

CM531 INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Instructor: H. Denis Wu, Ph.D.

Time: 8:00 – 10:45 a.m. Tuesdays

Meeting room: COM 217

Course Web site: learn.bu.edu

Office Hours: 1 – 3 pm Tuesdays or by appointment

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Objectives of the class

As one niche field that straddles communication and international relations, International Communication encompasses wide-ranging and interconnected subjects. Despite its vast scope, this course is intended to introduce key theories, relevant concepts, and real-world cases and practices in the field. The course subject is an important dimension of higher education for all students aiming to specialize in a host of communication, culture, and socio-political areas. As the world has become immensely internationalized and intricately connected, a good grasp of the world's communication systems, their underlying concepts, and potential impact of professional practices may prove pivotal to students' edge in building successful academic and/or professional careers in relevant fields. Empowered with knowledge and understanding beyond national borders, professionals in communication and public affairs are better prepared to fulfill their professional responsibilities, advocate the ideals they embrace, and the interests they represent. To all students, the knowledge of how international communication works indisputably can enhance their appreciation, enrichment, and engagement with different parts of the world and at the global level.

The specific goals of this course are for students to

- Grasp the context, history, and essential ideas behind international communication;
- Develop a good sense of how communication across national borders and at the global level takes place and will project in the future;
- Be familiar with the key issues that have existed and may evolve in future international communication and public affairs;
- Obtain a comprehensive knowledge of how practitioners in international communication areas work and of the problems they face;
- Identify and explain the dynamics of communication ecosystem and vital components in the mediated and lived worlds;
- Know how to conduct impactful and methodologically rigorous research, apply solid communication concepts, and assess related programs in international affairs.

Textbook & Reading

Required:

Dimitrova, D. (Ed.). (2025). *Global journalism: Understanding world media systems (2nd ed)*. New York: [Rowman & Littlefield](#).
 Fullerton, J. A., & Kendrick, A. (Eds) (2017). *Shaping international public opinion: A model for nation branding and public diplomacy*. New York: [Peter Lang](#).

Recommended:

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (Eds) (2012). *Comparing media systems beyond the Western world*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
 Punathambekar, A. (2013). *From Bombay to Bollywood*. New York: NYU Press.
 Thussu, D. K. (2019). *International communication: Continuity and change (3rd ed)*. London: Bloomsbury.

Other Reading:

The articles that are assigned for each date or address timely topics are available on the course Blackboard site.

You are required to also follow one of the two newspapers – *The New York Times* and *The Economist*. They can be accessed freely on the BU library [site](#), if you do not have subscription to them. Alternatively, you are allowed to select another quality news outlet in the region/culture/language of your choice. It can be an alternative medium you appreciate or an influential news media from a specific country, of which you would like to become an expert. The class would also benefit from your weekly update from this particular news source. You are expected to verbally brief in class and/or post on the Discussions space of Blackboard regarding the supplemental readings or news outlet you follow. This part will count as your participation evaluation. Please write down your *newspaper choice on the first-day survey*.

Course Requirements

Grades. Your final grade will be based on the following components:

Participation and Engagement	15%
Country report & presentation	25%
Assessments of knowledge (10% each)	30%
Final paper & presentation	30%

Every assignment will be evaluated on a 100-point scale. Your final score will be calculated based on the above percentages. And your final letter grade will be given based on the following formula:

94-100	A	73-76.99	C
90-93.99	A-	70-72.99	C-
87-89.99	B+	67-69.99	D+

83-86.99	B	63-66.99	D
80-82.99	B-	60-62.99	D-
77-79.99	C+	0-59.99	F

Participation & Engagement.

Attendance of the class is imperative. Because we only meet once a week, missing any class would result in potential disconnect with the class. Given this, attendance check is conducted regularly at the beginning of each class and recorded on Blackboard for you to review.

Perfect class attendance *will not* necessarily result in a perfect score of participation and engagement (P&E). In addition to attendance, you must 1) express your informed opinion and engage in discussion regularly, and 2) verbally deliver your comment on news coverage in class and/or write on the Blackboard discussion space to earn your P&E credit. There will be in-class or Blackboard-based exercises for you to engage in as well. You are advised to complete reading assignments prior to each class, keep abreast of your chosen media outlets, and be ready to participate whenever opportunity arises.

Assessment.

There will be 3 in-class assessments of your knowledge. The questions will be based on assigned readings, discussions, and materials presented in the class. Potential question formats include true/false, multiple choice, fill-in the blank, and short answer. Each one of the assessments will constitute 15-20 questions – make sure to bring in your pen for assessments.

Country Report.

This assignment is designed to prepare each and every student of this class an expert of communication-related topics in a specific country.

You need to pick one country to concentrate on for this assignment. You should immerse yourself into the country’s media, communication issues this country faces, and write a comprehensive report based on your research findings. The issues or orientation of your country report hinges on the communication attributes, the salient issues, and the kind of information you can gather. Your background knowledge and language skill can be relevant when you pursue this country-centered project.

It is important to keep in mind that your country report should deal primarily with issues that pertain to *communication*, which is broadly defined – and can include such areas as print media, broadcasters, social media, mobile phones, media professionals, media celebrities, movie/television production, music industry, media laws and policies, advertising, public relations, communication infrastructure, technologies, and services, freedom of expression, public diplomacy, and so forth. Your report should follow the following structure: a) overall

media landscape in the country; b) the governance, legal framework, and business of the media; and c) the issues you deem important. You are encouraged to discuss your choice of country and focused topic with me in advance. It is important to support your analysis and argument with solid evidence and contain insight from *reliable* sources. The report should be well organized, coherently synthesized, and prepared with care.

The written report should be prepared in single-spaced format, with Times font, size 12, one-inch paper margin, and not exceed 6 pages. Each presentation should not exceed 5 minutes (multi-media visual aid is welcome). The country report is due on **10/28** at noon in Blackboard Student Works folder and a 5-minute presentation should be delivered in class as well.

Final Paper.

The primary task of students in this class is to produce a research paper that addresses a key issue of international communication, examines a pivotal communication concept in the real world, or presents findings of a case study that deals with a given aspect of communication in the class's context. This paper may eventually become your thesis or a convention paper that contributes to international communication scholarship. Therefore, please be serious about this endeavor because it may very well pay off. It is important for you to learn about the available databases in the library and literature search skills. Do not be afraid of paying library visits and don't limit your references or ideas from AI services or digitalized databases. After all, not all literature has been digitized, yet. The references in the textbooks and class readings can be a good starting point. As always, you are more than welcome to discuss your topic choice with me.

You should systematically follow a specific style ([APA](#) 7th edition is highly recommended) in the paper. In addition, basic writing requirements – spelling, grammar, word usage, and structure of your paper – will be considered. Your final paper must be typed (Times font, size 12, one-inch margin), *single-spaced*, and should not exceed 8 pages (including everything, e.g., references, illustration, and tables). Clear sections and subheads are recommended. Do not inflate your paper by including lengthy quotes or redundant examples – *succinct but insightful papers are superior to long but disconnected counterparts*.

You are required to submit an outline or brief of your final paper on **11/11 in class (hard copy)**. Your outline should include: 1) your research topic; 2) description of your inquiry; and 3) a list of highly relevant literature or sources of information that you consider using for your final paper. You can also include 4) questions you have. The more information you are able to provide in the outline, the more help you may get from me.

Remember to gather relevant information for your final paper *whenever you can* during the semester, i.e., take good notes of what you read, watch, or listen to, and not limit yourself to social media, artificial intelligence, or convenient sources from the internet. Most importantly, you should always verify every piece of information used in the paper for accuracy and validity. You may NOT change your topic of final paper afterward.

An electronic copy of your final paper is due by **12/10 10 p.m.** at the designated folder on the Blackboard. You will also have to formally present your paper (in 5 minutes) on the last day of class. For those who are serious about academic careers, I would encourage you to polish your final paper and submit it to an academic conference and/or [journal](#).

Course Policies

These policies are extremely important to you. Please read carefully and remember that these policies will be upheld throughout the semester. It is your responsibility to keep these policies in mind. First and foremost, academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this class. Any kind of academic misconduct will result in the filing of academic misconduct charge. Particularly, it is imperative to understand plagiarism in detail:

“Plagiarism is the act of representing someone else’s creative and/or academic work as your own, in full or in part. It can be an act of commission, in which one intentionally appropriates the words, pictures or ideas of another, or it can be an act of omission, in which one fails to acknowledge/document/give credit to the source, creator and/or the copyright owner of those words, pictures or ideas. Any fabrication of materials, quotes or sources, other than those created in a work of fiction is also plagiarism. Plagiarism is the most serious academic offense that you can commit and can result in probation, suspension, or expulsion.”

Your written reports *will be examined with Turnitin* on Blackboard, an online software to identify and locate suspicious plagiarized copy. You may run Turnitin yourself to ensure your personal writing or co-authored copy for any assignment is not plagiarized. Any AI-generated content is considered plagiarized work – because of the existing sources that are used – in this class. It is very important to note that you are entirely responsible for any turned-in report that bears your name.

If you cannot take an assessment or submit an assignment on the scheduled date, you have the full responsibility to report to me via email *in advance* with legitimate evidence. You will be penalized if you turn in your assignment late: Your grade on that given assignment will be subtracted 20 points for every day late. You should also heed to *where* the assignment is due; assignments turned into other venues will not be graded. Moreover, you do not have the option to submit extra work or project to gain bonus credit. Bonus credit can only be initiated by the instructor.

Any class you miss will not be offered or summarized afterwards at a one-on-one basis – you are entirely responsible for any class you miss. The instructor will assume that you can fully understand the material covered on the day(s) you miss and that you can grasp the content and skills *on your own*. Therefore, you are strongly advised to follow the schedule in the syllabus and participate in each class session to ensure you comprehend the subject and obtain the full benefit of this class.

For those of you who are working full time, having various part-time jobs, or participating in extra-curricular activities while taking this class at the same time, it is important to keep in mind that this class may be time-consuming and challenging to some students. If your

job or other commitments demand a lot of time and energy, you should be aware of the risk. Jobs or activities related excuses are not acceptable.

Foreseeable events (trip or vacation) or technological incidents will not be accepted as excuses for delayed work or a change in assessment time. You should take all necessary and sufficient precaution to protect your valuable work from being destroyed by any entity, equipment malfunction, or interruption. Also, you are strongly advised to plan your itinerary wisely to avoid any potential conflict with the class schedule.

If you had any question about the grade you receive of any assignment or assessment, you must put your inquiry and explanation *in writing* (i.e., email) so that I can have sufficient time to review the assignment and your answer(s), respond to your question(s), or change your grade if your request proved justified. I will not take individual verbal inquiry about grade during class time, which would likely compromise other students' interests.

The instructor will take grammar and style of your assignments and assessments into consideration when grading. You are advised to consult stylebook and other resources for guidance. The [Writing Center](#) in COM and other BU units can be helpful if you are not confident in or happy with your writing. It is always a good idea to seek editorial guidance or to have an erudite person look at your work before turning it in.

All communication in the classroom and online will be conducted in English. It is a courtesy to use the commonly shared language throughout the class to prevent the sentiment of being excluded from arising among your class members. Whenever you present content written in another language, please try to translate it to English for the class.

Lastly, please do not hesitate to talk to me if you encounter any issues during the semester. There are other university-wide policies that you may find useful:

-All BU students are bound by the [Academic Conduct Code](#). Please review to ensure you are acting responsibly and ethically in regard to your academics.

-Boston University is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconducts. Confidential support and academic advocacy resources can be found with the Center for Sexual Assault Response & Prevention ([SARP](#)).

-BU has strict guidelines on classroom behavior and practices when it comes to treatment of students and guests on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability, genetic information, military service, national origin, or due to marital, parental, or veteran status. Discrimination for any of these reasons is prohibited. Please refer to the [Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Policy](#).

-At your discretion, please alert me to anything related to preferred pronouns, name or nickname, or any extenuating circumstances or trigger warnings (personal, medical, etc.) that might impact your classroom experience.

-If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the [Office of Disability and Access Services](#) (DAS) to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests.

As long as you are still registered in this class, I assume that *you agree completely and entirely with these class policies and that you will uphold them throughout the semester*. You should keep this syllabus in mind and revisit these policies when needed. These policies will not be reviewed again during the class.

Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Please follow the class and my email for updates. You are required to do the assigned reading and prepare your original thoughts and/or comments to the readings prior to each class. Recommended reading is marked with #.

9/2

Introduction of the class – international communication as a field
Explanation of the syllabus and requirements
Getting acquainted with each other

[Dimitrova, 2025: chap 1](#)

9/9

Context, history, and key concepts of international communication
Normative, explanatory, applied, and predictive theories in the field
Discussion of country/region to be focused on Country Report assignment

[Dimitrova, 2025: chaps 4-5](#)

[Stevenson, 1992](#)

9/16

Context, history, and key concepts of international communication (continued)
Journalism practices, ethics, and press freedom: legacy vs. other media
Political parallelism and related media issues around the world

[Dimitrova, 2025: chaps 6-7](#)

[Hallin & Mancini, 2012: chap 1](#)

[Hallin & Mancini, 2012: chaps 5, 7, 8](#)

9/23

News flow; predictors of country relatedness, news values, and media resource
The impact of information transmission across national borders

- Perception of foreign countries, public opinion, and foreign policy-making

International news production/distribution and overall market structure

[Dimitrova, 2025: chaps 2, 15](#)

[Brewer, Graf, & Willnat, 2003](#)

[Hess, 1996: chap 4](#)

9/30

National media infrastructure, media professionalism
National development and modernization

Self-identity and perceived international status

Giddens, 1991: chap 1

Schramm, 1964: chaps 1, 2

Communication concepts and theories for international communication

- Agenda-setting and agenda-building, framing, priming, cultivation, knowledge gap, propaganda/persuasion theories, dependency theory, world systems theory, and others

Valkenburg & Oliver, 2020

§ Assessment 1 in class

10/7

Global media markets and the factors of language, geography, and culture

Non-Western media systems (tentative schedule: international experts to lecture)

Dimitrova, 2025: chaps 8, 9, 13

Hallin & Mancini, 2012: chaps 9, 10

Lotz, Eklund, & Soroka, 2022

10/14

No class. Monday schedule.

10/21

International information control and policy

Communication infrastructure

Cyber issues: information control and flow, disinformation and misinformation, mercantile system, data privacy, and monopoly issues

Choucri & Clark, 2018: chap 5

10/28

Armchair tour around the world of communication

Communication malady, war and peace, and clash of civilizations

Dimitrova, 2025: chaps 10-12

Lazer et al, 2018

Huntington, 1993; Said, 2001

§ Country report due at noon on Blackboard Student Works folder and 5-minute presentation delivered in class

11/4

Strategic public diplomacy, country branding/ images, and international perception of nations:
Concepts and case studies
International crises, trust of nation, and communication

Dimitrova, 2025: chaps 16, 17
Fullerton & Kenrick, 2017: chaps 1, 2, part 1
Buhmann, 2016; Wike et al, 2022

§ Assessment 2 in class

11/11

Strategic public diplomacy (continued): Issues and remedies
U.S. public diplomacy; practices and effect from China and others
Public diplomacy 2.0, post-truth public diplomacy

Fullerton & Kenrick, 2017: parts 2-3
Khakimova, 2011; Olins, 2002
Wu, 2023

§ Final paper outline due in class (hard copy)

11/18

New media technologies and international communication
○ News content diversity and plurality, “CNN effect,” and foreign policy-making
Social media-based communication (social movement, emotion, and disinformation) in
international context

Dimitrova, 2025: chaps 3, 18
Cull, 2019: chaps 2, 3
Gilboa, 2005
Bentley et al, 2021; Vargo & Hopp, 2020

11/25

Entertainment content in all forms: Cross-national flow and impact on national images and soft
power
Culture industries
○ Hollywood, Bollywood (India), Nollywood (Nigeria), Telenovelas (Brazil &
Mexico), Korean Wave (South Korea)
Global and diaspora cultures
Streaming services and platforms

Kim, 2025
Punathambekar, 2013: chaps 1, 4

12/2

Communication of controversial ideas and conspiracies across borders

- e.g., extremism, fascism, nationalism, populism, fundamentalism, radicalism, sexism, and racism

Bright, 2018

Fielitz & Marcks, 2019

Destradi & Plagemann, 2019; Flew & Iosifidis, 2019

§ Assessment 3 in class

12/9

Final paper presentation and discussion

Conclusion of the class

§ Final paper 5-minute presentation delivered in class

§ Final paper is due at the Turnitin folder on Blackboard by **12/10 at 10 pm**