

COM 3050: Communication Contexts in the Digital Era
Spring 2008: T, TH 12:30-1:45pm

Instructor: Dr. Rebekah Farrugia
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Office Hrs: Tues. & Thurs. 2:00-3:50pm or by appointment
Classroom: Dunbar Hall, Rm 2212

Course Overview

This course is designed to encourage students to think about the ways that new communication technologies are changing the landscape of everyday life with an emphasis on communication. Course readings are meant to challenge and familiarize students with a theoretical and practical understanding of the changing nature of the Internet and other facets of digital culture. Little emphasis is placed on the technology itself either in the readings or class discussion. Instead, we examine the historical, political, and culture *impact* of digital communication tools and media. Topics and issues raised include community, identity, and the rise of mobile technologies.

NOTE: If you have no interest in the Internet, new technologies, or digital culture I strongly recommend that you do not take this course.

Requirements

1. You are required to check WebCT for reading updates and course announcements EVERYDAY. It only takes a minute so I think this is a fair request. Everyone has access to the many computer labs on campus so not having your own personal computer is not a valid excuse.
2. As far as email is concerned, you are required to correspond with the course instructor using only your wmich email address.
3. You are required to complete all assignments on time. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. If you cannot meet a deadline please see me to discuss the issue BEFORE the due date.
4. You are required to come to class having read the material on the syllabus for that day with textbooks in hand. If we are covering Internet readings you are required to print them out and bring them to class. Failure to do so repeatedly will result in failing grade for participation.
5. You are required to complete all assignments on time. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. If you cannot meet a deadline please see me to discuss the issue BEFORE the due date. Otherwise, half a letter grade will be deducted for every day that an assignment is late.
6. You are required to participate in class by raising questions and engaging in thoughtful and respectful discussions with your classmates. This also includes being mindful and quiet while others are talking. I do not tolerate any talking while someone else has the floor. If you engage in this sort of behavior you will be required to leave the class.
7. You are required to get to class on time. If you need to leave early please notify the instructor before or at the beginning of class on that day. Tardiness will result in points deducted from your participation grade.

Required Course Texts

1. Rheingold, H. (2002). *Smart Mobs*. Basic Books: Cambridge, MA.
2. Reading course pack (available at the university bookstore)
3. WebCT and other online readings

Accommodations:

I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability that may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please contact me PRIVATELY during my office hours.

Problems or Complaints

If at any time during the course you have a problem or complaint, please come see me so that we may work things out as soon as possible. If we are unable to reach a satisfactory arrangement, please feel free to contact the Director of the School of Communication, Dr. Steve Rhodes (387-3130, steve.rhodes@wmich.edu). In addition, please consult the Student Handbook of Policies and Procedures for additional information regarding this process.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

*Points will be deducted for all late work.

Midterm Exam	200
Final Exam	200
Group Presentation	100
Annotated Bibliography	150
Paper Outline	30
Final Paper	200
Final Paper rough draft workshop (present w/ paper)	20
In class participation	100

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS (200 points each)

There are two exams in the course that may include multiple choice, matching, true/false, short answer, and/or essay questions.

Midterm = Tuesday Feb 19; Final = Monday April 21st, 12:30-2:30pm

GROUP PRESENTATION (100 points)

In a group of 3-4 you will put together a 15 minute presentation based on one of the course readings for your assigned day. Each group member is expected to speak for at least 2 minutes.

You will prepare your discussion and present the following:

1. Identify and explain the central thesis and main points of the article. (approx. 5 minutes)
2. Present a cultural artifact and relate it **DIRECTLY** to the reading. (approx. 7 minutes)

Ie. If your topic is online community, you could potentially spend some time examining online communities on yahoo or another online space and share some of what you find with the class.

3. Relate the article to the broader themes of the course or broader aspects of the topic of the reading as it relates to everyday life.

I.e. This is significant to digital culture because... (approx. 2-3 minutes)

4. Prepare a short annotation of the work you are presenting and post it to WebCT within one week of your presentation. You must identify the main thesis, core arguments, and the conclusions the author draws. It should be 1 page in length.

Keep in mind the following:

Your presentation is a microcosmic way of demonstrating to me that you are capable of reading critically. I recommend a visit to office hours before your presentation. However, I will not meet with you on the day of your presentation.

IN CLASS PARTICIPATION (100 points)

- Complete all assigned readings **prior** to the class period in which they will be discussed.
- Prepare questions, viewpoints, or examples to contribute to the discussion.
- Participate fully in discussions, neither dominating nor allowing others to carry the intellectual load.
- Pay attention to what you hear about digital communication in the media and share that information with the class.
- After **two** unexcused absences 10 points will be deducted from your participation grade for every absence thereafter.
- Simply showing up does not give you an ‘A’ for participation.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (150 points)

This will be a bibliography using the style manual of your choice (APA or MLA) in good form. Refer to hand out for more information.

FINAL PAPER

The final paper will be 8 to 10 pages long, typed, double spaced, using times new roman font, and 1 inch margins on all sides. You must clear your topic with me prior to beginning to work on the paper. Refer to course pack for hand out/information.

FINAL PAPER OUTLINE

Refer to course pack for an example of the outline for your paper final.

Tentative Daily Schedule

Section 1: History/Introductions to technology, the Internet, and CMC

Week 1: Introductions

Jan 8: Is this course right for you?

History of the Net

Jan 10: Rheingold, H. (1993). Ch. 3, Visionaries and convergences: The accidental history of the net (pp. 65-90). Available online at: www.rheingold.com/vc/book

Hobbes' Internet timeline: <http://www.zakon.org/robert/internet/timeline/>

Jan 15 William Gibson. Neuromancer excerpts, parts 1 and 2

<http://project.cyberpunk.ru/lib/neuromancer/>

Information database: The cyberpunk project

<http://project.cyberpunk.ru/idb/neuromancer.html>

Barlow. A declaration of the independence of cyberspace. Available online at:

<http://homes.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>

Popular Culture and Technology

Jan 17: Green, L. R. (2002). Ch 1: What fuels technology change (pp. 1-20) and Ch. 7: Mass media and the public sphere (pp. 116-132). In *Communication, Technology and Society*. New York: Sage. (in coursepack)

Week 3:

Jan 22 Wood, A. F & Smith, M. J. (2001). Ch. 10: Pop culture and online expression (pp. 184-202). In *Online Communication: Linking technology, identity & culture*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. (in coursepack)

Jan 24 screenings, final paper discussion

Section 2: Online Communities

Week 4: Online Communities and Social Network Sites (SNS)

Jan 29 Rheingold, H. *The Virtual Community*. Introduction. Available online at:

<http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book>

Baym, N. (1998). The Emergence of On-Line Community. In S. Jones (Ed.). *Cybersociety 2.0: Revisiting computer-mediated communication and community*, (pp. 35-68). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jan 31 Boyd, D. (in press). Why youth (heart) social network sites: the role of networked publics in teenage social life. *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning, Identity Volume* (ed. David Buckingham).

Week 5

Feb 5 Boyd, D. (2006). Friends, friendsters, and top 8: Writing community into being on social network sites. *First Monday: Peer-reviewed journal on the Internet, Vol. 11(12)*, Available at:

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1418/1336>

Feb 7 Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends": Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12* (4), article 1. Available at:

<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue4/ellison.html>

Week 6: Online Music Communities

Feb 12 Kostas, K. (2002). Music in the age of free distribution: MP3 and society. *First Monday: Peer-reviewed journal on the Internet, Vol. 7(1)*. Available at:

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/927/849>

Pfahl, M. (2005). Giving away music to make money: Independent musicians and the Internet. *First Monday: Peer-reviewed journal on the Internet, Special Issue #1: Music and the Internet*. Available at:

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1454/1369>

Feb 14 Duncan, N. B. & Fox, M. A. (2005). Computer-aided music distribution: the future of selection, retrieval and transmission. *First Monday: Peer-reviewed journal on the Internet, Vol. 10(5)*. Available at:

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1220/1140>

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Week 7: Midterm/Online Activism

Feb 19 MIDTERM EXAM

Feb 21 Howard-Spink, S. (2005). Grey Tuesday, online cultural activism and the mash-up of music and politics. *First Monday: Peer-reviewed journal on the Internet, Special Issue #1: Music and the Internet*. Available at:

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1460/1375>

Kidd, D. (2003). Indymedia.org: A new communications common. In McCaughey, M. & Ayers, M. D. (Eds.), *Cyberactivism: Online activism in theory and practice* (pp. 47-70). New York: Routledge.

Week 8: Online Activism/Blogging

Feb 26 Bogost, I. (2006). Playing politics: videogames for politics, activism, and advocacy. *First Monday: Peer-reviewed journal on the Internet, Special Issue #7: Command Lines: The emergence of governance in global cyberspace*. Available at:

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1617/1532>

Feb 28 Kahn, R. & Kellner, D. (2004). *New Media and Internet Activism: From the 'Battle of Seattle' to Blogging*. *New Media & Society, Vol. 6 (1)*: pp. 87-95.

Kendall, L. (2007). "Shout into the wind, and it shouts back." Identity and interactional tensions on Live Journal. *First Monday: Peer-reviewed journal on the Internet, Vol. 12(9)*. Available at:

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2004/1879>

Week 8: Spring Break

Week 9: Internet Subcultures

March 11 Hodkinson, P. (2003). "Net.Goth:: Internet communication and (sub)cultural boundaries. In Muggleton, D. & Weinzierl, R. (Eds.), *The Post-subcultures reader* (pp. 285-298). New York: Routledge.

Review paper outline due next class

March 13 Williams, J. P. (2006). "Authentic Identities: Straightedge subculture, music, and the Internet. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography Vol. 35* (2): 173-200. **ON WEBCT under COURSE CONTENT as "Williams_authenticidentities**

FINAL PAPER OUTLINE DUE

Section 3: Mobile Technologies

Week 10

March 18 Rheingold, H. *Smart Mobs*, ch. 1

March 20 Rheingold, H. *Smart Mobs*, ch. 2

Week 11

March 25 **FINAL PAPER ROUGH DRAFT WORKSHOP (Bring a copy of the rough draft of your paper to class to turn into me.)**

March 27 Rheingold, H. *Smart Mobs*, ch. 4

Week 12

April 1 Rheingold, H. *Smart Mobs*, ch. 5

April 3 **FINAL PAPER DUE**
Rheingold, H. *Smart Mobs*, ch. 8

Section 4: Cell Phone Culture

Week 13

April 8 Levinson, P. (2006). The little big blender: How the cellphone integrates the digital and the physical, everywhere (pp. 9-17). In Kavoori & Arceneaux (Eds.). *The Cell Phone Reader*: New York: Peter Lang.

Goggin, G. (2006). *Cell phone culture: Mobile technology in everyday life*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 1: Introduction: what do you mean 'cell phone culture'?! (pp. 1-16)

April 10 Goggin, G. (2006). *Cell phone culture: Mobile technology in everyday life*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 7: Intimate connections: Sex, celebrity, and the cell phone.

Whitney, A. (2006). Can you fear me now?: Cell phones and the American horror film. (pp. 125-139). In Kavoori & Arceneaux (Eds.). *The Cell Phone Reader*: New York: Peter Lang.

Week 14

April 15 TBA

April 17 final exam review

April 21 Final Exam 12:30-2:30pm