

COMM185 - Communication Technology and Relationships
SUMMER 2025 Session A
Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday - 3:30 pm to 4:55 pm
Phelps Hall, 1425

Instructor

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Office: SSMS 3311 or Zoom (by request)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores issues and questions about computer-mediated communication and social media in a variety of relationship stages and contexts, in order to understand the impacts of interactive communication media on human relationships. The major objective of the course is to develop a critical and practical view of how online communication differs from unmediated communication (and how it doesn't) by applying the principles from theories and research to issues and patterns of the use of communication technology.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

I expect that by the end of this class, you will be able to:

1. Understand how communication technologies shape interpersonal, group, and organizational communication in mediated contexts.
2. Analyze and apply major theories of computer-mediated communication.
3. Integrate theoretical frameworks of computer-mediated communication into real-life phenomena.
4. Understand the methodology used by researchers applied in computer-mediated communication research.

READINGS

Required:

This course is built on fundamental computer-mediated communication theories, which require students to read theoretical texts related to each topic before they come to the lecture. Reading list is at the end of the syllabus assigned according to every lecture.

Recommended:

There is a textbook for computer-mediated communication that include most topics we will cover in the course. You are welcome to read the chapters according to each topic for an overview, but they are not required.

Carr, C. T. (2025). *Computer-Mediated Communication: A Theoretical and Practical Introduction to Online Human Communication* (Second Edition). Bloomsbury Publishing.

TRIGGER WARNING

In studying the internet, we will encounter and address online material that is sexual in nature, pornographic, and possibly obscene, as well as racist, misogynistic, homophobic, and otherwise offensive terms, graphics, and other messages. Some of this material is a focus of the curriculum, while at other times there is likely to be incidental exposure to content that most individuals find offensive. The material is there to learn from, but it does not represent the views of the instructors. You are always welcome to discuss your concerns about this material with the instructor(s) individually, and to explore the possibility of alternative materials and coursework if an assignment involves material you want to avoid.

ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE GRADING

Reading Response/Reflection	20	4 points for each 10 times in total, only 5 times will count toward the final grade
Quizzes	40	2 quizzes in total The first quiz is worth 10 points The final quiz is worth 30 points
Paper	30	Two options, see below
Attendance	10	14 times of attendance can earn a full credit
TOTAL	100	

Curving. The course is not graded on the curve. However, the highest score on each assignment will become the benchmark for the highest possible score, and everyone's scores will be increased commensurately. So, for example, if the highest score on a quiz is 8 (out of 10 points) and your score was 12, the person whose score was 13 will have it adjusted by 2 points up to 15, and your score will also be adjusted up 2 points to 14. This will be done for each individual quiz, and for the final course score as a whole.

The grading distribution is as follows. Please note that **no** rounding will take place at the end of the quarter (i.e., a student must receive a .5 or higher (as indicated below) to achieve the next grade level). Below a .5 will be rounded down.

A 93.5%-100% A- 89.5%-93.5%
 B+ 86.5%-89.5% B 84.5%-86.5% B- 79.5%-84.5%
 C+ 76.5%-79.5% C 74.5%-76.5% C- 69.5%-74.5%

D+ 66.5%-69.5% D 64.5%-66.5% D- 59.5%-64.5%
F 59.5% and below

LECTURES

Readings and in-person lectures are complimentary. Reading the chapters will give you a breadth of knowledge of the course material. In lectures, I will be highlighting key points and adding more tailored information. Some of the materials may overlap, but there is also unique information in both the readings and the lectures that you will need to know.

Attendance for lectures is required, we will use iClicker to count attendance for each lecture. You are expected to download the APP on your phone. You are required to sign up for attendance only if you are physically present.

There will be 16 lectures (meetings), and attending 14 of them will receive full credit for attendance. However, if you miss more than 2 lectures (meetings), you will lose 2 points for each missed lecture, until the attendance score goes to 0. If you miss equal to or more than 8 lectures (meetings) in total, you will fail the class automatically. If you have any excuse for absences, please let me know at least 2 days in advance.

READING RESPONSES/REFLECTIONS

Students are required to write one reading reflection before each lecture. The reading response requires students to write no more than 200 words on what they have learned from the readings and their thoughts while reading the articles. There is no specific guideline for the reflections, but you should not only focus on your personal experiences that can be related to the readings. Instead, you should focus on 1) your understanding of the readings (or theories mentioned in the readings), 2) how you can apply this theory to practical situations/your own research interest, 3) or any criticisms.

There will be 10 reading responses in total, but only 5 of them will count towards your final grade. You are more than welcome to write more than 5 times if you find the question/reading interesting. All reflections will be graded based on a check/check+ grading scheme. As long as you finish on time, you will get a check (3 points); a check/check+ means you still have room to improve (3.5 points); a check + means you are doing great (4 points).

All responses will be due at 11:59 pm prior to the lecture. See details in the schedule. Late work is not accepted.

PAPER

For the term paper, you have two options. You need to indicate on the cover page which option you chose. All papers need to be submitted using APA style: double-spaced, 12 Times New Roman, citations included, cover page included.

Option 1 - two short papers (in one single document)

Within this option, you need to write two short papers (no more than 4 pages each). In each short paper, you need to explain one theory and pick a phenomenon using the theory you picked to explain. You should not only focus on describing the phenomena, but also focus on the analysis of the application and how the theory fits, or any shortcomings.

Option 2 - a simple version of a research proposal

Within this option, you need to write a short research proposal (no more than 8 pages). You need to identify a research question based on a research gap you found in the current CMC studies. You need to build it based on one main theory (you can elaborate on another theory if needed). You only need to write a short literature review to introduce the research question. There is no need to think about the research design at this stage, but if you would like to, we can talk more about this and maybe extend it to a full study.

The goal of this assignment is to have a better understanding of the specific theory, and then, help students think about how to expand the scope of a theory or invite new boundary conditions into their long-term thinking of applying theory.

The instructor will not accept late work beyond 3 days unless the student has received an extension prior to the due date of the assignment. Note that there will be a 5-point deduction for every day late. Computer issues are not an excuse for failing to submit an assignment.

QUIZZES/FINAL

There are two quizzes (10 points for the first one, 30 points for the final quiz). All exams will be conducted online (via Canvas). You can use whatever resources you like to support your quiz, except AI.

Quiz 1 needs you to first read a research article (available on Canvas) and then answer questions. No time limit.

Quiz 2 is an overall review of the course. It includes open-ended and multiple-choice questions. Both content from the readings and lectures will be tested in Quiz 2.

*There is no quiz or final makeup unless you have an EMERGENCY. You must contact me at least two hours before you miss the quiz/final.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

It is expected that students attending the University of California understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and are willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Any work (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill requirements in this course must represent your own original work. Any act of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on an exam or plagiarism on a paper, will result minimally in receiving zero points on that assignment/exam and will also likely lead to a failing grade in the course. You should be aware that I must report any violation to the Office of Student Conduct, which has the authority to impose a range of University disciplinary actions, including suspension or dismissal.

AI TECHNOLOGIES

While AI technologies are wonderful for brainstorming and idea generating, they will not write a strong paper/response in COMM185 and are subject to academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Papers that appear to be written using these technologies will result in a minimal score, no score/credit, and/or will be at risk for larger university consequences. Please refer to UC Santa Barbara's Academic Integrity standards: <https://studentconduct.sa.ucsb.edu/academic-integrity>

COURSE POLICY

- Email Communication
 - Emails will not be responded to if the student does not address the instructor's situation in a professional manner.
 - All emails will be responded to within a 48-hour period (M–F, 9:00 – 5:00 PM). This means that an email sent on Friday afternoon may not be responded to until Monday.
- Grade Discussion
 - If a student would like to discuss their grade or get feedback on their work, they can contact their instructor or arrange an appointment **after 24 hours of receiving the grade**. These appointments are to discuss areas of growth, NOT to argue for point readjustments, etc.

Course Schedule

subject to change

[last update: Jun 21]

Week	Topic	Readings & Dues
1 6/23	Intro to CMC	<u>M: Class Intro and Overview of Comm Technologies</u> <u>T: Theories of CMC 1: Intrapersonal</u> Chapter 3: Baym, N. K. (2010). Communication in digital spaces. In <i>Personal connections in the digital age</i> . Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

		<p>University Press.</p> <p>optional: Walther, J. B. (2011). Theories of computer-mediated communication and interpersonal relations. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), <i>The handbook of interpersonal communication</i> (4th ed., pp. 443–479). SAGE Publications.</p> <p><u>W: Theories of CMC 2: Interpersonal</u> Ledbetter, A. (2014). Social information processing theory. In E. Griffin, A. M. Ledbetter, & G. G. Sparks (Eds.), <i>A first look at communication theory</i> (9th ed., chapter 11). New York: McGraw Hill.</p>
<p>2 6/30</p>		<p><u>M: Theories of CMC 3: Group</u> Pages 1-7: Walther, J., & Carr, C. (2010). Internet interaction and intergroup dynamics. In H. Giles, S. Reid, & J. Harwood (Eds.), <i>The dynamics of intergroup communication</i>.</p> <p>Optional: Walther, J. B. (2013). Groups and computer-mediated communication. In Y. Amichai-Hamburger, <i>The social net: Understanding our online behavior</i> (2nd ed.) Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.</p> <p><u>T: Working in CMC + In-class Activity</u> Leonardi, P. M., Huysman, M., & Steinfield, C. (2013). Enterprise social media: Definition, history, and prospects for the study of social technologies in organizations. <i>Journal of computer-mediated communication</i>, 19(1), 1-19. Reading Reflection 1 Jun 30th 11:59 pm</p> <p><u>W: Impression Formation</u> (up to Experiment 2): Epley, N., & Kruger, J. (2005). What you type isn't what they read: The perseverance of stereotypes and expectancies over email. <i>Journal of Experimental Social Psychology</i>, 41, 414-422. Reading Reflection 2 Jul 1st 11:59 pm</p>
<p>3 7/7</p>		<p><u>M: Impression Management</u> C. Rudder/OKTrends (Sept., 2009). Exactly what to say in a first message. https://theblog.okcupid.com/exactly-what-to-say-in-a-first-message-2bf680806c72 Reading Response 3 Jul 6th 11:59 pm</p> <p><u>T: Deception</u> Whitty, M. T., & Young, G. (2017). Online deception. In <i>Cyberpsychology: The Study of Individuals, Society and Digital</i></p>

		<p><i>Technologies</i>. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons. Reading Response 4 Jul 7th 11:59 pm</p> <p><u>W: Relationship Development</u> Sherman, L. E., Michikyan, M., & Greenfield, P. M. (2013). The effects of text, audio, video, and in-person communication on bonding between friends. <i>Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace</i>, 7(2), Article 3. https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2013-2-3 Quiz 1 due Jul 9th 3 pm</p>
<p>4 7/14</p>		<p><u>M: Dating</u> Markowitz, D. M., Hancock, J. T., & Tong, S. T. (2018). Interpersonal dynamics in online dating: Profiles, matching, and discovery. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), <i>A networked self and love</i>. Routledge. Reading Response 5 Jul 13th 11:59 pm</p> <p><u>T: Relational Maintenance and Conflict</u> Toma, C. L. (2018). Connection, conflict, and communication technologies: How romantic couples use the media for relationship management. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), <i>A networked self and love</i>. New York, NY: Routledge. Reading Response 6 Jul 14th 11:59 pm</p> <p><u>W: Social Media + Influence Online</u> French, M., & Bazarova, N. N. (2017). Is anybody out there?: Understanding masspersonal communication through expectations for response across social media platforms. <i>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication</i>, 22(6), 303-319.</p> <p>Optional: O’Sullivan, P. B., & Carr, C. T. (2018). Masspersonal communication: A model bridging the mass-interpersonal divide. <i>New media & society</i>, 20(3), 1161-1180. Reading Response 7 Jul 15th 11:59 pm</p>
<p>5 7/21</p>		<p><u>M: Social Support + Well-being</u> Rains, S. A., Brunner, S. R., Akers, C., Pavlich, C. A., & Goktas, S. (2017). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) and social support: Testing the effects of using CMC on support outcomes. <i>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</i>, 34(8), 1186-1205. Reading Response 8 Jul 20th 11:59 pm</p> <p><u>T: FINAL PAPER WORKSHOP (in person attendance required)</u></p> <p><u>W: Online Hate</u></p>

		<p>Walther, J. B. (2022). Social media and online hate. <i>Current Opinion in Psychology</i>, 45, 101298.</p> <p>Optional: Walther, J. B. (2024). The Effects of Social Approval Signals on the Production of Online Hate: A Theoretical Explication. <i>Communication Research</i>.</p> <p>Reading Response 9 Jul 22nd 11:59 pm</p>
6 7/28		<p><u>M: AI-mediated Communication</u></p> <p>Jakesch, M., French, M., Ma, X., Hancock, J. T., & Naaman, M. (2019, May). AI-mediated communication: How the perception that profile text was written by AI affects trustworthiness. In <i>Proceedings of the 2019 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems</i> (pp. 1-13).</p> <p>Optional: Hancock, J. T., Naaman, M., & Levy, K. (2020). AI-mediated communication: Definition, research agenda, and ethical considerations. <i>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication</i>, 25(1), 89-100.</p> <p>Reading Response 10 Jul 27th 11:59 pm</p> <p><u>T: NO CLASS - REVIEW SESSION (Q&A) - Zoom</u></p> <p>W: FINAL QUIZ (take home, access during lecture time) Paper due Aug 1st (Friday) 11:59 pm</p>

Additional Resources

Access to Reduced Costs Internet Access

<https://www.everyoneon.org/find-offers>

Campus Learning Assistance Service

Location: Student Resource Building 3210 | 805.893.3269 | <http://clas.sa.ucsb.edu/>

CLAS helps students increase their mastery of course material through course-specific tutoring and academic skills development. The tutorial groups and drop-in tutoring schedules are posted on the website. CLAS also provides workshops and counseling in test-taking as well as paper-writing skills.

Counseling Services

Location: Building 599 | 805.893.4411 | <http://caps.sa.ucsb.edu/>

Counseling Services offers counseling for personal concerns and crisis intervention, stress management, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

Office of Student Life

Location: Student Resource Building 1104 & 2260 | 805.893.4569 | <http://osl.sa.ucsb.edu/>
The Office of Student Life provides assistance with student emergencies, administrative withdrawals, and other unique academic situations and options.

Disabled Students Program

Location: 2120 Student Resources Building | 805.893.2668 | <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/>
The Disabled Students Program offers many services, such as reading services, notetaking assistance, test-taking accommodations, and registration assistance. For more information on these services, eligibility, and registration, please call or visit the Disabled Students Program office.

ONDAS Student Center

Location: Kerr Hall 1150 | 805.893.3457 | <http://ondas.ucsb.edu/>
The OSC offers academic support, mentoring, special programming, and community for all UCSB students, especially first generation students.

Transfer Student Center

Location: UCSB Library, First Floor, Ocean Side | <http://www.transfercenter.ucsb.edu/>
A space for transfer students to make connections, find academic support, mentoring, and special Programs.

Undocumented Student Services

Location: 2210 Student Resource Building | 805.893.5609
<http://www.sa.ucsb.edu/DreamScholars/>
USS provides general counseling to undocumented and mixed status students. Services include access to student mentors, programs and legal service referrals.

Educational Opportunity Program

Location: Student Resource Building, Room 2210 | 805.893.4758 | <http://eop.sa.ucsb.edu/>
EOP provides advising, mentoring, and programming for first generation and income eligible students.

Office of International Students & Scholars

Location: Student Resource Building, Room 3130 | 805.893.2929 | <http://oiss.sa.ucsb.edu/oiss-home>
OISS provides immigration support for the UCSB community, advising for international students, and cultural programming.

Academic Initiatives

Location: Student Resource Building | 805.893.2720 | <http://academics.sa.ucsb.edu/>

Student Affairs Academic Initiatives facilitates student academic and leadership opportunities, community engagement, and research experience.

Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity (RCSGD)

Location: Student Resource Building 3112 | 805.893.5847 | rcsgd.sa.ucsb.edu

The RCSGD, located on the 3rd floor of the Student Resource Building, works with students, staff and faculty to ensure that LGBTQ identities, experiences and concerns are represented and addressed at UCSB. The center aims to create a vibrant and engaging environment through social and educational programming, volunteer and leadership opportunities, a comfortable and welcoming social and study space, and professional and student staff for support, advocacy, and resource referral. The RCSGD hopes that all LGBTQ students can thrive at UCSB, feeling safe, affirmed and valued!

CARE (Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education)

Location: Student Resource Building (First Floor) | <http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/Care/>

CARE provides confidential advocacy and support to anyone impacted by sexual assault, dating/domestic violence and stalking.

Mental Health Peer Services

Location: Building 434, Room 100 | 805.893.4411 | (<https://www.ucsbmhp.com/>)

Mental Health Peer Services offers many services, including workshops on managing stress (and many other topics), as well as one-on-one sessions with a peer to help students learn coping skills to reduce anxiety.

Title IX and Sexual Harassment Policy Compliance Office

Location: 3211 Phelbs Hall | 805.893..2701 | <https://titleix.ucsb.edu/>

The mission of the Title IX and Sexual Harassment Policy Compliance Office (Title IX Office) is to ensure all UCSB community members fulfill the campus' commitment to create and maintain a work and academic environment free of sex discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Note: Please note that your TAs and I are university mandatory reporters. Should you wish to report incidents of sexual violence, sexual harassment, sex discrimination, and other behavior prohibited by Title IX Office-related policies (“TIXO prohibited conduct”), we are required to report this to the Title IX office.