

COM 201-001: Introduction to Communication and Media (FA24)
Mon & Wed 08:30 AM – 09:50 AM | Central King Building (CKB) 310

Professor: Eugene Cho Snyder (PhD of Communication)

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Office hours (both in-person and virtual) are by appointment. Please email me to set up a time in advance (for virtual meetings, I will send out a link after we set a time).

Course Description:

This course provides an overview of the history, theory, and practice of communication and media in various media contexts. Students will explore the role of communication and media in society and develop critical thinking skills to evaluate and analyze media messages and their psychological, attitudinal, and behavioral effects. Topics covered will include traditional and digital media landscapes, communication theories and media research, political and strategic communication, participatory and convergence culture, emotions and group portrayal in media, as well as mass and smart media ethics.

Required Readings & Optional Text:

While NOT required to purchase, this course draws relevant content from the following textbooks (and other online sources) that will be included in lecture slides/notes:

1. Biagi, S. (2017). *Media/Impact: An introduction to mass media* (12th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning. **(the instructor has a few copies for students to borrow as well)**
2. Gunkel, D. (2020). *An introduction to communication and artificial intelligence*. Medford, MA: Polity Press.

Course Evaluation Breakdown:

1. Involvement (Attendance 15%, Class participation 15%)	30%
2. In-Class Exercise Discussion & Presentations (5% X 4 out of 6 team or individual exercises administered in class)	20%
3. Individual Career Presentation: Presentation 10%, Report 10%	20%
4. Group PR Project: Presentation 10%, Report 10%, Peer Evaluation 10%	30%
Total	100 %

Grading Scale:

- *Normal participation* ranked into three groups: A, B+, B
- *Any abnormal participation* (including, but not limited to, significant number of unexcused absences (over 5), unsubmitted assignments, and a significant lack of participation in class discussions and projects) results in a lowering of a letter grade, or more based on the student's severity in lack of involvement: C+, C, D+, D
- *No participation*: F

Explanation of Major Assignments:

1. Involvement: 30% (Attendance 15%, Class Participation 15%)

As this course will be run by a small, major-focused group, there will be a heavy consideration of attendance and class participation. I look forward to co-create this first-time running course together as Communication and Media majors. Your active participation in class meetings, as indicated by your responses to lectures, discussion, and peer presentations in class, will be rewarded. Not only the amount of participation, but also the quality of your responses will be taken into account. Please note that high-level attendance will be naturally correlated to other scores, such as in-class exercises as follows.

2. In-Class Exercise Discussion & Presentations: 20% (5% X 4 in-class exercises submitted)

There will be a total of six in-class exercises announced and administered in class. Please plan your absences responsibly and strategically based on the course schedule, and if need be, proactively communicate with the instructor to meet the minimum requirement. These assignments serve to help the application of core media-related concepts discussed during class lectures. Normally, in-class exercises will be based on group performance (with new groups formed each class day) but may be based on individual performance contingent upon the characteristics of the exercise. Each in-class exercise will be given 5 points or less (depending on you or your team's performance), and I will only count the highest four scores out of six in-class exercises. In other words, **the minimum required submission is the completion of four in-class exercises**, out of six offered in class. Please note that any submissions over four will NOT go to waste. They will spill into the lacking points from prior submissions, and also make up for class participation scores for involvement.

3. Individual Career Presentation: 20% (Presentation 10%, Report 10%)

As we approach the mid-term of this course, the instructor will announce an individual assignment related to professional development in the field of communication and media. Specifically, each student will select and interview a communications or media professional (who can range from family members, acquaintances, or even external reach-outs), share their professional experiences (e.g., major responsibilities, success stories, and lessons from setbacks), and how that shaped and affected the student's own idea of pursuing a career in a relevant field as well as future career aspirations. Three to four students will take turn to present their findings at one of the Individual Career Presentation days. Details regarding the conduct of this assignment (e.g., format, rubrics) will be spelled out as the semester progresses.

4. Group PR Project: 30% (Presentation 10%, Report 10%, Peer Evaluation 10%)

During the last part of this course, groups of three to four students will be formed to report and present a PR campaign plan to enhance the media presence of NJIT's Communication and Media program. The group project will include activities such as assessing the current PR status, and proposing PR strategies with an executable PR plan and/or concrete PR material. Major grading events include group-based a) oral presentation in class, b) written report, and c) peer evaluation to ensure fair participation within the group. Details regarding the conduct of the group project will be spelled out as the semester progresses.

CLASS SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

See below for a tentative course outline. Any changes will be announced in class and Canvas, and I will assume that you are aware of such changes announced.

WK	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	9/04 (W)	Introduction to course	Review syllabus
2	9/09 (M)	Lecture 1: Mass Media & Everyday Life	Ch. 1 from Biagi
	9/11 (W)	Lecture 2: Books & Magazine	Ch. 2, 4 from Biagi
3	9/16 (M)	Lecture 3: Streaming Sounds & Radio	Ch. 5-6 from Biagi
	9/18 (W)	Exercise #1: Reinterpreting Sounds Communication	
4	9/23 (M)	Lecture 4: Movies & TV	Ch. 7-8 from Biagi
	9/25 (W)	Lecture 5: Advertising	Ch. 10 from Biagi
5	9/30 (M)	Lecture 6: Public Relations	Ch. 11 from Biagi
	10/02 (W)	Exercise #2: NJIT's Social Media PR	Group project announcement
6	10/07 (M)	Lecture 7: News, social and political issues	Ch. 12-13 from Biagi
	10/09 (W)	Exercise #3: NJIT, on press	
7	10/14 (M)	Jobs in Communication and Media	Individual project announcement
	10/16 (W)	Field Trip to NJIT's XR lab	
8	10/21 (M)	Lecture 8: Communication & AI	Gunkel
	10/23 (W)	Exercise #4: What should the Metaverse look like?	
9	10/28 (M)	NJPAC-recommended film screening	
	10/30 (W)	Exercise #5: DEI Panel	
10	11/04 (M)	Lecture 9: Mass Media Ethics, privacy and credibility	Ch. 11 from Biagi
	11/06 (W)	Individual Career Presentations I	3~4 individual PTs
11	11/11 (M)	Lecture 10: AI Ethics, transparency/literacy and trust	Gunkel
	11/13 (W)	Individual Career Presentations II	3~4 individual PTs
12	11/18 (M)	Exercise #6: Ethics Panel	
	11/20 (W)	Individual Career Presentations III	3~4 individual PTs
13	11/25 (M)	Final Group Project Consultation (selection of topic)	Meetings per request
	11/27 (W)	No Class (Friday Classes Meet before Thanksgiving)	
14	12/02 (M)	Final Group Project Discussion I	
	12/04 (W)	Final Group Project Discussion II	
15	12/08 (M)	Final Group Presentations	
	12/11 (W)	Final Review (Last Day of Classes)	Grade due: 12/23

GENERAL POLICIES

Late & Make-up Policy

Late work is accepted with prior permission only, based on justifiable reasons with official documentation. No credit will be given for unexcused late work. “Permitted” means that a student has successfully contacted me and received a response confirming the granting of an extension or a make-up. Participation points cannot be made up regardless of the reasoning behind missing the class period.

General Class Conduct

I expect students to arrive in class on time and to stay for the entire class. Random arrivals and exits only serve to distract other students and the instructor. Making conversations irrelevant to class also disrupts other classmates and impedes their learning experience. Those engaging in distracting behavior may be asked to leave the classroom.

Mobile phones, computers, and other technological distractions: All students are expected to put their mobile phones and other interactive devices on silent mode at the beginning of class. It is inconsiderate to classmates to allow a mobile device to ring during lecture. While students can make notes using electronic devices such as laptops during class, personal use of any electronic devices (e.g., watching Netflix) are not permitted. Those distracting others by doing so will be asked to leave the classroom.

Diversity, equality, inclusion, belonging, and general respect: In this class, I will work to promote an anti-discriminatory environment where everyone feels safe and welcome. I recognize that discrimination can be direct or indirect and take place at both institutional and personal levels. I am committed to providing equality of opportunity for all by eliminating any and all discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimization. Success of this policy relies on the support, understanding, and respect of everyone in class.

CANVAS will be used in the administration of this course. Any changes to the course schedule, in addition to other announcements, will be posted on CANVAS, so students are encouraged to check in often. I routinely communicate with the class through CANVAS’ mail function – please make sure your CANVAS mail account is forwarded to your preferred email account if you do not check CANVAS often.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](https://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/NJIT-University-Policy-on-Academic-Integrity.pdf):

<https://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/NJIT-University-Policy-on-Academic-Integrity.pdf>

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office (dos@njit.edu).

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

Students with learning disabilities who may require accommodations should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (<https://www.njit.edu/accessibility/>). As another resource, students in distress or experiencing challenging life circumstances may contact the NJIT CARE Team (<https://www.njit.edu/care/>). Accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis according to each student's individual needs and documentation. Please come speak with me if you have any accommodations or leniency that you require so we can work out a plan together.

Email Etiquette

When you are initiating or responding to communication with your instructor, please follow some common courtesies:

1. Our NJIT accounts should be used for any email correspondence. If you send email from a non-NJIT account, it will likely go to the junk mail folder.
2. Include the subject of your message, and in the body of your message, clearly state your question using complete sentences and proper grammar.
3. Please allow 48 hours for a response. If you have not received a response in this time period, please email again.