

New telecommunication media

Comm 4291

Prof. Gil Rodman

rodman@umn.edu / 626.7721

office hours (253 Ford):

TuTh 2:30-4p, W 2-3p, and by appointment

Syllabus

Spring 2008

GTA Julie Wilson

wils0775@umn.edu / 626.0574

office hours (275 Ford):

Tu 12:30-2p, Th 2-3:30p

Course description and objectives

It has become something of a cliché to claim that the world has been “revolutionized” by the broad and eclectic range of “new” communication technologies that includes the Internet, laptop computers, mobile phones, iPods, Blackberries, and the like. How true that cliché is, however, depends a great deal on precisely which technologies one is talking about and on just where in the world one is trying to measure their impact. This course will provide a survey of some -- but by no means all -- of the major social, cultural, and political issues raised by the growth and spread of digital media. While our readings will occasionally include brief technical discussions, this is *not* a course about the science of digital media (e.g., how does WiFi work? what are the acoustic limitations of satellite radio? etc.) and your ability to succeed will *not* depend on whether you can master the intricacies of software engineering, computer circuitry, or the like.

Few (if any) of the questions we'll address this semester have easy or predictable answers. How well you do in this class will depend on (1) your ability to think *critically* about issues related to technology, media, culture, and politics, and (2) your ability to *argue* your position(s) on those issues persuasively, rather than your ability to memorize and repeat the “right” answers.

Permanent course rules

1-001. Applicability of rules. All rules listed in the original syllabus are in effect when the semester begins and remain in effect until and unless they are officially changed.

1-002. Rule types. There are three types of course rules:

(a) Permanent course rules. These rules can only be changed, amended, or repealed by the professor, who will only do so under emergency circumstances. They are numbered with a “1-” prefix.

(b) Major course rules. These rules require at least a supermajority vote (i.e., greater than 66.66%) to be created, changed, amended, or repealed. They are numbered with a “2-” prefix.

(c) Minor course rules. These rules require at least a majority vote (i.e., greater than 50%) to be created, changed, amended, or repealed. They are numbered with a “3-” prefix.

1-003. Hierarchy of rules. In the event of conflicts between two or more rules, major rules take precedent over minor rules, and permanent rules take precedent over both major and minor rules. If conflicting rules are in the same level of the hierarchy, the rule with the lowest number takes precedent (e.g., a rule numbered #3-152 would take precedence over a rule numbered #3-155).

1-004. Class participants. There are three categories of class participants:

(a) Professor. The professor (Gil Rodman) is the final arbiter and enforcer of all course rules, and the only person authorized to determine and/or assign final course grades. He is also authorized to determine and/or assign grades for individual assignments (or portions thereof).

(b) Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA). The GTA (Julie Wilson) is authorized to determine and/or assign grades for individual assignments (or portions thereof) as delegated to do so by the professor.

(c) Students. This category includes all individuals whom the University recognizes to be enrolled in the course and any other individual who the professor recognizes as a grade-earning member of the class.

1-005. Eligible voters. All students have the right to propose new rules and/or rule changes, and to vote on official ballots. In any voting situation, each student has exactly one vote. In the event of a tie vote, the GTA is empowered to cast the deciding vote. Should the GTA choose not to resolve the deadlock, the professor will cast the deciding vote. Otherwise, the professor and the GTA are non-voting participants.

1-006. Quorum. Any ballot that fails to achieve a quorum of at least 50% of all eligible voters will be null and void, regardless of the final outcome of the vote.

1-007. Passed ballot grade points. When a ballot passes in accordance with the course rules, the student who formally proposed that ballot will have one (1) point added to their final course grade.

1-008. Timekeeping. For purposes of all course rules, a "course week" begins at 11:15:00 am CT every Tuesday and lasts until 11:14:59 pm CT on the following Tuesday.

1-009. Grade queries. Questions about specific grades should be directed to the assignment's original grader. In the event of a dispute over a GTA-assigned grade, the student in question must make every reasonable effort to resolve that dispute with the GTA before the professor will intervene. Should the professor intervene in such a dispute, he will re-grade the assignment in question, and the resulting grade -- which may be higher than, the same as, or lower than the original grade -- will become the official grade of record for the assignment. The GTA is not empowered to change grades assigned by the professor.

1-010. Higher law. No course rules can be created, changed, or amended in such a way as to violate (a) federal, state, or local law; (b) official UMN regulations; and/or (c) Communication Studies policies.

Major course rules

2-001. Books. The following required books are available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union:

- Gerard Goggin, *Cell Phone Culture*
- Lawrence Lessig, *Code: Version 2.0*
- Eric S. Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* [revised edition]
- Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. Macgregor Wise, *Culture and Technology: A Primer*
- Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Anarchist in the Library*

Please note that earlier editions exist for both the Lessig and Raymond books. Students who opt to acquire their books from alternate sources should make sure that they acquire the editions listed above.

Students who choose the major research project option (see #2-010 below) are strongly encouraged to use the following recommended book (which is also available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union) as a helpful guide for how to conceive, plan, research, and write their final papers:

- Wayne C. Booth *et al.*, *The Craft of Research* [second edition]

2-002. Course blog. All students on the official course roster as of 21 Jan have been given posting privileges for the course blog.

The principal uses for the blog will be for:

- proposing and discussing all changes to the official course rules,
- ongoing discussions of issues raised by the assigned readings and/or in class,
- occasional “virtual lectures” designed to stimulate (additional) online discussion, and
- course-related business announcements.

Further details on how to access the blog are available on a separate handout.

2-003. Yoga mat. All students are required to purchase a molded rubber yoga mat (in UMN maroon and/or gold only; minimum length of 120 inches) that they will bring to every class meeting from 5 Feb until the end of the semester. Students who come to class without their yoga mats will have their course grade docked one (1) point for each and every such infraction.

2-004. Grading schedule. Final course grades will be calculated using the following schedule:

Thought paper	10%
Reading responses	30%
Major research project <u>OR</u> Take-home final exam	60%

Final grade point totals will translate to letter grades as follows:

A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	0-59

- “S/N” grades will only be given to students who have registered for the course on an S/N basis.
- “I” grades will only be given under extraordinary circumstances (i.e., major life emergencies).

2-005. Attendance/participation. Class meetings will be structured around discussions rather than lectures. The professor will assume that all students present on any given day are suitably prepared to contribute to those discussions: i.e., they will have done the assigned reading carefully enough to offer productive comments and questions about the reading. In this context, “being prepared” does not require a full mastery of the assigned readings. It does, however, require the sort of good faith effort that can be demonstrated with a thoughtful question and/or a clear explanation of at least some meaningful portion of the reading. Vague, superficial, and/or generic contributions (e.g., “I just didn’t get it,” “I liked this essay,” “What does [word found in the reading] mean?”) will not count as evidence of adequate preparation.

The professor will routinely call on students by name and ask them to contribute to the discussion. Students who are absent or unprepared when called upon in, or who otherwise demonstrate that they are not suitably prepared, will have their course grades docked according to the following schedule:

	<u>absent</u>	<u>unprepared</u>
1st time	0 points	0 points
2nd-3rd time	1 point each	2 points each
4th+ time	2 points each	3 points each

2-006. Valentine's Day. In appreciation of Tim Behme's excellent work as the department's undergraduate advisor, all students must bring one of the following items to class for Tim on 14 Feb:

- one dozen long-stemmed roses (white or pink only)
- one box of imported chocolates (minimum of 24 pieces)
- one hand-made Valentine addressed to Tim

Students who fail to meet this requirement will have their course grade docked by three (3) points.

2-007. Written assignments -- general rules.

(a) Where/how to submit assignments. Unless specifically noted otherwise in the course rules, all written work must be submitted in both printed and digital versions, and the text of each version must be identical.

- Printed versions should be double-spaced and stapled (do not use plastic covers/binders).
- Digital versions should be e-mailed to rodman@umn.edu.
- Acceptable digital formats are OpenOffice, WordPerfect, Word, RTF, PDF, HTML, and plaintext.
- Neither the professor nor the GTA will print out hard copies from digital submissions, and so students will not receive written feedback unless they submit both versions.
- Students submitting printed versions of assignments outside of the normal class period should either hand such work directly to the professor or place it in his campus mailbox in 250 Ford. Do not submit assignments to the GTA's mailbox or under office doors. Please note that the 250 Ford normally closes shortly before 4:00 pm every day.

(b) Deadlines. At least one -- and preferably both -- versions of any assignment must be submitted by 11:15 am on the date it is due. Students who only submit one of the two required versions on time have until 3:30 pm on the due date to submit the other version. Late penalties will apply to all assignments where (a) neither printed or digital versions have been submitted by 11:15 am or (b) only one version has been submitted by 3:30 pm. Late penalties will be assessed in direct proportion to the assignment's lateness. The minimum penalty in all such cases will be one full letter grade.

(c) Grammar/spelling/etc. Grades for written assignments will be based primarily on content (rather than form): e.g., insightful, smartly argued essays that contain a few spelling errors will almost always receive higher grades than grammatically flawless papers that have weak arguments. Nonetheless, grammar, spelling, and style still matter to the effective presentation of a strong argument, and assignments suffering from significant "form" problems will be penalized accordingly.

(d) Accepted languages. All written assignments submitted after 31 Jan must be submitted in one (or more) of the following languages:

Bottle-nosed Dolphin	Klingon	Navajo
Esperanto	Mandarin Chinese	Proto-Indo-European
Flemish	Mayan	Wolof

Written work submitted in any other languages -- including English -- will be penalized a full letter grade.

2-008. Thought paper. All students must write and submit a short (1000-1250 words) paper by 29 Jan. This assignment will be ungraded. Students who turn the paper in on time should receive full credit for doing so, though the professor reserves the right to give partial (or even no) credit to papers that fall short of the assignment's requirements. Further details about this assignment are available on a separate handout. That handout constitutes a legally binding extension of this course rule.

2-009. Reading responses. All students must write and submit a minimum of fifteen (15) short reading responses, each of which will consist of a significant comment or question about a different one of our assigned readings. Each reading response is due by 11:15 am the day before the class period for which a given reading is assigned. Further details about this assignment are available on a separate handout. That handout constitutes a legally binding extension of this course rule.

2-010. Major research project. This assignment will result in a 4000+ word argumentative research paper on a topic appropriate to the course's central theme. Final papers are due by 10:00 am on 14 May. There are several mandatory intermediate deadlines designed to help students complete their projects in a timely and satisfactory fashion.

This assignment is designed so that it can be used to satisfy the Senior Paper requirement for Communication Studies majors. Students intending to use this project for this purpose must:

- inform the professor in writing of their intent to do so by 31 Jan,
- register for Comm 3995 by 1 Feb (see Tim Behme in 274 Ford for "magic numbers"), and
- earn a grade of B- or better on their completed project.

Further details about this assignment are available on a separate handout. That handout constitutes a legally binding extension of this course rule.

2-011. Code-your-own software assignment. All students will design and code a major piece of software from scratch. Allowable types of software for this assignment are limited to the following:

e-mail client	ogg-vorbis music player	spreadsheet
instant messaging client	photo editor	web browser
MMORPG engine	RSS feedreader	word processor

Finished software is due on 12 Feb and must be submitted in DVD format. This assignment will not be graded, but students who fail to complete it will have ten (10) points deducted from their course grades.

2-012. Academic integrity. To help avoid potentially disastrous misunderstandings, the following is a partial list of major examples of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism in any of its forms,
- copying assignments (in whole or in part) produced by other students,
- having someone else research and/or write substantial portions of any graded assignment, and
- knowingly assisting someone else in their efforts to engage in any of the above practices.

The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is a zero for the assignment in question -- and, in cases involving the major research project, such a penalty will result in a final course grade of F.

Further information about the University's official policies with respect to academic dishonesty -- including more detailed explanations of what constitutes "plagiarism" and "cheating" -- can be found online at <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/plagiarism/>

2-013. Favre Loyalty Oath. From 5 Feb onward, all of our class meetings will begin with a mandatory group recitation of "The Oath of Eternal Loyalty to Brett Favre." The full text of this oath (which all students must commit to memory) is as follows:

I swear by all that is holy and true in the cosmos
That I shall be forever faithful to Brett Favre,
Who shines forth like Packer gold on a cloudy day,
And is the greatest quarterback ever to trod upon the frozen tundra.
I shall honor Brett faithfully and fully,
Forswearing all other football allegiances,
And defend his name and legend, if need be, with my very life.

Students who fail to memorize the Oath completely and accurately, to participate in our in-class recitations of the Oath, and/or to abide by the noble ideals expressed in the Oath will have their final course grade penalized one (1) point for each infraction.

2-014. Recordings and notes. Students are allowed to make audio recordings of our class meetings for their personal use, provided they can do so without disrupting the ordinary flow of the class. The purchase and/or sale of either written notes or audio recordings of our class meetings is strictly prohibited.

2-015. Etiquette. Significant disruptions of the normal flow of course-related business -- e.g., using cell phones in class, excessive side chatter, engaging in premature leave-taking behavior -- will result in grade penalties for the student(s) involved.

2-016. Reading/assignment schedule. The schedule below lists reading assignments and due dates for major written assignments. Readings should be completed in advance of the dates listed.

Jan 22	no reading
Jan 24	syllabus and assignment handouts [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 1]
Jan 29	thought paper due Slack and Wise, pp. 1-50 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 2]
Jan 31	Slack and Wise, pp. 51-82 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 3]
Feb 5	Slack and Wise, pp. 83-134 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 4]
Feb 7	Slack and Wise, pp. 135-162 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 5]
Feb 12	paper topic / 5-item bibliography due Slack and Wise, pp. 163-196 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 6]
Feb 14	Goggin, pp. 1-40 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 7]
Feb 19	Goggin, pp. 41-88 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 8]
Feb 21	Goggin, pp. 89-125 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 9]
Feb 26	Goggin, pp. 126-161 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 10]
Feb 28	Goggin, pp. 162-211 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 11]
Mar 4	Lessig, pp. ix-60 [recommended: Booth <i>et al.</i> , ch. 12]

Mar 6 **NO CLASS**
Lessig, pp. 61-82
[recommended: Booth *et al.*, ch. 13]

Mar 11 **thesis paragraph / annotated 10-item bibliography due**
Lessig, pp. 83-137
[recommended: Booth *et al.*, ch. 14]

Mar 13 Lessig, pp. 138-168
[recommended: Booth *et al.*, ch. 16]

Mar 18 **NO CLASS -- SPRING BREAK**

Mar 20 **NO CLASS -- SPRING BREAK**

Mar 25 **rough draft #1 due**
Lessig, pp. 169-199

Mar 27 Lessig, pp. 200-232

Apr 1 Lessig, pp. 233-280

Apr 3 Lessig, pp. 281-312

Apr 8 Lessig, pp. 313-339

Apr 10 Raymond, pp. ix-18

Apr 15 **rough draft #2 due**
Raymond, pp. 19-64

Apr 17 Raymond, pp. 65-112

Apr 22 Raymond, pp. 113-166

Apr 24 Raymond, pp. 167-194

Apr 29 Vaidhyanathan, pp. ix-64

May 1 Vaidhyanathan, pp. 65-96

May 6 Vaidhyanathan, pp. 97-150

May 8 Vaidhyanathan, pp. 151-192

May 14 **NO CLASS**
take-home final exam due
final paper and verification pages due

Minor course rules

3-001. Changing course rules. With the sole exception of rule changes proposed in class on 24 Jan (see #3-013 below), all changes/additions/amendments to the course rules must adhere to the four-step process described in rules #3-003 through #3-006.

3-002. E-mail timing. From 1 Feb onward, all course-related e-mail sent to either the professor or the GTA must have a timestamp indicating that it was sent between 3:24:00 am and 3:32:17 am CT. E-mail sent outside that obligatory time period will be ignored.

3-003. Proposing rule changes. All potential rule changes must first be proposed on the course blog. An official proposal will consist of a post to the course blog in which:

- the subject line takes the form “PROPOSAL #mm-dd-name” -- where “mm-dd” are numbers representing the date on which the proposal is made and where “name” consists of the last name of the proposal’s author. [Example: a properly formatted subject line for a proposal made by Jennifer Slack on 8 Feb would be “PROPOSAL #02-08-Slack”]
- the body contains the precise text -- and only the precise text -- of the proposal that will be put to a formal vote.
- the post is “tagged” with a “rule changes” tag.

Blog posts that fail to follow the requirements listed above precisely will not be considered to be legitimate proposals. Votes cast on any illegitimate proposals will be null and void.

Proposed rule changes must relate to official course business in a clear and explicit fashion, and must be enforceable within the existing structure of the course. The outcome of any and all ballots must be fully decidable by means of a simple Yes/No vote.

Students may formally propose a maximum of one (1) rule change each per course week. In the event that a student proposes more than one legally formatted ballot in a single course week, only the first such ballot proposed will be considered to be legitimate.

3-004. Discussion of proposed rule changes. The successful posting of a properly formatted proposal will automatically start a 72-hour period for open discussion of the proposal in question. The discussion period is intended to give proposal authors the opportunity to assess the potential effects and/or viability of their proposals -- and, if they so desire, to make revisions to their proposals prior to any formal vote. During the discussion period, any and all course participants are welcome to use the course blog to offer questions, suggestions, objections, and/or other commentary on the proposal in question.

3-005. Revision or withdrawal of proposed rule changes. After the discussion period ends, the original proposal author has three options:

(a) To post an official revision to the proposal. Such a revision must follow the same format described in #3-003 above except that the word “PROPOSAL” must be replaced by the word “BALLOT.” Once the discussion period has ended and a legally formatted revision has been posted, no further revisions are permitted, and the voting period (see below) begins immediately.

(b) To withdraw the proposal completely. For a withdrawal to be official, the original proposal author must post a new message to the course blog that clearly, unambiguously, and unconditionally states her/his desire to withdraw the proposal. Once formally withdrawn, a proposal is not eligible for an official vote unless it is subsequently put forward as a new proposal following the rules described here.

(c) To do nothing. If 24 hours passes after the discussion period and neither (a) nor (b) above has happened, then the original proposal automatically becomes a “live” ballot.

3-006. Voting. The official voting period for all ballots will last for 72 hours. All voting shall be done via e-mail. Votes must be sent to rodman@umn.edu during the official voting period for any given ballot item and must conform to the following rules:

- The subject line must contain the precise identifying portion (i.e., the “#mm-dd-name” portion) of the ballot item in question.
- Ballots must originate from an e-mail address that clearly and recognizably belongs to an eligible voter: e.g., a student’s official UMN e-mail address or a non-UMN e-mail address that the professor can reliably and accurately associate with an eligible voter.
- The body of the e-mailed ballot must contain one and only one of the following three words: Yes, No, Abstain. This word will be recorded as part of the official vote tally for the ballot in question.

Votes on separate ballot items must be submitted in separate e-mails. Votes that are unclear, ambiguous, and/or conditional will be null and void. Once cast, votes cannot be changed or retracted -- so vote carefully. Votes that fail to follow these requirements precisely will not be considered to be legitimate votes, either for deciding the outcome of a ballot or for constituting a quorum.

3-007. Gopher spirit. From 1 Feb onwards, all students must wear T-shirts to class honoring two great Minnesota sports teams of the past. On Tuesdays, students must wear maroon T-shirts displaying a team photo of the 1962 Rose Bowl champion Gophers. On Thursdays, students must wear gold T-shirts displaying a reproduction of the *Minnesota Daily* story describing the women’s basketball team’s appearance in the 2004 Final Four. Students who fail to wear the appropriate T-shirts on the appropriate days will have their course grade docked two (2) points for each infraction.

3-008. Changed rules. Changes to existing rules are considered to have passed if and only if:

- they have been proposed in accordance with the official course rules,
- they have been voted on in accordance with the official course rules,
- they have been judged by the professor not to be “illegal” rule changes, and
- they have received the number of Yes votes necessary to change the rule(s) in question, as determined by their hierarchical type.

3-009. New rules. New rules are considered to have passed if and only if:

- they have been proposed in accordance with the official course rules,
- they have been voted on in accordance with the official course rules, and
- they have been judged by the professor not to be “illegal” rule changes.

Unless their wording specifically states otherwise, new rules will be assigned to a hierarchical category based on the percentage of Yes votes received: i.e., a new rule receiving at least a supermajority Yes vote will be implemented as a major course rule, whereas a new rule receiving only a simple majority Yes vote will be implemented as a minor course rule.

3-010. Celebrity photos. By 1 May, all students must have taken a candid photograph of themselves with a celebrity (preferably on a family vacation or a secret date), had their photo published on one of the leading celebrity news/gossip blogs (preferably perezhilton.com or TMZ.com), and post a link to their celebrity photo on the course blog. In order to qualify, the celebrities in question cannot be current or past residents of the state of Minnesota. Students who fail to complete this assignment will have their course grade docked three (3) points.

3-011. Effective date of rule changes. Any rule change(s) resulting from a passed ballot shall take effect at the start of the first class meeting following the completion of the voting period. No ballot may have retroactive application, even if its wording explicitly states otherwise.

3-012. Formal record of rule changes. The full text of any rule changes resulting from passed ballots shall be added to the official course rules maintained on the course blog.

3-013. “First week” ballots. During our class meeting on 24 Jan, students will have the opportunity to meet in small groups for the purposes of proposing changes to the course rules. After that review process, each group will be allowed to propose one (1) official ballot item in class. Using the official form provided for this purpose, any such ballot items must be submitted to the professor by the end of class on 24 Jan. The discussion and revision periods for these ballot items will be waived, and the 72-hour voting period will begin immediately after the professor posts the ballot items to the course blog. For purposes of rule #1-007, grade points for any “first week” ballot item that is officially approved will be awarded to all listed members of the group that originally authored the ballot.

This rule does not infringe on the right of any individual student to propose a separate ballot item during the first course week in accordance with the procedures described above.

N.B.: There are no fewer than nine (9) deliberately flawed rules in the initial syllabus. Students are strongly encouraged to locate these, to propose rule changes that would repeal and/or modify them, and to vote these rule changes into effect. Otherwise, by rule #1-001, even these flawed rules will remain in effect until and unless they are officially changed.

3-014. Change your major. Before classes resume after spring break, all students must have officially and permanently changed their major, and must provide suitable documentation demonstrating that this change has been filed with the University. Students who begin the semester as Communication Studies majors must change to one of the following majors: Aerospace Engineering and Mechanics, Dental Hygiene, Radiation Therapy, or Urban and Community Forestry. All other students must change their major to Communication Studies. Students who fail to provide documentation of their major change will be assigned a course grade of “F.”