

## **Sociology C167: Virtual Communities/Social Media Spring 2019**

### **INSTRUCTOR**

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

**E-mail:** [jabakehorn@berkeley.edu](mailto:jabakehorn@berkeley.edu)

Office: 479 Barrows Hall

**Drop-in Office Hours:** Wednesdays 9-10am

**Sign-up Office Hours:** Wednesdays 10-11am

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

### **CLASS MEETING**

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:30pm

F295 Haas Faculty Wing

### **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?
- ◆ 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 types of activism are facilitated online?
- ◆ What are the limitations of networked protests?

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 (2411 Telegraph Ave) 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.

**Norm Breaking Paper:** You will be given a list of potential norming-breaking tasks related to the digital/online world. 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 to make sense of your experiences.

## GRADE SCALE

Grade Range		Grade
100%	97%	A+
96%	93%	A
92%	90%	A-
89%	87%	B+
86%	83%	B
82%	80%	B-
79%	77%	C+
76%	73%	C
72%	70%	C-
69%	67%	D+
66%	63%	D
62%	60%	D-
59%	0%	F

## 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 Telegraph.

**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 discussion board on bCourses. Be sure to contextualize any posts by connecting them to issues in the class. Provide content warnings where appropriate.

If you have a question about the readings, lecture, etc., please post your question to the 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, 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. 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 strongly encourage you to take notes without a computer if you are able. If you need 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; we can work something out.

## OFFICE HOURS

**Drop-in** office hours: 9:00-10:00am on Wednesdays —no appointment necessary.

**Sign-up** office hours: 10:00-11:00am on Wednesdays. Sign-up: <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/xjanb>

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.

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

### 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. <https://slc.berkeley.edu>

### 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/>

### Economic, Food, and Housing Support

If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at [basicneeds.berkeley.edu](http://basicneeds.berkeley.edu). You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [calfresh.berkeley.edu](http://calfresh.berkeley.edu) or our [Food Assistance Program](#). If you are in need of food immediately, please visit our UC Berkeley Food Pantry at [pantry.berkeley.edu/](http://pantry.berkeley.edu/).

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

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

**Tuesday, 1/22**                      **Introductions**

**Thursday, 1/24**                      **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, 1/29**                      **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, 1/31**                      **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, 2/5**                      **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, 2/7**                      **Theories of the Digital World (Cont.)  
In-Class Screening**

**Tuesday, 2/12                      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, 2/14                      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-SIX: CHRISTIANS UNDER COVERS**

**Tuesday, 2/19                      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, 2/21                      Making Online Religious Communities**

**NORM BREAKING PAPER DUE**

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

**Tuesday, 2/26                      Making Online Religious Communities and Defining Women's Pleasure**

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

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

**Thursday, 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



## **WEEKS SEVEN-ELEVEN: SOCIAL MEDIA AND STATUS**

### **Tuesday, 3/5                      Introducing Status Update**

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, 3/7                      Understanding Web 2.0**

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

### **Tuesday, 3/12                      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 *The Happiness Effect: How Social Media is Driving a Generation to Appear Perfect at Any Cost*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### **Thursday, 3/14                      Celebrity and Social Media**

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

### **Tuesday, 3/19                      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 *The Happiness Effect: How Social Media is Driving a Generation to Appear Perfect at Any Cost*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### **Thursday, 3/21                      TAKE-HOME MIDTERM NO CLASS**

### **Tuesday, 3/26— Thursday, 3/28      NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK**

### **Tuesday, 4/2                      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 *The Happiness Effect: How Social Media is Driving a Generation to Appear Perfect at Any Cost*. New York: Oxford University Press.

**Thursday, 4/4                      Conclusions**

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

Alice E. Marwick: Conclusion

**WEEK TWELVE: WHAT BECOMES OF OUR DIGITAL SELVES?**

**Tuesday, 4/9                      Digital Selves**

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

**Thursday, 4/11                      The Facebook Dilemma  
In-Class Screening**

Collins, Keith and Larry Buchanan. 2018. "How Facebook Lets Brands and Politicians Target You." *The New York Times*. April 11. <https://nyti.ms/2GUIE1T>

**Tuesday, 4/16                      The Facebook Dilemma  
In-Class Screening + Discussion**

Roose, Kevin. 2018. "Facebook Emails Show Its Real Mission: Making Money and Crushing Competition." *The New York Times*. December 5.  
<https://nyti.ms/2EoigFo>

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

**Thursday, 4/18                      Anonymous: From Trolls to Activists  
DISCONNECT PAPER DUE**

Coleman, Gabriella. 2015. "Chapter 1: On Trolls, Tricksters, and the Lulz." Pp 19-51 in *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso.

—. "Chapter 5: Anonymous Everywhere." Pp 143-176 in *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso.

**Tuesday, 4/23**                      **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, 4/25**                      **Limitations of Social Media Activism**

Tufekci, Zeynep. 2017. "Introduction." Pp xxi-xxxi in *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Hartford, CT: Yale University Press.

---. "Platforms and Algorithms." Pp 132-163 in *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Hartford, CT: Yale University Press.

**Tuesday, 4/30**                      **Activist Capacities Afforded by Digital Technologies**

Tufekci, Zeynep. 2017. "Signaling Power and Signaling to Power." Pp 189-222 in *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Hartford, CT: Yale University Press.

**Thursday, 5/2**                      **Catch-Up/Review**

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

MONDAY, MAY 6-FRIDAY, MAY 10

**TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM: Due MONDAY, MAY 13 at 2:30PM**