Your extremely complete guide to COMS 210 for Fall 2023.
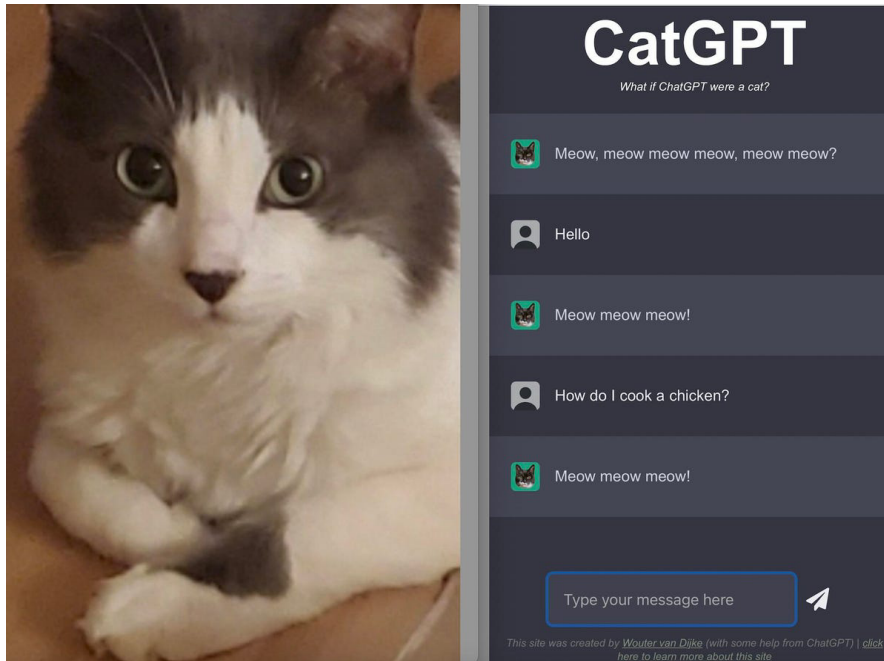
Table of Contents

Introduction to Communication Studies
COMS 210, Fall 2023
T/Th 2:35-3:55pm Montreal time (except where noted)
Location: Leacock 219[1]
Also, a lot of servers in a lot of places.

COMS 210 is a course in media civics. It is designed to help you become a better citizen of reality. It also offers an introduction to the field of Communication Studies as it is practised at McGill. We live in a media-saturated world, yet, despite the constant talk *about* media *by* media institutions, technologies, and personalities, most people know surprisingly little about how and why these systems work the way they do. You will learn about media economics and institutions; ecological impacts of media systems; and media practices and ideologies. Throughout the term we will attend carefully to questions of power, justice, and inequality.
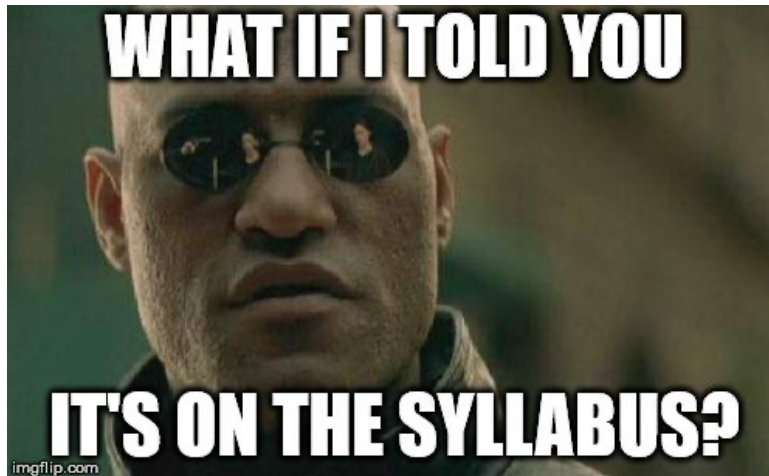
Professor **Jonathan Sterne** (he/they—and "me" and "I" on this syllabus)
    Email: jonathan.sterne@mcgill.ca (list "COMS 210" as the subject of your message)
    Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-2:00pm at my office; and by appointment (exceptions: fall reading week; others may be announced).
    Office Location: W280 Arts; 3rd floor, west wing. If we are meeting at some other time on Zoom, it's https://mcgill.zoom.us/my/jsoffice (password: kittens)
Teaching Assistant: **Kirsten Hawson** (she/they)
    Email: kirsten.hawson@mail.mcgill.ca
Teaching Assistant: **Prabhnoor "Noor" Kaur** (they/she)

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[1]   McGill University is named for James McGill who enslaved Black and Indigenous people. Learn more here at https://www.blackcanadianstudies.com/Recommendations_and_Report.pdf (pp. 55-67). McGill is situated on unceded Indigenous lands in Tiohtiá:ke (Montreal). The Kanien'kehà:ka (Mohawk) of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are recognized as the traditional custodians of these lands and waters. Desire2Learn's headquarters are located on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie. The actual servers we will be using may or may not be located in Quebec, but are very likely to benefit from water and land rights expropriated from Indigenous peoples.

Email: prabhnoor.kaur@mcgill.ca
Teaching Assistant: **Richard Luong** (he/him)
Email: richard.luong@mcgill.ca

TA office hours will be announced on the course website.

We check email every weekday (minus vacation). If you write before we check, you'll get a reply that day. If you write after we check, you'll get a reply the next day. If you don't get one after 24 hours or at the end of a Monday after a weekend, feel free to resend with "resend" in the subject line. We won't be mad. We do not guarantee email replies on weekends, nights, or holidays.

Hey! Yes, you! Read this part!
Please read these scorching hot tips (tl;dr: write to us like we are people):
https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087

We would like to reserve our email time for helping you learn. **Answers to questions about requirements, deadlines, etc. that are not covered on the syllabus or assignment sheets will be posted in course announcements:** Please visit that section of the course first. If your email asks a question that can be answered by looking at the syllabus, announcements, or MyCourses site, we will return a very short reply indicating the location of your answer.

Delivery Plan
Lectures: This class is live and in person, as it should be! As you know from the past few years, this could change. I successfully taught this course online in 2020 and 2021, and can promise a relatively uncomplicated pivot to online instruction if that is needed. I will be traveling to give a few talks during the term and some course material may be "dropped" as podcasts.

Class Recordings: for in-person meetings, we will be using the classroom recording system. This is supposed to record the screen and all the sounds in the classroom. It is inferior to coming to class but a whole lot better than nothing.

We are still in a pandemic and your professor and some of your classmates are immunocompromised: please a) keep your vaccinations up to date; b) stay home if you are sick, Covid positive, or worried that you might infect others (we have recordings for you); c) wear a mask if you are at all symptomatic (including "just getting over it") and stay as far away from the prof as possible; we will have some masks available. Do not be shy about wearing one. We will be very grateful.

Readings: Most weeks will involve 1-3 assigned readings. You are expected to arrive at the relevant class meeting having done the assigned readings; ideally you would do them sometime

on Monday, or on Tuesday morning. **For Thursday, 31 August, please arrive at class having read at least pp 1-17 of this syllabus/course book.**

All materials for COMS 210 will be available through MyCourses. Students will not be asked to purchase any textbooks.

Requirements and Grading

All grading schemes are explained in this course guide. Be sure you understand them before the end of add-drop. There are no extra credit assignments for this course.

To pass this class, you must complete the two projects and keep up with the weekly work.

Almost-Weekly Quizzes: [40%] Over the course of the term, there will be approximately ~~10~~ 9 quizzes on course material. These generally ask you to explain one of the main ideas in one of the readings and/or lectures. They will be administered through MyCourses and are meant to take about 30 minutes. You will have up to 45 minutes to complete the answer to accommodate people who need extra time, or if you have a bad day. We will drop your lowest of the 10 quizzes, which includes dropping a zero if you skip a week or are sick for a week. More details below.

Weekly Reading Posts + Occasional writing: [10% pass-fail]

By noon Montreal time each Tuesday (except for those noted in the syllabus), students will post comments and questions on one or more of the readings in Perusall. More details below.

We will also have a number of short pass/fail writing assignments throughout the term: exit surveys due at the end of a class meeting; and thought exercises collaboratively completed during class time. These assignments are designed to encourage engagement with lectures and reading throughout the term, and to give you an extra incentive to show up and stay caught up. They are also meant to be fun. Over the term there will be at least 20 of these assignments in total, all very easy and low-stakes. We will drop your lowest score, meaning that you can miss up to 5 of these and still earn an A in the category. There are no excused/unexcused missed assignments in this category. Grading criteria will be explained in class, but basically, if you do the assignment in good faith, you will pass.

Projects: [50% of total, 25% each] During the semester, you will be asked to complete two projects. The default form of the project is a short, written academic paper of approximately 800-1000 words, but other formats for the project (podcast, video, infographic, very short graphic novel, etc.) are certainly encouraged. The projects are designed to be individual, though you may collaborate with up to two other people if you like—the expectations are the same for the group (see assignment for details on collaboration). The assignments are both in the Course Guide below.

↑ **Comprehension/Coercion** ↕ ↔ **Creation/Application** ↓

Flexible Assessment. Since 2020, I have been using flexible assessment. During add/drop, you will be given an opportunity to select alternative weightings for some of the assignments. If you simply want to stick with the weights given to assignments, you don't have to do anything. If you want to change the weights given to the assignments, you must make your selection on a form (https://forms.office.com/r/1yZ7c9Qsmm) by the end of add-drop. Making no selection is equivalent to selecting the weights given on the syllabus. After add-drop, no changes will be allowed, no exceptions. WARNING: only do this if you are absolutely certain you want to do it. Some students find they want to emphasize the keeping up and basic comprehension part of the course; others want to emphasize the more integrative and creative work that goes into the paper. I recommend you talk it over with someone else before you do this; or you may check in with me during office hours. I will say a few things about the assignments before add-drop is over and you have the assignment sheets already.

Disabilities and Access Needs: Your professor has disabilities. Maybe you do too? If so, please come talk with me. To discuss an access need or request a specific accommodation, send an email to me before the end of add-drop with the subject line "COMS 210: Access Needs," and include a paragraph discussing what kind of access needs you have. You are also invited to just come talk with me in office hours. Students are welcome and encouraged to work with the Office for Students Accessibility and Achievement at McGill (formerly called the Office for Students with Disabilities or OSD) 514-398-6009 voice; https://www.mcgill.ca/access-achieve/). BUT: you are *also* welcome and encouraged to just approach me directly regarding any disability issues, without prior contact with the OSAA or a medical professional. I teach a course on disability, have published on disability and impairment and continue to research in the area, and am generally very comfortable talking about the subject. All access arrangements for COMS 210 need to be formalized in writing early in the term; it is much more difficult to provide retroactive accommodations in a fair manner.

Class Credos

More than one thing can be true: cultural analysis only works if it is possible to hold onto apparently contradictory ideas at once, and explain how they can both be true in specific circumstances. A contradiction is not a paradox: human beings are complicated and culture is messy.

No bullshit: we will avoid easy, prepackaged explanations of complex phenomena, and we will greet the claims of interested parties as open to interpretation and analysis. We will also not bullshit one another. However, your professor will occasionally delight in pointing out media industry bullshit.

You have the right to be wrong: part of learning is changing one's own perspective. This is only possible where ideas can be expressed and challenged, and people are allowed to change their minds. But: no "devil's advocates" will be allowed—if you present a position, it will be interpreted as honest advocacy for that position.

It is everyone's job to imagine a better world: any critique of how something is raises the question of how it ought to be. You will be asked to think carefully and imaginatively about alternatives to the way things are.

Follow the golden rule: treat others as you would want to be treated.

Resources

I. You: "There are those who think that the speaker has a function to perform, and the hearer none. They think it only right that the speaker shall come with his lecture carefully thought out and prepared, while they, without consideration or thought of their obligations, rush in and take their seats exactly as if they had come to dinner, to have a good time while others work hard. Those people bite." – Plutarch, Greek Philosopher

Although this is a large lecture course, your participation is essential. Listen carefully. Take lots of notes on lectures and readings. Take advantage of opportunities to participate. Make friends with your classmates and help one another. Use our office hours.

II. Your prof and TAs: See contact info on pp 3-4.

III. Readings: All required readings will be available on the MyCourses site. Additional, supplemental readings and links will also be made available.

IV. Your classmates: You are strongly encouraged to work together and support one another. For instance, you may want to organize for collective note-taking.

V. Additional University Resources:
The University has some additional resources to help you out. The academic resources are not remedial programs, and often the best and most advanced students use them. The cultural resources are broadly defined and inclusive.

The Writing Centre offers individual consultation on all aspects of writing. Appointments are required. Highly recommended if you want to work on your writing. 514-398-7109, https://www.mcgill.ca/mwc/

The Office for Student Accessibility and Achievement (formerly the Office for Students With Disabilities or OSD) provides a broad range of support and services to assist students with disabilities. 514-398-6009 (voice), https://www.mcgill.ca/access-achieve/

Counseling Services provides personal, academic, and career counseling to undergraduate and graduate students. They also offer workshops on study skills, multiple choice exams, test anxiety/stress management. Visit the Wellness Hub for more information: 514-398-6017, https://www.mcgill.ca/wellness-hub/

If you need support as a survivor of sexual violence, harassment, and/or discrimination on campus, you can contact McGill's Sexual Violence Response Advisor, Émilie Marcotte, at 514-398-4486 or by email at: osvrse@mcgill.ca. For more information on survivor support and reporting options, visit: www.mcgill.ca/saap. The Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Students' Society (SACOMSS), is a volunteer-run organization committed to supporting survivors of sexual assault and their allies. 514-398-8500, http://www.sacomss.org/ The SSMU website also contains additional information on a number of resources available to survivors (https://ssmu.ca/resources/sexual-violence/)

Queer McGill provides social, political, and informational support for queer students by queer students. 514-398-6913, https://www.mcgill.ca/engage/support/queer-mcgill

First People's House provides a "home away from home" for Indigenous students, promoting academic success as well as community connection. 514-398-3217, https://www.mcgill.ca/fph/

Black Students' Network provides support for black students, and also works to raise awareness of black people's issues at McGill, and to make the campus safer and more accessible for black students. https://www.mcgill.ca/engage/support/black-students-network

McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life is a nondenominational religious and spiritual hub on campus. https://www.mcgill.ca/engage/support/mcgill-office-religious-and-spiritual-life-morsl

Rules and Expectations (aka "The Business End")

Be kind to one another. Be kind to your teachers.

0.   The most important rule in the course: your rights, our rights
Everyone in COMS 210 has a right to their data and their privacy. Audio and video recordings, and other materials that we provide are for your use only and are not to be distributed beyond MyCourses (for instance, by quoting or posting online on another platform or server, uploading to a LLM or Chatbot, or sharing elsewhere in the world). Students may not produce or circulate recordings of their teachers or classmates without the prior, explicit, written consent of the people being recorded. There are no exceptions to this rule.

We enthusiastically encourage students in the course to share any study materials they make with one another. However, no one may sell study aids to the course without the prof's prior, expressed, written consent.

1.   Just be honest with us: we do not want to be the police
Has something gone wrong? Did you miss an assignment? Just be honest with us about what's going on and talk to us early while something can still be done.

You will never be asked for a doctor's note or some other official documentation to justify yourself. We don't want you waiting all day at a doctor's office just to get a piece of paper for our class. In exchange, we ask for your honesty about what's going on. That can include things that are entirely your fault. Everyone makes mistakes.

Nobody gets into teaching because they want to enforce rules. Our course policies are designed to maximize the amount of time we spend helping people learn and minimize the amount of time we (and you) spend on managing problems with the course policies. There are 4 of us and 200 of you, so our course policies are set with those limitations in mind.

The only behaviors we will be judgmental about are:
a) lying to us or other intentional deception (like plagiarism, which is claiming someone else's writing, or a LLM's, as your own)
b) grade grubbing (trying to negotiate with us about a grade or demanding a grade) or arguing about the criteria or standards set in the syllabus

2.   We are not technical support

We cannot troubleshoot your computer or internet connection. If there are systemic problems with MyCourses or Zoom (it happens), please do let us know. We will deal with them in a way that does not penalize students for issues beyond their control. If you have an IT issue, please contact McGill IT support. https://www.mcgill.ca/it/

3.   Class discussion and conduct

Respectful dialogue and behaviour is expected of everyone. Everyone always has the right to change their mind, to learn and grow. We do not expect you to arrive with all the answers and we don't want you to expect that of one another. We especially do not want people worrying about whether their ideas or the ideas of others are "pure." While disagreements are expected, they should not shut down dialogue. Learning is a process; we make mistakes, we change our minds, we sometimes even regret some things we've said earlier. Our aim is to work together to learn and *un*learn some of the things we take for granted, and to sharpen our analytic skills.

Please grant your fellow course participants courtesy and respect, whether you agree with what they say or not. Avoid attacking someone's character or personhood if you disagree with something they have said; what someone thinks or says is not reducible to who and where they are. Our goal in talking with one another is to understand the texts we read, the concepts we use, and the media examples we encounter, and how they might be useful to us. As much as possible, let's work to avoid purely negative critique in comments and responses. Let's also extend the same consideration to classmates. Consider what other people say in their comments and discussion forum posts and think about how you can build on them and respond as generously as possible.

Personal experience: while you each bring interesting experiences to the course, you should consider whether you really want to bring them up in discussion. If you do bring up your own

experience, recognize that it becomes a topic for classroom discussion and others may provide other interpretations. Ask yourself what point you want to make by talking about yourself. Do you want others to know this about you? You do not have to express your own opinion on a subject. You are also free to change your mind on any topic at any time.

Difficult subject matter: we will never do anything intentionally to shock or traumatize students. At the same time, it's our job to discuss difficult subjects in class, and nobody can predict the effect some materials may have on someone. If you are having difficulty dealing with a class discussion or a reading or recording, you may raise the issue as part of the discussion, or you may simply discretely leave class. A note to us would be helpful after the fact so that we know what happened and don't think you just got up and left.

Etiquette: the short version is that all the normal rules of good classroom conduct apply whether we are in person or online, and whether we are in a small or large class. Make our class a nice place for others: listen intently. If you don't understand something, ask—you're probably not the only one. Don't interrupt people; stick to the subject at hand; don't be distracting for others.

Technology use: pay attention to how you are using technologies for class. Don't multitask. When you're in class, do that. Don't shop, respond to social media alerts, or text your friends. We will discuss this further on the first day of class.

4.   Deadlines, extensions/late/missed assignments and exams
Everyone is expected to take the quizzes and submit two papers. Students who join the class during add/drop will be given additional time to complete quizzes from the beginning of term, but are not excused from doing them.

Flexible assessment allows you to influence the relative weight of different work on your assignments, but it may not be used retroactively.

The two projects each have two deadlines: an official deadline and a penalty-free extension deadline (in other words, you won't need to request an extension). This will be explained in class.

6.   Grade Appeals
You can find your most up to date grades on MyCourses.

Calculation errors happen sometimes. Just let us know and we can fix it.

Should you wish to dispute a mark, it must be done according to the grade appeal policy on the course website. Keep in mind that "A" grades are awarded for superior performance, not for meeting minimal expectations. Also, you begin an assignment with a 0, not a 100, so it is impossible to "lose" points; you can only earn them. Meeting with your prof or TA and doing what we tell you also does not guarantee an A on a project. Although there is no quota, an A is

a truly superior grade in this course. Most years, 20-25% of the enrolled students earned an A or A- semester grade. Also keep in mind that if you ask for your assignment to be regraded, the grade can go up or down.

7.   Language
The language of instruction at McGill University is English. However, you are allowed to submit your work in French. In discussions, Francophone students are welcome to use the French word if they can't think of the English word and we can help one another out.

8.   Non-discrimination Statement
Your teachers value equality of opportunity, and human dignity and diversity. In accordance with University policy, we will not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, civil status, religion, creed, political convictions, language, sex, sexual orientation, social condition, age, appearance, size, personal handicap or the use of any means to palliate such a handicap. Among other things, this means that you do not have to agree with your teacher, the assigned readings, or the majority of your classmates in order to do well in this course. You are, however, expected to demonstrate an understanding of the course material whether or not you agree with it, in order to each credit for the course. If there is something we can do to make the class more hospitable, please let us know.

9.   Cheating, Plagiarism and Exam Conduct
Please do not bullshit us. We've designed our assignments so that they will be timely and engaging. Cheating will either be next to impossible because you are supposed to look things up, or it will be more work than just doing the assignment. We planned it that way! But here is the required official language from McGill.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see **www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).**

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

## 10.   Generative AI / Large Language Model Policy
We will talk about emerging so-called AI systems in class. It is your responsibility to understand what we discussed and how it relates the work you do in this class. One hot tip: current generative AI systems regularly make up quotes and citations (this is called "hallucination") and they also routinely attribute positions to authors that they do not in fact hold. To better understand what you're getting into by using them, I recommend checking out the McGill Library's "ROBOT" heuristic, described here: https://libraryguides.mcgill.ca/ai/literacy. The rest

of our policy follows our "no bullshit" and anti-plagiarism rules above. This means that you are allowed to use generative AI, but you a) cannot claim its output as your own writing and b) must attribute it properly, just like any other source. A guide for proper AI attribution can be found at https://www.monash.edu/learning-teaching/teachhq/Teaching-practices/artificial-intelligence/policy-and-practice-guidance-around-acceptable-and-responsible-use-of-ai-technologies under "Declaration of the Generated Material."

11.   Special Required Emergency Syllabus-Eraser Clause
In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change. [This seems to happen a lot these days.]

12.   What This Class Was Predicted to be Like in 1935
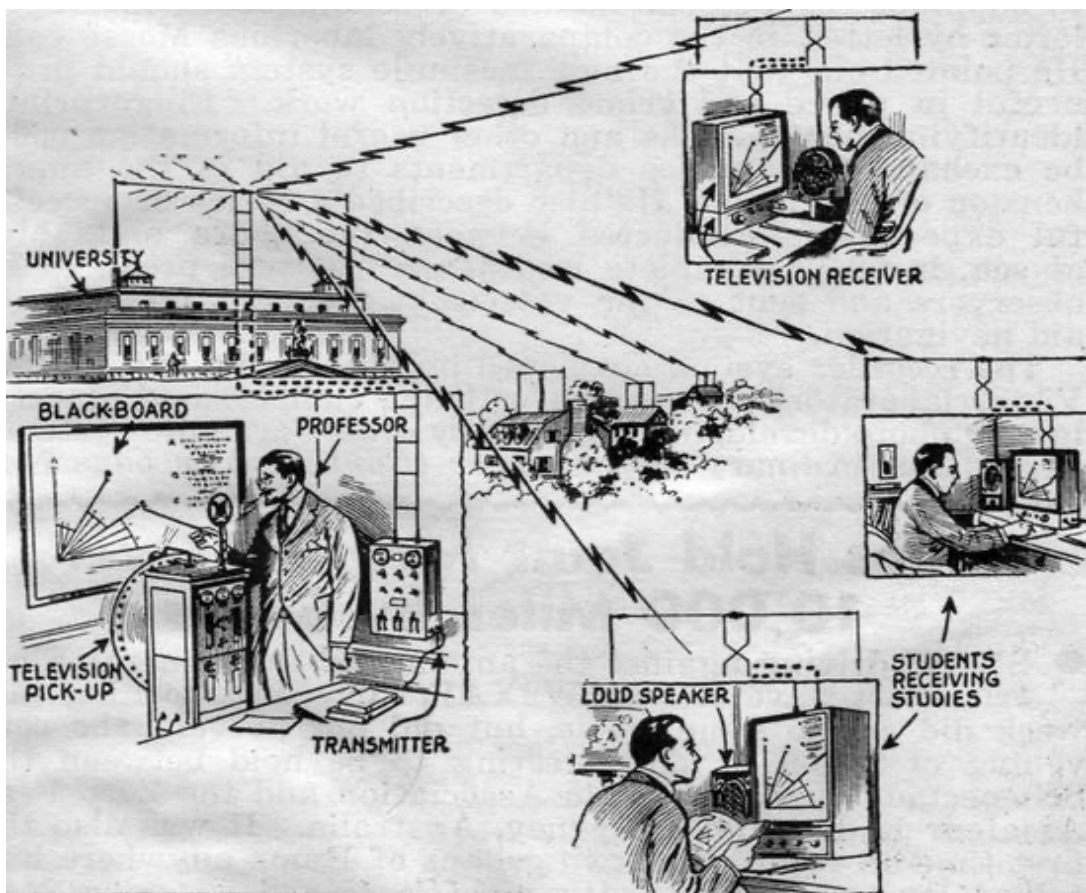
Thanks: Carolyn Samuel, Jasmine Parent, Adam Finkelstein.

COMS 210 Fall 2023 Tentative Schedule

This schedule is **subject to revision** throughout the course. Changes will be announced on the announcements tool on MyCourses. Students are responsible for knowing and following the up-to-date schedule.

Readings are listed immediately <u>above</u> their due dates.
For example: Crawford and Joler is due on 5 September; Benjamin is due 19 September.

Orientations

<u>Learning goals:</u> Explain the purpose and operation of the course, familiarize yourself with course routines, requirements, and expectations. Explain the main features of media and communication and how they work, and how these differ from common sense understandings of media and communication. Additionally, you should be able to summarize each author's main arguments, distinguish them from arguments that the authors rehearse and dismiss, and provide accurate definitions of the key terms they use. You should also be able to explain terms and examples used in lecture.

O hai!

Read the syllabus and the course guide for this week.

Th 31 Aug: Intro lecture and intro to the class.

Media are Many Things

Reading: Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler. *Anatomy of an AI System: The Amazon Echo as an Anatomical Map of Labor, Data and Planetary Resources*. Artificial Intelligence Now, 2018, https://anatomyof.ai.

T 5 Sep: AI lecture and Q&A.

Th 7 Sep: Invent the media exercise; more on AI.

Quiz 1

Communication is Many Things

Reading: Stuart Hall. "Encoding/Decoding." In *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-9*, edited by Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis. London: Hutchinson, 1980, 128-38.

<u>Recommended:</u>[2]

Stuart Hall, "Reflections upon the Encoding/Decoding Model: An Interview with Stuart Hall." *Viewing, Reading, Listening: Audiences and Cultural Reception,* eds. Jon Cruz and Justin Lewis. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, 252-274 (some relevant sections have been

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[2]   A recommended reading will not be "on the test" but may help you understand the week's material. I will also mention some of the things Hall says in lecture.

highlighted with blue markings; don't worry about the rest unless you're curious)

~~T 12 Sep~~: ~~Encoding/Decoding lecture and Q&A.~~ ←Prof gets Covid instead. Life is dark.

Hey! Why not read they "Encoding/Decoding" *again* before Thursday's class, but after you've heard Tuesday's lecture? Maybe that seems unusual, but it might make more sense and help you shape your questions.

Stuart Hall. "Encoding/Decoding." In *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-9*, edited by Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis. London: Hutchinson, 1980, 128-38.

Th 14 Sep: More on Hall; struggles over meaning; misinformation about misinformation.

~~Quiz 2~~ ←Prof has Covid. Quiz was cancelled.

T 19 Sep

Th 21 Sep: even more Stuart Hall, quiz stuff.

Quiz 2

Technologies Do Not Act Alone

Reading: Ruha Benjamin, "Introduction: The New Jim Code," *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019, 1-32.

T 26 Sep: Technology and Causality No Perusall post due, but please review the Benjamin reading.

Political Economy

<u>Learning goals:</u> Explain the main economic principles according to which media systems and institutions work, and with what consequences for whom, explain how and why these mechanisms work differently than those described in economic theories like "supply and demand." Additionally, you should be able to summarize each author's main arguments, distinguish them from arguments that the authors rehearse and dismiss, and provide accurate definitions of the key terms they use. You should also be able to explain terms and examples used in lecture.

Th 28 Sep: More Tech and causality, intro to Political Economy Unit and Project

Quiz 3 **(Ruha Benjamin/Tech and Causality)**

Media Capitalism 101

Shoshana Zuboff (2019) "Home or Exile in the Digital Future," *Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power.* New York: Public Affairs, 1-24.

Media Capitalism 101 pt 2

Doctorow, Cory (2023) "TikTok's Enshittification," https://pluralistic.net/2023/01/21/potemkin-ai/#hey-guys, 3-18 of PDF. (CN: lots of cursing)

T 3 Oct: Media Capitalism 101

Th 5 Oct: Media Capitalism 102

T 10 Oct: Woo-hoo! Fall Break! No Class! No Perusall post due!

Intellectual Property and Data

Siva Vaidhyanathan, (2017) "How to Read Starbucks, or Why Intellectual Property Matters
    More Than You Think," *Intellectual Property: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford
    University Press, 1-15.

Joana Radin, "Digital Natives: How Medical and Indigenous Histories Matter for Big Data." *Osiris*
    32 (2017): 43-64.

Th 12 Oct: IP and data lecture

Quiz 4 – Media Capitalism 101

T 17 Oct: IP and data continued

Labo(u)r

Lisa Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic
    Manufacture." *American Quarterly,* vol. 66, no. 4, 2014, pp. 919–41.

Tarleton Gillespie, "The Human Labor of Moderation," *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms:*
    Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions that Shape Social Media. New Haven:
    Yale University Press, 2018, 111-140.

Th 19 Oct: Labour

Quiz 5 – IP and data

T 24 Oct: Labour pt 2.

Th 26 Oct: No class, extra office hours for Economy Project

No quiz this week.

M 30 Oct, 6pm Montreal time: Economy Projects Due

Technology + Ecology

Learning goals: Explain the political and ethical stakes in creating and maintaining media
    technologies and practices. Advance a cogent position on how our media system can be
    improved. Explain technological scripts, as well as the components of a technological
    system. Explain the ecological impact of the manufacture, use, and disposal of media
    technologies and their component parts, like plastics. Additionally, you should be able
    to summarize each author's main arguments, distinguish them from arguments that the
    authors rehearse and dismiss, and provide accurate definitions of the key terms they us.
    You should also be able to explain terms and examples used in lecture.

Building Better Worlds

Suzanne Kite in dialogue with Corey Stover, Melita Stover Janis, and Scott Benesiinaabaandan, "How to Build Anything Ethically." In Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence Position Paper, ed. Jason Lewis, 75-84. Honolulu, Hawai'i: The Initiative for Indigenous Futures and the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR). https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/986506/7/Indigenous_Protocol_and_AI_2020.pdf

Erik Olin Wright How to be an Anticapitalist Today https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/erik-olin-wright-real-utopias-anticapitalism-democracy/

T 31 Oct: Lecture and Q&A; Class will be surveyed ahead of time on whether we should dress up.

Th 2 Nov: Identifying problems with media; intro to Make Media Better Assignment (Podcast)

Quiz 6

M 6 Nov, 6pm Montreal Time: No-penalty extension deadline for Economy Project.

The Politics of Design and the Realities of Practice

Madeleine Akrich, "The De-Scription of Technical Objects," in *Shaping Technology, Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed. Wiebe Bijker and J. Law. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992, 205–24.

Jenny Odell, "Restoring the Grounds for Thought," *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy.* Brooklyn: Melville House, 2019, 154-184.

T 7 Nov: Lecture and Q&A.

Th 9 Nov: Design and practice lecture and Q&A, continued.

Quiz 7

Corporations and Environmental Violence

Kyle Devine, "Data," *Decomposed: The Political Ecology of Music.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019, 129-164.

Max Liboiron, "Scale, Harm, Violence, Land," *Pollution is Colonialism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2021, 81-110.

T 14 Nov: Ecology lecture and Q&A.

Th 16 Nov: Ecology lecture and Q&A continued

Quiz 8

Consumers and Consumerism

Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, "Consumers," *Greening the Media.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 22-41.

Laura Marks, "Let's Deal With the Carbon Footprint of Streaming Media," *Afterimage* 47:2 (2020): 46-52.

T 21 Nov: Consumers lecture and Q&A.

Th 23 Nov: Consumers lecture continued (podcast)

Quiz 9

Doing the Work

Karina Rider, "Building Ideal Workplaces: Labor, Affect, and Identity in Tech for Good Projects." *International Journal of Communication* 16(2022): 5005-5022.

T 28 Nov: Wrap-Up: more activist examples; why "tech for good" is not enough (helpful for projects ☺)

Th 30 Nov: Thursday is the new Monday—no class.

T 5 Dec: No class, extra office hours for Make Media Better Project; no reading due

Th 7 Dec 6pm Montreal time: Make Media Better Assignment due. Also Prof's Mom's 90th birthday. Happy birthday mom!

T 12 Dec 6pm Montreal time: No-penalty automatic extension due date for Make Media Better Assignment.

About Quizzes

Purpose:
Quizzes give you a compelling reason to keep up with the material, and make sure you know it before moving on to the next section of the course.

How Quizzes Work:
Quizzes will consist of one question that tests comprehension of the week's assigned lectures and readings. They will be available from the end of class on Thursday through Friday evening to 11:59pm. You can type in your answer. Your answer must be your own (not a copy-paste from your friend). That means any quotes from the readings, lectures, or from other people must be put in quotes and attributed. Please also see our AI policy on pp11-12 of this guide.

Non-native speakers are welcome to use translation dictionaries or online translators. You may submit your answers in French.

What We Recommend:
Keep up with the readings, show up to class, and ask questions if you don't understand something and you'll be ready for the quiz. You don't need to study beyond that.

How We Write Questions:
The questions are simply about one of the main points covered in the lectures and readings. They are not trick questions, though they will ask you to think analytically and make judgments. We will be doing this a lot in class, so coming to class will be practice for the quizzes.

How We Evaluate Quizzes:
A (90%): Your answer is good and correct.
C (55%): Your answer shows you clearly did the reading or came to class, but you didn't answer correctly. OR we are somehow confused by your answer.
F / Thanks for playing / "Dude, where's my car?" (10%): Your answer shows evidence of bullshitting (see class credos) or does not show sufficient evidence of doing the reading or coming to class.
Even more F (0%) You didn't write anything or something is profoundly wrong.

Feedback:
Quizzes with errors will receive brief comments. You are strongly encouraged to meet with a TA or the prof if you are trying hard and not scoring well on this assignment.

HEY! Why can't I get 100% on my quizzes?
In McGill's grading scheme, an A is 85%. We're giving you more than that here; AND we're giving you a free 10% of your grade for keeping up with the class. If you think this is a raw deal, ask yourself if you'd prefer that we removed the free 10% of your semester grade and dropped scores and then offer 100% scores on the quiz.

About Annotations

Purpose: Annotations give you a compelling reason to keep up with the material, reassure me that most students have arrived having read (or at least looked over) the reading, and help me prepare my classes for Thursdays.

Date Due: Most Tuesday by noon Montreal time (see schedule for exceptions).

Details: Each week you will annotate a reading using the program **Perusall** in MyCourses.

Annotation means making comments on, or asking questions about, a reading, *directly on the PDF text itself.*

Everyone will annotate the same reading each week.

To facilitate some discussion and camaraderie, you will be organized into smaller groups, however, you do not need to depend on your groupmates to complete the assignment.

Where to Submit:
In the weekly readings, there will be a "Perusall" tab. Open it up and find the week's assigned reading.

Evaluation:
You can fulfill the requirements of the assignment by making at least 3 useful annotations, reading the entire essay, and responding to classmates' comments or questions. A useful annotation means a substantive engagement with the text: if you don't understand something, explain why you don't understand it. If you have a response or a thought, explain it so that others can think about what you said. Vague, off-topic, or "this reminds me of this totally unrelated thing" comments will result in a zero. It is possible to receive partial credit because of the automatic grading system.

Disruptive, rude, harmful comments will result in a reduction of your semester grade in this area. Please also see our AI policy on pp11-12 of this guide.

Responses will be evaluated through a mix of automated grading, where you receive credit for the comments and responses, and manually by the prof combing through some of the groups each week. I will respond to some comments most weeks in class, and maybe sometimes in Perusall itself. I reserve the right to adjust automated grades if I see the system is making errors, or if students are slacking or BSing, but this is meant to be a low-stakes assignment.

Feedback:
Students are strongly encouraged to meet with me if they are trying hard and not scoring well on this assignment. (The prof handles all grading for this assignment.)

Occasional Writing Assignments

"Occasional" here means "for the occasion" rather than "once in awhile."

Dates Due:
Assignments are mostly not announced ahead of time. They will be presented during class, when they are in-class writing, or within a 24 hour window after the end of class, if they are done online.

Where and what to submit:
You may either submit a piece of paper to the Prof or TA on your way out of class, or you may submit the assignment electronically under the "assignments" tab.

Evaluation:
Responses will be graded pass (1)/fail (0). A passing response shows serious engagement with the assignment and/or course material. A failing one does not seriously engage with the assignment and/or course materials, or isn't legible to us (either we can't make sense of the answer, can't tell if you did the assignment, or can't read your handwriting), or is not submitted.

Please also see our AI policy on pp11-12 of this guide.

Feedback:
Students are strongly encouraged to meet with a TA if they are trying hard and not scoring well on this assignment.

Some Paper Writing Tips

0. <u>Revised papers *always* read better than first drafts. There are no exceptions to this rule.</u> Deciding on your topic early, writing a "bad" first draft, and leaving time for substantial revision is probably the best thing you can do for your essay grade. Revision is the key to success. Everything you read for this class has been revised many times before it reached you.

1. Speaking of office hours, <u>come see your prof and TA.</u> We can help with everything from brainstorming to organization. We do not, however, copyedit, proofread or offer preliminary grades.

2. Make sure you do everything the assignment tells you to do. Students often lose points simply for not doing everything on the assignment sheet.

3. Don't just tell us, show us: explain your thinking in clear detail. Remember that we can only grade you based upon what you put in your paper. We can't guess what you're thinking.

4. Use specific concepts from the readings (and the lecture if you wish). Directly citing material from lecture and readings will help you connect the ideas in your paper to the ideas we've discussed in class. Also, be specific in your claims. For instance, rather than using a big term like "society," find a more specific term to use.

5. Don't let quotes "speak for themselves." When you cite something, be sure to tell us what it means and how it links up with your argument. Don't just drop a name or a concept.

6. Use a recognized citation style: APA, MLA, or Chicago (Chicago with footnotes is the prof's favorite, for what it's worth).

You can now view most of the Chicago Manual of Style online if you are logged in from campus or using a VPN if off campus:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/home.html

There are also many online guides to source citation. For instance, try
https://library.duke.edu/research/citing/

7. If you cite a lecture, you can just cite it thus: (Lecture 8 September). If you're using notes instead of parentheticals, just put the list it as "Lecture 8 September " in your notes.

8. Check out the wonderful resources at the Purdue Online Writing Lab:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

9. Once you have your paper written, look at each paragraph and ask yourself "so what?" Think about why this might matter to someone who's not enrolled in the course. Put the answer in as the topic sentence of your paragraph and adjust the rest of the paragraph accordingly.

10. A simple way to proofread your paper: read it out loud to yourself. If a sentence sounds

funny, it probably needs to be reworded or rewritten. Some students will make the mistake of trying to sound "academic" by putting in too much passive voice or using words without looking them up—both these techniques make your paper harder to read, not easier.

11. Often the best ideas in first drafts come at the end of paragraphs. During revision, put your most important ideas at the top of each paragraph; use the rest of the paragraph to back up your assertion.

12. Remember that fulfilling the minimal requirements for the paper will result in a C grade. Doing a decent job gets you a B grade. If you want to go for an "A", you need to go above and beyond meeting the requirements of the assignment.

13. If you have fun with this assignment, it's more likely that we'll enjoy reading it. This is a bigger deal than you might think.

14. You can use the Writing Centre for paper help as well. Appointments are required, so plan ahead. https://www.mcgill.ca/mwc/

15. The Arts Undergrad Society also has an essay centre. https://ausmcgill.com/essay-writing-center/
Email: aus.essay.centre@gmail.com

The Economy Project (25% of semester grade)

Purpose: 1) For you toapply concepts from the course in order to analyze and explain something in the real world, 2) to spur discussion of and reflection on concepts in the course, and 3) to foster collective ownership of the learning process.

Deadline: M 30 Oct 2023, 6pm Montreal time; no-grade-penalty late submission deadline is M 7 Nov, 6pm. After the deadline, we will no longer discuss papers in progress, but students can submit up to a week late with no penalty. Submit it under "assignments" in MyCourses.

This project may be done individually or in groups of up to 3 people; it is entirely up to you. If you submit a group project, the requirements are exactly the same as for an individual project (length, rubric, etc.) except you will all receive a grade for a single submission. Since group work is optional, we will not solve problems that come up in group work. Keep your own backup of everything in case someone gets sick or something goes wrong.

What you are analyzing: you will be applying concepts from the course to a media artifact from 2023. Your "artifact" could be a specific object like someone's phone or video game controller, or a media text (an episode of a TV show, a TikTok video, a song, a game, a news article, social media post), or it could be a specific event, like a sporting event. We will explain this further in class, and provide a nonexclusive pre-approved list of artifacts, but you are strongly encouraged to choose others. We strongly recommend checking with your prof or TA to be sure your chosen artifact is specific enough and will work for the course.

Your task: Write a paper of about 3 pages (800-1000 words—it may be a little shorter or longer, we're not keeping a tight count). You may also submit in a medium other than writing—see below.

Step 1: Your paper should answer <u>one or more</u> of the following questions: at what stages (and how) is money made in the making and circulation of your media artifact (or at what stages are people trying and failing to make money)? What kinds of labour, paid and unpaid, are involved in making and circulating it? Are there efforts on the part of the makers to conceal or devalue the labour involved? Who does the work vs. who makes the money? What aspects of your artifact are treated as commodities, and what aspects are not? Are there aspects of your artifact that are designed to reduce the possibility of market competition?

Step 2: Once you have developed a hypothesis about the economics of your artifact, <u>explain why it matters</u>. Answer one of these questions: do the economic aspects of your artifact enhance or reduce inequality? In what ways? If the artifact was made for profit, how might it be different if it were not-for-profit? If it was made not-for-profit, how would it be different if it was made for profit? Or is the salient economic issue big business vs. small business?

Step 3: <u>Apply a concept from the readings or lectures from the first two units to an aspect of the media artifact</u>. Explain how the artifact elucidates the idea from the readings or lectures, or

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how the idea from the readings or lecture explains something important about the artifact. The concept here should match up well with the kinds of questions you address in Step 1. Another way to think about it is: what would your author say about the artifact, and what would you say back to them in reply? Note: if you can't seem to find a good connection between your artifact and the lectures and readings, that's a sign it's not a good artifact.

Step 4: Great, now: so what? You're explaining the project to someone not in the class—a parent, a friend, a pet who has magically acquired the power of language. Why does any of this matter? What do we know that we didn't before, or what questions should we be asking about media that we weren't asking before? Your answer to this question is something like a thesis statement, and ideally, once you have it, you can use it to structure the whole paper (note: we do not actually need formal thesis statements in the paper!).

Papers should ideally be written in an integrative fashion: the first three steps can be done at once, and the writing should reflect a good presentation of your ideas, rather than the order in which you did your work. The discussions in each step can build on, develop, and reinforce the others.

Pages should be numbered, and your name should appear in the upper right-hand corner. It should be 12-point font (just don't pick anything too weird), and 1" margins. You can use any known citation style. The paper will be submitted via the assignment page in MyCourses.

You are welcome to submit in a medium other than writing (video, audio recording, etc.). The criteria for the assignment are the same regardless of medium, so a video project or infographic will be evaluated according to the same criteria as a written project. We recommend you come see one of us if you're planning to do something other than a written paper. We love creative proposals as long as they're also do-able.

Evaluation and Feedback: Projects will be graded according to a rubric (see next page) and earn a letter grade score translated into points. We will share the rubric with you beforehand. For more extended comments and suggestions for doing better next time, please come see the person who graded your project (their initials will be on the rubric). We are happy to talk with you about your writing!

Please also see our AI policy on pp11-12 of this guide.

Economy Project Rubric

Name_____   Who's grading? _____

	A (85)	**B (70)**	**C (55)**	**D (40)**
Use of Course Material	Applies course material in a really thoughtful or original manner, gets to fundamental intellectual issues in the question.	Clearly uses at least one major idea from one of the designated readings or lectures and uses it correctly. Shows that you know your stuff.	Clearly uses course material but incorrectly or in a cursory fashion (for instance, merely mentions something without using it).	Doesn't show any significant engagement with course material. Or major errors with more than one concept or lots of small or repeated errors.
Quality of Answer	Particularly original, thorough, insightful or cogent answer.	Fulfills the assignment satisfactorily. Answers one or more of the questions well; ideally in an integrated fashion.	Addresses the assignment, but not fully or not in a manner appropriate to the assignment. Claims are unclear, undersupported or underdeveloped.	Does not fulfill a major component of the assignment or otherwise fails to respond to the questions.
Quality of Writing (Multimedia materials will be judged on an analogous basis.)	Easy and fun to read. Really well written.	Readable, concise, and clear. Could have one or two small improvements.	Problems with clarity, presentation, language use or proofreading.	Not appropriate for university-level writing; problems in more than two areas or major problems in one.

Extra Credit Justification:

Total Score: _____

Your total score is the average of your three category scores. Up to 5 points extra credit can be given for something cool students do that we don't anticipate in the rubric above, based on the grader's discretion. Extra credit is only for "above and beyond." Truly exceptional papers will be considered for scores of 95 or 100.

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The Make Media Better Project (25% of semester grade)

Purpose: 1) For you to demonstrate an understanding of key concepts from the readings and lectures for the third section of the course; 2) to apply those concepts to something in the real world, 3) to spur discussion of and reflection on concepts in the course, and 4) to foster collective ownership of the learning process.

Deadline: Th 7 Dec 2023, 6pm Montreal time; no-grade-penalty late submission deadline is T 12 December 2023, 6pm Montreal time. After the deadline, we will no longer to discuss papers in progress, but students can submit up to a 5 days late with no penalty. Submit it under "assignments" in MyCourses.

This project may be done individually or in groups of up to 3 people; same as the economy project.

What You Will Be Analyzing: A problem with a particular technology, practice, or system. Based on what you learned in this class, what is one thing you (individually or collectively) can do to make media better? Make it as concrete as possible: is there a law or policy the government could enact? If so, how would you get them to do that? Is there something specific that an organization of people could do collectively? A redesign of something? A rule or best practice that companies should follow? A design principle? An environmental or process test they should have to pass? Is there something you personally want to do in your life? Don't try to fix or change everything. Make it *just one thing.* But also: think collectively. Changing just yourself, solutionist or consumerist projects, and social media campaigns untethered from social movements won't fix the world (or earn high mark on the assignment, which might be a more immediate concern).

Your task: Write a paper of about 3 pages (800-1000 words—it may be a little shorter or longer, we're not keeping a tight count). You may also submit in a medium other than writing—see below.

Step 1 Identify a problem. Throughout the course, writers, and the prof (and you and your classmates) have identified things they would like to change about their media environments, or the way media industries, practices, and technologies work. Pick one problem that's of particular interest to you.

Step 2: Identify the register at which you will intervene. Using Kite's steps to building a good technology or Wright's quadrants, explain the level at which you want to engage the problem. You may also want to think back across the examples from lecture of activists, artists, and organizations and their interventions. Are you going to try to change the way something is done? Reduce the carbon footprint of some practice or technology? Stop a company from collecting data in a certain way? What are you writing against? What do you want to change? <u>Explain why you've chosen the register you want to work at as opposed to a different one.</u>

Step 3: Describe your proposal. <u>Explain your proposed change, or action.</u> How does it mitigate, resolve, challenge, or transform the problem you've identified? Drawing on ideas from readings and lectures (other than the Kite or Wright), <u>explain why it is a particularly good or attractive response to the problem.</u> What obstacles might you encounter? What would you do about them?

Another way to think about it is: what would your chosen author or reading say about what you're proposing, and what would you say back to them in reply? Note: if you can't seem to find a good connection between your idea and the lectures and readings, that's a sign it's not a good choice for the assignment

Step 4: Great, now: **so what?** You're explaining the project to someone not in the class—a parent, a friend, a pet who has magically acquired the power of language. Why does any of this matter? Some ways to answer this question could include: how does your proposal fit in with broader problems or other attempts to transform our media environment for the better? What do we know that we didn't before, or what questions should we be asking about media that we weren't asking before? **Your answer to this question is something like a thesis statement, and ideally, once you have it, you can use it to structure the whole paper (note: we do not actually need formal thesis statements in the paper!).**

Papers should ideally be written in an integrative fashion, rather than the order in which you did your work or the listed steps above.

Pages should be numbered, and your name should appear in the upper right-hand corner. It should be 12-point font (just don't pick anything too weird), and 1" margins. You can use any known citation style. The paper will be submitted via the assignment page in MyCourses.

You are welcome to submit in a medium other than writing (video, audio recording, etc.). The criteria for the assignment are the same regardless of medium, so a video project or infographic will be evaluated according to the same criteria as a written project. We recommend you come see one of us if you're planning to do something other than a written paper. We love creative proposals as long as they're also do-able. Note: audio and video projects should aim for 5-8 minutes, 10 minutes maximum.

Evaluation and Feedback: Projects will be graded according to a rubric and earn a score between 0-100%. We will share the rubric with you beforehand. For more extended comments and suggestions for doing better next time, please come see the person who graded your project (their initials will be on the rubric). We are happy to talk with you about your writing!

<u>Please also see our AI policy on pp11-12 of this guide.</u>

Make Media Better Project Rubric

Name_____   Who's grading? _____

	A (85)	**B (70)**	**C (55)**	**D (40)**
Use of Course Material	Applies course material in a really thoughtful or original manner, gets to fundamental intellectual issues in the question.	Clearly uses at least one major idea from one of the designated readings or lectures and uses it correctly. Shows that you know your stuff.	Clearly uses course material but incorrectly or in a cursory fashion (for instance, merely mentions something without using it).	Doesn't show any significant engagement with course material. Or major errors with more than one concept or lots of small or repeated errors.
Quality of Answer	Particularly original, thorough, insightful or cogent answer.	Fulfills the assignment satisfactorily. Answers one or more of the questions well; ideally in an integrated fashion.	Addresses the assignment, but not fully or not in a manner appropriate to the assignment. Claims are unclear, undersupported or underdeveloped.	Does not fulfill a major component of the assignment or otherwise fails to respond to the questions.
Quality of Writing (Multimedia materials will be judged on an analogous basis.)	Easy and fun to read. Really well written.	Readable, concise, and clear. Could have one or two small improvements.	Problems with clarity, presentation, language use or proofreading.	Not appropriate for university-level writing; problems in more than two areas or major problems in one.

Extra Credit Justification:

Total Score: _____

Your total score is the average of your three category scores. Up to 5 points extra credit can be given for something cool students do that we don't anticipate in the rubric above, based on the grader's discretion. Extra credit is only for "above and beyond." Truly exceptional papers will be considered for scores of 95 or 100.

Peer Feedback Template

We will provide a mechanism for peer feedback on drafts of papers, for those who want that. (We strongly encourage you to write a draft and get peer feedback.)

The goal of feedback is to help your peers get better at the kind of thinking we are encouraging for this course, and for you to talk with one another about the ideas in the course. Below is a set of questions for you to answer in no more than a few sentences each (and sometimes one sentence will do).

1. In your own words, what is the author's main claim?

2. How far did you have to get into the paper (video, infographic, audio recording) to understand their claim?

3. What evidence do they use to support their claim?

4. What was most compelling or persuasive about their paper (or video, or infographic, or audio recording)? For instance, are there things covered that you would find particularly interesting to discuss with the author if you were talking together in person?

5. Are there parts of the paper (or video, infographic, audio recording) that could be revised to more effectively advance or support its claim about the artifact or intervention? Please be concrete in your suggestions.

Pitfalls to avoid when giving feedback:
Remember you're trying to help the author accomplish what they want to accomplish. You're not trying to get them to write the paper you want them to write. You also don't need to agree with what they are writing to help them improve their argument (though it's good for groups to discuss points on which they disagree). It's also possible to give too much feedback. Focus on what's most important.