



Communication Studies (CMNS) 201

Introduction to Mass Media (Revision 6)

Status: Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#) for the current revision

Delivery mode: Individualized study online . Delivered via Brightspace.

Credits: 3

Areas of study: Arts or Social Science

Prerequisites: None

Precluded: None

Challenge: CMNS 201 has a challenge for credit option.

Faculty: [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Overview

This course provides an introduction to key topics, debates, issues, and theoretical approaches in Communication Studies. In this course, we explore questions of communication and map the contours of the field. We particularly examine the role the mass media play in society and the ways they are shaped by politico-economic and socio-cultural factors. Topics include how media policies, trends in ownership, production practices, and audiences impact our mediascape, with a focus on the Canadian context. We pay particular attention to how digital media practices are impacting these approaches, debates, and issues.

Objectives

- To gain an overview of the key topics, debates, and issues in communication studies and map the contours of Communication Studies
- To examine the role that communication and mass media play in society, with a particular focus on the Canadian context

- To critically analyze media practices and media uses in our daily lives
- To improve the ability to convey ideas through structured written assignments

Outline

- Unit 1: Defining Communication
- Unit 2: Defining Mass Media
- Unit 3: Media Audiences
- Unit 4: Media Policy
- Unit 5: Critical Approaches and the Political Economy of Media
- Unit 6: Cultural Studies and Media Representation
- Unit 7: Digital Media and the Internet
- Unit 8: Social Media

Evaluation

To **receive credit** [↗](#) for CMNS 201, you must pass each assignment and the final examination with a minimum grade of 50%. The weighting of the composite mark is as follows:

Activity	Weight
Assignment 1: Media Log and Blog	15%

Activity	Weight
Assignment 2: Midterm Readings Exercise	20%
Assignment 3: Synthesis Paper	25%
Assignment 4: Reflective Blog	10%
Final Examination	30%
Total	100%

The **final examination** for this course must be requested in advance and written under the supervision of an AU-approved exam invigilator. Invigilators include either ProctorU or an approved in-person invigilation centre that can accommodate online exams. Students are responsible for payment of any invigilation fees. Information on exam request deadlines, invigilators, and other exam-related questions, can be found at the [Exams and grades](#)  section of the Calendar.

Materials

Digital course materials

Links to the following course materials will be made available in the course:

Shade, L. R. (2013). Mediascapes: New Patterns in Canadian Communication (4th ed.). Top Hat.

Other Materials

The course materials also include an online Study Guide, Course Information, and AU Student Manual. All other reading materials for the course are available online through the Digital Reading Room.

Challenge for credit

Overview

The challenge for credit process allows you to demonstrate that you have acquired a command of the general subject matter, knowledge, intellectual and/or other skills that would normally be found in a university-level course.

Full information about **challenge for credit** [↗](#) can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Evaluation

To **receive credit** [↗](#) for the CMNS 201 challenge registration, you must achieve a grade of at least **D (50 percent)** [📄](#) on the examination.

Activity	Weight
Take home assignment	50%
Exam	50%

Activity	Weight
Total	100%



Challenge for credit course registration form

Important links

- › Academic advising [↗](#)
- › Program planning [↗](#)
- › Request assistance [↗](#)
- › Support services at AU [↗](#)

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery modes may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 6, May 10, 2023

Updated August 11, 2026

View **previous revision** 
