COMM 4330 - Special Issues in Comm: Platform Society-RELLIS

Fall 2026 Syllabus, Section 181, CRN 19058

Instructor Information

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Office Hours:
Mondays 02:00 p.m.-04:00 p.m.
Tuesdays 02:00 p.m.-04:00 p.m. (virtual)
Wednesdays 02:00 p.m.-04:00 p.m.
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Times and Location

Does Not Meet Face-to-Face

Course Description

Course provides intensive study of diverse and relevant specialized subjects and topics in communication. Subjects may focus on various trends, methodologies, research, measurements, and analysis within the field. Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.
Psychology & Communication Department, College of Arts & Sciences

Additional Course Information

1. Special Issue in Communication: This course's special issue is platform society. In this course, students will explore how digital platforms have penetrated the heart of societies, such as institutions, economic transactions, and social and cultural practices, and have forced governments and states to adjust their legal and democratic structures. Students will gain a comprehensive view of the platform society proliferating in a connected world and discuss private gain versus public benefit amid this fundamental social transformation.

2. ChatGPT and Generative AI Tools: In this course, students may use AI tools to enhance their weekly assignments. These tools can assist with brainstorming and provide insights into the potential appearance of completed tasks. Additionally, AI-assisted writing (e.g., Grammarly) is permitted for editing your own work, helping identify flaws in reasoning, spot confusing or underdeveloped paragraphs, and correct citations. However, when submitting work, students must acknowledge any writing, text, or media AI produces. This can be achieved through various means, such as using a different-colored font for AI-generated sections in assignments or by quoting directly in the text or product. Please get in touch with the instructor if you need further clarification on using generative AI tools for this course.

Students cannot use AI for weekly reading quizzes and midterm/final exams. Using generative AI tools for any part of your work will be treated as academic dishonesty for these exams and quizzes. If you have questions, please get in touch with the instructor.

3. Late Submission: Course assignments, including weekly reading quizzes and weekly assignments submitted late, will have 30% of deduction from the total grade.

4. Syllabus Subject to Change: While information and assurances are provided in this course syllabus, it should be understood that content may change in keeping with new research and literature and that events beyond the control of the instructor could occur. Students will be informed of any substantive occurrences that will produce syllabus changes.

Program Learning Outcomes

1. Graduates will develop critical thinking skills to evaluate theories and approaches to selected media and communication problems.

2. Graduates of the program will be able to explore appropriate data, tools, or techniques to draw informed, evidence-based conclusions within communication fields.

3. Graduates of the program will be able to communicate effectively and with high fluency in oral, written, and mediated professional contexts.

4. Graduates of the program will be able to collaborate effectively in teams and integrate communication knowledge with practical experiences to address community or industry communication needs.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to examine emerging issues in the field of communication and their social and cultural relevance.

2. Students will be able to distinguish between different approaches and methodologies appropriate to analyze emerging communication issues.

3. Students will be able to develop research strategies to study emerging communication issues.

4. Students will be able to evaluate the different characteristics of an emerging communication issue in teams.

Important Dates

Visit the Academic Calendar (tamiu.edu) (https://www.tamiu.edu/academiccalendar/) page to view the term's important dates.

Textbooks

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Required	The Platform Society	José van Dijck, Thomas Poell, Martijn de Waal	9780190889807

Other Course Materials

Links for other course materials will be provided and should be available through the TAMIU public library.

Grading Criteria

GRADE	PERCENTAGE
A	90-100
B	80-89.9
C	70-79.9
D	60-69.9
F	Below 60

Open Boilerplate

Exams (30%): Students will take the midterm and final examinations based on the assigned readings and video lectures. The midterm exam includes multiple-choice and true/false questions, while the final exam includes multiple-choice, true/false, and short essay questions. These exams will be administered online through Blackboard. To take these exams, students must install Respondus Lockdown Browser and Monitor. For these two exams, students are not allowed to use any books, notes, seek help from others, or use AI tools. The midterm exam is worth 15% of the grade, and the Final exam is worth 15% of the grade.

Weekly Assignments (40%): Students will submit weekly assignments related to the course topics. Each assignment addresses the agenda discussed in the assigned reading(s) and/or lecture video, and students should engage with concepts, claims, or ideas from these course materials as they complete the assignments. One weekly assignment is worth 4% of the grade. Students should relate the concepts and ideas discussed in the assigned chapter and video lecture when completing their weekly assignments. Weekly assignments include, but are not limited to, class discussion posts and

responses, case analyses, a photo collage, and a voice recording. Students should adhere to the AI use policy for this course, and each assignment is due on Saturday.

Weekly Reading Quizzes (30%): Students will take 10 weekly reading quizzes on Blackboard. Students can use course materials, but they are not allowed to seek help from anyone during the quiz. Each quiz covers questions on the assigned reading(s), videos, and materials listed in the course schedule for that week. Quizzes are only available until the due date, and no makeup quizzes will be offered. Each quiz consists of multiple-choice and true/false questions. One weekly quiz is worth 3% of the grade, and it is due on Saturday.

ASSIGNMENT	VALUE
Assignment #1 10 Reading Quizzes	30
Assignment #2 Midterm and Final Exams	30
Assignment #3 10 Weekly Assignments	40

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week of	Agenda/Topic	Reading(s)	Due
8/24	Understanding Platforms	Course Syllabus Cristofari, G. (2024). Understanding the "platform" keyword: An inquiry on the contested use of metaphors in platform studies, Platforms & Society, 1, 1-13.	Introduce Yourself (08/29, 11:59 pm)
8/31	Platform Scholarship	Magaudda, P. & Solaroli, M. (2020). Platform Studies and Digital Cultural Industries. Sociologica, 14(3), 267-293	Reading Quiz 1 (09/05, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 1 (09/05, 11:59 pm)
9/7	Platform Economy	Gillespie, T. (2010). The politics of 'platforms.' New Media & Society, 12(3), 347-364 Kenney, M. & Zysman, J. (2016). The Rise of Platform Economy. Issues in Science and Technology, 32(3), 61-69.	Reading Quiz 2 (09/12, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 2 (09/12, 11:59 pm)
9/14	Platformization	Helmond, A. (2015). The Platformization of the Web: Making Web Data Platform Ready, Social Media+Society, 1-11 Nieborg, D. B., & Poell, T. (2018). The platformization of cultural production: Theorizing the contingent cultural commodity. New Media & Society, 20(11), 4275-4292.	Reading Quiz 3 (09/19, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 4 (09/19, 11:59 pm)
9/21	The Platform Society	Introduction Ch 1. The Platform Society as a Contested Concept	Reading Quiz 4 (09/26, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 4 (09/26, 11:59 pm)
9/28	Platform Mechanisms	Ch 2. Platform Machanisms Turow, J. & Couldry, N. (2018). Media as Data Extraction: Towards a New Map of a Transformed Communications Field, 68, 415-423.	Reading Quiz 5 (10/03, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 5 (10/03. 11:59 pm)
10/5	Midterm Exam	Midterm Exam Study Guide Midterm Review Session (10/06, 01:00 pm-01:30 pm)	Midterm Exam (10/07, 09:00 am-11:59 pm)
10/12	Platforms and Journalism	Bell, E. & Owen, T. (2017). The Platform Press: How Silicon Valley reengineered journalism (Introduction and Platforms Becomes Publishers, pp.9-56), Columbia Journalism Review.	Reading Quiz 6 (10/17, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 6 (10/17, 11:59 pm)

10/19	Platforms and Urban Transport/Food Delivery	Ch 4. Urban Transport Haidar, J. (2024). Unpacking the business model: Food delivery platforms as 'multiple market makers'. Platforms & Society, 1.	Reading Quiz 7 (10/24, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 7 (10/24, 11:59 pm)
10/26	Platforms and Healthcare/Education	Ch 5. Healthcare and Health Research Ch 6. Education	Reading Quiz 8 (10/30, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 8 (10/30,11:59 pm)
11/2	Platform Governance	Ch 7. Governing a Responsible Platform Sáenz-Leandro, R. & Fernández-Ardèvol, M. (2024). The politics of policy change in platform capitalism: A systematic review of the literature on the regulation of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs). Platforms & Society, 1, 1-14.	Reading Quiz 9 (11/7, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 9 (11/7, 11:59 pm)
11/9	Platforms and Visual Culture	Manovich, L. (2017). Instagram and Contemporary Image. Retrieved from: http://manovich. net/index.php/projects/instagram-and-contemporary-image	
11/16	Platforms and Music/Streaming Culture	Chalaby, J. (2023). The Streaming Industry and the Platform Economy: An Analysis, Media Culture & Society, 46(3), 552-571. Prey (2020). Locating Power in Platformization: Music Streaming Playlists and Curatorial Power, Social Media+Society, 1-11.	Reading Quiz 10 (11/21, 11:59 pm) Weekly Assignment 10 (11/21, 11:59 pm)
11/23	Platforms and Videogames	Montfort, N., & Bogost, I. (2009). Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. Ch 1. Stella_1	
11/30	Final Exam	Final Exam Study Guide Final Review Session (12/01, 01:00 pm-01:30 pm)	Final Exam (12/02, 09:00 am-11:59 pm)

University/College Policies

Please see the University Policies below.

COVID-19 Related Policies

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please refer to the Student Handbook, Appendix A (Attendance Rule) for instructions.

Required Class Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class in person (or virtually, if the class is online) and to complete all assignments. If you cannot attend class, it is your responsibility to communicate absences with your professors. The faculty member will decide if your excuse is valid and thus may provide lecture materials of the class. According to University policy, acceptable reasons for an absence, which cannot affect a student's grade, include:

- Participation in an authorized University activity.
- Death or major illness in a student's immediate family.
- Illness of a dependent family member.
- Participation in legal proceedings or administrative procedures that require a student's presence.
- Religious holy day.
- Illness that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class.
- Required participation in military duties.
- Mandatory admission interviews for professional or graduate school which cannot be rescheduled.

Students are responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to faculty members within seven calendar days of their absence and return to class. They must substantiate the reason for the absence. If the absence is excused, faculty members must either provide students with the opportunity to make

up the exam or other work missed, or provide a satisfactory alternative to complete the exam or other work missed within 30 calendar days from the date of absence. Students who miss class due to a University-sponsored activity are responsible for identifying their absences to their instructors with as much advance notice as possible.

Classroom Behavior (applies to online or Face-to-Face Classes)

In the classroom, students are expected to listen attentively, participate respectfully, and adhere to established rules. Behavior that interferes with the class lecture may result in disciplinary action, ensuring a productive and respectful learning environment for everyone. Any disputes over academic matters should be addressed calmly and constructively, ideally during designated times such as office hours or after class. If a student does not agree with a decision, they can request a meeting with the instructor to discuss their concerns in more detail. Should further resolution be needed, the student may escalate the matter to the department head or use formal grievance procedures as outlined in the sections below. (please refer to Student Handbook Article 4 (https://www.tamiu.edu/handbook/article-04.shtml)).

TAMIU Honor Code: Plagiarism and Cheating

As a TAMIU student, you are bound by the TAMIU Honor Code to conduct yourself ethically in all your activities as a TAMIU student and to report violations of the Honor Code. Please read carefully the Student Handbook Article 7 and Article 10 available at Student Handbook (https://www.tamiu.edu/handbook/index.shtml).

We are committed to strict enforcement of the Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code tend to involve claiming work that is not one's own, most commonly plagiarism in written assignments and any form of cheating on exams and other types of assignments.

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as your own. It occurs when you:

1. Borrow someone else's facts, ideas, or opinions and put them entirely in your own words. You must acknowledge that these thoughts are not your own by immediately citing the source in your paper. Failure to do this is plagiarism.
2. Borrow someone else's words (short phrases, clauses, or sentences), you must enclose the copied words in quotation marks as well as citing the source. Failure to do this is plagiarism.
3. Present someone else's paper or exam (stolen, borrowed, or bought) as your own. You have committed a clearly intentional form of intellectual theft and have put your academic future in jeopardy. This is the worst form of plagiarism.

Here is another explanation from the 2020, seventh edition of the Manual of The American Psychological Association (APA):

"Plagiarism is the act of presenting the words, idea, or images of another as your own; it denies authors or creators of content the credit they are due. Whether deliberate or unintentional, plagiarism violates ethical standards in scholarship" (p. 254). This same principle applies to the illicit use of AI.

Plagiarism: Researchers do not claim the words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due. Quotations marks should be used to indicate the exact words of another. Each time you paraphrase another author (i.e., summarize a passage or rearrange the order of a sentence and change some of the words), you need to credit the source in the text. The key element of this principle is that authors do not present the work of another as if it were their own words. This can extend to ideas as well as written words. If authors model a study after one done by someone else, the originating author should be given credit. If the rationale for a study was suggested in the discussion section of someone else's article, the person should be given credit. Given the free exchange of ideas, which is very important for the health of intellectual discourse, authors may not know where an idea for a study originated. If authors do know, however, they should acknowledge the source; this includes personal communications (p. 11). For guidance on proper documentation, consult the Academic Success Center or a recommended guide to documentation and research such as the Manual of the APA or the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. If you still have doubts concerning proper documentation, seek advice from your instructor prior to submitting a final draft.

TAMIU has penalties for plagiarism and cheating.

- **Penalties for Plagiarism**: Should a faculty member discover that a student has committed plagiarism, the student should receive a grade of 'F' in that course and the matter will be referred to the Honor Council for possible disciplinary action. The faculty member, however, may elect to give freshmen and sophomore students a "zero" for the assignment and to allow them to revise the assignment up to a grade of "F" (50%) if they believe that the student plagiarized out of ignorance or carelessness and not out of an attempt to deceive in order to earn an unmerited grade; the instructor must still report the offense to the Honor Council. This option should not be available to juniors, seniors, or graduate students, who cannot reasonably claim ignorance of documentation rules as an excuse. For repeat offenders in undergraduate courses or for an offender in any graduate course, the penalty for plagiarism is likely to include suspension or expulsion from the university.
    - *Caution*: Be very careful what you upload to Turnitin or send to your professor for evaluation. Whatever you upload for evaluation will be considered your final, approved draft. If it is plagiarized, you will be held responsible. The excuse that "it was only a draft" will not be accepted.
    - *Caution*: Also, do not share your electronic files with others. If you do, you are responsible for the possible consequences. If another student takes your file of a paper and changes the name to his or her name and submits it and you also submit the paper, we will hold both of you responsible for plagiarism. It is impossible for us to know with certainty who wrote the paper and who stole it. And, of course, we cannot know if there was collusion between you and the other student in the matter.

- **Penalties for Cheating**: Should a faculty member discover a student cheating on an exam or quiz or other class project, the student should receive a "zero" for the assignment and not be allowed to make the assignment up. The incident should be reported to the chair of the department and to the Honor Council. If the cheating is extensive, however, or if the assignment constitutes a major grade for the course (e.g., a final exam), or if the student has cheated in the past, the student should receive an "F" in the course, and the matter should be referred to the Honor Council. Additional penalties, including suspension or expulsion from the university may be imposed. Under no circumstances should a student who deserves an "F" in the course be allowed to withdraw from the course with a "W."
  - *Caution*: Chat groups that start off as "study groups" can easily devolve into "cheating groups." Be very careful not to join or remain any chat group if it begins to discuss specific information about exams or assignments that are meant to require individual work. If you are a member of such a group and it begins to cheat, you will be held responsible along with all the other members of the group. The TAMIU Honor Code requires that you report any such instances of cheating.
- **Student Right of Appeal**: Faculty will notify students immediately via the student's TAMIU e- mail account that they have submitted plagiarized work. Students have the right to appeal a faculty member's charge of academic dishonesty by notifying the TAMIU Honor Council of their intent to appeal as long as the notification of appeal comes within 10 business days of the faculty member's e-mail message to the student and/or the Office of Student Conduct and Community Engagement. The Student Handbook provides more details.

Use of Work in Two or More Courses

You may not submit work completed in one course for a grade in a second course unless you receive explicit permission to do so by the instructor of the second course. In general, you should get credit for a work product only once.

AI Policies

Your instructor will provide you with their personal policy on the use of AI in the classroom setting and associated coursework.

TAMIU E-Mail and SafeZone

Personal Announcements sent to students through TAMIU E-mail (tamiu.edu or dusty email) are the official means of communicating course and university business with students and faculty –not the U.S. Mail and no other e-mail addresses. Students and faculty must check their TAMIU e-mail accounts regularly, if not daily. Not having seen an important TAMIU e-mail or message from a faculty member, chair, or dean is not accepted as an excuse for failure to take important action.

Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to download the SafeZone app, which is a free mobile app for all University faculty, staff, and students. SafeZone allows you to: report safety concerns (24/7), get connected with mental health professionals, activate location sharing with authorities, and anonymously report incidents. Go to SafeZone (https://www.tamiu.edu/adminis/police/safezone/index.shtml) for more information.

Copyright Restrictions

The Copyright Act of 1976 grants to copyright owners the exclusive right to reproduce their works and distribute copies of their work. Works that receive copyright protection include published works such as a textbook. Copying a textbook without permission from the owner of the copyright may constitute copyright infringement. Civil and criminal penalties may be assessed for copyright infringement. Civil penalties include damages up to $100,000; criminal penalties include a fine up to $250,000 and imprisonment. Copyright laws do not allow students and professors to make photocopies of copyrighted materials, but you may copy a limited portion of a work, such as article from a journal or a chapter from a book for your own personal academic use or, in the case of a professor, for personal, limited classroom use. In general, the extent of your copying should not suggest that the purpose or the effect of your copying is to avoid paying for the materials. And, of course, you may not sell these copies for a profit. Thus, students who copy textbooks to avoid buying them or professors who provide photocopies of textbooks to enable students to save money are violating the law.

Students with Disabilities

Texas A&M International University seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal education opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Office of Disability Services for Students located in Student Center 124. This office will contact the faculty member to recommend specific, reasonable accommodations. Faculty are prohibited from making accommodations based solely on communications from students. They may make accommodations only when provided documentation by the Office of Disability Services for Students.

For accommodations or assistance with disabilities, contact the Disability Coordinator, Karla Pedraza, at karla.pedraza@tamiu.edu, call 956.326.2763, or visit Student Center 124.

Student Attendance and Leave of Absence (LOA) Policy

As part of our efforts to assist and encourage all students towards graduation, TAMIU provides

LOA's for students, including pregnant/parenting students, in accordance with the Attendance Rule (Section 3.07) and the Student LOA Rule (Section 3.08), which includes the "Leave of Absence Request" form. Both rules can be found in the TAMIU Student Handbook (URL: Student Handbook (https://www.tamiu.edu/handbook/index.shtml)).

Pregnant and Parenting Students

Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, harassment based on sex, including harassment because of pregnancy or related conditions, is prohibited. A pregnant/parenting student must be granted an absence for as long as the student's physician deems the absence medically necessary. It is a violation of Title IX to ask for documentation relative to the pregnant/parenting student's status beyond what would be required for other medical conditions. Students who experience or observe alleged or suspected discrimination due to their pregnant/parenting status, should report to the TAMIU Title IX Coordinator (Lorissa M. Cortez, 5201 University Boulevard, KLM 159B, Laredo, TX 78041, TitleIX@tamiu.edu, 956.326.2857) and/or the Office of Civil Rights (Dallas Office, U.S. Department of Education, 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 1620, Dallas, TX 75201-6810, 214.661.9600). You can also report it on TAMIU's anonymous electronic reporting site, *Report It*, at https://www.tamiu.edu/reportit (https://www.tamiu.edu/reportit/index.shtml).

TAMIU advises a pregnant/parenting student to notify their professor once the student is aware that accommodations for such will be necessary. It is recommended that the student and professor develop a reasonable plan for the student's completion of missed coursework or assignments. The Office of Compliance (Lorissa M. Cortez, lorissam.cortez@tamiu.edu) can assist the student and professor in working out the reasonable accommodation. For other questions or concerns regarding Title IX compliance related to pregnant/parenting students, contact the Title IX Coordinator. In the event that a student needs a leave of absence for a substantial period of time, TAMIU urges the student to consider a Leave of Absence (LOA) as outlined in the TAMIU *Student Handbook*.#As part of our efforts to assist and encourage all students towards graduation, TAMIU provides LOAs for students, including pregnant/parenting students, in accordance with the Attendance Rule and the Student LOA Rule.#Both rules can be found in the TAMIU *Student Handbook*.

For parenting-related rights, accommodations, and resources, contact the Parenting Liaison, Mayra Hernandez, at mghernandez@tamiu.edu, call 956.326.2265, or visit Student Center 226.

For pregnancy-related rights, accommodations, and resources, contact the TIX Coordinator, Lorissa Cortez, at lorissaM.cortez@tamiu.edu, call 956.326.2857, or visit Killam Library 159.

Anti-Discrimination/Title IX

TAMIU does not discriminate or permit harassment against any individual on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, educational programs, or employment. If you would like to file a complaint relative to Title IX or any civil rights violation, please contact the TAMIU Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity/Title IX Coordinator, Lorissa M. Cortez, 5201 University Boulevard, Killam Library 159B, Laredo, TX 78041, TitleIX@tamiu.edu, 956.326.2857, via the anonymous electronic reporting website, ReportIt (https://www.tamiu.edu/reportit) and/or the Office of Civil Rights (Dallas Office), U.S. Department of Education, 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 1620, Dallas, TX 75201-6810, 214.661.9600.

Incompletes

Students who are unable to complete a course should withdraw from the course before the final date for withdrawal and receive a "W." To qualify for an "incomplete" and thus have the opportunity to complete the course at a later date, a student must meet the following criteria:

1. The student must have completed 90% of the course work assigned before the final date for withdrawing from a course with a "W", and the student must be passing the course;
2. The student cannot complete the course because an accident, an illness, or a traumatic personal or family event occurred after the final date for withdrawal from a course;
3. The student must sign an "Incomplete Grade Contract" and secure signatures of approval from the professor and the college dean.
4. The student must agree to complete the missing course work before the end of the next long semester; failure to meet this deadline will cause the "I" to automatically be converted to an "F"; extensions to this deadline may be granted by the dean of the college. This is the general policy regarding the circumstances under which an "incomplete" may be granted, but under exceptional circumstances, a student may receive an incomplete who does not meet all of the criteria above if the faculty member, department chair, and dean recommend it.

WIN Contracts

The Department of Biology and Chemistry does not permit WIN contracts. For other departments within the college, WIN Contracts are offered only under exceptional circumstances and are limited to graduating seniors. Only courses offered by full-time TAMIU faculty or TAMIU instructors are eligible to be contracted for the WIN requirement. However, a WIN contract for a course taught by an adjunct may be approved, with special permission from the department chair and dean. Students must seek approval before beginning any work for the WIN Contract. No student will contract more than one course per semester. Summer WIN Contracts must continue through both summer sessions.

Student Responsibility for Dropping a Course

It is the responsibility of the student to drop the course before the final date for withdrawal from a course. Faculty members, in fact, may not drop a student from a course without getting the approval of their department chair and dean.

Independent Study Course

Independent Study (IS) courses are offered only under exceptional circumstances. Required courses intended to build academic skills may not be taken as IS (e.g., clinical supervision and internships). No student will take more than one IS course per semester. Moreover, IS courses are limited to seniors and graduate students. Summer IS course must continue through both summer sessions.

Grade Changes & Appeals

Faculty are authorized to change final grades only when they have committed a computational error or an error in recording a grade, and they must receive the approval of their department chairs and the dean to change the grade. As part of that approval, they must attach a detailed explanation of the reason for the mistake. Only in rare cases would another reason be entertained as legitimate for a grade change. A student who is unhappy with his or her grade on an assignment must discuss the situation with the faculty member teaching the course. If students believe that they have been graded unfairly, they have the right to appeal the grade using a grade appeal process in the Student Handbook and in the Faculty Handbook.

Final Examination

All courses in all colleges must include a comprehensive exam or performance and be given on the date and time specified by the Academic Calendar and the Final Exam schedule published by the Registrar's Office. In the College of Arts & Sciences all final exams must contain a written component. The written component should comprise at least 20% of the final exam grade. Exceptions to this policy must receive the approval of the department chair and the dean at the beginning of the semester.

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it. The Telus app is available to download directly from TELUS (tamiu.edu) (https://www.tamiu.edu/counseling/telus/) or from the Apple App Store and Google Play.

Distance Education Courses

This course is 100% online. There are no required sessions that require students to log in to Blackboard at a scheduled time. This course consists of weekly modules released a week in advance. Students are expected to meet weekly deadlines, and may schedule their work as they see fit within that time frame.

Because this is an online course, each student's attendance is based on their online activity and participation. Students are expected to log in to the course on Blackboard at least twice per week. If students have a situation that might cause them to miss an entire week of class, discuss it with the instructor as soon as possible.

Online Courses and On-Campus Meetings

Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 2, Subchapter J, Section 2.202 (https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=2&rl=202), defines distance education as the formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50%) of instruction. Distance education includes hybrid and 100% online courses and programs as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB):

- **Hybrid Course** - A distance education course in which more than 50 percent but less than 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations.
- **100-Percent Online Course** - A distance education course in which 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations. **Requirements for on-campus or in-person orientation, testing, academic support services, internships/fieldwork, or other non-instructional activities do not exclude a course from this category.**

Course Structure

Students should log in to Blackboard regularly to review course schedules and materials. Each module requires students to read the module objectives, the assigned readings, and other course materials, watch a lecture video, and engage with other students and the instructor. These readings, videos, and materials are essential for completing course assignments and activities, including reading quizzes, weekly assignments, and exams. If students have any questions or concerns about the course topic, they can post or comment in the Q&A forum on Blackboard or contact the instructor via course messages or email.

Student-Instructor Communication Policy and Response Time

Announcements/Course Messages/Emails

The instructor primarily communicates with students through Blackboard announcements, messages (preferred), and emails. Every Monday, the instructor will post an announcement about the week's readings, assignments, and other course-related updates. Regarding course messages and emails, students can anticipate receiving replies from the instructor within 24 hours on weekdays (Monday through Friday, from 08:00 a.m. to 05:00 p.m.).

Note: If students have an urgent matter that necessitates the instructor's immediate attention, they should email URGENT: COMM 4330 in the subject line.

Assignments and Assessments
The course schedule notes all assignment due dates. Students expect to receive grades and feedback within two weeks of submission.

Course Communication Guidelines (Netiquette)

There are course expectations concerning etiquette or how we should treat each other online. We must consider these values as we communicate with one another. Visit **Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' web page on Netiquette (http://www.tamiu.edu/distance/students/netiquette.shtml)** for further instruction.

Accommodations/Accessibility Policy

Texas A&M International University seeks to provide reasonable accommodation for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Director of Student Counseling and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodation. For more information, contact the online at **Office of Disability Services for Students (DSS)**, via phone at 956.326.3086 or by visiting the staff at the Student Center, room 118. A link to the Disabilities Services for Students site has also been included under the "Resources" tab inside the course.

Student Support Resources

The University wishes to have all students succeed in their courses. To provide support to our students, an array of services in the areas of technology support, academic support, student support, and accessibility support may be found at the University. For more information, visit the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services page on **University Resources and Support Services**.

Computer/Technology Requirements

When participating in distance education courses, it is vital to consider the technology involved in order to have a successful course. Online students will need regular access to a personal computer that runs on a broadband Internet connection.

It is recommended that you meet the technical requirements listed on the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' webpage (https://www.tamiu.edu/distance/students/technology-requirements.shtml) when using the learning management system (LMS) of the University.

Additional Hardware. For this class, you will need the following additional hardware: Recently purchased laptops may have these built-in web cameras. If you do not have this equipment, it is recommended to purchase a stand-alone webcam, a microphone, or a webcam with a built-in microphone from your local electronic store or any online store.

NOTE: Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services may check out available webcams to students on a first-come, first-served basis. To check out a webcam, please stop by Killam Library, Room 259, and request an available webcam.

Additional Software. You will need the following additional software: TAMIU Students may access online versions of this software through their Dusty Office 365 account at **https://dusty.tamiu.edu/**. This site also provides students access to download the Microsoft suite for educational use. **See instructions for downloading the Microsoft Office suite**.

Note: Students, if you do not own the required hardware or software or do not have access to the Internet, it will be highly challenging for you to make any progress in this class. However, my goal is to assist you in finding solutions and guide you appropriately most of the required materials can either be found free of charge at TAMIU's library, classrooms, and available computer labs. **Visit Media Services' web page on the availability of on-campus computer labs.** In addition, you may also purchase any of these items at any electronic store.

Learning Management System (Blackboard)

Students are provided with an orientation (*eLearning (Blackboard) Student Orientation*) and access to guides on how to use the Blackboard LMS. Guides may be available at **Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' Student eLearning Tutorial Videos page** or by contacting the eLearning team at **elearning@tamiu.edu**.

Minimum Technical Skills Expected

When participating in distance education courses, it is vital to consider the technology involved to ensure a successful course. Students in distance education should have basic computer and Internet skills, as noted on the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services **webpage**. For this course, students should be able to deliver virtual presentations and basic media skills.

Technical Support Services

Because of the nature of distance education courses, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) computing and information services are vital to the success of online students. This webpage covers contact information for Distance Education Services (Blackboard Support), the OIT Help Desk, and E-mail support: **Technical Support Services**.

Web Conferences/Synchronous sessions

Throughout the semester, the instructor will be available for virtual meetings with students by appointment during office hours (Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, 02:00 p.m.—04:00 p.m.). Two synchronous virtual meetings will be offered via Microsoft Teams to help students prepare for the midterm and final exams (See the course schedule). These meetings will be recorded and available to students who are unable to attend the synchronous sessions.

Rubrics (may be included here and in the Syllabus and Overview in the course)

Rubrics for weekly assignments will be located in the modules on Blackboard.

Late Work Policy

In the media and communication fields, it is crucial to meet deadlines. Students are responsible for ensuring that all their quizzes, assignments, and exams are submitted promptly within the designated timeframe. While late submissions may be accepted, they will incur a 30% deduction from the available grade and be subject to additional assessment.

Course Evaluation

At the end of this course, students are encouraged to complete a course evaluation, which will be distributed via email and through a course link.

Turnitin Policy Or Other Types of Assignments in Other Systems

For this course, students must submit all assignments through the SafeAssign system for originality checks. Work flagged for high similarity or academic dishonesty (over 20%) may incur grade penalties.

Proctoring

This course requires the use of LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor (webcam) for online exams. The webcam can be built into your computer or be a plug-in model that connects via a USB cable. Watch this short video (http://www.respondus.com/products/lockdown-browser/student-movie.shtml) to get a basic understanding of what LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor (the webcam feature) are. A student Quick Start Guide (PDF) (https://web.respondus.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/RLDB-Quick-Start-Guide-BbUltra-Student.pdf) is also available.

Accessibility and Privacy Statements on Course Technologies

At Texas A&M International University, we believe that all students should have equal access to technology in the classroom. These technologies/sites may also require user data, such as the creation of a username and password. You may find the accessibility and privacy policies of the technologies used in this class on the following pages: **Accessibility Statements and Privacy Statements**