

# COMMUNICATION IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE (COM 394)

**Instructor:**

**Office:**

**Email:**

**Online Office Hours:**

*The best way to reach me is via email. I will always respond as quickly as possible, but allow 24 hours (longer on weekends) for me to respond. I am teaching solely online this semester so I do not have regularly scheduled office hours on campus. That said, feel free to request a face-to-face office meeting and we can find a time that fits our schedules.*

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

Welcome to COM 394: Communication in the Electronic Age! This class is designed to examine how the Internet and other communication technology affect our lives, relationships, and society.

The material for this course is divided into three Modules, and each Module is further divided into weekly Units (there are 14 Units in total). Each Unit has assigned readings AND either discussion board postings or some other assignment. Each of the three Modules has an associated Module Quiz, which will test your knowledge at the end of each Module.

Due to the online nature of the course, our Blackboard site is our virtual classroom. All required readings, assignments, and course tools/information are provided on the site. To navigate through our virtual classroom, you will need to familiarize yourself with the course menu tabs. The “course menu” consists of all the tabs, or “navigation buttons,” located on the left side of our Blackboard site. You will notice that there is a tab for each Module, which will open up and consist of a folder for each Unit within that Module, with an additional link to the respective Module Quiz. Readings and assignments will be listed and if necessary posted as a pdf file within its respective Unit folder. The Discussion Board tab can be used to access the folder for each Unit’s discussion board assignment.

## **COURSE GOALS**

Each of you will enter this course with personal goals, and your goals will be solidified, clarified, amended, and/or multiplied during our time together. During and by the end of this course, it is my hope that I will be able to facilitate the following for you:

1. Create a critical yet respectful forum for discussion and learning
2. Understand and evaluate key concepts and theories about computer-mediated communication.
3. Raise self and structural-awareness concerning our beliefs, attitudes, values, practices, policies, and behaviors surrounding communication technology
4. Explore how concepts and theories about technology and communication intersect with our personal identities
5. Become more savvy and critical consumers of messages that we receive, create, and perform by, through and in new media

## **INSTRUCTOR OBLIGATIONS**

You should expect that your instructor will:

1. Approach our class prepared and organized
2. Be accessible and respond to questions in a timely manner
3. Conduct the class in a manner that is engaging
4. Respect each student's individuality as a person and as a learner
5. Attempt to relate material in this course to real personal and social contexts

## **STUDENT OBLIGATIONS**

I will expect you to:

1. Complete and spend time contemplating the readings
2. Complete and submit all assignments in advance of the deadline
3. Take initiative over your experience: work independently yet ask questions if necessary
4. Actively engage with course material and positively contribute to online discussions
5. Be respectful and active members of our virtual community

One of the benefits of online learning is that you interact with the class material as your schedule permits. Because the course is flexible to your schedule, it requires you to: (1) be self-motivated to thoroughly read the weekly course readings, (2) complete and submit your assignments prior to the deadline, (3) sufficiently communicate your thoughts using online/text-based communication, and (4) keep in contact with classmates and the instructor as necessary. You can expect to spend the same amount of time with this course as you would spend completing readings and attending a course that meets in person each week. Please note that unlike a "face-to-face" class where you can express your thoughts using multiple modes of communication, this class is primarily restricted to reading/writing. If your learning style does not fit well with this online format then you should consider finding a different class in which you might better thrive.

**The requirements and rules indicated in this syllabus and on our Blackboard site are non-negotiable. You should drop the class immediately if any aspects of the course, its rules, requirements and/or the instructor's expectations are not acceptable to you.**

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Computer/Internet Access and Skills**

This course is designed for students who already possess basic experience with computers and the Internet. You are expected to have access to a reliable computer with appropriate software, and reliable high-speed Internet access. Computer/Internet issues will not be an acceptable excuse for late work, so please ensure that you have proper access and plan ahead in case you encounter delays or technical difficulties.

### **Course Contact**

You should check your ASU e-mail and the course Blackboard page regularly. I will periodically post announcements and/or send out individual and class emails with updated information about the class. I may also email your graded writing assignments back to you via Blackboard, and we have an assignment requiring you to be in email contact with other students. Because all email sent via Blackboard is automatically sent to students' asu.edu accounts, it is important that you regularly access and read your ASU email.

Email is the preferred contact method. Allow a minimum of 24 hours during the week (potentially longer on weekends) for me to respond to your email, and be certain to use the subject line to clearly indicate the purpose of your message. DO NOT send me emails from random email accounts besides your asu.edu address because I might not receive your message.

Note: If you have issues accessing or questions regarding the course material you can contact me. I am unable to assist with any other computer/internet or Blackboard-related problems/questions, so you should go through the ASU Help Desk, which is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 480-965-6500 or <http://asu.edu/helpdesk>.

### **Required Readings**

- 1) Wright, K. B., & Webb, L. M. (2011). *Computer-mediated communication in personal relationships*. New York: Peter Lang.
- 2) Documents and websites posted on our course Blackboard page.

Readings are assigned for each Unit of the course and are listed under their respective **Module** section on Blackboard. Reading thoroughly—such that you are able to comprehend, apply, evaluate, and critique the information presented—is required for all assignments and is thereby essential for success in this class. The section below each Unit will list the readings necessary for that week. If the reading is labeled as “CMC in Personal Relationships Book Chapter” then you can find it in the required textbook. Please note that we will NOT be reading this book in order, but rather, will be jumping around quite a bit. All other readings will be posted as a pdf file inside the folder for its respective Unit. You might occasionally be directed to view a particular webpage as well, in which case the URL will be provided.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Assignment Deadlines**

Deadlines are the last possible day/time that an assignment can be submitted for credit. Assignment deadlines are listed in the Course Calendar, which is located in the **Course Information** section of our Blackboard site. All assignments must be submitted correctly before 11:59 pm on their respective deadlines to be eligible for credit.

Deadlines are absolute; late assignments will not be accepted for any reason (not even if you have issues with your computer/Blackboard/Internet access). Any assignment submitted one minute or later after the 11:59 pm deadline will receive a grade of “0.” Therefore, you should prepare for the unexpected by recognizing deadlines as the latest possible moment that assignments will be accepted, and plan to submit assignments well in advance. Please note that you have ONE WEEK from the date that an assignment grade is posted to contact me if you have questions regarding that grade.

**NOTE:** Students who wait until the last minute to submit assignments are taking a huge risk! Computer-, internet-, Blackboard-, and life-related problems happen every day, and they are almost always unexpected and seemingly beyond one’s control. Please submit assignments early!

## Assignments

The large majority of assignments (all except the Module Quizzes) require you to turn in written work. Drawing upon multiple readings will show your proficiency with the material. Therefore, you are expected to integrate concepts from multiple course readings into every assignment.

Avoid simply “finding” quotes to place into your response. Instead, you should build a response based around the concepts from that Unit/Module and integrate previous readings/concepts. The course Units are designed to build upon themselves, so the concepts we discuss will be applicable to later Units. Correct APA citation of sources is required for all course work (INCLUDING YOUR DISCUSSION BOARD POSTS).

All of your work should clearly and explicitly demonstrate the following:

1. that you have read the assigned readings;
2. that you comprehend the concepts discussed in the readings;
3. that you are able to make important connections between readings as well as between modules (i.e., to show that you are able to build on previous material);
4. that you are able to apply course concepts appropriately in an effort to analyze and make sense of the ways in which CMC impacts your life and the lives of others.

Communication in the Electronic Age is an upper-division course offered through the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, and we hold our students to high standards of scholarship and academic writing. All submitted assignments must be original work written by you for the sole purpose of the designated assignment. Plagiarizing any part of your own previous work or someone else’s work, thoughts, or ideas, will result in immediate disciplinary action and potential failure (“XE”) in the course. This includes taking sections of other students’ posts, re-using your writing from earlier posts/work in this class or re-using any part of an assignment for a different course.

I am here to help you in any way that I can, but please know that I cannot teach you how to write at an upper-division level via email and expect that you already possess this ability. If you struggle with your writing skills or do not know how to cite sources using APA then you should contact the ASU writing center for assistance.

### **General information about each type of major assignment is provided below:**

➤ **Discussion Board Assignments (11 graded assignments x 20 pts each = 220 total points)**  
 There are 12 Discussion Board assignments and each is associated with the readings for a different Unit. This will be the primary form of classroom interaction and is a huge part of your final grade. Please note that only 11 Discussion Board assignments will count toward students’ final grades. That is, each student’s lowest Discussion Board score will be dropped (and a “0” counts as a lowest score). Here’s what that means: If you complete all of the Discussion Board assignments, I will drop your lowest score. Alternatively, you can miss one Discussion Board assignment without affecting your final grade. Think of this as the equivalent of being able to be “absent” for a week of class, though you will still be responsible for the readings when you take the Module Quiz.

Discussion Board assignments will require that you complete the readings and make a series of posts to the ***Discussion Board*** that engage fellow classmates in discussions about the readings. The discussion prompt will be detailed under its respective Unit forum on the ***Discussion Board***.

Your objectives for Discussion Board Posts are as follows:

1. To gain a better understanding of the important concepts, terminology, issues and arguments addressed in the current week's readings;
2. To identify ways that previous weeks' readings support, refute, or otherwise relate to the current week's readings;
3. To gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for viewpoints, experiences, and circumstances that differ from one's own;
4. To use the concepts discussed in the readings to help each other make sense of real-world issues that affect your lives and the lives of others.

You can expect to make a minimum of 4 posts if you want to pass each Discussion Board assignment, and there are two different types of posts, as follows:

**INITIAL POSTS**—One initial post is required for each Discussion board assignment, and is due on the discussion board by TUESDAY AT 11:59 PM during the week a particular Unit is being covered. These posts are your individual responses to the questions posed in the Discussion Board assignment prompt for each Unit. Please note that if you are asked multiple questions, you must respond to each question to receive full credit (unless otherwise noted). Initial posts are typically between 200-300 words each and must be a well-written response that draws from multiple readings. You must post your initial post as a *unique thread*. This can be done by opening the general forum for the particular Unit in the Discussion Board Section of the course and clicking on the "Create Thread" button.

**RESPONSE POSTS**—After making your initial posts, you will engage your fellow classmates in discussions about the readings. This will involve reading some of the Initial Posts made by your classmates and offering a response. Students should make a minimum of 3 response posts per assignment (in addition to the initial posts). **These response posts must be to other students' initial posts (e.g., not responses to your own initial post, and not responses to other's responses).** Each forum will remain open and available for response postings until FRIDAY AT 11:59 PM during its respective week. The length of response posts will vary, but should be at least 100 words each. Please note that these response posts should still integrate concepts from the class, so it is not sufficient to espouse your unsupported opinions or simply say "Good point, I agree" if you expect to earn a high grade. Also note that your response posts should be civil and respect each other's opinions. You do not always have to agree with each other, but you must always be respectful of each other.

**IMPORTANT GRADING NOTES CONCERNING ALL POSTS:**

- Each Discussion Board Assignment is worth 20 points. Half of this will come from your initial post and the other half will come from your series of response posts.
- Only posts that make direct and explicit connections to course readings are eligible for credit. Any post that does not satisfy this requirement will earn zero (0) points.

- Proper APA citation of all sources is required within the text of each post (you do not need a reference list for Discussion Board Posts). Please note that “citation” does NOT mean “direct quote.” In fact, you should MINIMIZE direct quotes and use them *only when absolutely necessary*. Focus instead on paraphrasing and applying the main points, arguments, and concepts in the readings. If direct quotes are abused I will be forced to institute a policy that forbids their use in discussion board posts.
- Posts must be made over multiple days to be eligible for full credit. The benefits of a discussion board can only be gained when students visit the forum throughout the week to engage in actual discussion with other students. If you make all of your discussion posts on one day/one sitting, do not expect to receive the maximum points for that assignment.
- The back-and-forth exchange of ideas is an important component of this learning forum. Ultimately, the more people whose posts you read and with whom you engage in conversation about the readings, the more opportunities you will have to learn new ways of thinking about and making connections with the readings and course concepts. Therefore, to be eligible for full credit, you should make clear efforts to hold thoughtful, readings-related discussions with many different students over the course of the semester.

➤ **Module Quizzes (3 quizzes x 40 points each = 120 total points)**

Each Module will conclude with a Module Quiz consisting of multiple choice, matching, and true/false questions that relate directly to course readings for each Unit within that Module. The Module Quiz will be completed online via Blackboard. A link to each Module Quiz will be provided in its respective *Module* and due dates will be posted on the course calendar. You must complete the Module Quizzes alone; however, you are free to use the readings while you take the quiz. That said, you will have limited time to complete each Quiz, so do not expect to succeed unless you have done the readings each week and understand/remember the important concepts. In other words, you will not have time to look up the answer to every question. Module Quizzes will not be cumulative and will only cover the readings for specific Units within that Module.

➤ **CMC Log/A Day Without CMC Assignment (35 points)**

During Unit 3 you will engage in an assignment that will be similar to the discussion board assignments, except far more detailed (and therefore worth more points). This activity requires a minimum of 2 full days to complete, so begin it as early as possible. For ONE day you will monitor and document your use of communication technology/media. In addition, you will select ONE day to go completely without communication technology/media, and you will keep a journal to document that experience. Please see the Unit 3 section of the course menu for complete/detailed instructions.

➤ **Virtual Team Activity (35 points)**

In the Virtual Team Activity, students are given the opportunity to put course concepts into action and to gain hands-on experience working on a virtual team. This activity will be due during Unit 10, so there will be no Discussion Board Assignment that week. Communicating through CMC only, students will work in groups of 4 to complete a team task. After the activity, each student will write an analysis and evaluation of his/her virtual team experience based on course concepts. Please go to *Virtual Team* from the course menu for detailed information.

### ➤ CMC and Me Assignment (30 points)

Think of this assignment as your final reflection on the semester. This assignment is due during the final week of class and involves making a lengthy initial post, followed by normal response posts. Your task is to write a 3-page paper (12 pt Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1 inch margins) that discusses the role of CMC in your life. Which forms of CMC do you use, for what purposes and to what end? Identify some of the positive and negative impacts that CMC has on your life, including your personal and professional relationships. What have you learned that will help you better utilize CMC in the future? You should base your entire discussion on important concepts addressed in the course readings. Therefore, you should draw from the information and arguments set forth in a MINIMUM of 6 course readings (which should be drawn from at least 4 different units) to build and support your analyses, evaluations, and claims in this assignment. We have been discussing similar topics throughout the semester, so the point of this final assignment is to integrate all of the various units and identify the topics that are most pertinent to your life. So, you should really be looking back on the whole semester and showing what you learned. As always, proper APA-style formatting and in-text citations/referencing is expected.

### **IMPORTANT: Submitting Assignments via SafeAssign**

The “CMC Log/Day without CMC Assignment”, “Virtual Team Assignment” and “CMC and Me Assignment” must be submitted to *SafeAssign* as “.doc” files only (do not submit it as a “.docx” or “.pdf” file). Assignments will not be accepted via any other means. When you submit an assignment to SafeAssign, verify that your paper was submitted correctly by going to the Grade Center. If you see a white exclamation point (“!”) inside of a green box in the space where your grade will be, then your submission was received. It is your responsibility to verify this PRIOR to the deadline as no assignments will be accepted that are not successfully submitted through SafeAssign by the deadline.

### **Additional Course Information**

In addition to this syllabus, read the files provided in *Course Information* on our Blackboard site to answer other questions you may have about how to succeed in this course. Finally, always keep copies of everything you turn in to me until the semester is over and you have received your final grade.

### **GRADES**

**Points**—There are 450 available points contributing to your final grade, as follows:

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Max Points</u>
Syllabus Quiz and Self Introductions (First week assignment)	10 points
Discussion Board Assignments (20 pts each x 11 graded assignments)	220 points
Module Quizzes (40 pts each X 3 modules)	120 points
CMC Log/Day Without CMC (Unit 3 Assignment)	35 points
Virtual Team Activity (Unit 10 Assignment)	35 points
CMC and Me Assignment (Final Reflection Assignment)	30 points
<b>TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE</b>	<b>450 points</b>

### Assignment Grade Descriptions

A+ = PERFECT! (This is very rare)

A = Excellent! In addition to excellent quality and performance, work that earns an “A” exceeds minimum requirements.

B = Very good! A grade of “B” indicates successful completion of all assignment requirements with little room for improvement. Please note that all minimum requirements must be satisfactorily completed to earn a grade of “B” or better. Writing skills and overall performance should be above average.

C = Average. A grade of “C” indicates work in good standing. All minimum requirements are met, although some might need improvement. Writing skills may be flawed, but are at an acceptable level for an upper division course.

D = Passing...but below average. The assignment’s minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of work is less than average.

E = Not passing. Minimum requirements are not met and quality of work is poor.

XE = Failure due to cheating. Please do not plagiarize (it’s not worth it)!

TIP: The most common reason for earning a “C” or lower is missing coursework or failure to properly apply course concepts from course readings. Improper APA style, poor grammar, sloppy writing, typos, and failing to follow directions might also reduce your grade.

### Final Letter Grade

The following is the percentage and point break-down for each letter grade (please be advised that I do not round up):

Grade	Points	%
A+	450	100%
A	418.5-449.5	93 - 99.9%
A-	405-418	90 - 92.9%
B+	391.5-404.5	87 - 89.9%
B	373.5-391	83 - 86.9%
B-	360-373	80 - 82.9%
C+	346.5-359.5	77 - 79.9%
C	315-346	70 - 76.9%
D	270-314.5	60 - 69.9%
E	0-269.5	0 - 59.9%

### ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES

#### Academic Integrity

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to University policies regarding academic honesty, as specified in the current Catalog and Schedule of Classes. Cheating in any form, or plagiarizing any part or parts of oral or written work (someone else’s or your own from previous coursework) is automatic grounds for receiving an XE grade in the course. In addition, a report may be filed with the university administration for further possible action (including expulsion from the University). If you are uncertain about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, consult the University Catalog and Schedule of Classes for definitions and for

information regarding your rights and responsibilities. The Student Code of Conduct may be found at: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/usi/usi104-01.html>.

### **Personal Conduct**

Whether communicating on the Discussion Board, through email, or in the chat room, students are expected to conduct themselves in a considerate, respectful, and civil manner. Any violation of proper classroom and/or online etiquette is grounds for one or more of the following: (1) receiving a “0” on the assignment, (2) being banned from participating on the discussion board which will result in a “0” on all remaining discussion board assignments, and/or (3) university-sanctioned disciplinary action. If you feel that someone is verbally abusive to you or otherwise violating rules of conduct, do not respond to the person! Instead, notify your instructor immediately.

### **Special Needs**

If you have a disability that may affect your participation in class, please see me as soon as possible so I can accommodate your needs. I will make appropriate accommodations for any qualified students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resource Center. The DRC will work with both of us to ensure proper accommodations are made. If you need accommodations reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/> or 480.965.1234 or TTY 480.965.9000).

### **Right to Privacy**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) ensures that your student records (for any students over 18 years of age) are kept confidential. I will not release your grades to anyone other than you or school officials who are given permission to view your progress. Anyone other than you (or an approved school official) may not request any information (beyond simple directory information) about you, your progress, or your status as a student in my class – this includes parents, partners, and other students. For more information, see: <http://students.asu.edu/policies/ferpa>.

### **Acceptable Use of Computer System**

As a student in this class you're subject to the Acceptable Use Policies for ASU's computer systems. Anyone violating these policies will receive an automatic grade of "E" for the course and will be referred to the University for disciplinary action.

### **Questions, Concerns, Course Problems**

If you have any concerns regarding the course, contact me via e-mail immediately. I am always willing to assist you in any way I can. **Remember, do NOT contact me for computer and Blackboard-related problems.** Please contact the help desk for those issues at 480-965-6500 or the following email addresses: [myasu-q@asu.edu](mailto:myasu-q@asu.edu) or [HelpDesk@asu.edu](mailto:HelpDesk@asu.edu). **Computers do act up, so plan ahead and give yourself plenty of time to work through the material.**

### **Have Fun!**

Online courses are what you make of them. Feel free to play with the material, share your ideas, and contribute to the class. The more you engage the material and your fellow classmates, the more you'll enjoy and benefit from the course. I look forward to exploring with you some of the many ways that CMC touches our lives, relationships, and world!