

## **Sociology 167: Virtual Communities/Social Media Spring 2017**

### **INSTRUCTOR**

Jill Bakehorn, PhD (Pronouns: she/her or they/them)

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Office: 479 Barrows Hall

**Sign-up Office Hours:** Tuesdays 10am-noon

Sign-up: <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/xjanb>

**Drop-in Office Hours:** Thursdays 10am-noon

### **CLASS MEETING**

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-2:00pm

175 Boalt

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores the kinds of communities and social interactions that occur online or virtually. In particular we will examine how we construct connections, meaning, self, and identity in the absence of face-to-face interaction. Theories both utopian and dystopian about the virtual world will be discussed: for instance, does the Internet provide a space free from the social inequalities that plague the “real” world or does it exacerbate them?

We will begin the course with general sociological theories about the social construction of reality, the self, and interactions. We will use these as a basis for discussing and explaining online social relations, noting the ways in which these theories help illuminate the virtual world and the gaps that emerge.

We will use empirical research on virtual communities to understand what the online world facilitates and enables that may not be possible offline.

Technology is not, of course, neutral, so we will also take a critical eye to the ways in which new communication technologies are created: within what contexts, by whom, and for what ends. We will interrogate the intersection of society and social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others. What are some of the dark sides of social media? Can social media be harnessed for social good?

### **Some questions we will explore:**

- ◆ What does an increasingly digital world mean for our sense of self?
- ◆ In what ways are technological innovations creating and recreating identity categories?
- ◆ How do we make sense of our bodies and embodiment in a virtual context?
- ◆ What impact does this have on our relationships with others, on social institutions and, on everyday life?
- ◆ What does privacy and surveillance mean in this context?
- ◆ What new forms of culture are being created?

Keep in mind this is a sociology course. Just to refresh your memory, sociology is the study of human social activity, organization, and interaction. Sociology is about the search for patterned behavior and social, rather than individual, explanations for this behavior. Sociologists look beyond the taken-for-granted notions of our social environment to examine the many layers of social meaning in the human experience. (If this doesn't sound familiar to you, or you are unclear about the *sociological perspective*, please refer to your introductory sociology text for a refresher.)

This class will be **challenging** on a number of levels:

- ❖ You will be expected to keep up with a number of readings for each class meeting.
- ❖ These readings will be challenging not only in terms of their length and number, but also in terms of the subject matter presented and the complex theories proposed.
- ❖ We will be speaking frankly about issues of gender, race, class and sexuality. Some topics may be challenging in the sense that you may find the subject matter embarrassing, graphic, controversial, or difficult to discuss. Frank discussions and presentation of material may include things that some find offensive.

This course challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world. Keep in mind that your personal experiences may not match the general sociological insights discussed in the course. This does not negate the insights. Ask yourself why this might be the case. You may not agree with everything we read and discuss, but I expect you to have an open mind and demonstrate your knowledge of the sociological perspective. Disagreements and debates are expected and welcome in this class; however, I will not tolerate personal attacks.

## **COURSE GOALS**

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- ❖ Explain the sociological perspective
- ❖ Apply sociological theories to the virtual world
- ❖ Connect sociological theories to the social world and your experiences
- ❖ Critically analyze media/"common sense" understandings of the Internet and social media
- ❖ Write succinct papers where you effectively synthesize course materials and apply theory

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Burke, Kelsy. 2016. *Christians Under Covers: Evangelicals and Sexual Pleasure on the Internet*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Marwick, Alice E. 2013. *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Course Reader: Available at Central Copy (on Bancroft) and on bCourses

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Exams:** Take-home midterm and final exam--both are in essay format. Each is worth 30% of your final grade. You will be responsible for course readings, lectures, and any media presented in the class. No late exams are accepted without prior approval.

**Online Norm Breaking Paper:** You will be given a list of potential norming-breaking tasks to try out online. You must choose one, undertake it, and write a short, analytical paper.

**Disconnect Paper:** You will choose a single 24-hour period to go without social media, texting, Internet, apps, and any networked-connected device including phones, laptops, tablets, etc. You will write a paper about your experience reflecting on your feelings and on what it reveals about our relationship to connected devices. You will need to apply course materials.

## GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Exams (60%)

Norm Breaking Paper (20%)

Disconnect Paper (20%)

## COURSE FORMAT AND POLICIES

**Readings:** Readings should be completed prior to class. You must keep up with the readings to participate in class discussions and complete assignments. Bring your reading materials to every class; you will likely need to refer to them in class discussions. All of your assigned readings (aside from the required books) are available on bCourses and as a reader at Copy Central on Bancroft.

**Participation:** This class will incorporate the use of lecture, films, music, visuals, and group discussions. I expect you to be an active participant in the course. Bring your questions and comments to class and don't be shy about bringing them up.

You can also participate by posting links to news stories or videos, as well as any relevant thoughts on issues related to gender in the chatroom or discussion board on bCourses. Be sure to contextualize any posts by connecting them to issues in the class. Provide **trigger warnings** where appropriate.

If you have a question about the readings, lecture, etc., please post your question to the chatroom or discussion board on bCourses where both your questions and my answers will be visible to other students, rather than e-mailing me. Feel free to answer each other's questions as well.

**Missing Class:** If you miss a class, do not ask me if you missed anything. Of course you did!--but don't expect me to fill you in. I suggest sharing contact information with a classmate early on in the semester and getting the notes you missed.

**Course Slides:** I use course slides which often incorporate media. I will post course slides after lecture, not before, but they will only contain the text. Keep in mind that these slides are meant to be a guide during lecture and are therefore not exhaustive or a substitute for attending class.

**Course Notes and Recordings:** Course notes should not be disseminated beyond other students enrolled in the course. That means you are forbidden from posting them online on forums like Course Hero. You must obtain permission from me to record lectures.

**Course Etiquette:** Do not read, listen to music, browse the Internet, text, or sleep during class. If you want to do these things, don't bother coming to class. All **phones** must be silenced and put away during class.

You may not agree with everything we read and discuss, but I expect you to have an open mind and demonstrate your knowledge of the sociological perspective. Debates are expected and welcome in this class, however, I will not tolerate personal attacks.

**Laptop Policy:** I encourage you to consider taking notes without a computer if you are able. If you need/want to use a computer during class, I ask that you **sit in the back four rows of the classroom** so that you do not distract and disturb other students.

**Email:** Clearly indicate to which class you are referring in your emails to me. I endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours, but this is not always possible; please be patient.

## **GRADING POLICIES**

No **late assignments** will be accepted without prior approval.

**Turnitin:** All of your assignments will be checked by TurnItIn for plagiarism. Keep in mind, this program keeps a database of previously turned in papers as well.

For assignments turned in via bCourses, your feedback can be found there. Be sure to carefully consider the feedback; it is provided to help you improve on future assignments.

If you would like to request a re-grade or re-evaluation of an assignment, you must first, wait 24 hours after the assignment was returned and second, write up a statement detailing why you believe you deserve a higher grade. This statement should be about the substance of your work, not about effort. **You must request a re-grade within 7 days of the assignment being returned.** My assessment and grade of your work will be used, even if that means you get a lower score than originally given for that work.

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

The University defines academic misconduct as “any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community” (UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct).

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is collaboration with other students on exams or using notes during exams. Plagiarism includes turning in any work that is not your own as well as improper or missing citations of others' works. As a student of the University of California, you are bound by the Code of Academic Conduct. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will result in a referral to The Center for Student Conduct and a zero for that assignment.

Plagiarism is most likely to occur because students are unaware of how to cite their sources or because they feel desperate. If you get to this point in your writing, contact me ASAP rather than doing something you'll very likely regret.

## **OFFICE HOURS**

I will be holding **Sign-up** office hours from 10am-noon on **Tuesdays**. Sign-up: <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/xjanb>

I will be holding **Drop-in** office hours from 10am-noon on **Thursdays** —no appointment necessary.

If you are having any difficulties with the material or assignments for the course or if you are having any personal problems that are affecting your ability to complete assignments on time, you should take advantage of office hours early in the semester. I will be much more amenable to granting extensions when I have been made aware of problems early on rather than at the last minute.

Remember that office hours are an important resource if for no other reason than getting to know your instructors could help you in the future when you may need letters of recommendation.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

### **Disability Accommodations**

Please let me know early in the semester if you qualify for any disability accommodations.

### **Student Learning Center**

“The primary academic support service for students at Berkeley, the SLC helps students transition to Cal; navigate the academic terrain; create networks of resources; and achieve academic, personal and professional goals.” Located in The Cesar Chavez Student Center on Lower Sproul Plaza. Front desk phone: 510 642 7332

## **WEEKS ONE-TWO: SOCIOLOGY OF INTERACTION & REALITY**

### **Tuesday, 1/17                      Introductions**

### **Thursday, 1/19                      An Invitation to Sociology**

Berger, Peter L. 2011. "Sociology as an Individual Pastime." Pp 3-12 in *Readings for Sociology*. Seventh Edition, edited by Massey Garth. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Berger, Peter L. 1963. "Sociology as a Form of Consciousness." Pp 25-53 in *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*. New York: Anchor Books.

### **Tuesday, 1/24                      Erving Goffman's Rules for Interaction**

Goffman, Erving. 1967. "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction." Pp 5-45 in *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. New York: Pantheon Books.

### **Thursday, 1/26                      The Social Construction of Reality**

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. "Introduction: The Problem of the Sociology of Knowledge." Pp 1-18 in *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. "The Foundations of Knowledge in Everyday Life." Pp 19-46 in *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.

## **WEEKS THREE-FOUR: THEORIZING DIGITAL COMMUNITIES**

### **Tuesday, 1/31                      Theories of the Digital World**

Baym, Nancy K. 2015. "Chapter 2: Making New Media Make Sense." Pp 24-56 in *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*. 2nd Edition. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

### **Thursday, 2/2                      Making Connections Through Technology**

Standage, Tom. 2009. "Chapter 7: Codes, Hackers and Cheats." Pp 105-126 in *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Standage, Tom. 2009. "Chapter 8: Love Over the Wires." Pp 127-144 in *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers*. New York: Bloomsbury.

**Tuesday, 2/7**                      **Virtual Communities as Communities**

Baym, Nancy K. 2015. "Chapter 4: Communities and Networks." Pp 81-111 in *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*. 2nd Edition. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

**WEEKS FOUR-SEVEN: CHRISTIANS UNDER COVERS**

**Thursday, 2/9**                      **Introducing Christians Under Covers**

Kelsy Burke: Introduction in *Christians Under Covers: Evangelicals and Sexual Pleasure on the Internet*

**Tuesday, 2/14**                      **Evangelical Sexuality**

Kelsy Burke: Chapter 1: Godly Sex: A New Evangelical Sexual Logic

**Thursday, 2/16**                      **Using Religion to Talk about Sex**

Kelsy Burke: Chapter 2: Overcoming the Obscene: Using Religion to Talk about Sex

**Tuesday, 2/21**                      **Making Online Religious Community**

**\*\*NORM BREAKING PAPER DUE\*\***

Kelsy Burke: Chapter 3: Virtual and Virtuous: Forming Online Religious Communities

**Thursday, 2/23**                      **Women and Pleasure**

Kelsy Burke: Chapter 4: Sexual Awakening: Defining Women's Pleasures

**Tuesday, 2/28**                      **Masculinity and Sex and Conclusions**

Kelsy Burke: Chapter 5: What Makes a Man: Making 'Bad' Sex 'Good'

Kelsy Burke: Conclusion: Paths of Desire

**Thursday, 3/2**                      **Catch-up/Review**

**WEEKS EIGHT-TEN: STATUS UPDATE**

**Tuesday, 3/7**                      **NO CLASS—AT A CONFERENCE**

Alice E. Marwick: Introduction—Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age

Alice E. Marwick: Chapter 1: A Cultural History of Web 2.0

**Thursday, 3/9                      Status and Social Media**

Alice E. Marwick: Chapter 2: Leaders and Followers: Status in the Tech Scene

**Tuesday, 3/14                      Celebrity and Social Media**

Alice E. Marwick: Chapter 3: The Fabulous Lives of Micro-Celebrities

**Thursday, 3/16                      Branding and Social Media**

Alice E. Marwick: Chapter 4: Self-Branding: The (Safe for Work) Self

**Tuesday, 3/21                      Lifestreaming**  
**\*\*MIDTERM DUE\*\***

Alice E. Marwick: Chapter 5: Lifestreaming: We Live in Public

**Thursday, 3/23                      Conclusions**

Alice E. Marwick: Chapter 6: Designed in California: Entrepreneurship and the Myths of Web 2.0

Alice E. Marwick: Conclusion

**WEEK ELEVEN: SPRING BREAK**

MONDAY, MARCH 27-FRIDAY, MARCH 31

**WEEKS TWELVE-THIRTEEN: SOCIAL MEDIA AND IDENTITY**

**Tuesday, 4/4                      Digital Selves**

Lupton, Deborah. 2015. "Chapter 8: The Digitised Body/Self." Pp 164-187 in *Digital Sociology*. New York: Routledge.

Angwin, Julia and Terry Parris, Jr. 2016. "Facebook Lets Advertisers Exclude Users By Race." [propublica.org](https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-lets-advertisers-exclude-users-by-race). October 28. <https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-lets-advertisers-exclude-users-by-race>

Angwin, Julia et al. 2016. "What Facebook Knows About You." [propublica.org](https://www.propublica.org/article/breaking-the-black-box-what-facebook-knows-about-you). September 28. <https://www.propublica.org/article/breaking-the-black-box-what-facebook-knows-about-you>

Larson, Jeff. 2016. "How Machines Learn to be Racist." [propublica.org](https://www.propublica.org/article/breaking-the-black-box-how-machines-learn-to-be-racist). October 19. <https://www.propublica.org/article/breaking-the-black-box-how-machines-learn-to-be-racist>



**Thursday, 4/6                      Technology and Identity: Gender**

Shapiro, Eve. 2015. "Chapter 2: Information Technologies and Gendered Identity Work." Pp 115-172 in *Gender Circuits: Bodies and Identities in a Technological Age*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge.

**Tuesday, 4/11                      Technology and Identity: Sexuality**

Gray, Mary L. 2009. "Negotiating Identities/Queering Desires: Coming out Online and the Remediation of the Coming-Out Story." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 14:1162-1189.

Callander, Denton et al. 2016. "'Not Everyone's Gonna Like Me': Accounting for Race and Racism in Sex and Dating Web Services for Gay and Bisexual Men." *Ethnicities* 16 (1):3-21.

**WEEKS THIRTEEN-FIFTEEN: ENGAGING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Thursday, 4/13                      Engaging and Disengaging with Facebook**  
**\*\*DISCONNECT PAPER DUE\*\***

Marwick, Alice and Nicole B. Ellison. 2012. "'There Isn't Wifi in Heaven!' Negotiating Visibility on Facebook Memorial Pages." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*. 56 (3):378-400.

Portwood-Stacer, Laura. 2012. "Media Refusal and Conspicuous Non-Consumption: The Performative and Political Dimensions of Facebook Absention." *New Media & Society* 13 (0):1-17.

**Tuesday, 4/18                      Audience and Twitter**

Marwick, Alice E. and danah boyd. 2010. "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately" Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience." *New Media & Society* 13 (1):114-133.

Kang, Jay Caspian. 2014. "The Campaign to 'Cancel' Colbert." *The New Yorker*. March 30. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-campaign-to-cancel-colbert>

Bruenig, Elizabeth. 2015. "Why Won't Twitter Forgive Suey Park?" *New Republic*. May 20. <https://newrepublic.com/article/121861/suey-parkof-cancelcolbert-fame-has-stopped-fighting-twitter>

Ahmad, Asam. 2015. "A Note on Call-Out Culture." *Briarpatch Magazine*. March 2. <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/a-note-on-call-out-culture>

**Thursday, 4/20                      Engaging Race on Twitter**

Chaudhry, Irfan. 2016. “‘Not So Black and White’: Discussions of Race on Twitter in the Aftermath of #Ferguson and the Shooting Death of Mike Brown.” *Cultural Studies-Critical Methodologies* 16 (3):296-304.

Patton, Desmond Upton et al. 2016. “‘Police Took My Homie I Dedicate My Life 2 His Revenge’: Twitter Tensions Between Gang-Involved Youth and Police in Chicago.” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 26 (3-4):310-324.

**Tuesday, 4/25                      Deception, Hacktivism, Trolling**

Donath, Judith S. 1999. “Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community.” Pp 27-58 in *Communities in Cyberspace* edited by Marc A. Smith and Peter Kollock. New York: Routledge.

Coleman, E. Gabriella. 2012. “Phreaks, Hackers, and Trolls: The Politics of Transgression and Spectacle.” Pp 99-119 in *The Social Media Reader* edited by Michael Mandiberg. New York: New York University Press.

**Thursday, 4/27                      Catch-up/Review**

**WEEK SIXTEEN: READING, REVIEW, RECITATION WEEK**

MONDAY, MAY 1-FRIDAY, MAY 5

**TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM:** Due THURSDAY, MAY 11 at 3PM