Overview of Course Content:

With the explosion of virtual communities and social media, technology and its effect on society has become a daily reality, invading all areas and aspects of our social lives. This ranges from pop culture, sports, and entertainment to political participation, intimacy, and family. Everyone taking this course is likely to have some exposure to virtual communities and social media—even if one is unaware of the extent and depth of this exposure in their lives. As a result, this course is not about discovering new ideas and never-before-seen concepts, but rather providing some tools and perspectives to understand aspects of society that we are somewhat familiar with. Put another way, this course seeks to understand a growing aspect of our society through a different lens of understanding.

Explicitly, the goals of this course are: 1) to provide a survey of subfields in social media research, 2) to expose you to what social science research looks like in these subfields, and 3) to provide a space for you to reflect and personally interact with what virtual communities and social media means in your own life.

Technology Requirement:

The class does have an embedded requirement to be connected with technology—or rather I should say that it is assumed that you have access to and more or less regularly participate with technology. That said, I do not want this class to privilege those who have over those who have not. Please send me an email or come talk to me if you feel that you are either not technologically proficient or will have trouble using technology and social media for the class assignments.

Grade Breakdown:

- Virtual Community Proposal 5%
- Disconnect Paper 10%
- Midterm 20%
- Virtual Community Paper 25%
- Final 40%
***If English is not your first language, or you have trouble writing in English, there are resources on campus to help in writing your papers. I am happy to point you to some of them, just send me an email. Also, if you are part of the Disabled Students’ Program (DSP) and require any special accommodations, please talk to me and/or send me an email within the next

LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED! The following paper assignments will all be “handed out” and completed through the bcourses website. As a result, if you miss the deadline, you will be completely unable to submit your assignment. Please be sure to turn things in on time and before the stated due date.

Disconnect Paper:
Sometime this week (make arrangements as necessary), for 36 hours you are to disconnect completely from any form of virtual community or social media. This means no text messages, emails, Internet, chat messengers, online spaces, apps, games, etc. You will write a paper about this experience and the positive and/or negative effects of virtual communities and social media in partial response to the week’s readings. See assignment on bCourses for more detailed information about this assignment.

Virtual Community Proposal + Paper (2 papers):
During this semester, you will be asked to spend at least five weeks (five hours a week) investing and interacting with a virtual community. This can certainly be a community that you are already currently a part of, but the interaction must be distinct, involved, deliberate, and intentional. In other words, you must reach out to the community in a proactive and initiative-taking way as to incite a response and deepen your interaction with it. The proposal is a way for me to make sure you have something in mind that is appropriate for your paper and will guarantee some interesting results. In the final paper, you will be asked to reflect on this experience and relate it to readings and topics from class. See assignment on bCourses for more detailed information about this assignment.

Midterm:
Your midterm exam will be held on Tuesday, October 13 during regular class time and in our regular class location. It will cover topics from the first six (6) weeks of class. More information to come as the semester moves along.

Final Exam:
Your final exam will be a take-home exam. More information as the semester moves along.
**Reading List and Semester Schedule**

**Week 1- September 1**

Introduction

**Disconnect Paper Handed Out**

**Virtual Community Proposal Handed Out**

**Week 2- September 8**

Utopian Views

***Disconnect Paper Due***

**Week 3- September 15**

Dystopian Views

***Virtual Community Proposal Due***

**Virtual Community Paper Handed Out**
Week 4- September 22  Globalization, Culture, and Technology

Week 5- September 29  Social Capital and Social Networking Sites

Week 6- October 6  Mobile Life in Offline Spaces

Week 7- October 13  Midterm Exam

Week 8- October 20  Privacy, Hacking, and Virtual Crimes
**Week 9 - October 27**

**Dating and Intimacy Online**

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**Week 10 - November 3**

**Family, Youth, and Children**

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**Week 11 - November 10**

**Revolutions, Movements, and Political Influence**
**Week 12- November 17**  

**Esports**  
- Steinkuehler & Williams (2006). Where Everybody Knows Your (Screen) Name: Online Games as “Third Places”.  

**Week 13- November 24**  

**Education**  

**Week 14- December 1**  

**Final Review and Evaluations**

***Virtual Community Paper due December 1***

*Final Exam due Friday, December 18 submitted via bCourses!*