COMM-4381.001 Senior Seminar in Media Studies
Fall 2014
MW 1-1:50pm
Bay Hall 205

Professor David Gurney
Office: Bay Hall Rm. 326
Phone: 361-825-5991
Email: david.gurney@tamucc.edu

Office Hours: T 3:30pm-5pm, W 10am-Noon, R 11am-12:30pm & by appointment

Course Description:
The capstone course for Communication majors in the Media Studies track offers students opportunities to synthesize information learned in other Communication and Media courses through in-depth study of a particular topic. Students will demonstrate their abilities to think and write critically, and to conduct independent research or produce media projects at an advanced level. Topics vary by instructor.

Course Topic:
This semester students will be surveying the communication and media landscapes as they exist today. Students will accomplish this by crafting a schedule of research and completing an in-depth report on a topic of their choosing.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
● Demonstrate critical thinking and problem solving abilities;
● Create individual and collaborative projects that demonstrate effective use of communication strategies;
● Identify and analyze issues in media ethics
● Understand and apply critical theories, research methods, and/or production skills

Recommended Materials:

Course Policies:
» Attendance is required – both physically and mentally. Unexcused absences will have a direct effect on your final grade for this course, with each one equaling a 25-point deduction (out of a possible total of 1000 points). Attendance will be taken starting exactly at 1:00 p.m. and completed within the first five minutes of class. Arrivals after that time will be considered late. Late arrivals and departures prior to the finish of the class period will count as half-absences, meaning that two of either type will be counted as a full absence.
» You are allowed one fully excused absence throughout the semester. This is to be employed at your discretion, but it should be used to cover illness, religious holiday observances, or most any other events or circumstances that cause you to miss class. Only extreme hardship with back-up documentation (e.g. a doctor’s note) will allow for consideration of any additional absences being excused. Classes missed due to university-approved activities (athletic teams, student government, etc.) will also be considered excused. For those absences, I will need official TAMUCC documentation. If appropriate, you may arrange to make up quizzes or exams missed due to excused absences, but it will be your responsibility to get any information from a missed class lecture or discussion from one of your classmates.
» All absences not fitting into the excused categories described immediately above, will be considered unexcused. Any work missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up.
» Late work will be penalized by a reduction of ten percent of its total possible points for each day it is late.
» A note on competing media devices: Laptops are permitted for note taking purposes during lecture only, but please do not abuse this privilege. While you may personally feel capable of multitasking during class while still paying attention to lecture and discussion, your surrounding classmates will more likely find your in-class extracurricular activities distracting, so please, for the sake of your peers, respect this restriction. No laptop use will be permitted during screenings.
» Please remember to check your Islander email account regularly during the week and monitor the course Blackboard site for any course updates.
» If you would like to discuss any course readings, lectures, or assignments outside of class, you should feel free to contact me via email or by arranging to visit me during my office hours. If you need to schedule a time to meet outside of office hours, please let me know.
» All writing for this course must be composed using a standard, 12-point font size, double spacing, and standard 1" margins.

Academic Integrity:
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work. For a more expansive definition of plagiarism please see the relevant passage from the University's student handbook.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade (F) for the assignment, at the very least, or a report to the Chair of the Department of Communication and Media, the Dean of the School of Arts, Media, and Communication, and the Office of Student Affairs.
» For the purposes of citation, please follow American Psychological Association (APA) Style Guide. For reference, see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Dropping a Class:
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the class be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. November 7, 2014, is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Classroom/Professional Behavior:
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.
**Academic Advising:**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 361.825.3466.

**Notice to Students with Disabilities**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Grade Appeal Process:**
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.
Grade Scale:
A  900-1000 points
B  800-899 points
C  700-799 points
D  600-699 points
F  599 points and below

Grade Distribution:
» Attention and Participation (100 points overall): Each student is expected to be attentive to her/his Peer Review Partner’s work and willing to participate in class discussion when appropriate. These points will reflect how well you accomplish these goals. These are this area’s components:
   » In-Class Attentiveness (20 points)
   » Peer Review of Preliminary Research Proposal (20 points)
   » Peer Review of Literature Review (20 points)
   » Peer Review of Sample Section of Data Analysis (20 points)
   » Peer Review of Rough Draft of Research Report (20 points)

Reminder: Attendance is required. It is assumed that you will be present for all class meetings and screenings unless you have a valid excuse. Unexcused absences will have a direct effect on your FINAL GRADE (not only the Attention & Participation component) for this course, with each one equaling a 25-point deduction (out of a possible total of 1000 points).
» Preliminary Research Proposal (25 points): You will create a document in which you will establish: (1) your research topic and its importance, (2) your proposed method(s) of studying the topic, and (3) what theories will most likely be utilized in analyzing your findings. Peer review will be a component of the points earned. Length: 500-750 words.
» Revised Research Proposal (50 points): An expanded version of the Preliminary Research Proposal with improvements based on Peer Review Partner and Instructor recommendations. Length: 750-1000 words.
» Preliminary Bibliography (25 points): An APA-formatted list of 15-20 sources (scholarly articles or books) that are relevant to your research topic, methods, and/or prospective theoretical framework.
» Literature Review (75 points): A short paper, which will ultimately be a section of your Research Report, in which you provide an overview of: (1) what scholarly work has already been done on your topic, (2) what methods that work has relied upon, and (3) what the conclusions of that body of work are. Peer review will be a component of the points earned. Length: 750-1250 words.
» Sample Section of Data Analysis (125 points): A short paper, which will ultimately be a section of your Research Report, in which you share and analyze some of your research findings. Peer review will be a component of the points earned. Length: 1000-1500 words (more if appropriate).
» Rough Draft of Research Report (200 points): A complete version of your final report that will include the following sections: (1) Title Page, (2) Abstract, (3) Introduction, (4) Literature Review, (5) Methodology, (6) Data Analysis, (7) Conclusions, (8) Reference Page. Peer review will be a component of the points earned.
» Research Presentation (100 points): A summary presentation of your research project and its findings.
Course Schedule:
Recommended readings are to be completed prior to the first class meeting in the week under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Week 1 (August 27) – Introduction to Senior Seminar
Introductions and Preliminary Discussion
Peer Review Partners will be assigned.

Week 2 (September 1 & 3) – Research Tutorial
Recommended Readings: *The Craft of Research*, Chapters 3 and 4
A schedule of Research Presentations will be established.

Week 3 (September 8 & 10) – Preliminary Research Proposals
Submit your preliminary Research Proposal via Blackboard before class on September 8 and bring a copy with you to class.
Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class on September 10.

Week 4 (September 15 & 17) – Revised Research Proposals
Recommended Readings: *The Craft of Research*, Chapters 5 and 6
Submit Revised Research Proposal via Blackboard before class on September 15 and bring a copy with you to class.
Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class on September 17.

Week 5 (September 22 & 24) - Preliminary Bibliographies
Submit Preliminary Bibliographies via Blackboard before class on September 22 and bring a copy with you to class.
Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class on September 24.

Week 6 (September 29 & October 1) – Literature Reviews
Submit Literature Review via Blackboard before class on September 29 and bring a copy with you to class.
Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class on October 1.

Weeks 7 and 8 (October 6-15) – Research/Consultations
Recommended Readings: *The Craft of Research*, Chapters 7-11
No Regular Class Meetings. Extra time should be used for data collection and analysis.
Dr. Gurney will schedule one-on-one consultations to take place these weeks.

Week 9 (October 20 & 22) – Sharing of Initial Data Analysis
Submit Sample Section of Data Analysis via Blackboard before class on October 20 and bring a copy with you to class.
Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class on October 22.

Week 10 (October 27 & 29) – Preparation Week
No Regular Class Meetings (unless more partner time is needed). Time should be spent improving and building upon initial analyses and creating Rough Draft of Research Paper.
Week 11 (November 3 & 5) – Exchange of Rough Drafts
Submit Rough Draft of Research Report via Blackboard before class on November 3. Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class on November 5.

Weeks 12 and 13 (November 10-19) – Finalizing Reports and Presentations/Consultations
Recommended Readings: *The Craft of Research*, Chapters 14, 16, and 17
No Regular Class Meetings. Time should be spent working to finalize your Research Reports and prepare your Research Presentations.
Dr. Gurney will schedule one-on-one consultations to take place these weeks.

Week 14 (November 24 & 26) – Research Presentations
Research Presentations will take place based on schedule determined on first day of class.

Week 15 (December 1) – Research Presentations
Research Presentations will take place based on schedule determined on first day of class.

Finals Week (December 10, 11am-1:30pm) – Research Presentations
Research Presentations will take place based on schedule determined on first day of class.

Final Research Reports due via Blackboard by 11am on December 10.