

# COMM 5350-01

## Computer-Mediated Communication

### Spring 2018

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Professor: Melinda R. Weathers, Ph.D.

Office: DRCB 322E

Office Hours: T/TH, 11:00am-12:00pm & 3:30-4:30pm,  
or by appointment

Location: Online

E-mail: [mweathers@shsu.edu](mailto:mweathers@shsu.edu)

Phone: 936.294.1848 (email is best)

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### COURSE OVERVIEW

#### **Course Description:**

This course explores the intersection of interpersonal communication and technology. As technology has become more pervasive many people use it to find, maintain, and end relationships. Thus, this course will demonstrate how technology influences interpersonal relationships. Students in this course will learn about the traditional interpersonal areas such as privacy, perception, and social support. In addition, they will also learn about the computer-mediated communication (CMC) areas of anonymity, synchronicity, and channel limitation. In the new information age with social media, email, text, and video chatting on every desk, laptop, and mobile phone, technology has infiltrated our personal relationships. Students will learn about the benefits and the problems of negotiating interpersonal relationships via technology in the 21st century.



#### **Course Objectives:**

These are the objectives I hope you accomplish in this course:

- ☐ To understand the field of CMC and contemporary debates in the field.
- ☐ To become more comfortable with and more competent in skills related to CMC and personal relationships.
- ☐ To develop multiple communication strategies concerning CMC negotiations, lifestyles, ongoing situations, and daily interactions.
- ☐ To identify processes, problems, and advantages associated with the use of CMC in different contexts.
- ☐ To be able to apply and incorporate theoretical perspectives and scientific/scholarly observations regarding CMC and relational dynamics.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

**Required Material:** The following book is required and may be available at the University Bookstore. Most online retailers also sell this book.

- Wright, K. B., & Webb, L. M. (Eds.) (2011). *Computer-mediated communication in personal relationships*. New York: Peter Lang.

**Suggested Material:** I also strongly encourage every graduate student to purchase the following book; it is very helpful for learning how to properly cite your work in APA style.

- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

**Blackboard Material:** Blackboard includes dozens of project documents, PowerPoints, bibliographies, and articles you may use for this class. We will not go over every document that is posted on Blackboard, but it will substantially increase your learning and progress on the nature of CMC if you take time to go through the relevant documents provided.

**Lecture Materials:** Each week I will release/post course material on Sunday (this will be the beginning of our class week). All assignments for the week will be due by Saturday at 11:59pm (this will be the end of our class week). You are to review the materials; it is your responsibility to retrieve the course material and any other materials that I post to our Blackboard page.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**

Your course grade will be determined from the number of points you earn over the course of the semester. Assignments are due on the date listed in the course schedule. No late work!

Final Course Grades, *500 total points*

- A. 450+ points
- B. 449-400 points
- C. 399-350 points
- D. 349-300 points
- F. < 299 points

Assignment Points

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| □ Syllabus Acceptance                             | 5 points   |
| □ Written Self-Introduction                       | 5 points   |
| □ Midterm Exam                                    | 25 points  |
| □ Final Exam                                      | 25 points  |
| □ Group Assignments (4 x 100 points each)         | 400 points |
| □ Individual Reaction Papers (4 x 10 points each) | 40 points  |

Interpret letter grades on assignments and for the course according to this rubric:

- A. *Excellent*. The student's work and contributions to the class are exemplary.
- B. *Very Good or Above Average*. The student's work and contributions to the class are consistently and remarkably strong.
- C. *Acceptable or Average*. The student's work meets and sometimes exceeds expectations for graduate performance in courses of this nature.
- D. *Problematic or Below Average*. The student's work may sometimes meet expectations for graduate performance in courses of this nature, but is sometimes deficient or flawed.
- F. *Failing*. The student's work does not meet the expectations for graduate performance in courses of this nature.

**Syllabus Acceptance:** The Syllabus Acceptance form is located on Blackboard. Fill it out and submit to the corresponding *assignment link* on Blackboard. In doing so, you are acknowledging that you have received and thoroughly reviewed the syllabus.

**Written Self-Introduction:** Submit to the corresponding *forum* on Blackboard.

Tell us your name, where you are from (and where you are currently living, if different), and three things about yourself that we would not know if we saw you (e.g., “I have brown hair” is not deep enough. Give us something to remember you by). Tell us why you took this online class, your focus of study, and your job/career/area of expertise. Then tell us about an important person in your life – this is a relational communication course, so give us some insight into the relationship that you share with this person. After your initial post, you should respond to at least two classmates to make them feel welcome.

**Exams:** The midterm and final exams will allow you to demonstrate your understanding of course concepts, approaches, and theory bases. Each exam will be made up of two essay questions.

**Group Assignments:** Although you have been put into groups to work on each of these units, each person must participate and divide the work in a way that the group feels is fair and equitable. It is most likely that all group members will receive the same grade for the assignment; however, I reserve the right to give individual grades if deemed necessary.

For each unit your group **MUST**:

- ☐ Develop a full and detailed outline of each chapter (you can use to study for the exams).
- ☐ Create visually interesting and content-rich PowerPoint slides for each chapter.
- ☐ Provide an outside article and a brief synopsis of the article for each chapter. Each synopsis should be no more than 1 page in length.
- ☐ Script and record a short (5 minute) video essay on a current issue, phenomenon, or debate related to CMC. This will allow you to explore current trends in CMC (and learn to use technologies that may be new to you).
- ☐ Write individual (i.e., each group member) reaction papers to the content of the unit (not each chapter; the unit as a whole). Papers should reference the content from the unit (book chapters, your group’s outside readings, etc.) and highlight something that you feel is significant in the material. Papers **MUST** have a scholarly focus and tone, and should be between 3-5 pages in length.

Group assignments should be submitted to the corresponding *assignment link* on Blackboard.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Expectations:**

- ☐ Students are expected to *attend* every class session for every class they are enrolled in.
- ☐ The attendance policy reflects the “real world” expectations of the working world. You need to be responsible and accountable for your actions. Students must demonstrate personal responsibility and accountability.
- ☐ Your participation is an integral part of this course therefore; you are expected to come to class prepared to participate in group interactions and discussions with an understanding of the material due that session.
- ☐ Failure to adhere to these expectations will be reflected in your total grade, and/or referral to the Dean for disciplinary action.

### **Classroom Policies:**

- ☐ Attendance: Participation points will be based on your class attendance and participation. Following the College’s policy, I expect you to be in class. Absence in an

**online course** is defined as the lack of an active post or submission within the course including discussion forums, written assignments, and tests/quizzes. This standard will be used to determine all absentee issues, including but not limited to last date of attendance and involuntary withdrawal from a course due to absences. For online classes, to be considered as “showing up the first day” you must, on the first day, do something meaningful in the online Blackboard site (i.e., Syllabus Acceptance assignment). Once you’ve logged in for the first day, your attendance will be taken at each assignment. If you do each assignment on time, you’ll get credit for attending. Although some weeks have more than one assignment, attendance will be taken just once for the week. Each week in which a student does not complete at least one activity (i.e., has no online presence) will be counted as an absence and **10 points will be docked from his/her FINAL course grade**. If you miss more than three weeks of assignments, you will be dropped from the course. *It is critical that you stay in touch with me by phone or e-mail when you are experiencing illness or difficulty. If you wait until your problems are over to talk to me, I may have no option but to fail you based on course policies. This is a communication course; communicate to me to discuss options.*

- **Missing Class and Assignments:** YOU are responsible for your accountability to this class. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining pertinent information and for finding out what you missed. YOU must obtain this information prior to the next class. If you miss any in-class assignments/activities, you will receive a ZERO. No late, make-up, or extra credit work will be given or accepted for credit. **Assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date listed in the course schedule.**
- **Written Assignments:** All written assignments are to be typed in *Times New Roman, 12-point font*, and must be *double-spaced*. Written assignments should be in formal English and polished (i.e., grammatically correct). It should read like the intelligent college-level student that you are! Part of creating a message as a communicator is doing so in both oral and written avenues. All assignments must be full and complete analyses of the content assigned. All assignments will be submitted as *Word documents* (.doc) through Blackboard and are due on the date listed in the course schedule. **No late assignments will be accepted.**
- **Citing Sources:** Any assignment in which you must cite sources must include a reference page at the end, listing all cited sources. All sources must be cited according to the American Psychological Association (APA) 6<sup>th</sup> edition style guide. The Internet, although the greatest thing ever invented, will not be the only source you’ll use for your research. **Go the library and find scholarly research articles!**
- **Grading Timelines and Grade Challenges:** You can expect assignments to be graded within 72 hours after the deadline. I am happy to discuss your grade with you **up to one week after the grade is given**. However, after this point, no alterations will be made. Thus, please do not email me when final grades are posted asking for your grade to be increased.

#### **Behavior:**

- You are expected to come to class prepared to participate in group interactions and discussions with an understanding of the material due that session.
- You are expected to be **considerate and constructive** when providing feedback to class members and to the instructor on issues and/or assignments.
- You are expected to give this class your utmost professional attitude.
- You are expected to share relevant comments, opinions, ideas, and experiences.
- **Rude behavior will not be tolerated** should you demonstrate rude and unprofessional behavior in class you will be asked to leave the class.

**Online Classes and Netiquette:** Netiquette or Network Etiquette is a set of rules for behaving properly online. When you enter any new culture, you are liable to commit a few social blunders. You might offend people without meaning to, or you might misunderstand what others say and take offence when it is not intended. Here are some guidelines for proper behavior in an online course:

- ❑ Avoid using derogatory, obscene, or inappropriate language.
- ❑ Use emoticons to smooth online communication. :-)
- ❑ Don't SHOUT. Use of all capital letters indicates shouting.
- ❑ Avoid grammatical and spelling errors by using spelling and grammar check tools when available.
- ❑ Keep your posts on-topic and in the proper forum. Keeping message on topic will help with the organization and readability.

**Just because this is an online course does not mean you should type carelessly. Please use formal grammar in the forums and discussion boards and engage with your classmates' work in a professional manner.**

**Late Work: NO** make-up work will be accepted. This is not negotiable. Missed work will receive a ZERO.

**Email Accounts:** Students must activate their SHSU email accounts to receive important messages related to this class. This is the only email account I will use to contact you. Make sure it's activated and you know how to use it!

**Technology:** Online classes require that you be diligent. It is easy to put off doing assignments until the last minute. I will not accept Internet outages, power outages, or other electronic/technological issues as acceptable reasons for not meeting assignment deadlines. Please plan in advance for emergencies and power/Internet outages.

**Consultations:** On the Blackboard site for this class, I have created a Q&A forum. Please use it! I encourage everyone to submit questions and respond to each other's questions/concerns about the class. Your classmates are an invaluable resource, even if they are scattered throughout the community and not sitting next to you on campus.

That being said, you can always email if you have questions about what's going on in the class. However, because I value your time and my time, I request that you follow this simple format: Use your SHSU account. Have the subject line be a clear indication of the subject of the email. Sign the email with your full name. These small yet crucial steps will help me answer your question and identify you in a timely manner.

### **UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE POLICIES**

**Academic Integrity (Plagiarism/Cheating):** The University expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary actions. No student shall engage in behavior that, in the judgment of the instructor, may be construed as cheating. This may include, but is not limited to, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty such as the acquisition without permission of tests or other academic materials and/or distribution of these materials and other academic work. This includes students who aid and abet as well as those who attempt such behavior. For more information, visit [www.shsu.edu/syllabus/](http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/)

When you use any source for information in your research, you must give credit for the information, both visual and textual, to the author or creator, both in-text and on the reference page.

*If caught, a student will receive a ZERO for any assignment on which they plagiarized or failed to document ethically according to college and professional standards or cheated. The student will be referred to the Dean for disciplinary action. This may include receiving an "F" for the course.*

**Reasonable Accommodations:** It is the policy of SHSU that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (936.294.3512; [disability@shsu.edu](mailto:disability@shsu.edu)). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may adversely affect your work in this class, I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to let me know during the first week of class if you will need accommodations. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodations can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For more information, visit: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability/index.html>

**Observance of Religious Holiday:** Colleges and universities must recognize the mandatory observance of religious holy days for students. The university must permit students to celebrate religious holy days, including travel for the same purpose. Please notify the instructor in writing of any observed religious holidays during the course of the semester. The instructor will not only excuse absences resulting from religious holiday observances, but will also allow students to make up examinations and assignments. I need in writing from students their intention to miss class for the purpose of holy day observances prior to the planned absence.

**Tentative Schedule**  
(subject to change, if necessary)

**Assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date listed in this course schedule.**

<b><u>WEEK</u></b>	<b><u>DUE DATE</u></b>
<b>Week 1</b>  <u>Readings</u> Syllabus  <u>Assignments</u> Syllabus Acceptance Written Self-Introduction	<b>Jan. 20</b>
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<b>Week 2</b>  <u>Readings</u> Part I: The Influence of Technology on How Relational Partners Communicate Online (Chapters 1-4)  <u>Assignments</u> Chapter Outlines PowerPoint Slides Outside Articles + Synopsis Video Essay Individual Reaction Papers	
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<b>Week 3</b>  <u>Readings</u> Part I: The Influence of Technology on How Relational Partners Communicate Online (Chapters 1-4)  <u>Assignments</u> Chapter Outlines PowerPoint Slides Outside Articles + Synopsis Video Essay Individual Reaction Papers	
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<b>Week 4</b>  <u>Readings</u> Part I: The Influence of Technology on How Relational Partners Communicate Online (Chapters 1-4)  <u>Assignments</u> Chapter Outlines PowerPoint Slides Outside Articles + Synopsis Video Essay Individual Reaction Papers	<b>Feb. 10</b>
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## **Week 5**

### Readings

Part 2: Processes and Goals in Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships  
(Chapters 5-11)

### Assignments

Chapter Outlines  
PowerPoint Slides  
Outside Articles + Synopsis  
Video Essay  
Individual Reaction Papers

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## **Week 6**

### Readings

Part 2: Processes and Goals in Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships  
(Chapters 5-11)

### Assignments

Chapter Outlines  
PowerPoint Slides  
Outside Articles + Synopsis  
Video Essay  
Individual Reaction Papers

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## **Week 7**

### Readings

Part 2: Processes and Goals in Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships  
(Chapters 5-11)

### Assignments

Chapter Outlines  
PowerPoint Slides  
Outside Articles + Synopsis  
Video Essay  
Individual Reaction Papers

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## **Week 8**

**Mar. 10**

### Readings

Part 2: Processes and Goals in Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships  
(Chapters 5-11)

### Assignments

Chapter Outlines  
PowerPoint Slides  
Outside Articles + Synopsis  
Video Essay  
Individual Reaction Papers

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## **Week 9**

**Mar. 17**

Spring Break

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**Week 10****Mar. 24**Midterm Exam

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**Week 11**Readings

Part 3: Influences of CMC on Relational Contexts  
(Chapters 12-14)

Assignments

Chapter Outlines  
PowerPoint Slides  
Outside Articles + Synopsis  
Video Essay  
Individual Reaction Papers

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**Week 12****Apr. 7**Readings

Part 3: Influences of CMC on Relational Contexts  
(Chapters 12-14)

Assignments

Chapter Outlines  
PowerPoint Slides  
Outside Articles + Synopsis  
Video Essay  
Individual Reaction Papers

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**Week 13**Readings

Part 4: The Dark Side of Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships  
(Chapters 15-19)

Assignments

Chapter Outlines  
PowerPoint Slides  
Outside Articles + Synopsis  
Video Essay  
Individual Reaction Papers

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**Week 14**Readings

Part 4: The Dark Side of Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships  
(Chapters 15-19)

Assignments

Chapter Outlines  
PowerPoint Slides  
Outside Articles + Synopsis  
Video Essay  
Individual Reaction Papers

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**Week 15****Apr. 28**Readings

Part 4: The Dark Side of Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships  
(Chapters 15-19)

Assignments

Chapter Outlines

PowerPoint Slides

Outside Articles + Synopsis

Video Essay

Individual Reaction Papers

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**Week 16****May 5**

Final Exam

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