**Marshall University**

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| Course Title/Number | **Introduction to Computer-Mediated Communication**  **CMM 255 (WI)** |
| Semester/Year | Spring 2013 |
| Days/Time | Tuesday & Thursday, 2:00 – 3:15 pm |
| Location | Smith Hall 232 |
| Instructor | Stephen D. Cooper |
| Office | Smith Hall 246 |
| Phone | 304 696-2733 |
| E-Mail | coopers@marshall.edu |
| Office/Hours | Monday 12:30 -1:30 pm  Tuesday 12:30 -1:30 pm  Wednesday 12:30 -1:30 pm  Thursday 12:30 -1:30 and 3:30-5:30 pm  Other times by appointment. |
| University Policies | By enrolling in this course, you agree to the University Policies listed below. Please read the full text of each policy by going to [www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs](http://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs) and clicking on “Marshall University Policies.” Or, you can access the policies directly by going to <http://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs/?page_id=802>  Academic Dishonesty/ Excused Absence Policy for Undergraduates/ Computing Services Acceptable Use/ Inclement Weather/ Dead Week/ Students with Disabilities/ Academic Forgiveness/ Academic Probation and Suspension/ Academic Rights and Responsibilities of Students/ Affirmative Action/ Sexual Harassment |

# Course Description, From the Catalog

Use and implications of telecomputing for messaging, resource finding, and self-directed discovery learning.

# Course Philosophy, From the Instructor

From its infancy as a federally-funded experiment in military communications, through its adolescence as the federally-funded plaything of academicians, to its maturity as a self-supporting and self-organizing global network, the World Wide Web has continued to confound the pundits and delight its users. Personal computers have made serious computing power available to people of ordinary means. E-commerce has influenced the commercial marketplace in both obvious and subtle ways.

While prior communication innovations such as the telephone and television also reshaped our notions of time and space, there is good reason to see the widespread adoption of computer-mediated communication (CMC) as unique in its simultaneous impact on our social institutions, our organizations, and our personal identities. One goal of this course is to get a sense of the breadth and depth of the institutional, workplace, and personal changes fostered by computer-mediated communication. Another goal is to get introduced to the major theories about human communication behaviors when they’re mediated by computer technology.

And yet another goal of this course is to refine your skills in analytical writing. This is a writing-intensive course. When you look over the course calendar, you’ll notice a short written assignment almost every week. When you look over the grading system for this course, you’ll notice grade points for those weekly assignments, and more points for a thing called “in-class memos.” Relax, and trust the Force. You’ll do a good deal of writing in this course, and the writing will both help you master the material and get even better in your writing skills.

If you feel a bit of anxiety about this aspect of the course, it’s a sign you realize that analytical writing is a skill you need to work on! Keep in mind that important opportunities often present themselves as challenges.

# Learning Objectives of This Course

So what’s the payoff, exactly, for all your hard work in this course?

* An introduction to fundamental scholarly concepts concerning human communication behaviors mediated by computer technology.
* An introduction to the major theoretical models for CMC behaviors.
* Familiarity with big questions and issues regarding CMC’s impact on social structure and human agency.
* Insights into your personal use of CMC.
* Greater skill in analytical writing.

# Program Student Learning Outcomes

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| 1. Understand basic concepts associated with the primary theories of communication. 2. Write a clear, concise, and reasoned paper on topics dealing with the concepts of communication. 3. Understand the research literature underlying the discipline of communication. 4. Demonstrate speaking competencies by composing a message, provide ideas and information suitable to the theory and audience. 5. Basic understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry, as applied to human behavior. 6. Familiarity with the four research methods commonly used to study human communication behaviors. 7. Greater skill in analytical thinking and writing. 8. Demonstrate “sense-making,” the ability to apply knowledge to lived experience. |

# Relationships among Course, Program, and Degree Profile Outcomes

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| **Course Outcomes** | **How Accomplished in this Course** | **How Evaluated in this Course** | **Program Outcomes** | **Degree Profile Outcomes** |
| Students will be familiar with scholarly concepts about CMC. | Textbook readings; lectures and explanations; in-class writing activities; formal written assignments. | Weekly quizzes; midterm exam; final exam; formal written assignments. | 3 | * analytic inquiry * specialized knowledge |
| Students will be familiar with major theoretical models of CMC behaviors. | Textbook readings; lectures and explanations; in-class writing activities; formal written assignments. | Weekly quizzes; midterm exam; final exam; formal written assignments. | 3 | * analytic inquiry * specialized knowledge |
| Students will be familiar with major issues regarding CMC’s impact on social structure and human agency. | Textbook readings; lectures and explanations; in-class writing activities; formal written assignments. | Formal written assignments. | 3 | * analytic inquiry |
| Students will gain insights into their personal use of CMC. | Textbook readings; lectures and explanations; in-class writing activities; formal written assignments. | Formal Written assignments. | 8 | * applied learning |
| Students will develop greater skill in analytical writing. | In-class writing activities; formal written assignments. | Formal written assignments. | 7 | * communication fluency |

# Required Texts, Additional Reading, and Other Materials

Barnes, S. B. (2003). *Computer-mediated communication.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

# Course Requirements / Due Dates

All assignments and deliverables are described in the course calendar, below.

# Make This a Habit

Try this technique for reading course materials. It’s probably different from what you’re used to doing, but you might find it very helpful in deepening both your comprehension and recall of the material.

* First browse the entire section you’ve been assigned. Let your eyes go where they want to: check out the headings, bold-faced terms, diagrams and figures, whatever paragraphs catch your attention. Don’t make any marks in your book or take any notes at this point. Just get a sense of how the section is put together, and what the main ideas are.
* Next, look for summary materials the book might include. There may be a chapter summary at the end. There may be a preview, or a bullet list of important ideas, or a glossary of key terms. Whatever forms the summary materials may be in, read them slowly and carefully. Let those ideas sink in.
* Then read through the assignment in sequence. Highlight passages, make margin notes in the book, write things down in your notebook. Take your time with this reading, and let the familiarity you gained by browsing guide your highlighting and note taking. By all means, make marks in your book! You own it, and marking it up as you study will help you tremendously in learning the material.
* Finally, jot down ideas or concepts you don’t feel rock solid about understanding, after doing the reading. We’ll devote a good deal of time in class talking about the concepts you identify as troublesome or confusing. Make some notes so that when I ask you what things from the reading need clarifying, we’ll cover the ones you need help with.

This four-step process won’t require much more time, but I think you’ll find you have a far better grasp of the material and you’ll do better on the written assignments and exams as a result. Try it and see.

As an added bonus, you even get points for bringing those notes (the fourth step) to class. Wow! Here’s the 411 on these *reading notes*:

Handwritten is fine. Keep a notepad with you as you do the reading, and jot down questions about passages, puzzlements of any sort, *eureka!* moments, and *yeah, but—* moments. Be sure to note the page numbers for the passages that prompt your reactions. Put your name on the top, and turn it in at the class when that reading is due.

# Plagiarism

The explosive development of the World Wide Web has opened a great many wonderful opportunities to all of us. It has also made it easier than ever to misrepresent someone else’s work as our own.

Don’t do it.

Plagiarism is a fool’s shortcut. Not only do you cheat yourself of the opportunity to learn and grow, but you expose yourself to severe academic penalties.

Plagiarism is dishonest. There’s a saying that sincerity inspires respect. Earn your self-respect through your own efforts.

# Grading Criteria for the Weekly Assignments

Each of the short written assignments is worth a maximum of 50 points toward your term grade. Here is how you earn those points:

* *Writing mechanics: 15 points.*

(Spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, word choice, general appearance of the page.)

* *Relevance to the assignment’s question or topic: 10 points.*

*(How well your paper addresses the question or topic.)*

* *Use of concepts to answer the question: 25 points.*

*(How skillfully your paper uses the textbook’s concepts and terms to describe insights into the question or topic.)*

You have the option to revise and resubmit any three of these weekly assignments. Put the revisions together with the originals, and turn them in by our second meeting during Dead Week. The grades on the revisions will replace the grades on the originals. But be clear about the purpose of the revisions! You’re not just fixing a typo or two—you’re taking your thinking to the next level.

Do yourself a big favor, and avoid using a thesaurus when you work on these assignments. The thesaurus makes it convenient and easy to totally screw up what you’re trying to say. The dictionary (not the thesaurus) is the right tool for clarifying your understanding of words.

Keep this in mind, always: fancy language is no substitute for clear thinking. The quality of your thinking is the most critical aspect of your written work; there’s no need to blow smoke, ever.

Get your thoughts together *first*, and *then* start writing*.*

# The Course Grade

Here are the point values which add up to your course grade:

In-class Writings 50 points, in all 50 possible

Written Assignments 12 @ 50 points 600 possible

Midterm Exam 1 @ 100 points 100 possible

Final Exam 1 @ 100 points 100 possible

Quizzes 100 points, in all 100 possible

Reading Notes 25 points, in all 25 possible

Attendance 25 points, in all 25 possible

Total 1,000 possible

A = 900 or better

B = 800—899

C = 700—799

D = 600—699

F = below 600

# Attendance Policy, a/k/a Ground Rules and Tough Love

I reserve the right to reject assignments after their due dates pass. If you know you’ll have trouble making a deadline on any of the work, get in touch with me *in advance* so we can make some arrangement. The key to success in this course is simple: take this course seriously, and think ahead.

That makes the attendance policy obvious, too: if you take this course, come to class. The penalty for blowing off class is losing the knowledge you would have gained from our activity that day, and losing the points you would have earned toward your grade that day.

That’s the *tough* part. Here’s the *love* part: if something is going on in your life such that you know you will not be able to attend a particular class, contact me in advance of that date. I will be glad to meet with you during office hours to keep you up to date.

The same logic applies to the written work. If you know that you’ll have a problem with a due date, contact me in advance so we can work something out. Missing a deadline and then making lame excuses just won’t cut it. If you don’t turn in a written assignment when it’s due you get a zero. Ouch! Don’t hurt yourself like that, K?

You can understand what I mean, then, by calling this *tough love*. I sincerely care about your success in this course. But if I were to let you get away with doing less than your best in this course, or to give you the impression that life is about doing the minimum necessary to get by, I’d be devaluing you. Again, sincerity inspires respect. I want to earn your respect, and I hope you want to earn mine.

Remember that you are a student at a first-class state university, and this is a professional context for all of us. Be sure that the papers you turn in reflect your professionalism. All your formal written work must be typed, double spaced, with normal margins and font size. Be sure your name, the course number, the due date of the assignment, and the number of the assignment are at the top of the page. Written work is *written* work; unless we make prior arrangements, email is not acceptable as a way to submit an assignment.

When you’re having trouble with an assignment or you know you won’t make a deadline, don’t suffer in silence. Call me, email me, or drop by during office hours! That’s what I’m here for.

Here’s what it all comes down to:

**My job is to create an environment in which you can succeed.**

**Your job is to succeed.**

# Motivation

Your success in this course is in your own hands. As in so many other activities, your commitment is crucial. At one level, this is simple: come to class, be prepared for the class, and participate fully in the class. At a deeper level, this is complex: only you can promise you will do that, and then keep that promise to yourself.

And speaking of motivation...

# On “Phoning It In”

(If you’re not familiar with that expression, hit *Urban Dictionary* and look it up.)

Probably the best way to get your beloved instructor totally p\*ssed off at you is play around with some sort of wireless gadget during class. Let’s cut to the chase here: if you’re paying attention to your Droid/iPhone/iPad/whatever, you’re not paying attention to what we’re doing in class. Turn it off when class starts, and put it away.

We’ve got serious business to do, here, and your phone has no part in it. Yeah, I know this is a course in computer-mediated communication—but that doesn’t mean it’s OK to tweet, text, or surf in class. *Capisce?*

# Course Calendar

# Week 1

January 15—Course Introduction, and the Syllabus.

January 17—Clarity in Writing, Clarity in Thinking; a Primer on Social Science.

* **Reading**

*This syllabus. (There might be a quiz on it, even...)*

*The excerpt from Strunk & White.*

* **Bring to Class**

*Bring to this class a paper (or two) of yours containing some passages which broke one (or more) of the S & W rules.*

***Week 2***

January 22—CMC: What Do You Do With It?

* **Reading**

*Chapter 1.*

January 24

* **Writing #1**

*First, list all the ways you’ve used CMC that are mentioned in the reading, and briefly describe how you’ve used each of them. Then take a look at the glossary of chapter 1, and pick out the terms which apply to your own uses of CMC. List those terms, and write a sentence or two about each to show how they apply.*

***Week 3***

January 29—What’s Special About Computer-Mediated Comm?

* **Reading**

*Chapter 2.*

January 31

* **Writing #2**

*Choose any kind of CMC you engage in often. Describe it, and analyze it—in detail!—in terms of flow theory. Don’t just throw terms around. Connect the flow model to the experience.*

***Week 4***

February 5—Humans & Computing Machinery.

* **Reading**

*Chapter 3.*

February 7

* **Writing #3**

*Make a list of all the aspects of computer interfaces that mimic something in real life. (There are lots of them!) For each of those items, comment (in a short paragraph) on the extent to which it might or might not lead us to think of the computer as a social actor (refer to CAS theory on pp. 62-63).*

***Week 5***

February 12—The World Wide Web: It’s Big.

* **Reading**

*Chapter 4.*

February 14

* **Writing #4**

*Find at least one example of each of the types of web sites listed in the textbook, pp. 78-80. For each site, list the name and URL, briefly describe the site, and analyze the site using the uses and gratification model (pp. 82-84).*

***Week 6***

February 19—Language and Self, in CMC.

* **Reading**

*Chapters 5 & 6.*

February 21

* **Writing #5**

*Think about all the ways you present information about yourself, as you use CMC. Use the concepts in chapter 6 to discuss your own online self.*

***Week 7***

February 26—CMC as a Substitute for FTF.

* **Reading**

*Chapter 7.*

February 28

* **Writing #6**

*Find a site which is an example of a Weblog (see p. 127). List its name and URL, of course, and briefly describe it. Analyze its audience: who would enjoy visiting this site? Who would hate it, or find it boring? Analyze its value (i.e., talk about its strengths and weaknesses) as a serious information source for a thoughtful citizen. Cover the points on the handout!*

***Week 8***

March 5—Reviewing for the Midterm Exam.

* **Reading**

*Review chapters 1-7.*

March 7—The Dreaded Midterm Exam, Itself...

***Week 9***

March 12—How CMC Affects Organizations.

* **Reading**

*Chapter 8.*

March 14

* **Writing #7**

*Think about the places you’ve worked, and organizations you’ve been affiliated with (like non-profits, or schools). Follow the handout for this assignment, and briefly discuss all the forms of CMC you’ve seen in an organizational setting. For the forms of CMC you haven’t experienced, say whether a particular organization would have been better using it, or was smart not to. Explain why you think so! (Cite some kind of evidence, in other words.)*

**☺** *Yahooie! It’s spring break...*

***Week 10***

March 26—Fun, Games, and Learning.

* **Reading**

*Chapters 9 & 10.*

March 28

* **Writing #8**

*Decide whether you’ve made more use of CMC in online games, or in your educational endeavors. Then describe either use, and choose concepts from either chapter 9 or chapter 10 (whichever is relevant) to thoroughly analyze your experience. (Don’t just sling terms around; connect the concepts to your CMC use.)*

***Week 11***

April 2—Community, in the Virtual World.

* **Reading**

*Chapter 11.*

April 4

* **Writing #9**

*Mull over the ideas presented in chapter 11. Then take a position on this question: On the whole, does CMC strengthen community or weaken it? Make a case for your position, drawing on the concepts from the book as much as you can. Probably VF’s gyp sheet will help you get going on this writing.*

***Week 12***

April 9—Bad Behavior, in Virtual Life.

* **Reading**

*Chapter 12.*

April 11

* **Writing #10**

*Probably you’ve experienced some sort of bad behavior, online. Describe it, and analyze the experience, drawing on the concepts from this reading as much as you can.*

***Week 13***

April 16—Intellectual Property Rights.

* **Reading**

*Chapter 13.*

April 18

* **Writing #11**

*Think about what would happen if property rights did not apply to cyberspace. Then decide whether, on the whole, life would be better or be worse. Make a case for your position, using the concepts from the book as much as possible—but also analyze, impartially, the benefits and harms to society as a whole. Probably VF’s gyp sheet again will help you get going on this writing.*

***Week 14***

April 23—What If We All Were Wired?

* **Reading**

*Chapters 14 & 15.*

April 25

* **Writing #12**

*In what ways has the development of CMC changed, or probably will change, what it means to be a human being living on this planet? As always, draw on the concepts from your readings and thoughtfully consider benefits, harms, and things that probably won’t be affected much.*

***Week 15—Dead Week***

April 30

* **Reading**

*Review the entire book!*

*Make notes on what you want us to review in class—particularly stuff relating to the papers you’re revising. Write it down!*

May 2

* **Writing**

*This is the deadline for submitting revisions of any three of the weekly assignments.*

***Week 16***

The Dreaded Final Exam...at the time decreed by the University!

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