

## COMM 603: Social Change and Communication Systems

Wed. 7:10 – 9:50 P.M., BAL 3056

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Burton St. John III, Associate Professor of Communication  
**OFFICE:** BAL 3010  
**PHONE:** 683-3834  
**E-MAIL:** bsaintjo@odu.edu  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Wed, 4:00 – 5:30 PM.

**E-MAIL REQUIREMENT:** Each student enrolled in this course is required to have an O.D.U. e-mail account to use for this class. The syllabus, grades and (as necessary) announcements, will be posted on the university's Blackboard system. To access Blackboard, students must log in, using their e-mail name and password (Blackboard can be accessed via the university's home page, <http://web.odu.edu>, under Current Students, then Academic Resources). To access Blackboard, however, you must first activate your ODU email account. Remember that you cannot activate your ODU email account if you have any holds or blocks on your account (if you encounter such holds, contact the ODU Registrar office).

### Course Description

This course examines the role of various communication systems in enacting social change. Students explore principles and practices of social change initiatives in a variety of commercial, governmental, and not-for-profit contexts. Topics include persuasive techniques, community engagement, mobilizing large-scale social movements, and the political consequences of human and digital communication technologies.

This course explores the forces that both attempt to enact and resist social change within societies. As such, while this class will focus on communication, theories are also drawn broadly from such arenas as sociology, political science and psychology.

Students will engage current and classic research involving social changes that relate to such areas as public sphere studies, individual and collective perceptions of citizenship, technology as a social change vehicle and civic involvement and the press. This course will also examine peer-to-peer civic mobilization and political forces, and mass institutional persuasion.

Readings will be drawn from peer -reviewed journals and scholarly compilation texts. There is one required text you will need to purchase:

*Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture*, Jenkins, et al, The MIT Press, 2009.

### Course Objectives

- 1) Foster an understanding of how social change is either advanced or resisted through a multitude of societal agents.
- 2) Appreciate the complex web of capability, competence and credibility that is associated with the advancement of, or the resistance to, social change.
- 3) Develop a keen awareness of the ways in which culture, citizenship, technology, and other phenomenon influence social change.

## Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to demonstrate the following competencies at the conclusion of the course

- 1) Distinguish the various types of social change dynamics in society and how social change is processed across a continuum from advocacy to resistance.
- 2) Connect theories with theorists
- 3) Articulate major premises and support for classic and cutting edge social change-related research.
- 4) Identify the concepts that are still being debated related to social change research.
- 5) Appreciate how individuals use technology (whether in an individual capacity or as part of wider collective) to stake out a position regarding social change.
- 6) Identify and critique how institutional forces (PR, journalism, organized interest groups) stake out positions regarding social change.
- 7) Explain how a wide variety of agents – at both macro and micro levels – affect what is seen and understood as social change (and what is not).

### A note about classroom civility:

As graduate students, it is expected that you come to class prepared – that is, you have done the readings in advance of the class and are ready, willing and able to contribute to class discussions. Furthermore, you are prepared fully for all classroom assignments (presentations, etc.). Failure to be prepared is a subtle form of incivility known as “bad form.” However, there are more apparent forms of incivility that graduate students should already be well aware of:

- **Using cell phone during class (yes, this includes texting)**
- **Engaging in cross-talk during lecture and class discussions.**
- **Doing other work in class**

**Make sure you avoid these behaviors – otherwise you may have to leave the classroom (it’s been known to happen)**

## Assignments

Oral Presentation:	20%
Peer Critique:	10%
Oral Mid-Term	25%
Socratic Roundtable	15%
Conference Ready Topics Paper:	30%

### Oral Presentation

Each student will be responsible for leading a 60-minute class session. Topics and dates will be determined collaboratively between instructor and students. Students will choose a reading and apply it to a specific social change dynamic. Students will clearly articulate theoretical assumptions, axioms, and propositions; theoretical development; theorists; application and extensions of the theory; and critique. This will be a dynamic presentation – students should prepare in advance ways to encourage classmates’ participation.

### Peer Critique

Students will be assigned a class session in which they will be responsible for a response and critique of their peer's oral presentation. This will be in the form of supportive, constructive criticism, but should not shy away from drawing attention to gaps in knowledge or apparent lack of careful consideration on the part of the oral presenter. Students must prepare for their sessions independently of each other.

### Final Paper

Each student will select a course theory/concept they wish to fully explore. Students may choose the same topic as their oral presentation, but it is not necessary. Final papers will include an argument for the importance of the topic, extensive review of literature about the topic, critique, and implications for future directions. By November 2, students will present a brief summary of their papers during the last two weeks of class for class observations and suggestions.

### **THE HONOR SYSTEM:**

PLEASE NOTE THAT AS A STUDENT OF OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY, YOU HAVE SIGNED A PLEDGE ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY TO ABIDE BY THE HONOR CODE. THIS IS AN INSTITUTIONAL POLICY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF VISITORS AND ENFORCED IN THIS CLASS. YOUR WORK IN THIS CLASS IS EXPECTED TO BE ORIGINAL, REFLECTING YOUR OWN THOUGHT, RESEARCH, AND EXPRESSION. YOU WILL HAVE COMMITTED PLAGIARISM IF YOU REPRODUCE SOMEONE ELSE'S WORK WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGING THE SOURCE.

**SPECIAL NEEDS/CONSIDERATIONS** - Please inform the instructor as soon as possible if you have any special needs or considerations for testing (ex: being registered with Disability Services or having a religious holiday celebration in conflict with a test day); every effort will be made in this class to respect our diversity.

### Tentative Schedule and Readings – Comm 603

- Aug 31 Popularized concepts of social change.  
Excerpts from *Future Shock*, Toffler; *The Singularity*, Kurzweil
- Sep 7 Philosophical perspectives regarding Technology, Citizenship & Social Change  
Excerpts from *No Sense of Place*, Meyrowitz  
Excerpts from *Transforming Technology*, Feenberg.  
Begin Excerpts from Turkle, *Along Together*
- Sep 14 Philosophical perspectives regarding Technology, Citizenship & Social Change  
Continue *Along Together*, Turkle  
Read all of *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture*, Jenkins, et al.
- Sep 21 Individual/Collective Perceptions of Citizenship  
Excerpts from *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey  
Excerpts from *Multitude: War and democracy in the age of empire*, Negri & Hardt  
Journal article: “Citizenship in the Age of the Internet,” (2006) Hermes
- Sept 28 The Public Sphere  
Excerpts from *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jurgen Habermas  
Book chapter: “Re-thinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” Nancy Fraser
- October 5 The Public Sphere  
Finish:  
Excerpts from *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jurgen Habermas  
Book chapter: “Re-thinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” Nancy Fraser
- October 12 Journalism and Citizenship  
Journal article: “Digital Communication Networks and the Journalistic Field: The 2005 French Riots,” (2007) Adrienne Russell  
Book chapters:  
“Madison Commons 2.0: A Platform for Tomorrow’s Civic and Citizen Journalism,” Sue Robinson, et. al  
“User-Generated Content and Journalistic Values,” Jane Singer & Ian Ashman
- October 19 No class – individual oral midterms with professor

- October 26 Institutional Persuasion/PR/Propaganda  
 Excerpts from *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, Jacques Ellul  
Book chapter: "Public Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory Revisited," Kenneth Starck and Dean Kruckeberg  
Journal article: "The Evolution of an Idea: Charting the Early Public Relations Ideology of Edward L. Bernays," (2011) Burton St. John III & Margot Lamme
- November 2 Technology as a social change vehicle  
Journal articles: "New Media, counter publicity and the public sphere," (2003) John Downey and Natalie Fenton  
 "Protest in an information society: A review of literature on social movements and new ICTs," (2006) R. Kelley Garrett  
Book chapter: "New media, new movements?: The role of the internet in shaping the 'anti-globalization' movement," P. Van Aelst, P. & S. Walgrave
- November 9 Civic activism  
Journal article: "Democratic media activism through the lens of social movement theory," (2006) W.K. Carroll & R.A. Hackett  
Book chapters:  
 "Identifying with Information, Citizen Empowerment, the Internet, and the Environmental Anti-Toxins Movement," Wyatt Galusky  
 "New Media Power: The Internet and Global Activism," W. Lance Bennett
- November 16 Peer-to-Peer Mobilization  
Journal articles:  
 "The Benefits of Facebook 'Friends': Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites," (2007) Nicole Ellison, Charles Steinfield & Cliff Lampe  
 "The Promise of Cell Phones: From People Power to Technological Nanny," (2008) Sergio Rizzo  
 "Hypermedia Space and Global Communication Studies Lessons from the Middle East," (2010) Marwan Kraidy & Sara Mourad
- November 23 No class – Thanksgiving Break
- November 30 Socratic Exercise – Social Change and Communication Systems Today
- December 7 Present/turn in Final Papers