COMS 320
Communication and New Media

Instructor Contact Information
Instructor Name and Preferred Title: Dr. Yue Li
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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00pm-2:00pm

Class Time and Location
Class Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30am-10:45am
Class Location: Wescoe Hall, 4018
Semester: Spring 2026

Course Hours and Instructional Methods:
This class is assigned 3 credit hours. This includes two and a half hours of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of six hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks.

This class is taught primarily in-person. It will include a combination of lectures, individual and small-group activities, and in-class discussion.

Course Description
This course introduces students to theories and concepts that have emerged to understand online communication processes. It will include topics related to communication in different online platforms, processes of online impression formation and management, online relational development and maintenance, and beneficial and negative social outcomes of the Internet. This class will challenge common assumptions held around relational and communicative effects of the Internet.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Identify different communication theories and concepts used to understand online communication.
- Describe and explain how those theories relate to different relational and communication aspects.
- Interpret critically different views about how communication technology (e.g., Internet, social media, online communities, generative AI) influences society.

Course Materials

Required textbook: Carr, C. (2021). Computer-Mediated Communication: A Theoretical and Practical Introduction to Online Human Communication. Rowman & Littlefield.

Technology Requirements

Links to articles and assignments are located on the Canvas site for the course. To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:

- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed.
- Reliable Internet access and a KU email account.
- A current Internet browser that is compatible with Canvas (Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Canvas).

If your computer does not have Office 365, you can download Microsoft Office at no cost by logging into Office 365 with their KU Online ID.

You should bring a laptop, tablet or other device to be able to work on in-class activities during class.

Laptops, tablets, phones, and any other digital device will be permitted in this course when instructed. Other than that, you are required to put all your digital devices away. Unless there is an emergency please refrain from using your phone during class time. **You cannot wear headphones in class. Please remove your headphones from your ears when class starts.**
The use of technology if not permitted could result in the loss of participation points.

Course Assignments and Requirements

1. *IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (20%):*
   Students are expected to participate **in-class individual activities**. These activities will be graded. We will have assignments during class assessing the learning objectives for that unit. You should bring a laptop, ipad or other device to be able to work on those activities during class. I will automatically drop the two lowest scores of the in-class assignments. That means, you can miss two in-class assignments without penalty.

2. *EXAMS (30%):*
   We will have **two** exams during the semester. Each exam will be **100 points**. Students have an opportunity to replace one exam grade with the grade of an **optional cumulative exam** conducted during Finals Week. This assignment will be most helpful for students who (a) would like to potentially improve one of their exam grades, (b) miss an exam for reasons not covered by a University Excused Absence (e.g., a vacation), or (c) cannot provide verification that the reason they miss an exam is due to a University Excused Absence.

3. *WEEKLY REPORTS OF PLATFORM USE (20%)*:
   Each student will select an online platform from a list of platforms that will be provided. Although students are free to choose any platform they like from the list of platforms, the only condition is that they cannot currently be or have been users of that platform in the past. This online platform will be used to do the weekly reports. The goal is that students become active users of the platform they choose. The weekly reports are the notes students take of their weekly use of the platform. These notes will narrate and reflect upon the events that take place during each of the visits.

   Students should produce a total of eight weekly reports. Weekly reports will be **due on Fridays before midnight** and should be uploaded to Canvas. Weekly reports are directly tied to the final paper assignment, as they will generate the material that will be used to write the final paper.

   Specific details and requirements will be provided later in the semester.

4. *ONLINE EXPERIENCE FINAL PROJECT (30%):*
   The final paper will be based on the data gathered throughout the semester and recorded on the weekly reports. Although requirements might vary depending on the online platform chosen and the data gathered, broadly, the final paper should analyze the material collected throughout the semester on the weekly reports. The paper should include a description of the online platform, its characteristics, and its uses. More importantly, the analyses of the online experience using the platform should be done using and applying theories and concepts learned throughout the semester and should include an explanation of the concepts and theories used for the analyses. Specific details will be provided later in the semester.

5. *EXTRA CREDITS (3%)*
   There will be **group activities** in nearly every class. Students can earn extra credits by participating in those group activities.

Evaluation Criteria and Grading Scale

Student Survey of Teaching

You will have multiple opportunities to provide feedback on your experience in this course. Suggestions and constructive criticism are encouraged throughout the course and may be particularly valuable early in the semester. To that end, I will use mid-semester surveys and/or reflection assignments to gather input on what is working well and what could be improved. You will also be asked to complete an end-of-semester, online Student Survey of Teaching, which could inform modifications to this course (and other courses that I teach) in the future.

Grading
All grades will be posted on Canvas. You are strongly encouraged to check your scores in Canvas regularly. A final letter grade will be assigned based on percentages.

Assignment Weights	Percent
Exams	30%
Weekly reports	20%
In class activities	20%
Final Project	30%
Total	**100%**

Grading Scale

89.5% - 100% = A
84.5% - 89.4% = B+
79.5% - 84.4% = B
74.5% - 79.4% = C+
69.5% - 74.4% = C
64.5% - 69.4% = D+
59.5% - 64.4% = D
0% - 59.4% = F

Incomplete Grades
You may be assigned an 'I' (Incomplete) grade if you are unable to complete some portion of the assigned course work because of an unanticipated illness, accident, work-related responsibility, family hardship, or verified learning disability. An Incomplete grade is not intended to give you additional time to complete course assignments or extra credit unless there is indication that the specified circumstances prevented you from completing course assignments on time.

Attendance Policy

University Excused Absences

2.2.1 The responsibility for class attendance rests with individual students. Students are expected to attend classes regularly and meet all requirements set by the instructor. Students are responsible for planning their schedules to avoid excessive conflicts with course requirements. Attendance policies may vary for individual instructors and shall be included in the course syllabus. The provisions of Section 2 shall not apply where an accrediting body requires a school to adopt policies requiring regular class attendance.

2.2.2 A university excused absence is an absence for which a student cannot be penalized and shall receive an accommodation for completing the missed work. University excused absences apply to all course requirements, including any final examinations, quizzes, in class work, and tests other than final examinations. In cases where part of a class grade is based on attendance, a student shall not be penalized for missing class due to a university excused absence.

2.2.3 Legitimate reasons for a university excused absence include:

- religious observance
- required military service
- illness or injury
- personal verifiable mental health or medical crisis or that of a relative or friend,

- unforeseen life event or compelling circumstances beyond the student's control (e.g., divorce, birth or adoption of a child, death, loss of employment, sexual assault, domestic violence).
- academic field trips
- participation in university activities at the request of university authorities (e.g. an approved concert or athletic event)
- jury duty or officially mandated court appearances.
- professional association or conference participation

2.2.4 Students are responsible for informing their instructors of an absence before the absence occurs, including providing verifiable documentation with as much advance notice as possible, or if not possible prior to, as soon as possible after the absence. In the case where a student does not want to disclose specific details of the verifiable absence to an instructor, the student may use the Student Support and Case Management Office and the Student Access Center to assist in the verification of an excused absence. In these cases, the Student Support and Case Management Office and the Student Access Center will provide confirmation to the instructor verifying the excused absence without providing specific details of the reason. In the case where a student has an unforeseen life event or medical/mental health emergency that requires the student to be away from campus for more than three days and the student is unable to communicate to their faculty, the Student Support and Case Management Office and the Student Access Center will assist in notifying the instructor.

2.2.5 For a verified excused absence, the instructor will provide the student with appropriate assistance and counsel about completing missed assignments and class material. The instructor is not required to waive essential or fundamental academic requirements to accommodate a student's absence, and a student is responsible for fulfilling all course requirements mutually agreed upon, including completing any makeup work resulting from their absence. A makeup assignment must be equitable and equivalent in substance and rigor to that missed and offered in a reasonable timeframe. The instructor and student must make arrangements for makeup work as appropriate, which must not interfere with the student's regularly scheduled classes. If makeup work is not feasible, the instructor will provide an alternate accommodation for excused absences.

2.2.6 Students who feel that they have unfairly been denied either excused absence or appropriate accommodation for an excused absence should first seek to resolve the disagreement with the course instructor. If the student and instructor are unable to find a mutually agreeable resolution, the student may contact the Chair of the Department, or Dean if there is not a Chair. A final grade appeal may be made to the University Senate Judicial Board.

Class Behavioral expectations

Professionalism will be expected at all times. Because the university classroom is a place designed for the free exchange of ideas, we must show respect for one another in all circumstances. We will show respect for one another by exhibiting patience and courtesy in our exchanges. Appropriate language and restraint from verbal attacks upon those whose perspectives differ from your own is a minimum requirement. Courtesy and kindness are the norm for those who participate in my class.

The scope and content of the material included in this course are defined by the instructor in consultation with the responsible academic unit. While the orderly exchange of ideas, including questions and discussions prompted by lectures, discussion sessions and laboratories, is viewed as a normal part of the educational environment, the instructor has the right to limit the scope and duration of these interactions. Students who engage in disruptive behavior, including persistent refusal to observe boundaries defined by the instructor regarding inappropriate talking, discussions, and questions in the classroom or laboratory may be subject to discipline for non-academic misconduct for disruption of teaching or academic misconduct, as defined in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities (CSRR), Article 22, Section C, and the University Senate Rules and Regulations, Section 2.4.6. Article 22 of CSRR also defines potential sanctions for these types of infractions.

Late Work/Make-up Policy

Makeup assignments and exams will be given without penalty if you have an excused absence. Unexcused absences from assignments and exams will result in a significant point deduction. You are allowed to make up one assignment without penalty one time this semester. Review the course schedule for all assignment due dates.

Academic Integrity

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this class. An instructor may, with due notice to the student, treat as unsatisfactory any student work which is a product of academic misconduct. Cases of academic misconduct may result in any or all of the following penalties: reduction of grade, admonition, warning, censure, transcript citation, suspension, or expulsion. The following information about Academic Misconduct is discussed in Article II, Section 6 of the rules and regulations of the University Senate. "Academic misconduct by a student shall include, but not be limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of notebooks, themes, reports or other assignments; knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; falsification of research results; plagiarizing of another's work; violation of regulations or ethical codes for the treatment of human and animal subjects; or otherwise acting dishonestly in research." It is your responsibility as a KU student to make sure you understand academic honesty and misconduct. The policy is described at this link: https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm#art2sect6. The website of the KU Writing Center provides some excellent information and resources on how to avoid plagiarism. http://www.writing.ku.edu/guides/index.shtml?1#plagiarism We expect you will familiarize yourself with these materials.

Subject to Change Statement

This syllabus, including all of its sections and the class calendar are subject to change. Should any change occur, the instructor will notify students of the change and replace the file on Canvas with the current version.

Advice for Doing Well in the Course:

- *Attend Class* - Listen, pay attention, and take notes. If you miss a class for any reason, it is up to you to get the notes from another source (e.g., a classmate). I will not provide notes to students for any reason after a class or discussion section is over. Remember, your final grade is an accumulation of the points earned in class.

- *Check Canvas* - Updates, assignments, study reviews, PPT. slides, etc. will be posted on Canvas. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with Canvas and learn to navigate our course site.

- *Ask Questions* - Whenever you are confused about lecture material, the book, assignments, etc., ask for clarification. This will only work to your advantage. I am here to help. Feel free to make an appointment to see me during my office hours.

- *Be Active* - Always know where you stand in this class. Check your grades and check them often. Use the extra credit, points back and late work policies to your advantage – that is what they are there for.

KU's Academic Success Office provides a wide variety of resources aimed at ensuring student's a successful experience as KU students.

In addition to any polices and resources noted above, the KU Academic Success Student Resources website provides links to KU Policies and Resources pertaining to academic misconduct, grading polices, harassment and discrimination, diversity and inclusion, mandatory reporting, equal opportunity and affirmative action, and student rights and responsibilities. Please visit the site to familiarize yourself with these policies and resources. If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies, statements, or resources, please let me know, or contact Student Affairs directly.

Student Resources

- University Academic Support Centers

    - https://access.ku.edu/
- Counseling and Educational Support Services
    - *Counseling and Psychological Services* (http://caps.ku.edu/)
    - *The KU Writing Center* (https://writing.ku.edu/)
- Religious observances
    - https://diversity.ku.edu/religious-observances

University Policies

- Academic Misconduct
    - https://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect7
- Change of Grade
    - https://policy.ku.edu/registrar/grade-change;
    - https://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect3
- Commercial Note-Taking
    - https://policy.ku.edu/provost/commercial-note-taking
- Diversity and Inclusion
    - https://policy.ku.edu/provost/diversity-inclusion
- Mandatory Reporting (Title IX/Civil Rights)
    - https://policy.ku.edu/civil-rights/mandatory-reporting
- Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action
    - https://policy.ku.edu/IOA/nondiscrimination
- Sexual Harassment
    - https://policy.ku.edu/civil-rights/sexual-harassment
- Student Rights and Responsibilities
    - https://policy.ku.edu/student-affairs/student-code
- Racial and Ethnic Harassment Policy
    - https://policy.ku.edu/civil-rights/racial-ethnic-harassment-policy
- Commitment to Integrity and Ethical Conduct
    - https://policy.ku.edu/Chancellor/statement-commitment-integrity-and-ethical-conduct
- KBOR Statement on Free Expression
    - https://publicaffairs.ku.edu/freedom-of-expression
- Weapons, Including Firearms
    - https://policy.ku.edu/university-kansas-policy-weapons-including-firearms-effective-july-1-2017

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
1	01/20	Class introduction		
	01/22	CMC, technology, and society	Carr, Ch. 1	Technology and society assignment
2	01/27	Internet history and foundational concepts in CMC	Carr, 14-22. Baym. Pgs. 6-13. (Reading available on Canvas).	Features and affordances assignment
	01/29	Digital Divide	Van Dijk, A theory of the digital divide	Digital divide assignment

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
			(Reading available on Canvas)	
3	02/03 02/05	Digital ethnography Quantitative Content Analysis.	Lenihan & Kelly-Holmes, 2015 Hine (2017). From virtual ethnography to the embedded, embodied, everyday internet.	Virtual ethnography/ Quantitative content analysis assignment
4	02/10 02/12	Impersonal theories of CMC I Impersonal theories of CMC II	Carr, Chapter 3.	Final project platform choice
5	02/17 02/19	Interpersonal and group theories of CMC I Interpersonal and group theories of CMC II	Carr, Chapter 4.	 Weekly report #1
6	02/24 02/26	Interpersonal and group theories of CMC III Intrapersonal CMC, self-presentation, deception and warranting theory I	Carr, Chapter 5. Carr, pgs. 158-173.	Online self-presentation assignment Weekly report #2
7	03/03 03/05	Intrapersonal CMC, self-presentation, deception and warranting theory II Intrapersonal CMC, self-presentation, deception and warranting theory III	Baym, Chapter 5. Pgs. 118-133 (Reading available on Canvas). Carr, 229-233	Warranting theory assignment Weekly report #3
8	03/10 03/12	REVIEW EXAM 1		

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
9	03/17 03/19	Spring Break – No Classes		
10	03/24 03/26	Online communities, social networking sites and social media Online social capital and social support I	Carr. 106-122; 185-194. Resnick, (2000) Ellison & Vitak, (2015) (Readings available on Canvas)	Online communities assignment Online social capital assignment Weekly report #4
11	03/31 04/02	Online social capital and social support II Final project workshop I		Final project workshop assignment
12	04/07 04/09	Final project workshop II Misinformation and social media I	Vosoughi et al. (2018), Chou et al. (2018), Ecker et al. (2022) (Readings available on Canvas)	Misinformation diffusion and effects assignment Weekly report # 5
13	04/14 04/16	Misinformation and social media II Generative AI and society I	Optional readings: Prompt engineering guide, intro to prompt engineering, tips for working with LLMs, ethical and social risks of harm from language models (Readings available on Canvas)	Generative AI and society assignment Weekly report #6
14	04/21 04/23	Generative AI and society II REVIEW		
15	04/28 04/30	EXAM 2 Final project presentation I		

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
16	05/05 05/07	Final project presentation II Final project presentation III		
17	05/12	Required: Final Paper Due 05/15 EOD Optional: Make-up Final Exam, 05/12, 9:00 am – 10:00 am		