Communication and culture do not exist in isolation. In this course we will study communication as culture and culture as communication.

- How does our style of communication characterize our way of life? How do we come to understand and characterize other people and cultures?
- Throughout this course, we will explore oral, written, and visual communication strategies. We will think about the role of audience, context, and purpose in shaping and influencing the various communications we encounter and interact with in our daily lives.

We then will consider how we can play with these strategies to make our own oral, written, and visual communication more effective, innovative, and personalized.

Keeping in mind that communication, according to John Fiske, is composed of a myriad of human activities, from the ways in which we spread information, what we see on television, our hair style, or even the way we dress and our facial expressions, we will organize our study of communication and culture on the following objectives:

**Course Objectives**
- understand the operation of narratives as cultural communication
- explore how the styles we follow tell a story about who we are as individuals and as a culture
- appreciate the complexities of culture and communication as seen in the news
- examine the relations between culture and communication

**What you can get out of this course:**
- Become more aware of rhetorical strategies to help you make alert choices within certain constraints.
- Increase your understanding of the impact of these choices.
- Enhance your ability to think critically about the various communications you encounter and interact with in your daily life.
Required Texts


What to Expect: Workload & Valuation

Below is a brief description of what we will accomplish this semester.

Please refer to the course calendar to help plan for timely and successful completion of involved projects.

Weekly Reading and Writing Responses — 20%  

Please refer to the course schedule for weekly reading assignments. You are responsible to have completed the assigned reading and writing before the class. These reading and writing assignments are the gristle of this course.

A successful writing response will show that you have been reading and paying attention to class discussions. In addition, it will show that you have moved beyond what others have said and written and show a thoughtful reflection that makes connections with concepts from class with 'real-life'.

Core assignments — 50%  

Throughout this semester you will complete formal writing assignments including a rhetorical analysis, and projects that involve visual and oral components. Writing projects will involve research, multiple drafts, peer-review, consideration and analysis of rhetorical strategies and persuasion, as well as reflective writing.

You must complete all core assignments to receive a passing grade in this course.

Collaborative, Multi-Modal Research Project — 15%  

Wow. A lot of words. In this course we will begin with how narrative functions in our culture and move forward to see how we can read our culture better by understanding the role of narrative and storytelling. This final project will
incorporate written, visual, and oral modes of communication (hence the multi-modal). In a group, you will begin to research a current event, rhetorically analyze what 'stories' have already been told and then using multiple modes of communication, tell your own story, your own interpretation – based on all your research.

**Social Practices – 15%**

This grade will reflect your contribution to the class dynamic. That is, your role in class discussions, peer review activities, and group work. This grade also will take into account your commitment to engaging with the course material in a thoughtful, reflective, and positive way. The basis of social practices is *respect* for ideas, opinions, deadlines, course policies, and learning.

If you are not in class, you are not participating, so this grade will also partially reflect your attendance.

**Portfolio**

The portfolio will include all the work you produced in this course. The portfolio will not be given a grade. A completed portfolio is required to receive a final course grade – no portfolio, no credit. Be prepared to hand me your completed portfolio on the Monday of finals week. *Note: Save all of your work and assignment sheets!*

**About Plagiarism and Cheating**

Completing and turning in an assignment is an agreement to abide by the University Integrity Code. Give credit where credit is due.

For more information on citing sources:

- APA style guide: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html)
- MLA style guide: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html)

Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses. They are defined by this policy as “knowingly copying another’s work or ideas and calling them one’s own or not giving proper credit or citation,” and this policy covers copying sections or entire papers from printed or electronic sources as well as handing in papers written by students for other classes of purchasing academic papers. Plagiarism and cheating not only are dishonest but cheat you out of learning, the prime reason you are here. If you ever have questions about this issue, please talk with your instructor or consult a coach in the Writing Center (7-2007).

*Please refer to:* [http://www.studentaffairs.msu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html](http://www.studentaffairs.msu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html)
Grading & Class Policies

I will give letter grades (A, AB, B...) for all graded assignments in this class. All letter grades and the final grade will be based on the following percentages:

- **A**: 92-100%
- **B**: 82-87%
- **C**: 72-77%
- **D**: 60-67%
- **E**: 68-71%
- **F**: <60%

You must complete all core assignments to receive a passing grade in this course.

Being Here & Being Involved
The quality of this course depends on the quality of your involvement.

If you absolutely must miss a class, it will be your responsibility to find out what went on in class from fellow students, and to make up all missed work.

- More than 3 unexcused absences will result in a letter grade reduction.
- If your absence is unexcused, in-class work may not be made up for credit.

An excused absence is defined by the University Attendance Policy. Please refer to:
http://www.sa.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/attendance.html

Plan to attend all classes.

Promptness
This is a general rule for both attendance and assignments.
If something major happens in your life and something will be late → come talk to me.

Paper
Unless otherwise stated, I expect to receive a hardcopy of all assignments when they are due. I will not accept an e-mail attachment – I have limited number of copies per semester and will not print out your work.

Communication
This is a communication class. I encourage you to talk to me if you have any questions, concerns, or comments about the class. It would also be great if you get to know better the other people in this room.

Final Statements

A note on Freestyle & Flexibility
I reserve the right to revise the syllabus and course schedule to better serve everyone's needs.

Cause & Effect
Speech is action. Think about how you make an instructor feel when you ask “are we going to do anything important on such a such day?” How does this question function rhetorically?