

Sociology C167: Virtual Communities/Social Media Spring 2018

INSTRUCTOR

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Office: 479 Barrows Hall

Sign-up Office Hours: Tue/Thur 9:45am-10:45am

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

Drop-in Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 4:00-5:00pm

CLASS MEETING

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00am-12:30pm

2050 Valley Life Sciences Building

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? How 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 (2576 Bancroft Way) and on bCourses. Books are on reserve at Moffitt Library and may be available online-check library website.

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.

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.

Be sure to carefully consider assignment feedback; it is provided to help you improve on future assignments. For in-text feedback, **click on the link "View Feedback"** which may not be visible if you are not in full-screen mode.

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. Be sure to make specific reference to your work, don't simply say that you responded to the questions asked. Demonstrate how you did so.

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 response papers and 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 9:45-10:45am on **Tuesdays and Thursdays**. Sign-up: <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/xjanb>

I will be holding **Drop-in** office hours from 4:00-5:00pm on **Tuesdays and 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

Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services

To learn more about these issues, how to support survivors, or how to file a report and receive support services, start here: <http://survivorsupport.berkeley.edu>. Please note that I am **not** a confidential advocate. To speak to a confidential care advocate: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/dean/confidential-care-advocate/>

Course Outline Readings to be **completed** on day listed. Schedule subject to change.

WEEKS ONE-TWO: SOCIOLOGY OF INTERACTION & REALITY

Tuesday, 1/16 **Introductions**

Thursday, 1/18 **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, 1/23 **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, 1/25 **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, 1/30 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, 2/1 Theories of the Digital World (Cont.) In-Class Screening

Tuesday, 2/6 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.

--. "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.

Thursday, 2/8 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 FIVE-SEVEN: CHRISTIANS UNDER COVERS

Tuesday, 2/13 Evangelical Sexuality

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

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

Thursday, 2/15 Using Religion to Talk About Sex

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

Tuesday, 2/20 Making Online Religious Community

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

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

Thursday, 2/22 Women and Pleasure

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

Tuesday, 2/27 Masculinity and Sex and Conclusions

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

Kelsy Burke: Conclusion: Paths of Desire

WEEKS EIGHT-TWELVE: STATUS UPDATE

Thursday, 3/1 Introducing Status Update

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

Tuesday, 3/6 Understanding Web 2.0

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

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

Thursday, 3/8 Status and Social Media

Freitas, Donna. 2017. "Chapter 1: Is Everybody Hanging Out Without Me? Comparing Ourselves to Others and the Importance of Being 'Liked'." Pp 16-42 in *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tuesday, 3/13 Celebrity and Social Media

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

Thursday, 3/15 IN-CLASS MIDTERM REVIEW

Tuesday, 3/20 NO CLASS

****MIDTERM DUE****

Thursday, 3/22 Branding and Social Media

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

Freitas, Donna. 2017. "Chapter 3: My Name is My Brand and My Brand is Happiness!" Pp 63-80 in *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tuesday, 3/27 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

Thursday, 3/29 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, 4/3 Lifestreaming

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

Freitas, Donna. 2017. "Chapter 10: My Smartphone and Me: A Love-Hate Relationship." Pp 209-230 in *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Thursday, 4/5 Conclusions

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

Alice E. Marwick: Conclusion

WEEKS THIRTEEN-FIFTEEN: ENGAGING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Tuesday, 4/10 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). 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). October 19. <https://www.propublica.org/article/breaking-the-black-box-how-machines-learn-to-be-racist>

**Thursday, 4/12 Youth Political Engagement
DISCONNECT PAPER DUE**

Light, Jennifer S. 2015. "Putting Our Conversation in Context: Youth, Old Media, and Political Participation, 1800-1971." Pp 19-33 in *From Voice to Influence: Understanding Citizenship in a Digital Age*, edited by Danielle Allen and Jennifer S. Light. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kahne, Joseph et al. 2015. "Youth, New Media, and the Rise of Participatory Politics." Pp 35-55 in *From Voice to Influence: Understanding Citizenship in a Digital Age*, edited by Danielle Allen and Jennifer S. Light. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tuesday, 4/17 **Dream Activists Online**

Beltran, Cristina. 2015. "Undocumented, Unafraid, and Unapologetic": Dream Activists, Immigrant Politics, and the Queering of Democracy." Pp 80-104 in *From Voice to Influence: Understanding Citizenship in a Digital Age*, edited by Danielle Allen and Jennifer S. Light. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Thursday, 4/19 **Audience and Twitter**

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>

Tuesday, 4/24 **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.

Thursday, 4/26 **Catch-Up/Review**

WEEK SIXTEEN: READING, REVIEW, RECITATION WEEK

MONDAY, APRIL 30-FRIDAY, MAY 4

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM: Due THURSDAY, MAY 10 at 11AM