COMM 4381.001  Spring 2018

MW 10-10:50 AM    ECDC 219C
Dr. Ethan Thompson    Office: Bay Hall 328
Phone: 361-825-5993    Email: ethan.thompson@tamucc.edu
Office Hours: MW 2-3:00/TR 11-12:30 and 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 at an advanced level. Students will accomplish this by crafting a schedule of research and completing an in-depth report and presentation on a topic of their choosing related to the media landscape.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
● Demonstrate critical thinking and problem solving abilities;
● Create individual projects that demonstrate effective use of media studies theory and insights;
● Understand and apply critical theories, and research methods

Required book:

E-Communication Policy:
● CONTACT ME THROUGH BLACKBOARD MESSAGES FOR THIS COURSE.
● I will respond to messages within 24 hours (usually sooner), except for Friday at 3 pm until Monday at 9 am.
● I will be happy to talk on the phone with you during my office hours.
● I am also happy to meet with you in person during office hours or some other time arranged in advance!

Attendance Policy:
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 1500 points). Attendance will be taken starting exactly at 11:00 a.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.

Grade Scale:
A  1350 - 1500 points
B  1200 - 1349 points
Grade Distribution:

» Participation (225 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 (100 points)
  » Peer Review of Preliminary Research Proposal (25 points)
  » Peer Review of Literature Review (25 points)
  » Peer Review of Sample Section of Findings & Analysis (25 points)
  » Peer Review of Rough Draft of Research Report (25 points)
  » Peer Review of Poster (25 points)

Reminder: Attendance is required. It is assumed that you will be present for all class meetings unless you have a valid excuse. Unexcused absences will have a direct effect on your FINAL GRADE (not the Participation component), with each one equaling a 25-point deduction (out of a possible total of 1500 points). You will also not be able to make up work missed due to unexcused absences.

» Research Interests Document (25 points): You will describe three possible areas you are interested in researching. Length: 250-500 words.
» Preliminary Research Proposal (50 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) your key research question. Length: 500-750 words.
» Revised Research Proposal (100 points): An expanded version of the Preliminary Research Proposal with improvements based on Peer Review Partner and Instructor recommendations, in which you will also articulate a specific research question. Length: 750-1000 words.
» Preliminary Bibliography (50 points): An APA-formatted list of 15 secondary sources (scholarly articles or books) that are relevant to your research topic, methods, and/or prospective theoretical framework.
» Literature Review (150 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. Length: 750-1250 words.
» Sample Findings and Analysis (150 points): A short paper, which will ultimately be a section of your Research Report, in which you share and analyze most of your research findings. Length: 1000-1500 words (more if appropriate).
» Research Poster (125 points): A visual presentation of your topic area, background literature, research question, and method(s) of data collection and analysis.
» Research Poster Session Presentation (125 points): During the poster session you will be expected to be present and able to answer questions asked by those in attendance.
Course Schedule:
Recommended readings are best 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 (January 17) – Introduction to Senior Seminar
Introductions and Preliminary Discussion

Week 2 (January 22 & 24) – Choosing a Topic
Research interests document due in class 1/24.

Week 3 (January 29 & January 31) – Research Proposals
Submit your preliminary Research Proposal via Blackboard before class on 1/31 and bring a copy with you to class. Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class.

Week 4 (February 5 & 7) – Finding Sources
Recommended Readings: *The Craft of Research*, Chapter 5
Bring a copy of your Revised Research Proposal to class, as well as one of your sources (a book or article).

Week 5 (February 12 & 14) – Proposal Conferences
No Regular Class Meetings. Dr. Thompson will schedule one-on-one consultations to take place this week.

Week 6 (February 19 & 21) – Working with Sources
Recommended Readings: *The Craft of Research*, Chapter 6
Submit Preliminary Bibliographies via Blackboard before class on February 21.

Week 7 (February 26 & March 8) – Literature Reviews

Week 8 (March 5 & 7) – Literature Reviews, continued.
Submit Literature Review via Blackboard before class on March 7 and bring a copy with you to class. Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class.

SPRING BREAK

Week 9 (March 19 & 21) – Developing Your Argument
Recommended Readings: *The Craft of Research*, Chapters 7-11

Week 10 (March 26 & 28) – Lit Review & Preliminary Findings Conferences
No regular class meetings. Individual progress consultations.

Week 11 (April 2 & 4) – Findings & Analysis
Submit Sample Sections of Findings and Analysis via Blackboard before class on April 4 and bring a copy with you to class. Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class.

Week 12 (April 9 & 11) – Poster Preparation
Recommended Readings: *The Craft of Research*, Chapter 15
Submit draft of poster to Blackboard and bring a copy (electronic or hardcopy) to class on 4/11. This draft will not be graded but will be peer reviewed.

**Week 13 (April 16 & 18) – Exchange of Rough Drafts**
Submit Rough Draft of Research Report via Blackboard and bring a copy to class on April 17. Partners will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to each other in class on April 19. Final draft of poster is due to Blackboard by end of 4/19.

**Week 14 (April 23 & 25) – Practice Presentations**
Posters due submitted to Blackboard by 6 pm, Monday, April 23. Posters must be picked up and paid for prior to presentations on April 30.

Students will practice presenting their posters in class. You should also continue revising your drafts.

**Week 15 (April 30 & May 2) – Poster Presentations**
Students will formally present their posters to faculty and students. I will schedule mandatory consultations on refining drafts the week following the presentations.

Final Research Reports due via Blackboard by the FINAL EXAM DATE Monday, May 7, 10:30 am.

---

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism**
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.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in an automatic zero on the assignment and further disciplinary action.

**Dropping a Class**
Events sometimes occur that make dropping a course seem 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 course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course 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.

**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.
Additionally, students are expected to:

1. **Complete readings and assignments as assigned.** All assignments must be turned in on time; exceptions will be made only for extraordinary cases and official documentation is needed.
2. **Proofread all work before turning it in.** Really.
3. **Seek help with writing if necessary.** The Writing Center of TAMU-CC, located in GSSC 112, provides free help for students at any stage in the writing process. More information is available at the Center for Academic Student Achievement website, casa.tamucc.edu.
4. **Properly cite sources.** Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form, and will result in an automatic zero for the assignment and further disciplinary action.
5. **Respect the privacy and opinions of fellow students.** I expect students to participate in discussion, and I expect students to respect each other’s (hopefully well-informed) opinions. Grades and course performance are considered private information. Students are not to openly discuss their grades (good or bad) inside my classroom.
6. **Meet with the instructor during office hours.** I will not discuss individual student grades in the classroom. I will, however, be happy to discuss grades on papers, exams, course performance, etc. during office hours. I also do not allow the following topics to be openly discussed in the classroom: student opinions about other faculty, student opinions about other students, student grades in other classes.

**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, Room #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.

**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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**Grade Appeals**
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures (available at http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C2.01_student_grade_appeal_procedure.pdf). For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.