How someone imagined this class in 1935; actual professor different than the one depicted; also: there was no Canadian television until the 1950s

**What is COMS 210?**

COMS 210: Introduction to Communication Studies is a course in media civics. It is designed to help you become a better citizen of reality. It also offers an introduction to the field of Communication Studies as it is practiced at McGill. We live in a media-saturated world, yet despite the constant talk *about* media *by* media institutions, technologies, and personalities, most people know surprisingly little about how and why these systems work the way they do. You will learn about media economics and institutions; ecological impacts of media systems; and media practices and ideologies. Throughout the term we will attend carefully to questions of power, justice, and inequality.

**All materials for COMS 210 will be available through the MyCourses site.**
**Lectures:** Lectures will be delivered through weekly audiorecorded “lecture” podcasts that will appear on MyCourses by Thursday at 14:35. “Answers” podcasts will appear Tuesdays. Students are strongly encouraged to download these and listen to them away from their computers and screens. More instructions will be given on the first day of class. The podcasts will be automatically transcribed by MyCourses, should students wish to refer to a print copy.

**Synchronous meetings via Zoom:** each Tuesday between 14:35-15:30, there will be an optional synchronous Zoom meeting for students who want it (there will be a link in MyCourses). These meetings will be primarily be used for work in small teams on tasks related to the three projects you will be submitting during the term. Teams may alternatively arrange to coordinate through asynchronous means (there will be a form you must submit regarding group work) or to meet at other times convenient to them. We will make every effort to group students by time zone so that students have a chance to talk with classmates in real time each week, if they are so inclined.

**Student questions and feedback on the lectures and readings:** Each week, approximately half the class will submit questions on the week’s lectures and readings by the end of the day on Friday. The prof will answer a selection of these in an “answers” podcast released on Tuesday. Students will also be asked to complete a short survey each week (the first one will be longer and more detailed) and the answers will be used to help design the podcast lectures.

**Student questions about the course requirements, rules, expectations, procedures, and “how-tos”:** start by checking the syllabus and FAQ. A discussion forum will be set up in MyCourses to cover these issues. Email should be used only as a last resort.

**Announcements:** will be made via the MyCourses Announcements tool. Students can sign up to receive email notifications or check the course website regularly.

**Readings:** All required readings will be available through the MyCourses site; most will be up as of the first day of class, though some readings will be added during the term.

**Office Hours:** The professor will hold weekly individual and group Zoom office hours for which students can sign up via a link in MyCourses. The TAs will also hold office hours. Some office hours may be held during Thursday class time to insure people in nearby time zones can make it, and if there is sufficient demand, some office hours will be held evenings (Montreal time) to be available for students in distant time zones.

**Contacting the Prof and TAs by email:** Please use email with COMS 210 as the subject line of your message. Allow 24 hours for a reply on weekdays and until Monday end of day if the email is sent on a weekend. If you do not receive a reply, assume we did not receive your email and please resend.

How to email your professors (works for all professors in all courses, also TAs).
Methods of Assessment (tentative):

**Quizzes:** [30%] Five times during the term you will take a timed, multiple-choice quiz during a predetermined 24-hour period. You will have plenty of notice as to when these quizzes will happen. The quiz is open-everything. You can look at your notes, refer to readings, and ask your friends. But it is timed. After the last day of class, there will be an optional sixth quiz. If you take it and score higher than your lowest prior quiz score, it will replace that quiz. If you score lower than on any of your first five quizzes, it will be averaged into your overall quiz score.

**Surveys:** [5%] Most weeks, on Thursdays, you will be asked to complete a short survey, which may consist of multiple-choice questions or short-answer queries. The fact that you did the survey will be recorded in the gradebook (credit / no credit) but your answers will be anonymous unless you tell me who you are.

**Questions:** [20%] Approximately every other week, you will submit a question or comment on the assigned readings and lecture. TAs will go through the questions and the prof will answer a selection of them in the Tuesday podcast. Questions are graded on a 4-point scale (0, 1, 2, 3) and a rubric will be provided on MyCourses. You are also welcome to submit an “Ask Me Anything” question any time, though this does not count towards your question grade. If it’s interesting to the prof, he will answer it in his answers podcast.

**Team Projects:** [45% total: 6% peer assessment and 13% for each project] Students will be randomly assigned into small teams, and teams will produce three projects over the course of the term. Each week, class time will be set aside for groups to make progress on their projects, and we will be available during class hours to consult with you about your progress.

**Feedback:** depending on the assignment, feedback will be provided by a numerical score or a grade on a rubric. For additional comments, please meet with your prof or TA during office hours.

**Access Needs and Disability Accommodations:** We are happy to make accommodations. Just write to the prof during add/drop and we will work something out.

**Expectations for class conduct:** Don’t do anything you normally shouldn’t do in a classroom. Use your computer for being in class, not for multitasking, hanging out on social media, doing your email, or shopping. Turn off notifications that interrupt you. Don’t interrupt others. If you are using video, avoid distracting or offensive backgrounds (no video, please; however, Zoom-bombing by pets is strongly encouraged).

Turn off your mic and turn it on only when you are talking. When finishing talking, say “and that’s my thought” or “and that’s my question” so others will know you are done talking.

Be kind to your classmates. Treat them even better than you would like to be treated. Remember that disagreements are encouraged and everyone has the right to be wrong.

Only the professor and TAs are authorized to record or disseminate recordings of the course; we will not, however, record students.
A more detailed document on Zoom etiquette will be provided in class.

An Imaginary Week in COMS 210

Here’s what a typical week in COMS 210 will look like if everything goes according to plan. You are welcome to organize your time as you like, but here is a hypothetical schedule for you.

**Tuesday or Wednesday:** Do the readings for the week.

**Thursday:** The lecture podcast drops¹ by 14:35. Download it, and listen to the lecture,² preferably away from your computer. While you’re on the website, answer the survey questions for the week (you can do this before you listen to the week’s lecture). A selection of student responses (plus any statistical aggregates) are incorporated into the following week’s lecture podcast.

**Friday:** Every other week, you will be responsible for posting a question about the Thursday lecture or readings to MyCourses by the end of the day. You could also do this on Thursday if you wanted. A subset of questions will be answered on Tuesday’s “answers” podcast.

**Tuesday:** For those who wish to meet synchronously, we will gather at 14:35, split into teams that will work on projects. Three times during the term, teams will submit projects for evaluation. Each week you will be given tools to make progress on the project. You can also elect to meet at other times, or asynchronously. ALSO: The “answers” podcast drops. Listen to it.

Five times during the term, you will take a timed, multiple-choice quiz on the lectures and readings. For each quiz, you will have a 24-hour window (which includes a Tuesday or Thursday class time) in which to take the quiz. It is “open-everything” and you are encouraged to help one another out. There will be an optional 6th quiz at the end of term.

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**Disclaimer:**
The terms of this guide are subject to modification as conditions change, in order to provide for flexibility and to optimize course delivery. Course requirements set out in the Course Syllabus (to be distributed in the first week of class) are not subject to modification.

¹ I know. Just let me have my fun.
² If you would prefer to read the lectures instead of listening to them, MyCourses provides automatic lecture transcription. I am told the transcription is “not bad.” The “official” version will be the audiorecording in cases where the transcript differs from the audio.