

CMS346
Using Communication Technology At Work
Spring 2020

Instructor:

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Office Hours: W 11–12:00pm, Th 10–11:00am

Teaching Assistant:

Course Description

How do people use information technology – email, instant messaging, knowledge management systems, and social media – in the contemporary workplace? In this course we will examine how these technologies help and hinder communication at work. Together, we will engage with scholarly theories, empirical research and practical case studies to consider the complicated relationship between organizations, employees, and their devices. In an independent inquiry, you will conduct a research project considering a workplace information technology using academic and popular press literature. By the end of this course, you will be able to ...

- Evaluate the implications of workplace technologies using foundational theories and scholars from communication studies.
- Synthesize research from a variety of sources, identifying themes and practical applications.
- Conduct a basic research project, investigating a workplace technology and resulting in an actionable recommendation for an organization.
- Approach email (and messaging channels like Slack and G-chat) with purpose and tact.
- Express your ideas creatively and clearly through a slide deck or PowerPoint.
- Think critically about your own use of information technologies in your professional life .

By the end of this course, I will have learned / developed / achieved / prioritized ...

The greatest obstacle to my success will be ...

But I will overcome that, in pursuit of my goal, by ...

OVERVIEW

My Guidelines

I will **respond to email** on weekdays, usually within 24 hours. One of the major themes of this course is managing the ‘always on’ mentality that workplace technologies inspire. Prompt email is an import part of professional communication, but a meaningful life doesn’t come from an inbox. That being said, it is the responsibility of both instructors and students to check their email regularly throughout the week.

Assignments and projects are to be **submitted to canvas** by 11:59pm (central time) by the due date listed on the syllabus.

Late assignments and projects are accepted within a reasonable timeframe, strongly discouraged, and will not receive feedback.

Exams can’t be rescheduled or made-up, unless documentation is provided. For absences known ahead of time (holy days, university activity travel) arrangements must be made at least 14 days before the exam date, per UT requirement. Holiday travel is not considered an appropriate reason for rescheduling an exam.

Discussions of **grades or grade changes** on assignments, projects and exams will only occur in person, at office hours or in a scheduled appointment. Discussion may begin after a 24-hour ‘cooling off period’ and within two-weeks of the assignment, project or exam’s return.

Using something that you wrote for another class, that your friend wrote, that you found online, or that read elsewhere but didn’t properly credit, are all **plagiarism**. Don’t do it. It will result in you receiving a 0 for the assignment. For further info please see:
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint_plagiarism.php.

In the spirit of this course, we will collaboratively draft our **classroom technology policy**:

COURSE WORK

How Does this Class Work?

Three-hour classes often meet three times per week; however, as a hybrid, we will meet twice a week (Monday and Wednesday) for discussion.

- Discussion – Come to our meeting prepared to discuss the reading material and interact with course concepts through in-class activities. I recommend bringing your readings, printed, to class.

Instead of meeting on Fridays, the extra hour of class time will be devoted to a self-guided lesson in the form of a weekly project.

- Self-Guided – The prompt for the project is distributed each week on Monday. Your response is **due on Friday at 11:59 pm**. I recommend budgeting 1.5 – 3 hours to complete each project, acknowledging that the university accounts for about 2 hours of preparation for each hour of class time. Projects will be evaluated based on your active engagement with the course concepts.
- There are 10 self-guided projects during the semester. On weeks without a prompt, you'll dedicate the Friday project period to independent work on the major course assignments.

Assessments

Participation (25 at 4 points each).....	50 points
Self-Guided Projects (9 at 10 points each)	90 points
Exam 1.....	80 points
Exam 2.....	80 points
Workplace Technologies Research Paper	80 points
Workplace Technologies Research Presentation	20 points

Total: 450 possible points

Participation

Participation credit is assessed daily. It is earned in two ways: 1) through attending class on Mondays and Wednesdays, and being fully present with your attention and open mind. I believe there are many ways to participate in the classroom: sharing your thoughts aloud, discussing with one of your peers, brainstorming in a small group, and peripherally participating through deep listening or note taking. 2) Or, through completing occasional low-stakes activities, which are assessed on a credit/no credit basis. Should you attend class without completing a low-stakes assignment, partial participation credit can be earned.

We will meet for discussion 29 times throughout the semester. In order to earn full credit for participation, you will need to be present and fully participating for at least 25 of these meetings, at 4 points each. Your daily participation grade will be negatively impacted through arriving late, tuning-out/tuning-in to your phone or outside material, and absences.

Self-Guided Projects

As a hybrid course, part of your learning will take place through independently and creatively exploring the course material through a weekly project. A prompt will be distributed each week on Monday. The required word count will vary (usually between 250-500 words), and should be all ideas and no fluff. Projects should be submitted on canvas the following **Friday at 11:59 pm**. There will be 9 self-guided projects throughout the semester, graded out of 10 points each. A sample grading rubric will be distributed on Monday, January 29.

Exams

Both the midterm and final exam will consist of multiple-choice and short answers questions that ask you to recall and apply concepts from discussions and readings. Exam 1 (the **midterm**) will be held during week 8, in class on March 11th. A study guide outline will be available on February 28th. Exam 2 (the **final**) will be held during the final exam period, scheduled for May 14th (a) and May 16th (b). A study guide outline will be available on April 24th. The final will be cumulative.

Workplace Technologies Research Project

Imagine that your manager has asked you to research and report on a communication technology that your company is considering implementing. You may want to apply this technology to a particular industry that interests you. You will need to use a communication technology that is used in organizations today that addresses issues of *communication*.

A full assignment description and rubric will be distributed on March 23rd. We will limit duplication through publicly posting a chosen field and technology on our course Canvas site, which will open the following Friday on March 27th at 10:00am. The final report is due on **May 6th**.

Workplace Technologies Presentation

In many high-tech workplaces, information is presented and circulated in a slide deck. The best slide decks communicate information both to the audience of your presentation and to those who will read it over email or access it in knowledge databases afterwards. Your presentation will be 5 minutes (not very long!) and should use a narrative to clearly communicate both the stakes of technology use and your recommendations. A full assignment description and grading rubric will be distributed on April 6th. Presentations will take place in-class, weeks 13 through 15.

GRADING

Point Distribution

Students will be assessed on four different criteria

1. Participation (100 points total)
2. Self Guided Projects (90 points total)
3. Exams (160 points total)
4. Research Project and Presentation (100 points total)

This course carries the **Independent Inquiry flag**. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

Grade Conversion

A	93– 100%	Excellent: Far exceed all standards
A-	90 – 92%	
B+	87 – 89%	
B	83 – 86%	Above Average: Exceeded some standards
B-	80 – 82%	
C+	77 – 79%	
C	73 – 76%	Average: Fulfilled all standards
C-	70 – 72%	
D	69 – 60%	Pass: Fulfilled most standards
F	below 59.5%	Fail: Did not meet several standards

LEARNING RESOURCES

Canvas Site

For this course, we will be using Canvas – a web-based course management system with password-protected access – to distribute course material, communicate, post grades, and submit and assess assignments. If you need help with Canvas, you can get in touch with the ITS Help Desk 475-9400, Monday through Friday 8:00am – 6:00pm. Our course page can be found here: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1270602>

Textbooks

In the beginning of this course, we will be engaging primarily with articles that are available on Canvas. The textbooks listed below will be used in the second half of the course, and will be available at the UT bookstore in mid-September.

1. Slideology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations by Nancy Duarte
2. How to Not Always be Working by Marlee Grace

Materials

Please bring a package of 3x5 notecards with you each day to class. We will use these for low-stakes participation activities. A piece of a paper ripped in half is not a substitute.

WELLNESS RESOURCES

I'm committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment for everyone. Y'all means all, no exceptions.

(Dis)ability and Neurodiversity

Let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure your ability to participate fully and succeed in our class. If you are a student with a disability, or if you are experiencing challenges in your learning, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). There is more information here: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability>. As part of the faculty, I'm also committed to complying with university policies and federal and state laws – many of which require we uphold educational opportunities for all students. Please don't hesitate to advocate for yourself and seek assistance from me, SSD and the wider university community.

If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as soon as you can in the semester so we can confidentially discuss your approved accommodations and so I can support your success in this course.

Counseling and Emotional Support

College is a time of personal growth and (often brilliant!) new experiences. But, transformation isn't always easy. If you're feeling stressed or lost, UT offers free or low-cost, one-on-one counseling for students. There are also free and unlimited group therapy sessions. If you're feeling the impact of your identity, you can speak with a diversity counselor.

There is also free, same-day crisis support. You can walk-in between 8:00 am - 5:00 pm or call a crisis counselor at 512-471-2255.

Food Pantry

Almost 23% of UT students have experienced a time when they didn't have reliable access to affordable, nutritious food. Hunger and food insecurity shouldn't keep you from succeeding at UT. You can visit the UT Outpost – in the UA9 building (2609 University Avenue) – for a free food packet that will contain 16 meals. It is available to *any student* and doesn't require any documentation of income. The Outpost also provides a career closet, with affordable access to professional clothes.

Access, Equity and Inclusion

The nearest gender-neutral restroom is located in the Moody College at CMA 3.102. For the location of other gender-neutral restrooms on campus, there is a map on the UT website here: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/gender-inclusive-restrooms>. UT's Office of Diversity and Community engagement has also created an app called Inclusive U, that maps all gender-neutral and ADA accessible bathrooms on campus. You can download it from the app store.

For nursing mothers, the nearest quiet room with a breast pump is located in the Moody College at BMC 2.708. For more information: <http://hr.utexas.edu/current/services/lactation-quiet-room-locations>

Student Emergency Services

If are experiencing an emergency situation – a missing student, a family concern, a medical or mental health crisis, stalking, sexual harassment, physical/mental/sexual abuse, natural disaster, fire – or academic difficulties that arise from these situations, please call 412-471-5017. They will provide you with support, referrals and resources.

If you're worried about your roommate, a fellow student or co-worker, you can seek advice through contracting the UT Behavioral Concerns Advice Line available 24 hours a day at 512-232-5050 (anonymous) or online through besafe.ut.texas.edu (requires a UTeid). If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Title IX Reporting Statement

As a UT faculty member, I'm a "Responsible Employee." This means that I am required to report any violations of Title IX to the Title IX coordinator. A Title IX violation includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking and discrimination based on sex or gender. It is mandatory that I report anything you tell me that could be considered one of these violations.

In the event of a report, I will work with the university to do three things: (1) intervene to prevent harmful behavior (2) provide support to those who have experienced harm (3) to investigate and discipline those who have caused harm by violating the university's policies.

If you want to speak to someone who is not a Responsible Employee for confidential support you can email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information, visit titleix.utexas.edu.