

SOC 350-01: DIGITAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

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Course Description

What exactly do we mean by “digital culture?” How does the rise of technological devices, social networks and computer-mediated community shape how we as individuals experience the institutions of our social world? 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 use a variety of texts from different disciplines to better understand the current research and understandings of topic.

This course is designed to give you a look at the interdisciplinary field of social media and digital culture with a focus on the contributions of sociology. This course should help you understand the role of technology in society and the specific contributions of the recent innovations of communication and social organization related to social media and digital culture.

Course Objectives

- To explore the interdisciplinary contributions of the humanistic social sciences and cultural students to research on digital culture and social media
- To develop insight into your own use of social media and consider your contributes to social media and digital technology
- To better understand how media and digital cultures shape your own values, expectations and ideals
- To develop a critical lens with which to analyze both research and popular culture.

Assignments

Participation: (20%) Regular participation is required, including participation in class discussions, classroom activities, debates and presentations, and regular attendance.

Attendance: Students must attend class regularly and be on time. Students may miss up to three class meetings without penalty. More than three missed classes will result in lowered grades for participation activities.

Semester Project: (80%)

As a class, we will write and produce our own ebook, a set of collected essays written by students that includes their own research and discussion of key themes for the semester.

Essay 1: Students will select one of the three topics we addressed in this module and write a 4-6 pages paper that provides additional info. Students may elect a “research” paper in which they

summarize historical or trend data, or a persuasive paper in which they provide insight into the debate about the long term impact of digital technologies on society.

Essay 2: Students will explore issues surrounding gaming and popular culture through sociological analysis. Students may elect to engage in participant observation, in which they will spend several hours playing games, either online or using game systems in the company of others, OR students may elect to interview at least 2 individuals who participate in computer or system gaming. Based on this research students will provide a thoughtful 4- 6 page essay discussing the norms, trends and expectation of game culture.

Essay 3: Students will explore issues surrounding social media through sociological analysis. Students may elect to engage in participant observation, by joining and examining one of the many social media sites on the web OR students may elect to interview at least 2 individuals who participate in social networking sites. Based on this research students will provide a thoughtful 4- 6 page essay discussing the norms, trends and expectation of social media.

Essay 4: Students will consider their own relationship with technology through a thoughtful discussion of their own patterns and use and the use of others around them. This will be a self-reflective essay that considers both issues of identity and the role of technology of society. What does it mean to be a member of “digital culture”?

Final Project: Based on feedback and peer editing activities, students will provide clean, properly cited, well edited, error free digital copies of each of their essays to me as a final project. Students may elect to not include one or more of their essays in the book, but all students are required to send me revised copies of their work.

Policy

The professor reserves the right to change the syllabus and assignments. Changes may be made to accommodate the specific needs of the class.

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty, including the giving or receiving of improper help on examinations or assignments, falsifying records, and plagiarism (the act of stealing and using, as one's own, the ideas or the expression of ideas of another) is not tolerated at Concord University. These behaviors can result in failure of the course or expulsion from the university. Please see p. 39 of the university academic catalog for the consequences of academic dishonesty.

Academic Resources: Free tutoring available in the Library, Student Center Study Lounge (2nd floor), and Rahall atrium. For specific information, contact the Academic Success Center (asc@concord.edu; 304-384-6074). The schedule will be posted online: <http://www.concord.edu/academics/academic-success-center/drop-tutoring>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Concord University is committed to responding to the needs of students with disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please inform your instructor at the beginning of the class semester if you have a disability and are requesting accommodations. It is your responsibility to self-disclose that you are requesting accommodations. The university and instructor will provide you with reasonable accommodations. You should register with CU's Disability Services Office, located in the Athens campus Jerry L. Beasley Student Center, Bottom Floor, across from the Campus Post Office. The Disability Services Office phone is 304-384-6036 or you can email the Director, Nancy Ellison, at nellison@concord.edu for assistance.

Readings listed for each day of class in the course schedule are to have been read **prior** to coming to that day's class.

Student athletes need to notify me in advance to be excused from class and are responsible for making up missing assignments and readings.

Classroom conduct: This course is heavily reliant on discussion, which includes difficult dialogue at times. **This is an inclusive and safe classroom.** All discussion points and questions are valued; as such students are expected to treat one another and the professor thoughtfully and with respect. Racist, sexist, homophobic or other pejorative or discriminatory language will not be tolerated and students who insist on such behavior will be asked to leave the classroom.

Cell phones and other electronic devices ARE allowed in this classroom, but any student using their electronic devices must be prepared to share their activities with their classmates and discuss the implications of technological use in public spaces at any time if asked to by the professor.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Aug 22 - Introductions and Syllabus

Aug 24 - Intro to Term Project

Module 1: Getting Started

Week 2 - Looking to the Past

Aug 27 - Lecture: Internet Past and Present

Aug 29 - Internet History Timeline Project: Small Group

Aug 31 - Trends in Internet Use and Social Media Activity Introduction

Reading: A Brief History of the Internet: written by those who made it history. Available Online at <http://www.internetsociety.org/internet/internet-51/history-internet/brief-history-internet>

Week 3 - Exploring the Terrain

Sept 3 - Labor Day Holiday, No Class

Sept 5 - Trends in Internet Use and Social Media Activity Wrap-up

Sept 7 - “The Matrix”

Reading: (interactive activity) Exploring the Pew Internet and American Life Project

Week 4 - The Great Debate: Technology as Utopia or Dystopia

Sept 10 - “The Matrix”

Sept 12 - “The Matrix”

Sept 14 - Discussion

Reading: The electronic hive: two views

First Essay Due: Sept 14th

Module 2: Gaming and Digital Culture

Week 5 - Games and the Digital

Sept 17 - The Rise of Video Games

Sept 19 - Level Up Short video

Sept 21 - Class Discussion

Reading: “Where Everybody Knows Your (Screen) Name: Online Games as “Third Places”
Do Video Games Kill?

Week 6 - Playtime!

Sept 24 - Simulations and Fantasy

Sept 26 - Class Discussion

Sept 28 - Class Discussion

Readings: Cyber Babies and Cy-Dough- Plasm
Breaking the Stereotype

Week 7 - Problems in the Gameworld?

Oct 1 - Game Over

Oct 3 - Film Discussion

Oct 5 - Reading Discussion

Reading: Live in your world, Play in ours

Gender and Video Games

Week 8

Oct 8 - individual meetings

Oct 10 - Individual meetings

Oct 12 - Fall Break, No Class

Essay #2 Due October 10th

Module 3: Social Media

Week 9 - Virtual Communities

Oct 15 - Why Communities Matter?

Oct 17 - Debate Prep “What about Social Media?”

Oct 19 - Debate!

Reading: Against Virtual Community

Virtual Togetherness

Week 10 - Social Media

Oct 22 - Social media and Youth Culture

Oct 24 - Class Discussion

Oct 26 - Intro Film and begin “The Social Network

Reading: “Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life.”

Week 11 - Facebook: Impacts and Future?

Oct 29 - The Social Network

Oct 31 - The Social Network

Nov 2 - Class Discussion

Reading: Identity Construction on Facebook

Essay #3 Due Nov 2nd

Module 5: Identity and the Self-Online

Week 12 - The Digital I/Eye

Nov 5 - Making Sense of Online Identity

Nov 7 - Google Yourself

Nov 9 - Google Your Classmates

Readings: Identity Construction and Self-Presentation on Personal Homepages

“Digital Footprints” by Mary Madden, Susannah Fox, Aaron Smith and Jessica Vitak. Available online at <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2007/Digital-Footprints/1-Summary-of-Findings.aspx>

Week 13 - Blogging and Self

Nov 12 - What do I have to say?

Nov 14 - Class Discussion and Intro: Find a Blog Activity

Nov 16 - Share “Find a Blog Activity” Results and Discuss

Readings: Blogging as Social Activity, or, Would You Let 900 Million People Read Your Diary?

How and Why People Twitter

Nov 19-23 - Thanksgiving Break, No Class

Week 14 - Cyborgs of the Past and the Future of Technology?

Nov 26 - Are you a cyborg?

Nov 28 - Class Discussion

Nov 30 - Discussion: Where do we go from here?

Readings: Cyborg Manifesto (Link to Text on BB).

From Cyber to Hybrid

Week 15 - Book Week

Dec 3 - Peer Editing

Dec 5 - Peer Editing

Dec 7 - Final Details

Essay #4 Due Dec 7

Final Revised Essays 1-3 due to me by Weds at 5pm.

You will get your final eBook Copy via email after the end of the semester!