

COMS 1001: Foundations in Communication and Media Studies



Students as Partners Project (SaPP)

Teaching + Learning Services
Carleton University



Chloe Martin + Vincent Andrisani
April, 2020

Introduction

This Students as Partners Program (SaPP) project offers a reimagining of COMS 1001: Foundations in Communication and Media Studies, the introductory course in Carleton University's Communication and Media Studies Program. It was developed through a collaboration between second year communication student Chloe Martin and Dr. Vincent Andrisani, a first-year faculty member in the School of Journalism and Communication.

COMS 1001 accommodates a cohort of approximately 320 students, it consists of two separate sections (A+B), and to deliver it requires a team of six or seven Teaching Assistants. The course was delivered by Dr. Andrisani for the first time in Fall 2019, the same semester Chloe successfully completed it. Because of her recent experience in COMS 1001, Chloe brought to the project an exceptional understanding of course content and a series of creative ideas for its rethinking.

Dr. Andrisani adopted a fairly conservative approach to the course's delivery in Fall 2019 by carrying over existing forms of assessment, course readings, and other logistical mechanisms that preceded his hire. So, this SaPP collaboration was undertaken in order to reshape the course according to Dr. Andrisani's personal teaching style, to keep it updated so that it reflects the current state of communication studies, and to integrate elements of experiential learning, media design, and community engagement.

During this collaboration, we identified four areas of the course that required revision: Teaching Strategies + Techniques, Syllabus Material, Discussion Groups, and most notably, Forms of Assessment. Our work in each of these areas comprises a separate section of this document. Attached in the Appendix is a revised version of the course syllabus, an infographic-themed document that is itself a media-based reimagining of the course.

In addition to the present report, we also developed [a multimedia blog post](#) that displays the sample assignments discussed in the "Forms of Assessment" section along with an electronic version of the course syllabus. A copy of this report is also available for download in .pdf format on the blog post.

A final consideration we made in the late stages of our collaboration, following the disruption caused by COVID-19, is the potential for the Fall 2020 semester to be delivered online. We tried to accommodate this possibility as best we can in the following course redesign.

Teaching Strategies + Techniques

In Fall of 2019, there was a very loose organizing structure that guided the delivery of each classroom session; a structure that was more a consequence of pedagogical instinct than it was a matter of intentional design.

In our discussions, we agreed that making a lecture structure explicit early on in the semester and reiterating it each week could have important pedagogical benefits. Not only would it streamline each session, but it would make the course's organization more apparent while giving students key touchpoints to return to when preparing course assignments or studying for exams.

The organizational structure for each session will contain four distinct movements: topic introduction, history + context, contemporary media examples, wrap-up + sample exam question.

The idea of workshoping a sample exam question at the end of each session is a new element that emerged in our discussions. This is an exercise that we believe has significant pedagogical potential because it encourages student socialization in a large, lecture-style class; it gives students a sense of the course's examination style; and it gives the instructor the opportunity to evaluate student learning throughout the session.

Syllabus Material

A course does not truly become an instructor's own until they have the opportunity to make informed decisions about syllabus material.

For Dr. Andrisani's approach to COMS 1001, this entails transitioning the course reading list from an introductory media studies textbook to a series of dedicated chapters, essays, and think pieces. Dr. Andrisani will personally select these readings and will work with the library over the summer to make them available in Ares. Such an approach will save students from having to purchase a textbook while making course material available to them online.

We also discussed supplementing COMS 1001's text-based readings with audio media. Podcasts in particular represent an excellent alternative to academic readings since they often present a contemporary perspective while offering a further (and at times more accessible) means for students to engage course content.

Throughout this project Chloe located a series of suitable podcasts and proposed creative ways of integrating them into the course design. This includes, but is not limited to, "Canadaland", "CBC Ideas", and "On the Media" produced by NPR. How this media will be integrated into the course—beyond it being "required reading/listening"—is detailed in the "Discussion Groups" section.

Discussion Groups

Discussion groups represent an important element of COMS 1001 and their organization plays a key role in the successful delivery of the course. So we developed ideas that could enhance discussion group delivery on a number of fronts.

In terms of attendance: students who have a perfect attendance record at the end of the semester will receive an additional 1% on their final grade. This technique is intended to incentivize being in class by rewarding those who demonstrate a commitment to the discussion group.

In terms of student engagement: developing more of a collaborative relationship with CSAS. Students who visit CSAS to support their writing for a COMS 1001 assignment will receive a pass that can be used in lieu of attending a discussion group session of their choice. The aims of this approach are threefold: to encourage necessary skills training, to encourage student investment in course assignments, and to build connections between first-year students and the campus support network.

In terms of design: Each discussion group session requires students to develop a short post in cuLearn's discussion forum as a demonstration of course participation. The prompt for this post is typically generated by the TA and it comes in response to the week's reading/listening material.

An alternative approach is to have students generate the forum prompt themselves. The TA will be tasked with selecting the top two suggestions, and those students whose prompts are selected will have their contribution noted and incorporated into their participation grade.

And lastly, as an alternative to a written post, student contributions could be assessed through a quiz on the course material—either readings or audio media. Students who simply participate will be awarded a single mark and an additional mark will go to those who answer the question(s) correctly.

Forms of Assessment

COMS 1001 requires students to complete two major assignments, and both entail a combination of media design and a written submission. However, during our SaPP partnership, we designed a total of three new assignments that can be swapped in and out for each iteration of the course.

The three assignments are the following:

- The Editor-in-Chief assignment
- The Poster/Infographic assignment
- The Web 1.0/2.0 assignment

Each of these assignments draw directly from course modules and can be repurposed to perform one of two tasks. The first is student exploration of a course-related theme or concept. This approach asks students to creatively communicate to a broad audience a key theme or core concept that emerges in the course readings and/or lecture.

Alternatively, these assignments can also be used as an opportunity for students to engage the Carleton University community. This approach asks students to design a PSA for one of the following: a campus event, a student group/club, or a campus unit/resource. This represents a particularly effective way to introduce first-year students to events, networks, and support systems at Carleton University while encouraging them to become active participants in campus life.

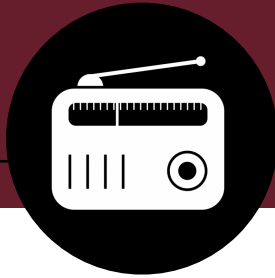
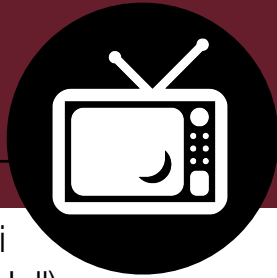
In both cases, these assignments emphasize experiential learning, critical engagement with course content, and the development of rudimentary media production and writing skills. Mock-ups of all three assignments are displayed on the [corresponding blog post](#), where the aims of each assignment are described in further detail and assignment guidelines are available for download.

*** Thanks to Teaching and Learning Services at Carleton University and all those involved in the Students as Partners Program (SaPP) for supporting this project ***

Appendix

Foundations in Communication and Media Studies

COMS 1001 A+B
Fall 2020/21



Section A:
M 2:35-4:25pm (TB360)

Section B:
F 8:35-10:25am (AT101)

Office Hours:

Mon 10:00am - 11:30am
Fri 11:00am - 12:30pm
or by apt

Dr. Vincent Andrisani
RB 4319 (Richcraft Hall)

Course Description

We spend much of our time sending and receiving messages through media technology. We use these messages to inform and entertain ourselves and to connect with others. How have we shaped the “media ecology” in which we find ourselves and how does it shape us?

This course introduces students to the study of media and communication through a survey of media history. Throughout the course, we examine how media technologies, industries, and cultural practices have influenced, and continue to influence the ways that we communicate in everyday life.

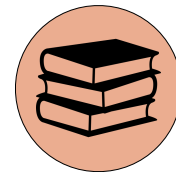
Assignments

Attendance + Participation **20%**
In-Class Quiz (5% x 2) **10%**
Pre-Break Assignment **20%**
Post-Break Assignment **20%**
Final Exam **30%**



Required Materials

1. The course kit is available online through the Ares system and can be accessed using your Carleton University credentials.
2. All other course materials will be made available on cuLearn.



Learning Objectives

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. describe the history and contemporary features of a range of media
2. define key concepts in media, communication, and cultural studies
3. design media that critically reflects on course themes while engaging the CU community
4. communicate clearly in class discussions, online commentary, and formal writing assignments



All assignments will be submitted through cuLearn. In the weeks leading up to submission, assignments will be discussed in detail during both lecture and discussion group.

Late submissions will be penalized **5%/day** (including weekends). Extensions can be negotiated only if absolutely necessary and must be accompanied by a medical certificate. Extension requests made within 24 hours of a deadline will not be considered.

Weekly Schedule

*** Fall Break (Oct 21 - Oct 25) ***

Week 1: Course Intro (Sept 9/13)

Media Essentials Ch. 15 (p. 445-469)

Week 2: Media + Mass Communication (Jan 13/17)

Mazepa et al (2014) "A Political Economy of Communication" (p. 20-42)

Week 3: Media Industries (Sept 23/27)

L. Henderson "Representation" (p. 172-176)

Week 4: Pictures + Photographs (Sept 30/Oct 4)

J. Storey "What is Popular Culture?" (p. 1-15)

Week 5: Writing + Printing (Oct 7/11)

Media Essentials Ch. 7 (p. 197-227)

Week 6: The Press (Oct 18/28)

Media Essentials Ch. 7 (p. 197-227)

Week 7: Radio + Audio Media (Nov 1/4)

Media Essentials Ch 10 (p. 293-321)

Week 8: Television + Audiovisual Media (Nov 1/4)

H. Jenkins "Defining Participatory Culture" (p. 1-31)

Week 9: Digital Media (Nov 15/18)

A. Ahmad (2015) "A Note on Call-out-Culture"
NPR podcast (2019), *Invisibilia* "The Callout"

Week 10: Social Media (Nov 22/25)

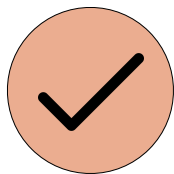
P. Pezullo + R. Cox (2018) "Defining Environmental Communication" (p. 32-50)

Week 11: Wrap up + Review (Nov 29/Dec 2)

S. Mattern (2017) "A City is Not a Computer"

Week 12: Review Group Meetings (Dec 6)

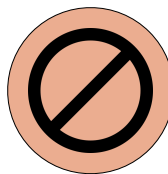
What is Expected of You



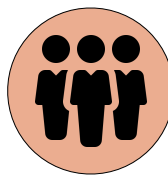
Attendance and Participation. Come to class prepared to participate. Pay attention. Ask questions. Not only is this part of your grade, but it will improve your class experience.



Read. This course, like all others, requires you to keep up with readings. Expect to spend 5-6 hours outside of class time reading, note taking, and preparing for class.



Plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated. Cite your sources. Ask if you're unsure.



Citizenship. Be a good citizen of our classroom community. Collaborate. Support. Encourage. Treat your peers and instructors with respect. Do your part to make this course a productive learning experience for everyone.

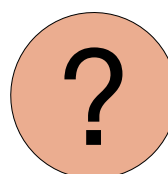
What is Expected of the Teaching Team



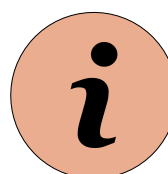
Communication. On weekdays, instructors will respond to emails within 48 hours of receiving them. If your question requires a reply that is more than several sentences, let's meet during office hours.



Guidelines. You can expect detailed assignment guides + grading rubrics for each assignment. Review these documents so you're familiar with expectations and grading criteria.



Questions. You have questions? We have answers. Ask during class time, in PASS workshops, or during office hours. Whatever you do, just ask.



Academic Support. Discussion groups. Instructor + TA office hours. PASS workshops. CSAS coaching. There are more than a few resources in place to offer support. It's up to you to make use of them.

The Fine Print

Grade Appeals

If you receive a grade that you believe is inconsistent with the assignment description and/or rubrics, you may request that your assignment be reviewed. To do so, submit to the professor an email that responds to the given feedback while outlining your areas of concern. The instructor will then consult with the Teaching Assistant who marked the assignment and if necessary, schedule a meeting with you to discuss the final decision. As a result of this process, **grades may be raised, lowered or left unchanged. Appeals sent beyond 7 days of receiving your grade will not be considered.**

Grading

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

Approval of final grades. Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Carleton E-mail Accounts

All email communication to students from the Communication and Media Studies Program will be via official Carleton university e-mail accounts and/or cuLearn. As important course and University information are distributed this way, it is the student's responsibility to monitor their Carleton and cuLearn accounts.

Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Religious obligation. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Academic accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613.520.6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. www.carleton.ca/pmc

Survivors of sexual violence. As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: www.carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for student activities. Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit students.carleton.ca/course-outline.

Community Resources

If you need more support than can be provided by the instructor or your teaching assistant, you are encouraged to take advantage of the following resources available on campus and in the community:

- Health and Counselling Services: <http://carleton.ca/health/>
- Equity Services <http://carleton.ca/equity/>
- Sexual Assault Support Services: <https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support/sexual-assault-support-services/>
- The Sexual Assault Support Centre of Ottawa: <https://sascottawa.com> | 24/7 confidential support line, 613.234.2266
- International Students Services Office: <http://carleton.ca/isso/>
- Carleton Undergraduate Students' Association (CUSA) service centres: <http://cusaonline.ca/services/servicecentres/>
- Carleton Interfaith Chaplaincy Centre: chaplaincy@carleton.ca

Academic Integrity + Plagiarism

The Carleton University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of others as one’s own”. This can include the following:

- Reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the source;
- Submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- Using another’s data or research findings;
- Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- Handing in “substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without the prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.”

Be sure to familiarize yourself with Carleton University’s policy on Academic Integrity, which can be found here: <https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy.pdf>