



SOC 250A: Sociology of Digital Culture & Online Behavior *Special Topic*

Glatfelter Hall 014 • Tuesday & Thursday • 10:00-11:15am
Fall 2018

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Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 1-2pm, Tuesday & Thursday 11:30-12:30pm

Prof. Standlee reserves the right to alter this syllabus and the assignments at any time. Changes may be made to accommodate the specific needs of this class.

We become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us. In this electronic age we see ourselves being translated more and more into the form of information, moving toward the technological extension of consciousness.

~Marshall McLuhan

Course Description

We live in an era where things like the internet, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, self-driving cars, smartphones and social media are an integral part of our daily lives, or soon will be. In this class we are going to explore some key questions about this new world. What does it mean to live in a digitally enhanced society? How does the rise of smart devices, digital social networks and online communities shape how we experience our social world? What does all of this mean for our future?

This course will examine these questions and more as we explore the experience of living in a techno-social society, where technology and social interaction are deeply and powerfully connected. We will consider the cultural ramifications of existing and emerging technologies that shape our experiences and collective understanding. We will focus on some of the major themes that have engaged digital scholars including consumption and participatory culture, identity and humanity, and information and literacy.

Ultimately, this class is about YOU, and what it means to YOU to live in a digital society. Are you ready to lead the way?

Required Course Materials

Available at the Campus Bookstore and Online:

- Simon Lindgren: *Digital Media and Society*, 1st edition
- Daniel Miller et al.: *How the World Changed Social Media* PDF
 - Available for download on the class Moodle site
 - Available for download directly at: <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1474805/1/How-the-World-Changed-Social-Media.pdf>
- Michael Caulfield: *Web Literacy for Students ...and other people who care about facts*.
 - PDF available for download on the class Moodle site
 - Available online at <https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com>

Moodle

You will need to access Moodle for this course. Moodle will offer access to the syllabus, readings, discussion board resources, and be used to submit assignments.

Learning Objectives

Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze the impacts of digital technology on contemporary social behavior.
- Develop skills to evaluate online information, news, popular culture, and techno-mediated social practices.
- Evaluate and critique their own techno-social behaviors and those of their peer groups.
- Identify and analyze the role of digital culture in both addressing and contributing to existing social inequalities and social problems.

Course Questions

Below are some of the questions we will use as organizing principles for this course. Keep these in mind in both your reading and writing activities. By the end of the semester, you should be able to provide well thought out, clear, and complete answers to the following questions:

- From what social context does digital content emerge and how do these contexts impact its form and function?
- How does online content and technological development shape and reshape social expectations, norms and values among different user groups?
- What impacts, both positive and negative, does living in a digital society have on your own behavior and values?

Grading Scale

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	59 and below

Course Assignments and Grading

Class Attendance and Participation (10%)

Class attendance is vital! We will frequently utilize group discussions and in-class activities. Students are expected to have completed the readings and be ready to engage with the material.

Individual Assignments (30%)

- **Annotated Resource Assignment** – For this assignment, you will produce a list of 20-25 high quality fact-checked sources of information about an area or issue within digital culture that you find intellectually compelling. Each listed item will include a proper citation, a brief description/annotation, and a description of the fact checking process that you used to verify the legitimacy of the resource. The annotation should include a selection of traditional academic, open-source, and non-academic resources.
- **Digital Immersion** (5-page minimum) – This assignment requires students to spend 3-5 hours immersed in an aspect of digital culture of his/her choice. Examples may include videogames, social media, or watching online videos. Immediately after the activity, student will take notes on his/her experience. Based on the theoretical work we have read for this course, students will then write an analysis of their experience. What social, cultural and individual behaviors and impacts are relevant to this immersion?
- **Presentation Reflection Paper** (5-page minimum) – Students will write a reflection paper that identifies key concepts from their groups research and lesson. Students will then theorize about current and future impacts of this aspect of digital culture.
- **Final Paper** (5-page minimum). For the final paper, students will address the following:
 - What have you learned about digital culture?
 - How has digital culture shaped your life and that of the broader society?
 - What role will digital culture play in the future of human society and why?

Group Discussion Leadership Assignment (30%)*

You will be assigned to a group that will be responsible for preparing and implementing class readings, presentation/lecture activities, and/or discussion for one week (two class periods) during the semester. In preparation, you will prepare a lesson plan and meet with Prof. Standlee.

- **Lesson Plan Meeting** – Groups are required to meet with Prof. Standlee during office hours or by appointment at least **one week** in advance of their presentation week. During this time, students will present a plan for their lesson. This will include, but not be limited to: outline of the presentation, a class activity or discussion, any audio-visual resources, and any materials that need to be prepared including handouts, etc.
- **Digital Component Requirement** – As part of your presentation, student groups will create a digital component. This can take any form that the group decides in consultation with Prof. Standlee. Examples might include: creating an original video, videogames, music, interviews and discussions with members of the community, or a wide range of other creative activities appropriate to the week's topic.
- **Discussion Leader Presentation** – Students should be prepared to implement their lesson plans, and demonstrate a clear and comprehensive understanding of the week's material they have selected. During their two scheduled course periods, students are expected to be organized, professional, and demonstrate strong public speaking.

Class Digital Culture Website Project (30%)

- The class will collectively produce a multi-page website that addresses a wide variety of issues within the digital world. The site will serve as an access point for thoughtful, fact-checked research and information on contemporary digital culture with well-written analytic arguments developed by members of the class.
- Your presentation group will be responsible for selecting, editing, organizing and posting appropriate content to our course website. Producing, selecting and editing content will be an ongoing project during the semester. Students should expect to engage in all aspects of the process throughout the course.
- During finals week we will have a formal public site launch party, as we make the site available and visible to the campus community and the digital world at large.

*** Your Group Discussion Leadership Assignment are designed to satisfy Gettysburg College's 4th hour requirement for this course.**

Course Policies

Technology Use

Cell phones and other electronic devices are welcome in this class, however be prepared to engage in discussion of the cultural implications of technology use. Please don't distract your classmates with your technology use.

Gettysburg College Honor Code

All students of Gettysburg College are expected to adhere to the College's Honor Code. Academic dishonesty, including (but not limited to) cheating and plagiarism, will not be tolerated. If you have any questions or concerns regarding whether or not something is plagiarism, please contact me. Further information and the complete Honor Code can be found at: http://www.gettysburg.edu/about/offices/provost/advising/honor_code/

- Remember that all submitted work must include a signed copy of the Honor Code pledge: *I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.*

Academic Resources

This is a writing intensive course. If you feel that writing is not your strongest ability, I encourage you to contact the Writing Center, located on the ground floor of Breidenbaugh Hall. The Writing Center's peer tutors can help you develop and organize ideas, revise and edit drafts, and share writing strategies for this and other classes. The center is open Sunday through Thursday from 4-10pm for drop-in visits and appointments. Visit the Writing Center website at <https://www.gettysburg.edu/academics/english/student/writing-center.dot> for more information.

Citation Format

Students in this course are required to follow ASA (American Sociological Association) guidelines for citation and style. The Department of Sociology's Style Guide and other resources are available at http://www.gettysburg.edu/academics/sociology/students/writing_guides.dot

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and need special accommodations for any aspect of this course, contact me by the end of the second week of class so that we can make arrangements.

Attendance

Attendance is vital for this course. You may have **two unexcused absences** during the semester. Your final grade will be reduced by one letter grade for each unexcused absence beyond the two. Students with extraordinary circumstances are required to meet with me.

Religious Holidays

Gettysburg College is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Students have the right to engage in essential practices of their faith while minimizing conflict with the course requirements. Requests for accommodations due to participation or observance of religious holidays must be made through the Religious Observance Accommodation Form available at <http://www.gettysburg.edu/about/offices/president/hr/forms/religious-observance.dot>

Late Papers

Assignments are due by the beginning of class. Students must contact me before the due date to negotiate any extensions.

Classroom Conduct

A core tenant of Gettysburg College's mission is "the worth and dignity of all people." I consider this one of the most important things that you will learn in this class. The nature of the material we are going to cover may include difficult discussions and challenging ideas. Throughout this course, students are expected to treat one another and the professor thoughtfully and with respect. Above all, it is your responsibility to acknowledge the worth and dignity of all your classmates, yourself and your professor. To help everyone accomplish this, **hate speech is unacceptable, and racist, sexist, homophobic, Islamophobic, transphobic, classist or other pejorative or discriminatory language will not be tolerated.** I know that we are in a time of great social tension and emotions can run high. At times, we will discuss concepts that make you uncomfortable, make you question your values, and even sometimes make you angry. This is part of developing your intellectual and ethical identities. It is your responsibility to manage your emotions and behavior properly at all times. If you cannot, you will be asked to leave.

Pronoun and Name Usage

This course affirms people of diverse identities, including all gender expressions and gender identities. If you have reason to believe that I may refer to you by an incorrect pronoun ("s/he"), please let me know how you prefer to be addressed (she, he, they, ze, etc.). Additionally, if you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, let me know. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Gettysburg Curriculum

This course fulfills the Gettysburg Curriculum requirement of Multiple Inquires: Social Science.

SOC 250: Sociology of Digital Culture & Online Behavior - Course Schedule

Introduction

Week 1: August 28 & 30

Weekly Readings

- Syllabus

Activities

- Tech Survey
- Semester Project Introduction
- Goals and Design Introduction

Week 2: September 4 & 6

Weekly Readings

- Moodle: *Chicago Guide to Fact Checking* (Excerpt)
- *Web Literacy for Students ...and other people who care about facts.*

Activities

- Digital Literacy Training Activity
- **Annotated Resources Assignment Assigned**

Week 3: September 11 & 13

Weekly Readings

- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 1 “Digital Society”
- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 17 “A Theory of Digital Media and Social Change”
- Moodle: Marshall McLuhan - *The Medium is the Massage* (Excerpt)

Activities

- Course Website Design and Structure Workshop

Digital Theories and Research

Week 4: September 18 & 20

Weekly Readings

- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 2 “Social Media”
- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 3 “Cyber Debates”

Assignment

- **Annotated Resources Assignment due on Moodle by Friday Sept. 21 at 5pm**

NO CLASS – Thursday September 20

Week 5: September 25 & 27

Weekly Readings

- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 4 “Interaction and Identity”
- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 5 “Communities and Networks”

Activities

- Student Groups Presentation Work Day

Week 6: October 2 & 4

Weekly Readings

- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 13 “Digital Social Research”
- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 15 “Digital Ethnography”
- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 16 “Mapping and Mining in Digital Society”
- *How the World Changed Social Media* PDF

Activities

- Class Discussion of *How the World Changed Social Media*
 - What themes and findings do you find interesting?
 - What strengths and limitations does this kind of research demonstrate?
- **Digital Immersion Activity Assigned October 4**

Week 7: October 9 & 11

NO CLASS – Gettysburg College Reading Days

Areas of Interest

Group Discussion Leadership Assignments Due During Week of Your Presentations

- Lesson Plan
- Digital Component Requirement
- Discussion Leader Presentation

Individuals Assignments Due One Week After Your Presentation

- Presentation Reflection Paper

Week 8: October 16 & 18

Weekly Readings

- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 8 “Digital Citizenship”
- *Digital Citizenship* Group Assigned Readings Posted on Moodle
 - e.g. Social Organizations, Privacy, Media, Propaganda, Echo Chambers, etc.

Assignment

- **Digital Immersion Reflection Assignment Due October 8**

Week 9: October 23 & 25

Weekly Readings

- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 9 “Digital Power and Exploitation”
- *Digital Power and Exploitation* Group Assigned Readings Posted on Moodle
 - e.g. Identity Tourism, Cyber-Feminism, Authority, Power, etc.

Week 10: October 30 & November 1

Weekly Readings

- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 6 “Digital Visuality & Visibility”
- *Digital Visuality & Visibility* Group Assigned Readings Posted on Moodle
 - e.g. Images, Videos, Gaming, Memes, etc.

Week 11: November 6 & 8

Weekly Readings

- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 7 “Feeling Digital”
- *Feeling Digital* Group Assigned Readings Posted on Moodle
 - e.g. Emotion, Flaming, Trolling, Hate Speech, etc.

Week 12: November 13 & 15

Weekly Readings

- *Digital Media and Society*, Chapter 11 “Mobile Culture”
- *Mobile Culture* Group Assigned Readings Posted on Moodle
 - e.g. Social Media, Smartphones, Groupthink, etc.

Week 13: November 20 & 22

NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

Creating and Evaluating Digital Culture

Week 14: November 27 & 29

Assignments

- Review and Select Material for Final Website Project
- Complete Feedback and Revisions on Annotated Bibliography, Annotated Websites, and Videos
 - All Content Must be Selected and Uploaded to the Website

Week 15: December 4 & 6

Weekly Readings

- Moodle: “Cyborg Manifesto”
- Moodle: *Life 3.0* Excerpts

Assignments

- Course Evaluations
- All Final Website Text and Design Decisions Must be Made in Groups and as a Class

Finals Week

- **Formal Site Launch Party Friday December 14 at 1:30pm**

Assignment

- **Final Course Reflection Paper Due by 4:30pm on Friday December 14**