

COMM 1101 – Introduction to Communication Studies – Winter 2012
School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University

Assignment #3

Topic: Critiquing Arguments; Understanding and Applying Course Themes

Due Date: At the beginning of your Discussion Group session during the **week of April 2**

Assignment:

1. Watch the online lecture by Clay Shirky, entitled “How Cognitive Surplus Will Change the World.” It’s available at this URL:

http://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_cognitive_surplus_will_change_the_world.html

2. Clay Shirky’s talk connects to a number of themes we have examined in this course: media and globalization; consumer societies; owning culture; alternative media; and “slacktivism,” to name only a few.

Drawing on course material, write a short essay (**600-700 words**) that demonstrates the connection between Shirky’s lecture and at least **one** of our course themes.

Your essay should contain answers to the questions listed below.

- a) What is Clay Shirky’s central thesis? Please summarize his thesis in 3-4 sentences, writing in your own words.
- b) What evidence does Shirky provide to support his argument? Provide at least 3 examples and show how they connect to his central thesis.
- c) Choose one sentence or phrase from Shirky’s lecture that encapsulates an aspect of his argument. How does this sentence or phrase work to convince the audience of the strength of his argument?
- d) Which course theme(s) do you find most relevant to Shirky’s argument? Using your chosen theme(s) as a source of evidence, **explain in detail whether you agree or disagree with Shirky’s argument**. Provide at least 2-3 examples drawn from your chosen course theme(s) to support your view.

Style: Your assignment should be presented in the form of a **600-700-word essay**, written *in your own words*. You may use direct quotes *sparingly*, citing the source in brackets after the citation. Provide page references where appropriate.

Formatting Checklist:

- a) your essay should have an introduction, main body, and conclusion
- b) essay should be typed and double spaced, in 12 pt. Times New Roman font
- b) normal margins
- c) pages numbered with your last name on each page
- d) essay should have a title
- e) essay should use citations where appropriate
- f) essay should have a reference list
- g) essay should be submitted to T.A. in hard copy only. Emailed assignments will not be accepted or graded.

Evaluation: This assignment will be graded out of 50. It is worth **5%** of your final grade. Your grade will be determined on the basis of the following criteria:

10 pts: Your ability to understand the meaning of thesis, argument and evidence

15 pts: Your ability to use relevant course material to support your argument

15 pts: Your ability to develop an argument, write convincingly and clearly express your thoughts

10 pts: Your use of correct formatting, referencing, and style (spelling, grammar, sentence structure, etc)

NOTE: Late assignments are not accepted.