

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION
CMNS 454-4
D1.00

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COMPUTER MEDIATED WORK & WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

Prerequisites: 75 units including CMNS 253. Recommended: CMNS 353 and 362.

Overview:

Computer Mediated Work & Workplace Communication brings together three important bodies of research, and applies them to the contemporary world of work. First, we consider various histories of Labour, in order to better understand the central importance of work in human life. What meaning do our jobs and careers give us, and how have these meanings changed over time? Second, we consider the role of Technology in the workplace – starting with the emergence of Scientific Management, and ending with present day visions of the Knowledge Economy. How does new technology change both the routines of day-to-day work and the organization of workplaces themselves? Finally, we will examine the Cultural aspects of work and technology, in order to trace the various social meanings of work. What does it mean to be a ‘white collar worker’ in Canada today, versus a ‘blue collar worker’? Why do we imagine that working with computers is ‘smarter’ or ‘better’ than working with our hands?

By holding these three sets of ideas together, we will get a clearer picture of how management functions in a globalized world; we will interrogate the notion of a ‘postindustrial economy’; we will think about the changing nature of industry in Canada, and how the current ‘global economic downturn’ may complicate things further. Thinking about labour and technology, both theoretically and in concrete terms, will illustrate the central role of communication in the work world.

At the end of the term, students will be asked to reflect on the various themes and ideas in the course by writing a term paper. This paper will examine an actual workplace in detail: students are encouraged to reflect upon a job that they themselves have had, or a job held by a close friend or family member.

Required Readings:

A custom courseware package with the required readings will be available at the SFU Vancouver Bookstore. In addition, there are a number of articles that you will need to access online. Students will also make use of a course wiki to supplement weekly in-person discussions and to access and share additional links and resources.

Grading:

Attendance/Participation	15%
Reflection Papers (3, 2-3 pages each)	40%
Essay Proposal	5%
Term Paper	35%
Presentation	5%

The school expects that the grades awarded in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distribution of grades. In addition, The School will follow Policy S10.01 with respect to Academic Integrity, and Policies S10.02, S10.03 and S10.04 as regards Student Discipline (note: as of May 1, 2009 the previous T10 series of policies covering Intellectual Honesty (T10.02) and Academic Discipline (T10.03) have been replaced with the new S10 series of policies).