

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

CMNS 253-3

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Introduction to Information Technology: The New Media

Prerequisites: CMNS 110 or 130.

Overview:

Information technology ("IT") is all around us and has been for more than fifty years. IT has been a factor in many of the transformations of modern life in the latter half of the twentieth century. These include: dramatic changes in the way that business is conducted, education is delivered, health care is provided, politics are played, and even how we carry on our social life. The transformations have been felt particularly strongly as information technology has become more than a computational device and been transformed into a medium for communication. In this course we examine the way in which information technology forms a new medium of communication in society and the implications that may have now and in the future. We pay special attention to so-called "social software," including web logs ("blogs"), instant messaging ("IM" or "MSN"), and short text messaging ("SMS").

Readings:

One textbook is required for this course. It is Wade Rowland's *Spirit of the Web*, Key Porter Books, 2002.

In addition, you will receive material via the course email list, the web-based course management system ([WebCT](#)), and the [instructors' blog](#).

Technology:

As a course about information technology and new media, it is probably not surprising that this course makes extensive use of both. All lectures are digitized and broadcast (audio and powerpoint slides only, no video [yet]) live on the Internet and available in archive form until the end of the semester. All lectures have audio/visual components (web pages and powerpoint slides, typically), and the class email list -- with web archive -- is used extensively. All course material is posted on the class web site and all assignments are submitted through the web site. The professor will read and respond to all student e-mail within 24 hours during the week and 36 hours on weekends. He is also available for instant message "office hours."

NOTE: This is NOT a course designed to train you in the use of information technology or the design of web pages. If you are looking for such training, check out the credit-free tutorials offered by [Academic Computing Services](#).

Grading:

Assignments will be marked based on a balance of critical thinking, sound logic, and persuasive language. Correct use of spelling and grammar will be required in all assignments. Use the CMNS style guide in all submitted work, where appropriate, even when submitting online. That means proper titles, names and student numbers, the use of headings and subheadings, and a proper bibliography. Blog posts and journal entries (see detailed descriptions of the assignments, online), of course, do not have to adhere to the style guide. The CMNS style guide, along with a great deal of other useful information can be found in the Library's resource page for CMNS students:

<http://www.lib.sfu.ca/researchhelp/subjectguides/cmns/cmns.htm>.

Detailed instructions on the grade breakdown and requirements for each assignment are provided in the syllabus (on webCT) and in class.

The School expects that the grades awarded in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. For details on the plagiarism policy of the school and the university, see the resources at the library web site: <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/researchhelp/writing/plagiarism.htm>). Plagiarism may result in a "zero" mark on the assignment or an "F" on the course. It may also result in expulsion from the university. It's not worth it. Here is the official word:

The School will follow Policy T10.02 with respect to "Intellectual Honesty" and Policy T10.03 on "Academic Discipline" (see the current Calendar, General Regulations section or <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/t10-02.htm> and <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/t10-03.htm>).

Writing Intensive:

This course is a "W" course, which means it is certified as part of the university's commitment to provide "writing intensive" courses. A certain number of writing intensive courses will be required for students entering the university in 2006. Writing intensive courses are defined by the university Centre for Writing Intensive Learning (CWIL):

"A writing-intensive course is one in which writing is used as a tool for learning and developing understanding of subject matter and is taught as a means of communication in discipline-specific ways. Students are shown, rather than simply told, how to write in the genres most valued in the discipline and are given opportunities to use skilled feedback in the revision and rewriting of major papers."

Assignments:

- Assignment Zero: Introductory online scavenger hunt (Send by email, no marks, and due immediately after the first class.
- Assignment One: How do you use new media? How do others use it? (Reflection and research/observation - A blog/wiki project, for 10 marks, Must start Week 1, but due Week 12)
- Assignment Two: How does it work, and why? (Inquiry - a comparative online research report, for 10 marks. Due in Week 5 with a PARTNER)
- Assignment Three: What do people say about IT? (Commentary, for 10 marks. Due in Week 9)
- Assignment Four: Digital Video Documentary (synthesis/expression, for 20 marks per person. Due in Week 13, GROUPS OF 4

Schedule Overview:

In the first part of the course we focus in class on the practical and theoretical foundations of a perspective on information technology in society. The textbook by Wade Rowland provides a historical foundation.

In the second part of the course, we consider new media technologies in a variety of contexts and from the perspective of a variety of people. Emerging forms of new media (podcasts, video podcasts, wikimedia, mobile tv) will be explored and discussed.

Week 13 will be a review of the course and presentation of the group projects.

Detailed syllabus:

This is a course outline only. A full syllabus with week by week reading guide, assignment details, and other information will be available online via webCT after the first class. Tutorials begin in week 2. Classes are two hours long, tutorials are one hour long.