

COM 325 Syllabus

COM 325: New Media Technologies (Fall 2025)
Mon & Thr 8:30 AM – 9:50 AM | Faculty Memorial Hall 313

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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 an online invite after we set a time).

PART I: COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description: This course introduces students to discussions of various new media and emerging communication technologies including, but not limited to, social media platforms, algorithmic recommendation systems (RecSys), artificial agents, and smart environments. In particular, students will discuss the socio-psychological effects of utilizing those new media technologies. In doing so, students will identify the perceptual, attitudinal, and behavioral impact of these media technologies in various communication contexts from personal to professional.

Course Objectives:

- Understand new media concepts, theories, and findings from case studies and empirical research conducted in the fields of communications and psychology;
- Apply conceptual and empirical knowledge to current everyday media situations;
- Ideate and propose research questions for industry and academic professions;
- Design and conduct a pilot study mimicking how researchers empirically investigate the effects of new media adoption and utilization in the fields; and
- Offer theoretical and practical implications from existing research as well as their own group-based research project developed and completed during this course.

Readings: There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, all readings (in the form of research articles and press releases) will be uploaded on Canvas (see Part IV for the list of assigned readings). I strongly advise students to read all the material before class.

Course Evaluation Breakdown:

Individual Contributions (75%)

- 1) Attendance (10%, 3 unexcused) & Involvement (5%): 15%
- 2) Discussion Questions (10 DQs X 3 points, 8 required): 30%
- 3) In-class Quizzes (10 Quizzes X 2 points, 8 required): 20%
- 4) Article Presentation: 10%

Group Contributions (25%)

- 5) Final Group Presentations 10%
- 6) Final Group Report 10%
- 7) Peer Evaluation 5%

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Grading scale:

- *Normal participation* ranked into three groups: A, B+, B
- *Any abnormal participation* (including, but not limited to, 4+ unexcused absences, less than 8 DQs and Quizzes submitted, missing article/group presentations, and significant lack of class/group involvement) will result in lowering of letter grade(s). Each and all grading events will be accumulated for final grades: C+, C, D+, D
- *No participation:* F

PART II: COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**1) Attendance (10%, 3 unexcused permitted) & Involvement (5%): 15%**

Attendance is the first step toward participating in this class. Simply by attending, students will be able to naturally meet normal participation requirements. 8 unexcused absences are permitted. Unless there is justifiable official proof (e.g., doctor's note) for your (excused) absence, attendance will not count (*Note:* at the school level, you can request absence verification at <https://www.njit.edu/dos/student-absence-verification>).

Active involvement in class meetings, as indicated by each student's participation during lectures and responses to class discussion, will be counted toward involvement points. Please note that those who do not attend (including excused absences) are assumed no involvement on the day of absence. Not only the amount of participation, but also the quality of individual responses (e.g., the ability to integrate assigned readings and personally relevant examples into discussion) will be taken into consideration.

2) Discussion Questions (10 DQs x 3 points): 30%

Students are asked to submit 10 DQ for the 10 lecture-based days with assigned readings. Each lecture-based day has at least 2 assigned readings, which you can choose 1 reading to write your DQ of that day. DQs should be relevant to the assigned reading you chose, and will be graded for their level of profound curiosity. Insightful and thought-provoking DQs will be used for in-class discussions. Students should submit at least 8 DQs to qualify for normal participation.

A DQ normally consists of 3~5 sentences with three parts: 1) Bring up and summarize one aspect of the study in 1~2 sentences that interested you from the assigned reading (e.g., specific theory, concepts or variables examined, method, findings, interpretation); 2) add your personal thought, impression or question about the prior sentence(s) in 1~2 sentences (e.g., social implications and real-life applications, study extension/revision ideas); 3) final comment in a sentence explaining why your question is meaningful (e.g., to whom, when, where, and for what kinds of occasions).

DQs should be submitted on Canvas by 6 PM the day BEFORE each class
(0 = no submission, 1 = irrelevant/generic answer, 2 = relevant/acceptable answer, 3 = creative/thoughtful answer). Any late submissions can be awarded up to 1.5 points (0.5 = irrelevant/generic answer; 1 = relevant/acceptable answer, 1.5 = creative/thoughtful answer). I will handpick creative/thoughtful answers (usually 10%~30% of submissions). In case of tardiness or absence, please submit the MDQ by the end of class day to receive any points. There will be NO make-up opportunities after that day.

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3) In-class Quizzes (10 Quizzes X 2 points): 20%

For days DQs are requested, there will be an in-class quiz at the beginning of the class to remind students of the assigned readings. The quiz will have 2~4 multiple-choice and/or mix-and-match questions making up to 2 points. This is an open-book quiz, so you are allowed to read the articles and talk to your colleagues in class to find the answers. Students should submit at least 8 Quizzes to qualify for normal participation. In case of tardiness or absence, please submit the quiz by the end of class day to receive half points of your score. There will be NO make-up opportunities after that day.

4) Article Presentations: 10%

As we progress through major topics from social media to virtual agents, there will be 4 days fully dedicated to Article Presentations. On those days, 2~4 students will take turns presenting a summary of a research paper/article related to topics discussed in class. The student presenters are expected to make a 10-minute presentation of the article in the class, followed by a Q&A session with the instructor and fellow students. Presenters should cover 6 elements with via slides, and share them with the instructor BEFORE their presentation day: 1) introduction of article topic and reason for your selection, 2) hypotheses or research questions (select 1~3 that interests you), 3) summary of relevant method, 4) results (of your interest), and 5) implications (both from authors' and yourself). Finally, please prepare and lead a Q&A session to facilitate class discussion.

5) Final Group Presentations: 10%

A team of 3~5 students will design an experimental or survey-based pilot study that will ask modern-day media users how some technological elements in their media shape their psychological perceptions, attitudes, or user behaviors. The studies will involve quantitative data collection and statistical analysis, which the instructor will guide and engage in hands-on implementation with students.

As an outcome of the Final Group Project, student teams will take turn presenting their a) study background and supporting literature, b) research questions, c) methods, d) data findings, and e) interpretation of findings and discussion during the last two class sessions. Here, the evaluative focus is on clear, concise, and effective communication of the study structure, major findings and implications of the study.

6) Final Group Report: 10%

Once the presentations are completed, each team will submit a written document of their study, within about a week after the presentations. Here, the evaluative focus is on the completeness and comprehensive reporting of details in the study presented.

7) Peer Evaluation 5%

As the final step of the Final Group Project (and this course), everyone is required to submit a peer evaluation form, which operates based on a penalty (vs. award) system to catch freeloaders. Details not stated above regarding the general conduct of individual and group assignments will be spelled out as the semester progresses.

PART III: CLASS AGENDA (TENTATIVE)

If changes in the schedule are necessary, they will be announced in class and Canvas.

WK	Date	Topic	Assignments
Part I: Conceptual Learning & Discussion			
1	9/04 (Thr)	Introduction to Course	
2	9/08 (Mon)	1. New media effects	DQ1
	9/11 (Thr)	2. Social media, isolation or connection?	DQ2
3	9/15 (Mon)	3. Social media, beyond text and images...	DQ3
	9/18 (Thr)	Article presentations 1	4~6 individual PTs
4	9/22 (Mon)	4. RecSys of info, do we choose, or it finds us?	DQ4
	9/25 (Thr)	5. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) vs. Human-computer interaction (HCI)	DQ5
5	9/29 (Mon)	Article presentations 2	4~6 individual PTs
	10/02 (Thr)	No class (Wellness Day)	
6	10/06 (Mon)	6. Virtual agents, how human should they be?	DQ6
	10/09 (Thr)	7. Smart cars and home, how smart are they?	DQ7
7	10/13 (Mon)	8. VR & AR, how real are they?	DQ8
	10/16 (Thr)	Article presentations 3	4~6 individual PTs
8	10/20 (Mon)	NJIT's XR lab visit	
	10/23 (Thr)	9. AI, where is the risk at?	DQ9
9	10/27 (Mon)	10. AI, what should we do about it?	DQ10
	10/30 (Thr)	Article presentations 4	4~6 individual PTs
Part II: Application through Pilot Study			
10	11/03 (Mon)	Group project introduction & ideation	Group formation
	11/06 (Thr)	Intro to experimental & survey design	
11	11/10 (Mon)	Practice t-test of experimental data	Stat exercise
	11/13 (Thr)	Practice linear regression of survey data	Stat exercise
12	11/17 (Mon)	Method Development Workshop I (2~3 teams)	Alternate Attendance
	11/20 (Thr)	Method Development Workshop II (2~3 teams)	Alternate Attendance
13	11/24 (Mon)	Group project finalization of ideas and data	Submit Study Material
	11/27 (Thr)	No class (Thanksgiving break)	
14	12/01 (Mon)	Data Analysis Workshop I (2~3 teams)	Alternate Attendance
	12/04 (Thr)	Data Analysis Workshop II (2~3 teams)	Alternate Attendance
15	12/08 (Mon)	Final Group Presentations I (2~3 teams)	
	12/11 (Thr)	Final Group Presentations II (2~3 teams) & Last Day of Classes for NJIT	

PART IV: ASSIGNED READINGS (TENTATIVE)

1. New media effects:

- a) Eveland, W. P. (2003). A “Mix of Attributes” approach to the study of media effects and new communication technologies. *Journal of Communication*, 53(4). 395–410.
- b) Sundar, S. S. (2008). The MAIN model: A heuristic approach to understanding technology effects on credibility (pp. 73-100). Cambridge, MA: MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Initiative.

2. Social media, isolation or connection?

- a) Hunt, M. G., Marx, R., Lipson, C., & Young, J. (2018). No more FOMO: Limiting social media decreases loneliness and depression. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 37(10), 751-768.
- b) Haddad, J. M., Macenski, C., Mosier-Mills, A., Hibara, A., Kester, K., Schneider, M., ... & Liu, C. H. (2021). The impact of social media on college mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: a multinational review of the existing literature. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 23(11), 70.

[Optional] Lee, E-J., & Cho, E. (2018). When using Facebook to avoid isolation reduces perceived social support. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 21(1), 32–39.

3. Social Media, beyond text and images

- a) Qiyang, Z., & Jung, H. (2019). Learning and sharing creative skills with short videos: A case study of user behavior in TikTok and Bilibili. *In Proceedings of International Association of Societies of Design Research Conference*.
- b) Tafesse, W., & Wood, B. P. (2021). Followers' engagement with Instagram influencers: The role of influencers' content and engagement strategy. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 58, 102303

4. RecSys of information, do we choose or info find us?

- a) Zhang, B., & Sundar, S. S. (2019). Proactive vs. reactive personalization: Can customization of privacy enhance user experience? *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 128, 86–99.
- b) Gil de Zúñiga, H., Weeks, B., & Ardèvol-Abreu, D. (2017). Effects of the News-Finds-Me perception in communication: Social media use implications for news seeking and learning about politics, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22(3), 105–123.

[Optional] Cho, E., & Sundar, S. S. (2022). How do we like our online dates—customized or personalized? The differential effects of user vs. system tailoring on date preferences. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 127, Paper No. 107037.

5. Computer-mediated communication vs. Human-computer interaction:

- a) Sundar, S. S., & Nass, C. (2000). Source orientation in human-computer interaction: Programmer, networker, or independent social actor? *Communication Research*, 27(6), 683–703.

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b) Moon, Y., & Nass, C. (1996). How “real” are computer personalities? Psychological responses to personality types in human-computer interaction. *Communication Research*, 23(6), 651-674.

[Optional] Lee, K. M., Peng, W., Jin, S. A., & Yan, C. (2006). Can robots manifest personality?: An empirical test of personality recognition, social responses, and social presence in human–robot interaction. *Journal of Communication*, 56(4), 754-772.

6. Virtual agents, how human should they be?

a) Song, M., Zhang, H., Xing, X., & Duan, Y. (2023). Appreciation vs. apology: Research on the influence mechanism of chatbot service recovery based on politeness theory. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 73, 103323.

b) Jones, B., Xu, Y., Li, Q., & Scherer, S. (2024, May). Designing a Proactive Context-Aware AI Chatbot for People's Long-Term Goals. In *Extended Abstracts of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-7).

[Optional] Cho, E., Molina, M. D., & Wang, J. (2019). The effects of modality, device, and task differences on perceived human likeness of voice-activated virtual assistants. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 22(8), 515–520.

7. Smart cars and home, how smart are they?

a) Braun, M., Mainz, A., Chadowitz, R., Pfleging, B., & Alt, F. (2019). At your service: Designing voice assistant personalities to improve automotive user interfaces. In *Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '19)*. Paper No. 40.

b) Oh, J., Kim, W., Kim, S., Im, H., & Lee, S. (2024, May). Better to ask than assume: Proactive voice assistants’ communication strategies that respect user agency in a smart home environment. In *Proceedings of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-17).

8. VR & AR, how real are they?

a) Slater, M., Pertaub, D. P., & Steed, A. (1999). Public speaking in virtual reality: Facing an audience of avatars. *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications*, 19(2), 6-9.

b) Smink, A. R., Van Reijmersdal, E. A., Van Noort, G., & Neijens, P. C. (2020). Shopping in augmented reality: The effects of spatial presence, personalization and intrusiveness on app and brand responses. *Journal of Business Research*, 118, 474–485.

9. AI, where is the risk at?

a) Elyoseph, Z., & Levkovich, I. (2023). Beyond human expertise: the promise and limitations of ChatGPT in suicide risk assessment. *Front Psychiatry*, 14, Paper No. 1213141.

b) Tomlinson, B., Black, R. W., Patterson, D. J., & Torrance, A. W. (2024). The carbon emissions of writing and illustrating are lower for AI than for humans. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 3732.

10. AI, what should we do about it?

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- a) Ehsan, U., Liao, Q. V., Muller, M., Riedl, M. O., & Weisz, J. D. (2021). Expanding explainability: Towards social transparency in AI systems. In *Proceedings of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-19).
- b) Chen, C., Lee, S., Jang, E., & Sundar, S. S. (2024). Is your prompt detailed enough? Exploring the effects of prompt coaching on users' perceptions, engagement, and trust in text-to-image generative AI tools. In *Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on Trustworthy Autonomous Systems* (pp. 1-12).

PART IV: 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>

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of

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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.

Student use of artificial intelligence (AI) is permitted in this course with prior consultation with the lecturer. For instance, using AI to more efficiently understand technical aspects of assigned readings are fine. However, it is not permitted to be used in drafting of any core content for the assignments (including DQs and article presentations), as doing so would undermine the learning process (including problem-solving processes for social issues discussed in class) to achieve the course learning outcomes. Additionally, if and when students use AI in this course, the AI must be cited as is shown within the NJIT Library AI citation page for AI: <https://researchguides.njit.edu/AI/home>. If you have any questions or concerns about AI technology use in this class, please reach out to your instructor prior to submitting any assignments.

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.