

Communication and Technology

04:192:354

Fall 2017

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Course Time: Monday and Wednesday, 1:10pm-2:30pm
Course Room: AB 1170 (Rutgers Academic Building, 17 Seminary Place)
Course Website: sakai.rutgers.edu

Course Description

This course provides an overview of communication theory and research related to the use of a range of communication technologies in a variety of interpersonal, group, and societal contexts.

Learning Objectives

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Explain and articulate basic concepts, theories, and research findings related to computer-mediated communication
- Apply basic knowledge of concepts, theories, and research findings related to communication and technology to contemporary problems and one's own lived experiences
- Recognize, explain, critique, and use several of the new communication technologies used by people in a digital age

Rutgers Core Curriculum Goals

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

21st Century Challenges

- Analyze the relationship that science and technology have to a contemporary social issue.

Cognitive Skills & Processes/Writing & Communication:

- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience.
- Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry.
- Analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

Contacting Us

The most reliable way to reach us is by email. Please include “**SCI 354**” in the e-mail subject – that ensures we can identify your message as related to this class and give it appropriate attention. We will typically get back to you within 3-5 days of receiving your email. Not including the class name in the subject will slow down the response time.

You can also find us during our office hours. We encourage you to stop by for a chat at least once during the semester. If you have other classes during the time when we hold office hours, you can email or come talk to us after class to schedule an appointment.

Required Readings

There is no required textbook for this class. All readings will be available on the course’s Sakai website (sakai.rutgers.edu). Log in using your Rutgers NetID, navigate to the course site, and browse the *Course Readings* page. The reading materials for each week of class are also listed in the *Course Outline* section of this syllabus.

If you encounter a problem with Sakai, you can contact the help desk at sakai@rutgers.edu or call them at 848 445 8721 between 8am-6pm on Monday through Friday.

iClickers

This course will use clickers. In order to receive credit for your participation, you have to get and register an iClicker+ remote (available at the [Rutgers Bookstore](#), or you can purchase a used one elsewhere). If you already have it, you can also use the newer iClicker 2. Brands other than iClicker will **not** work. You can use the same clicker for multiple classes.

Registering your iClicker

You need to register and bring to class your clicker starting on **Wed, September 13**. To do that, log into Sakai and select *i>clicker* from the left-side menu. Follow the instructions on that page. Be careful when you enter the ID printed on the tag of your clicker – if you make a mistake entering it, you will not get credit for using the clicker in class.

If you have been asked to register an iClicker through Sakai for another class **this term**, you will not need to register a second time.

If you lose your clicker and get a new one, you need to register again on Sakai and send your instructor an e-mail with your new ID number. You will not receive credit for your clicker participation until that e-mail is received.

Using your iClicker

Pull out the plastic tab on the back of the iClicker to activate the batteries.

In class, turn the clicker on using the on/off button – a solid blue power light will go on. When requested, respond to a question by pressing one of the A, B, C, D, E buttons. A green light will go on to show that your response has been recorded. A red light will go on if your answer has not been received - for instance if you try pressing a button at home. No other students will know your response.

Your clicker runs on **2 AAA** batteries – please be sure to carry extra ones with you to class. If you forget your clicker or run out of batteries, you will **not** be able to get credit for participation that day – even if you talk with your instructor or TA at the end of class.

Do not give your clicker to another student to use in class for you. Do not bring another student's iClicker to class and use it for them when they are not there. This is considered cheating and has serious consequences for both of the involved students (e.g. failing the class, a note of the violation of academic integrity on your permanent record, etc.).

Course Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes, pay attention and be active participants in the conversations we will have throughout the semester. You should read all the required materials carefully and thoroughly, identify their key points, think about their strengths and weaknesses, and be prepared to discuss them.

The lecture slides from each class will be uploaded on Sakai, usually by the end of the week. Note that the slides will only provide a general outline of the topics discussed in class. They do not include all the important details. You will need to be in class and pay attention in order to be prepared for tests and assignments. If you miss a class, you should do the readings for it, examine the slides, and borrow notes from a classmate in order to catch up.

If you expect you would have to miss a class, use the Rutgers University absence reporting website (sims.rutgers.edu/ssra) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. The system will automatically send me an email. If you are unable to attend classes for longer than one week, you should contact a dean of students who can help verify your circumstances. University policy excuses absences due to religious observance or participation, and permits students to make up work missed for that reason. You should notify me at least two weeks in advance if you are unable to come to class or take an exam due to religious observance.

On occasion, the university may have to cancel classes due to inclement weather. To check if classes are canceled, visit campusstatus.rutgers.edu or call 732-932-7799.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Participation (100 points)

Your participation will be graded based on your **iClicker** use in class. Your score will depend on the number of clicker questions you answer during the term. In order to receive full points, you should register participation in at least 75% of all clicker questions.

Keep in mind that we may use clickers any number of times in a single class session to check your opinion or test your understanding of the material. All of those count towards your participation score. This means that if you want to do well, you have to come to class on time, stay until the end, and pay attention. You will **not receive participation credit** for any questions you miss because you are late, you do not have your remote, you run out of batteries, or get distracted and skip a click. Remember that you should only use your own clicker – using someone else’s remote is considered cheating and there are serious consequences for the involved students.

You should register your clicker by **Wednesday, September 13** – see instructions about the way to do that on p.2-3 of this syllabus. The participation points will be distributed as follows:

75%-100% clicks	100 points
50%-74% clicks	50 points
25%-49% clicks	25 points
0%-24% clicks	0 points

Midterm and final exams (300 points each)

The class will have a midterm exam and a non-cumulative final exam.

- **Midterm exam:** covers material from day **1** through **11**
- **Final exam:** covers material from day **13** through **23**

The exams may include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short open-ended questions about key issues we have covered. You can expect questions dealing with major principles and concepts explained in class, as well as their application to specific contexts, cases, or technologies.

Requests for make-up exams for people who missed the original date will **very rarely** be granted, and only for students who have a verifiable excuse (e.g. a medical emergency). In exceptional cases where the instructor accommodates a make-up exam on a later date without a verified excuse, the student’s score will be **reduced by 20 points**.

Group project (300 points total)

Students will complete a collaborative project in groups of 4-5 people. Each group will produce a report examining a specific technological product or application assigned in advance. The technological products you will be asked to research and write about may include platforms such as: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, OkCupid, PatientsLikeMe, Periscope, Pinterest, Pokémon Go, Reddit, Snapchat, Twitter, Wikipedia, World of Warcraft, Yelp, YouTube.

At the end of the semester, each group will prepare a presentation of their report. Every student will also submit a brief evaluation statement describing how tasks were distributed and completed in their group.

I. Technology Report (250 points)

Each report should include the following four components:

(1) *Historical, contemporary, and future trajectory of the technology.*

Describe the history and background of the technology. When and how did it emerge and develop? What were its predecessors? When and how did it take off and become popular? Who are its major competitors? Discuss of the future of the technology. How might it evolve and change over time? Will it survive and thrive much longer or is it in decline? Why?

(2) *Technology and social difference: user demographics.*

Discuss the composition of the people using that technology. Are there any social or demographic groups that are particularly likely to use it? Are there any groups that are excluded from using it, either by choice or by necessity? Some relevant user characteristics to consider may include age, gender, race & ethnicity, education, income, etc. Find and cite data (preferably recent) from a credible source that supports your answer.

(3) *Motives, goals, and rules: social practices.*

Describe the role the technology plays in everyday life. What motivates people to use it? Think of key user goals that this technology may serve: seeking information, communication, social relationships, entertainment, self-presentation, self-improvement, etc.

What social practices, rules, or norms have developed around the technology? That may include, for instance, using specific slang, jargon, or acronyms; using the technology in new or unexpected ways (e.g. changing your profile picture to support a cause), developing social rules for appropriate behavior (e.g. killing players in certain locations in virtual worlds is considered rude, even though the game allows it), and so on.

(4) *Communication & technology: theory application.*

Select one of the themes we have covered in class that has a bearing on the technology you are examining. Discuss its relevance to the digital service you are writing about. For instance, you can evaluate the role of that technology for self-presentation, forming and maintaining social relationships, civic and political engagement, health and well-being, news and journalism, privacy, reputation, censorship, copyright, freedom of speech, and so on. Make sure to include key concepts and ideas we have discussed in class.

Reports should comply with the following requirements:

(1) *Formatting and length*

The report should be **15 pages** long, double-spaced, using a 12-point font with a 1-inch margin on all sides. You do not need a title page, but you should include a title and the names of all group members.

(2) *References and bibliography*

The report should cite **at least 10** relevant **academic** works. Additional citations may come from other types of sources (e.g. stories from reputable and credible media outlets or

industry reports). Those additional citations can help you develop and support your arguments, but they will **not** count toward the 10 mandatory academic references.

The citations and bibliography should be formatted in APA style (one place where you can learn more about it is the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#)). You can use a free citation manager to store and format citations (e.g. [www.zotero.com](#)), or a simpler online tool to format selected citations (e.g. [www.refme.com/citation-generator/apa](#) or [www.bibme.org/apa](#)).

(3) *Writing quality and organization*

The report should be clearly and logically organized. Different sections should not repeat the same information, though you can refer to previously mentioned ideas if you are building on them to develop a new argument.

All group members need to carefully proofread the final draft of the report before submitting it. You should confirm that it meets all the requirements and make sure that the text is clearly written, grammatically correct, and free of spelling errors.

(4) *Deadline and submission*

Reports (and evaluation statements) should be submitted individually by each team member through the "Assignments" section of Sakai by the end of the day on **December 1**.

Reports submitted by e-mail will not be accepted. Late reports will be accepted until April 19, but the delay past the deadline will reduce your grade by up to 25 points.

Each group member needs to submit a separate copy of the same report on Sakai to confirm that everyone agrees on and approves of the final version that is turned in. The report should be included as a single-file attachment in PDF or Word format

A rubric providing detailed information about the report grading will be available on Sakai.

II. Evaluation statement (20 points)

Every student will submit a brief (1-2 paragraph) individual evaluation statement explaining the responsibilities and contributions of each member in their group for the research and writing of the technology report. The statement should describe how tasks were distributed and completed in the group. The evaluation will be submitted through Sakai and will not be accepted over e-mail. The evaluation statement will play a role in assessing how much each member contributed to the completion of the assignment, which will affect individual grades for the report.

III. Group presentation (30 points)

Each group should prepare a 15-minute presentation based on their final project. Rather than summarizing your report, you should select **five examples**, stories, or case studies as follows:

- (1) An example or story about the way the technological platform was developed; or about a time when it changed, and how users reacted to that change (e.g. Facebook adding the news feed feature, or reaction buttons). What does the example tell you about the philosophy of the company or the nature of the technology?
- (2) An example or case study where a new, unusual, or unexpected group of people started using the technology (e.g. grandparents joining Skype to keep in touch with grandchildren; the Pope joining Twitter). How do uses of the technology differ across different user groups?

- (3) An example or story about an atypical, unintended, or unexpected use of the technology (e.g. people using World of Warcraft to organize social protests). How do people adapt and use features of the platform to serve their own goals?
- (4) An example or story where people use the technology in a way that violates its terms of service, breaks social norms, or is against the law. How are norms and laws enforced in the context of that technology?
- (5) A story that exemplifies a concept or theory that we have learned in class. For instance, the story of an employee getting fired after posting offensive content on social media may be an example of context collapse; or a story of getting catfished on a dating site may remind you of ideas related to the hyperpersonal model and warranting theory.

You can use slides, [Prezi](#), a pre-recorded video, dramatic performance, interpretative dance, a puppet show, or any other format you prefer. Be ready to answer questions from the instructor and from your peers about your presentation and the technology you examined in your report.

After you present, your peers will be asked to rate your presentation for content (whether it was clear, informative, comprehensive) and for style (whether it was interesting, attractive, funny). The groups that score highest in each of the two categories (content and style) will receive 10 points extra credit for the course.

Grade breakdown & scale

A and B grades in this class will be reserved for outstanding work. To get a high grade, students need to participate actively in class, be thorough and careful in exam answers and assignments, and demonstrate excellent understanding of the subject, critical thinking, and originality in their work. The grade breakdown is as follows:

Participation	100 points
Midterm exam	300 points
Final exam	300 points
Group project:	
A. Report	250 points
B. Evaluation	20 points
C. Presentation	30 points
Total:	1000 points

The final grade will be awarded according to the following scale:

A	900-1000 points
B+	850-899 points
B	800-849 points
C+	750-799 points
C	700-749 points
D	600-699 points
F	Below 600 points

Grade appeals

You can submit appeals for individual assignment grades up to **5 days** after the grades are announced. **Appeals submitted later than that will not be accepted.**

In order to be reviewed, your appeal has to be submitted in writing over e-mail to your instructor. It should present solid arguments demonstrating that you deserve a higher grade.

If you have concerns about your course grade, schedule an appointment early during the semester to discuss it. Once the course grades are announced, they are final and will only be changed in case of an error in the computation of the student's score.

Individual extra credit

In addition to any other extra credit opportunities during the semester, students who receive a **failing grade** on an assignment may request to do an individual extra credit project. Those requests will only be granted for students who can show a legitimate and verifiable reason for their poor performance (e.g. a health problem).

You can request individual extra credit up to 3 days after you receive a failing grade. If your request is approved, you will have one week to turn in the assignment: a short paper (5 pages, 12-point font, double-spaced, including at least 5 academic citations) on the role of technology in the civic engagement and participation of college-age Americans. The assignment would be worth a maximum of 30 extra credit points.

Academic Integrity

You are required to complete your own assignments and exams, and always acknowledge the sources of contributions, materials, quotes, and ideas that you did not develop yourself.

The consequences of scholastic dishonesty in this class and at Rutgers University in general are very serious. Any violation will at a minimum result in no credit earned for the assignment in question. Serious violations of academic integrity may prevent students from completing the course or their academic program.

For more details, consult the [University's academic integrity policy](#). If you have questions about issues related to plagiarism or academic integrity, do not hesitate to contact me.

Accommodation

This course will accommodate any student in need of assistance.

Students with documented disabilities who need accommodations should contact the Rutgers Disabilities Services Office (see disabilityservices.rutgers.edu for details). You can also speak with a SC&I adviser by visiting the Office of Student Services in the SC&I Building, Room 214 or calling them at 848-932-7500 (dial 2 as your menu choice).

Please contact me with information about the requested assistance and present your Letter of Accommodation as early in the semester as possible.

Additional Resources

The university offers a number of resources that you can access if needed:

- For additional tutoring, training, or **writing help**, visit the Rutgers Learning Center (online at rlc.rutgers.edu) and the Writing Center (plangere.rutgers.edu).
- If you need a consultation on **research materials** and ways to find them, you can contact the Rutgers University [subject specialist librarian for communication](#).
- If you need help with **class schedule or registration**, visit the Student Services Office located in CI 214, and online at comminfo.rutgers.edu/student-services/contact-us.html.
- The SC&I IT Services can help you with various **technological problems**. You can find them in CI 120, by phone at 848-932-5555, or by email at help@comminfo.rutgers.edu.
- If you encounter **problems with Sakai**, you can contact the help desk at sakai@rutgers.edu or call them at 848 445 8721 between 8am-6pm on Monday through Friday.
- Student wellness services are available to you at Rutgers. You can contact CAPS for **mental health support** at rhscaps.rutgers.edu or by phone at 848 932 7884. Free and confidential **peer counselling** is available from Scarlet Listeners at 732 247 5555.
- The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling, and advocacy for victims of **sexual and relationship violence**. You can reach VPVA at vpva.rutgers.edu and 848 932 1181.
- The Office of Disability Services can be reached for help with accommodation and facilities for **students with disabilities** at ods.rutgers.edu, or by phone at 848 445 6800.
- On occasion, the university may have to **cancel classes** due to inclement weather. To check if classes are canceled, visit campusstatus.rutgers.edu or call 732-932-7799.

Course Outline

The course schedule is subject to change: materials may be added or replaced during the semester based on relevant current events, new research, and student interests. If that happens, the changes will be reflected on the Sakai website and announced in class/over email.

Date	Topic	To Do
1. Sep 6 (Wed)	Course overview	Show up.
2. Sep 11 (Mon)	Interacting with machines (role & perception of technology)	Nye, D. (2006). <i>Technology Matters: Questions to live with</i> . Ch.11 Not just one future.
3. Sep 13 (Wed)	Key theories I (form and function)	Register your iClicker through Sakai Baym, N. (2015) <i>Personal connections in the digital age</i> . Ch.2 Making new media make sense.

4. Sep 18 (Mon)	Key theories II (the human on the other side)	Baym, N. (2015) <i>Personal connections in the digital age</i> . Ch.3 Communication in digital spaces.
5. Sep 20 (Wed)	Technology adoption (diffusion & acceptance)	Vishwanath, A. (2015) <i>The handbook of the psychology of communication technology</i> . Ch. 14 The psychology of the diffusion and acceptance of technology.
6. Sep 25 (Mon)	The online self I (self-presentation & identity)	Marwick, A. (2013) <i>A Companion to New Media Dynamics</i> . Ch. 23 Online Identity.
7. Sep 27 (Wed)	The online self II (reputation & credibility)	Lampe, C. (2012) <i>The Reputation Society: How Online Opinions Are Reshaping the Offline World</i> . Ch.7 The Role of Reputation Systems in Managing Online Communities.
8. Oct 2 (Mon)	Social relationships I (online & offline)	Baym, N. (2015) <i>Personal connections in the digital age</i> . Ch.6 Digital media in everyday relationships.
9. Oct 4 (Wed)	Social relationships II (social networks)	Christakis, N & Fowler, J. (2011) <i>Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives</i> , Ch.8 Hyperconnected
10. Oct 9 (Mon)	Language & technology (Internet linguistics)	Baron, N. (2011) <i>Handbook of Internet Studies</i> Ch. 6 Assessing the Internet's Impact on Language
11. Oct 11 (Wed)	Wrap-up & exam review	Be prepared to ask questions about the exam!
12. Oct 16 (Mon)	Midterm Exam	Bring pencils, eraser, an ID, & your RU ID #
13. Oct 18 (Wed)	Health & well-being (physical & psychological)	Burke, M. & Kraut, R. (2016) The Relationship between Facebook Use and Well-Being depends on Communication Type and Tie Strength. <i>Journal of CMC</i> .
14. Oct 23 (Mon)	Digital media (news & journalism)	Reeves, I. & Keeble, R. (2015) <i>The Newspapers Handbook, 5th Ed.</i> Ch.7 News reporting in the digital age.
15. Oct 25 (Wed)	Civic & political uses (mobilization & participation)	Bennett, W. L. (2008). <i>Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth</i> . Changing citizenship in the digital age.

16. Oct 30 (Mon)	Big data & society (algorithms & privacy)	Pasquale, F. (2015) <i>The Black Box Society</i> . Ch. 2 Digital Reputation in an Era of Runaway Data.
17. Nov 1 (Wed)	Information control (free speech & copyright)	Aufderheide, P. (2015). <i>The Routledge Companion to Remix Studies</i> . Ch. 19 Copyright and Fair Use in Remix.
18. Nov 6 (Mon)	Memes & diffusion (spreadable & viral content)	Nahon, K. & Hemsley, J. (2013) <i>Going Viral</i> . Ch. 2 What virality is: I know it when I see it.
19. Nov 8 (Wed)	Mobile communication (connections on the go)	Cumiskey, K & Ling, R. (2015) <i>The handbook of the psychology of communication technology</i> , Ch. 10 The Social Psychology of Mobile Communication.
20. Nov 13 (Mon)	Collaboration & teamwork (collective action & volunteering)	Shirky, C. (2008) <i>Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations</i> . Ch. 5 Personal motivation meets collaborative production
21. Nov 15 (Wed)	NO CLASS: project work (groups meet & discuss)	Groups meet (offline or online) to prepare an outline of their final project report.
22. Nov 20 (Mon)	In-class project reports (group collaboration)	Group report outlines due, in class. Outline discussion. Come prepared with issues/questions about the project report.
Nov 22 (Wed)	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving	Have a good Thanksgiving break!
23. Nov 27 (Mon)	Virtual worlds (games & augmented reality)	Consalvo, M. (2011) <i>Handbook of Internet Studies</i> . Ch. 15 MOOs to MMOs: The Internet and Virtual Worlds
24. Nov 29 (Wed)	Wrap-up & exam review	Be prepared to ask questions about the exam!
Dec 1 (Fri)	Final projects due.	Submit group report & evaluation on Sakai.
25. Dec 4 (Mon)	Project presentations	Be ready to present!
26. Dec 6 (Wed)	Project presentations	Be ready to present!
27. Dec 11 (Mon)	Project presentations	Be ready to present!
28. Dec 13 (Wed)	Project presentations	Be ready to present!
Dec 20 (Wed)	Final exam, 9:30-11:00am	Bring pencils, eraser, an ID, & your RU ID #