

COMS 252 [Introduction to Communication Studies]

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Office: 203 Watson Hall, richholt@niu.edu
Office Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Mondays and Wednesdays, or by appointment
Reading: Readings online, www.richcourses.com, menu "INT COMS STUD (252)"

Overview of Course

This course is designed to acquaint students with the field of **communication studies**. We will take a somewhat **unique approach** to this task, principally in two ways: (1) by treating knowledge about the field, **not as a "laundry list" of perspectives, theories, and approaches** (which in any case are far **too numerous** to cover) in favor of approaching the field **as a culture**, with all the **common understandings** and **disputes** that any culture necessarily has; and (2) taking a **popular, highly-developed social system** and relating the knowledge of the complex world of communication studies **to that culture** (for the **target culture**, I have chosen the environs of the world of **Batman** (particularly **Arkham City**). Students will be able to take their **new-found knowledge** of the field of communication studies and freely **create exciting scenarios** involving Gotham City and Batman's various **enemies, friends, and helpers**.

What is Expected of You

1. Class preparation and participation. To get the **most** out of the class, you must **complete readings** for the days assigned. You are expected to **contribute to discussion**, based on what you **read and observe**. If you come **unprepared**, you not only **miss** opportunities to **participate**, but this will **reflect negatively** on your grade. Your final grade is based in part on your **participation** in discussion.

2. Punctual, consistent attendance. You get **three "free" absences**; beyond that, each absence results in a **20-point deduction** from your grade. You must also be **on time**. If you come late, not only are you subject to penalties for **class disruption** (see below), but you may also be **counted absent**. Attendance is taken by means of a **roster sheet** you must sign. This sheet is the **final arbiter** in disputes over whether you attended on a particular day or not. Attendance on exam days is **mandatory: no makeups**.

3. No class disruptions. Among "disruptions," I count: (1) **talking during lecture** or **"off-topic" during class discussion**; and (2) **eating and drinking**. If you come in **after class begins**, note on the roster the **time you entered**. **No penalty** is applied on a **first infraction**. On a **second infraction**, **10 points** are deducted. On a **third infraction**, another **20 points** are deducted and **administration notified** a problem exists. Further infractions are **counted as absences**, penalties as incurred by **excess absences**.

4. Grading

Type	Number	Points Each	Total Points	Composition	Drop Lowest?
Hourly Exam	6	100 points	500 points	25 MC [3 pts.], 3 from lecture 25 T/F [1 pt.], 3 from lecture	Yes
Quiz	6	10 points	50 points	3 MC [2 pts.], 4 T/F [1 pt.]	Yes
"Our Thing" [Group Grade]	4	40 points (+ 40, = 20, - 0)	160 points	+ (more than enough) = (just enough) - (not enough)	No
Participation	N/A	N/A	40 points	N/A	No
TOTAL	--	--	750 points	--	--

Total Possible Points for Course: 750

A: 750-675

B: 674-600

C: 599-525

D: 524-450

F: Below 450

Outline of the Course

Unit I: Overview

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic(s)/Activities</i>	<i>Readings</i>
January 13	Orientation. Overview course content. Team assignments.	Syllabus [www.richcourses.com, "INT COMS STUD (252)], "ICS Basic Course Materials."
January 15	<i>Lecture 1/1</i> : Approaches to history. Model of communication history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [QUIZ TARGET] Loblich, M., & Scheu, A. M. (2011). Writing the history of communication studies: A sociology of science approach. <i>Communication Theory</i>, 21, 1-22.
January 17	<i>Lecture 1/2</i> : Centrality of communication studies. Confirming themes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morreale, S. P., Osborn, M. M., & Pearson, J. C. (2000). Why communication is important: A rationale for the centrality of the study of communication. <i>Journal of the Association for Communication Administration</i>, 29, 1-25.
January 20	<i>Lecture 1/3</i> : Career paths. Questions to ask.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muniz, H. (2018). Should you be a communications major? Retrieved from https://blog.prepscholar.com/communications-major-jobs • Colbert, S. M. (2016). Batman: 15 things you didn't know about Arkham Asylum. Retrieved from https://screenrant.com/arkham-asylum-batman-prison-facts-trivia/
January 22	Preparation for First Exam	Study Guide for First Examination
January 24	First Examination	Study Guide for First Examination

Unit II: Surveillance [Methods 01]

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic(s)/Activities</i>	<i>Readings</i>
January 27	<i>Lecture 2/1</i> : Peer review. The seven sins. Path to publication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [QUIZ TARGET] Neuman, W. R., Davidson, R., Joo, S.-H., Park, Y. J., & Williams, A. E. (2008). The seven deadly sins of communication research. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 58(2), 220–237.
January 29	<i>Lecture 2/2</i> : Definition of communication. Models of communication. Quantitative or qualitative: which to choose and why.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lumen Learning. (n.d.) Defining communication study. Retrieved from https://courses.lumenlearning.com/introductiontocommunication/chapter/31/ • Kautilya Society (n.d.) Types of communication research. Retrieved from http://www.kautilyasociety.com/tvph/communication_skill/communication_methods.htm
January 31	<i>Lecture 2/3</i> : The case. Postmortem of forensics. Batman detection tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhardwaj, G. (January 10, 2017). The world's greatest detective: Science versus comics. Retrieved from https://jguforensics.wordpress.com/2017/01/10/the-worlds-greatest-detective-science-versus-myth/
February 3	Preparation, Project 1	"Our Thing," Project 1 description
February 5	Performance, Project 1/A	Project 1 description
February 7	Performance, Project 1/B	Project 1 description
February 10	Second Examination	Study Guide for Second Examination

Unit III: Surveillance [Methods 02]

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic(s)/Activities</i>	<i>Readings</i>
February 12	<i>Lecture 3/1: Oppression and pedagogy. Liberation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [QUIZ TARGET] Freire, P. (2005). <i>Pedagogy of the oppressed</i> (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). London: Continuum.
February 14	<i>Lecture 3/2: Transgressive education. Teaching writing versus social status. Distinctive features of Batman comics.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West, G. (2000). "It takes time": The generative potential of transgressive teaching. <i>The Radical Teacher</i>, 58, 21-25. • Kleinhenz, M. N. (Dec. 6, 2017). <i>Creating the Bat #3: Alan Grant</i>. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/creating-the-bat-3-alan-g_b_4234378
February 17	<i>Lecture 3/3: THERE model. Themes for transgressors. Political activism.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holt, R. (2019). <i>"A light where there is dark": Transgressive teaching and the promise of liberation from transphobia</i>. Unpublished research paper. Albany, NY: University at Albany.
February 19	Preparation, Project 2	"Our Thing," Project 2 description
February 21	Performance, Project 2/A	Project 2 description
February 24	Performance, Project 2/B	Project 2 description
February 26	Third Examination	Study Guide for Third Examination

Unit IV: Villains

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic(s)/Activities</i>	<i>Readings</i>
February 28	<i>Lecture 4/1: Archetype and myth. Villains. Healing processes.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [QUIZ TARGET] Terrill, R. E. (2000). Spectacular repression: Sanitizing the Batman. <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i>, 17(4), 493-509.
March 2	<i>Lecture 4/2: Future of Batman films. Best and worst villains.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaz, E. (2019). <i>4 villains we want to see in THE BATMAN, and 4 we don't</i>. Retrieved from https://nerdist.com/article/batman-villains-matt-reeves-dc-comics/ • Newsarama Staff. (April 16, 2019). <i>The 10 greatest BATMAN Villains of ALL TIME!</i> Retrieved from https://www.newsarama.com/15456-the-10-greatest-batman-villains-of-all-time.html#s12
March 4	<i>Lecture 4/3: Pagan cosmology. The hero's journey. Pop mythology.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peters, T. D. (2007). Unbalancing justice: Overcoming the limits of the law in <i>Batman Begins</i>. <i>Griffith Law Review</i>, 16(1), 247-270.
March 18	Preparation, Project 3	"Our Thing," Project 3 description
March 20	Performance, Project 3/A	Project 3 description
March 23	Performance, Project 3/B	Project 3 description
March 25	Fourth Examination	Study Guide for Fourth Examination

Unit V: Boss Battles

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic(s)/Activities</i>	<i>Readings</i>
March 27	<i>Lecture 5/1: Roots of divisions. Three challenges for the field.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [QUIZ TARGET] Bryant, J. (2004). Critical communication challenges for the new century. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 54(3), 389-401.
March 30	<i>Lecture 5/2: Social media. Media addiction. Parental buffering. Comics as literature, superheroes as mythic figures.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chedda, M. L. (2016). <i>The challenges of communication amongst 21st century youth</i>. Unpublished research paper. Minnetonka, MN: Adler Graduate School. • Cates, I. (2011). On the literary use of superheroes; Or, Batman and Superman fistfight in heaven. <i>American Literature</i>, 83(4), 831-857.
April 1	<i>Lecture 5/3: Turning points. Alternative modes of discourse.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putnam, L. (2001). Shifting voices, oppositional discourse, and new visions for communication studies. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 51(1), 38-51.
April 3	Preparation, Project 4	"Our Thing," Project 4 description
April 6	Performance, Project 4/A	Project 4 description
April 8	Performance, Project 4/B	Project 4 description
April 10	Fifth Examination	Study Guide for Fifth Examination
April 13	JUDGMENT DAY	Grade summary, instructor evaluations.

Unit VI: The Future

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic(s)/Activities</i>	<i>Readings</i>
April 15	<i>Lecture 6/1: Future of media studies. The Academy and other social realms. Performance-based logistics. Batman and PBL.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [QUIZ TARGET] Punathambekar, A., & Scannell, P. (2013). Back to the future: Media and communication studies in the 21st century. <i>Media, Culture, and Society</i>, 35(1), 3-8. • Fowler, R. T. (2009). <i>Misunderstood superheroes: Batman and performance based logistics</i>. Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Materiel Readiness Washington United States.
April 17	<i>Lecture 6/2: Six challenges for organizational communication studies. Multilevel approaches. What makes Batman. Batman's supporting cast. Future of the franchise.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jones, E., Watson, B., Gardner, J., & Gallois, C. (2004). Organizational communication: Challenges for the new century. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 54(4), 722-750. • Dantzler, P. D. (2009). Static yet fluctuating: <i>The evolution of Batman and his audiences</i>. Unpublished research paper, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_theses/73
April 20	Sixth Examination	Study Guide for Sixth Examination