

Marshall University

Course Title/Number	Computer-Mediated Communication CMM 456/556
Semester/Year	Spring 2014
Days/Time	Tuesday, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
Location	Smith 261
Instructor	Stephen D. Cooper, Ph.D.
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Office/Hours	Monday 1:00 - 3:00 pm Tuesday 12:30 - 1:30 & 3:30 - 6:00 pm Wednesday 1:00 - 3:00 pm Thursday 12:30 - 1:30 & 3:30 - 5:00 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 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

This course explores the impact of computer-mediated communication on human organization.

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 Internet has continued to confound the pundits and delight its users. Personal computers have made serious computing power available to people of ordinary means. Electronic commerce has influenced the commercial marketplace in both obvious and subtle ways.

While prior communication innovations such as the telephone and television 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.

In this course we'll survey some major dimensions of this innovation. Our goal is to get a sense of the breadth and depth of the institutional, workplace, and personal transformations catalyzed by computer-mediated communication.

Another goal of this course is to further develop your skills in writing thoughtful, concise papers. In lieu of exams (no exams? yay!) all students, undergraduate and graduate, write a number of short papers relating to CMC issues we study in the readings. Graduate students also write two case studies of CMC in the real world.

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.

CMM Program Student Learning Outcomes

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, CMM Program, and MU Degree Profile Outcomes

Course Outcomes	How Accomplished in this Course	How Evaluated in this Course	Program Outcomes	Degree Profile Outcomes
Students will understand fundamental communication concepts applicable to CMC.	readings; class discussions; in-class writings (a/k/a prompts)	portfolio of drafts and final versions of short papers	1	creative thinking
Students will be familiar with analytical models for CMC behaviors.	readings; class discussions; in-class writings (a/k/a prompts)	formal written assignments (rubric appears below)	3	inquiry-based thinking

Students will be aware of major scholarly and social issues regarding CMC.	readings; class discussions; prompts; formal writing assignments	formal written assignments	8	integrative thinking
Students will develop skill in analytical writing.	readings; prompts; portfolio development	portfolio of drafts and final versions of short papers	2, 7, 8	communication fluency

Required Texts, Additional Reading, and Other Materials

Eggenschweiler, J., & Biggs, E. D. (2001). *Writing: Grammar, usage, and style*. New York, NY: Wiley.

The XanEdu reading packet for this course. The MU bookstore sells the download key for this beauty.

Recommended Materials

A good-quality dictionary of your choice.

Course Requirements / Due Dates

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

A Useful Tip

Try this technique for reading course materials. It's especially useful for the higher-level readings we'll be doing in this class.

First browse the entire reading you've been assigned. Let your eyes go where they want to: headings, bold-faced terms, diagrams, figures, whatever paragraphs catch your attention. Get a sense of how the reading is put together, and what the main ideas might be.

Next, look for summary materials the reading might include. There's likely to be a conclusion; you might get lucky and have a table of main ideas. Whatever forms the summary materials may be in, read them slowly and carefully. Get acquainted with the main ideas in the material.

Then read through the assignment in sequence. Highlight passages, make margin notes, write things in your notebook. Take your time with this reading, and let the familiarity you gained by browsing guide your highlighting and note taking.

Oh—and keep your dictionary handy. Stop and look up any unfamiliar word, when you're doing the third step. How else can you figure out what the sentence actually means, eh?

Finally, make notes on ideas or terms you don't feel rock solid about understanding, after doing the reading. Jot down ideas you understand but disagree with, and ideas you think are especially insightful. We'll devote much of our meeting time to collectively chewing on these readings, so make notes about them while they're fresh in your mind.

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 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.

Grading Criteria for the Written Assignments

The formal written works—weekly assignments, case studies, and portfolio—are the backbone of this course. These have different point values in computing your course grade, but the criteria on which they will be graded is the same. Here are the criteria, and the proportions each contribute to the grade:

Writing mechanics: 30%.

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

Relevance to the assignment's question or topic: 30%.

(How well does your paper do what the assignment asked for?)

Use of concepts to answer the question: 40%.

(How well does your paper use the discipline's big ideas? Do they reveal insights into the phenomenon?)

Do yourself a big favor, and avoid using a thesaurus when you work on these. The thesaurus makes it convenient and easy to totally foul 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 Case Studies

Grad students, you're on the hook for two case studies in addition to the other written work. One case study will be about a weblog or discussion site and the other about the use of CMC in a particular organization.

In both case studies, you describe the phenomenon (i.e., the blog/social networking site, the organizational CMC use) concisely but thoroughly, then use concepts from our readings to make sense of it. Relax! We'll spend some of our class time clarifying what case studies are supposed to look like. But do start thinking, early in the semester, about what cases you'd like to write up. These pieces need to strongly connect the concrete details of the case to the abstractions of CMC-related theories.

The Portfolio

The portfolio is your chance to strut your stuff. For the portfolio you choose three in-class scribbles and three weekly assignments to revise and develop. Please be sure to include both the original version and your revised version, with a bullet list of the improvements you made in the revision. For the sake of professionalism, put it all in some sort of binder or folder.

Be clear about this: the idea is NOT just to fix a couple typos or mechanical errors that I flagged in the original version. The idea is that the originals were *first drafts* which you then *revised* and *substantially* developed. If that content development isn't apparent, then the grade suffers.

In other words, you take a selection of your early works in this course to the next level of development.

The Course Grade

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

reading notes

100 points, total

100 possible

in-class scribbles	50 points, total	50 possible
written assignments	12 @ 10 points	120 possible
portfolio		200 possible
case studies (grad students only)	2 @ 100 points	200 possible
attendance	30 points, total	30 possible

total 700 possible for grad students
 500 possible for undergrads

A = 90% or better
 B = 80 to 89%
 C = 70 to 79%
 D = 60 to 69%
 F = below 60%

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

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

That makes the attendance policy obvious: if you take this course, come to class. The worst penalty for not showing up is losing the knowledge you would have gained from our activity that day, but you'll also lose the points you would have earned toward your course grade that day.

That's the *tough* part. Here's the *love* part: if something is going on in your life such that you will not be able to meet a deadline for written work or a presentation, contact me *in advance* of that date so we can work something out. Keep in mind, though, that missing a deadline and making lame excuses afterward just won't cut it.

You can understand what I mean, then, by calling this *tough love*. I want you to do well in this course. But if I were to let you get away with doing less than your best, or to give you the impression that life is about doing the minimum necessary to get by, I'd be devaluing you. There's a saying that 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. Except for the reading notes, all your written work must be typed, double spaced, with normal margins and font size. Be sure your name, the course number, and the assignment number are on the top of the page.

When you're having trouble with an assignment, don't suffer in silence. Call me! That's what I'm here for. My office hours are listed on this syllabus, and we can meet other times by appointment.

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 yourself you will do that, and then keep that promise to yourself.

Plagiarism

The 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. Again, sincerity inspires respect. Earn your self-respect through your own efforts.

Course Calendar

Week 1 — January 14

The Syllabus, Inquiry as Science, Your Own Use of CMC, and Why Your Writing Chops Matter

Week 2 – January 21

Clarity in Writing, Clarity in Thinking

Reading assignment for this class:

The syllabus. (Yeah, I know we gave it a glance in the first meeting—but we actually *follow* the syllabus in this course, so you need to read it carefully.)

Reading assignment for this class:

Spend a full hour-and-a-half browsing Eggenschwiler & Biggs—the whole thing. (Time yourself, K? And it's OK to take longer...) Linger and read carefully when an item seems especially pertinent to you.

☞ *Remember to do reading notes for every reading assignment, y'hear?*

Writing assignment for this class (#1):

Pick eight grammar/usage/punctuation rules or principles which you didn't know, or you misunderstood. These would come from the first twelve chapters.

For each of the eight you chose, find a passage in your own academic writing (any course, in any discipline) which violates it or would especially benefit from it.

For each rule (this is what goes on the paper you turn in):

- Quote the rule/principle, from Egg & Biggs.
- Quote the boogered original passage in your work, and identify the error in it.
- Revise the passage accordingly.

Week 3 – January 28

What's the Big Deal About CMC?

Reading assignment for this class:

Hunt & Ruben; Adams & Clark.

☞ *Reading notes on every reading assignment, all semester, right?*

Writing assignment for this class (#2):

Identify five interesting *questions* about CMC in particular, or the information society in general. Put each question in its own section with an appropriate heading, and write a few paragraphs stating the question precisely, explaining why the question matters, and sketching your own thoughts about possible answers. No fluff, no blah-blah, no pretentious wording, K? Get your thinking clear, then express your thought clearly.

Here's the point of the assignment: this is your personal agenda for this class. Don't be limited by the authors' ideas; think for yourself! Do give specific examples, events, personal experiences, or any other evidence which leads you to see CMC that way, or wonder about CMC, at this point.

Week 4 – February 4

Closing the *Information Society* Loop

Reading assignment for this class:

Find another high-quality source related to this topic. Prepare an informal briefing on it for us.

☞ *Yeah, do reading notes on the source you choose.*

Writing assignment for this class (#3):

Create an executive summary of the readings for this unit (both the packet, and the one you found). Concisely summarize the most important ideas about the information society. Be sure to include a glossary of key terms. Figure you'll run about two or three typed pages. No fluff, no blah blah, K? Bullet lists with short commentaries work great for this kind of document.

As an appendix to your executive summary, include three relevant discussion questions that would merit a piece of our face-to-face time.

Week 5 – February 11

Diffusion of CMC

Reading assignment for this class:

Rogers; Markus.

☞ *Reading notes, right?*

Writing assignment for this class (#4):

Put together a two-page summary of Rogers's diffusion theory. Strip the thing down to its essential ideas, but make sure you've covered all the essentials. Then add another page or so summarizing how Markus adapted diffusion theory to interactive media. Format this assignment as bullet points with brief explanations of each.

Week 6 – February 18

Closing the CMC as Innovation Loop

Reading assignment for this class:

Find another high-quality source related to this topic. Prepare an informal briefing on it for us.

☞ *Yep, do reading notes on the thing.*

Writing assignment for this class (#5):

Create an executive summary of the readings for this entire unit (both the packet, and the one you found). Concisely summarize the most important ideas about CMC as an innovation which diffused throughout the social structure. Be sure to include a glossary of key terms. Figure you'll run about two or three typed pages. No fluff, no blah blah—use bullet points with brief commentary.

As an appendix to your executive summary, include three relevant discussion questions that would merit a piece of our face-to-face time.

Week 7 – February 25

Getting to Know You...

Reading assignment for this class:

Sproull & Faraj; Wellman.

☞ *Got the idea, with this pointy-finger graphic?*

Writing assignment for this class (#6):

Think of yourself as a social being (as in Table 2.1, in Sproull & Faraj). Go through both readings and cherry-pick the ideas which seem to best explain you, as an *online* social being—identity, emotions, needs, behaviors, associations, interactions, whatever. Bullet list those ideas, and give a few explanatory sentences for each to show its application to you.

Week 8 – March 4

Closing the *Mediated Interpersonal Comm* Loop

Reading assignment for this class:

Find another high-quality source related to this topic. Prepare an informal briefing on it for us.

☞ *Notice how the pointy-finger shows up for every reading assignment?*

Writing assignment for this class (#7):

Create an executive summary of the readings for this unit (both the packet, and the one you found). Concisely summarize the most important ideas about CMC as interpersonal communication. Be sure to include a glossary of key terms. Figure you'll run about two or three typed pages. No fluff, no blah blah—just high-quality bullet points with brief explanations.

As an appendix to your executive summary, include three relevant discussion questions that would merit a piece of our face-to-face time.

Week 9 – March 11

It's Just Bidness

Reading assignment for this class:

Contractor & Eisenberg; Sproull & Kiesler.

☞ *Prolly by now all you need is the pointy-finger graphic to remind you...*

Writing assignment for this class (#8):

Imagine yourself as the boss of a place where you used to work (or currently do work), then think of some new network technology you might introduce into it. Write up an implementation plan, drawing on these readings as justification for the moves you'll make. Talk about problems, opportunities, necessary resources, possible unintended consequences. Don't just rattle on and on; keep it under three pages, and tie your main points into the readings *explicitly*. Since it's an implementation plan, it makes sense to structure this assignment around a temporal sequence of steps, right?

☺ *Yahooie! It's spring break...*

Week 10 – March 25

Closing the Mediated Organizational Comm Loop

Reading assignment for this class:

Find another high-quality source related to this topic. Prepare an informal briefing on it for us.

☞ *Uh-huh...you know what to do...*

Writing assignment for this class (#9):

Create an executive summary of the readings for this unit (both the packet, and the one you found). Concisely summarize the most important ideas about CMC in organizations. Be sure to include a glossary of key terms. Figure you'll run about two or three typed pages. No fluff, no blah blah—just high-quality bullet points with brief explanations.

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As an appendix to your executive summary, include three relevant discussion questions that would merit a piece of our face-to-face time.

Week 11 – April 1

Dystopia

Reading assignment for this class:

Papacharissi; Carnevale & Probst.

☞ *(what does that mean?)*

Writing assignment for this class (#10):

Push your pessimism button. In two pages or less (well, OK—just halfway into three), make the most compelling case you can that CMC is screwing the social world up. This thing is a persuasive essay, so it'll be running text—but think through the logical structure of your argument *before* you start banging on the keys, K?

Week 12 – April 8

Utopia

Reading assignment for this class:

Kedzie; Cooper.

☞ *(bada-bing!)*

Writing assignment for this class (#11):

Now push your optimism button. Make the most compelling case you can that CMC is yet another fabulous evolution in the best of all possible social worlds.

Week 13 – April 15

Closing the *Public Sphere* Loop

Reading assignment for this class:

Find another high-quality source related to this topic. Prepare an informal briefing on it for us.

☞ *(last one!)*

Writing assignment for this class (#12):

Create an executive summary of the readings for this unit (both the packet, and the one you found). Concisely summarize the most important ideas about the impact of CMC on the public sphere. Be sure to include a glossary of key terms. Figure you'll run about two or three typed pages. No fluff, no blah blah—just high-quality bullet points with brief explanations.

As an appendix to your executive summary, include three relevant discussion questions that would merit a piece of our face-to-face time.

Week 14 – April 22

The Workshop

Bring all your materials for the portfolio, and we'll flog 'em good.

Dead Week – April 29

Show 'n' Tell

Gimme that portfolio! In our class meeting we'll talk about the case studies, developed assignments, and elaborated in-class scribbles.

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