

Soc 167 – Virtual Communities and Social Media
University of California, Berkeley
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30am-11am
100 Genetics and Plant Biology

Instructor: Edwin Lin

Email: edklin@berkeley.edu

Office Hours: 487 Barrows Hall, Thursdays, 11:45am-1:45pm or by appointment

Sign-up for Office Hours at <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/icwie>

Readers: Gregory Fayard, gmfayard@berkeley.edu

Elena Rein, elena_rein@berkeley.edu

Mark Quinn, mark.quinn@berkeley.edu

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, sexual intimacy, and family. Everyone taking this course has 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.

About This Syllabus:

This syllabus is essentially a contract between you (the student) and me (the instructor). Many policies are listed in the syllabus that may not be relevant to you now, but may come up as the semester goes along. Please keep this handy and refer to it for detailed information about the course, such as grading, email, office hours, late assignments, DSP, extensions, etc.

Email Policy:

I am usually very good about answering emails, but please leave at least 2 days for me to get to you, especially over the weekend (I may not get to you until Monday/Tuesday). Also, please keep emails to questions that are relatively easy to answer, such as questions about logistics, instructions, office hours, etc. **For questions about class content or your papers, please talk to me before/after class or by appointment in office hours.**

During busy weeks, I get upwards of *50 emails a day* from students. As a result, sometimes I will only be able to provide short, curt answers. I apologize if it comes across as rude or uncaring, but it is simply due to the volume of responses I have to get through in a reasonable time frame.

I also reserve the right to simply respond to your email with “see syllabus” if the information is covered in this syllabus.

Office Hours:

Feel free to come into office hours for anything, course or life related! Please sign up at the link at the beginning of the syllabus if you know in advance that you'd like to come in. If you do not sign up, you are still welcome to drop in, but I do sometimes step out of the office when there is no appointment to run a quick errand.

If office hours are full, you may email me to set up another time, either in person or via phone/online meeting. If you have a very short question, you can try to drop by and sneak in before/after a student for a quick question (as not every student will use the entire 15 minutes they signed up for)—but be prepared to wait patiently as well.

If the door to my office is closed during office hours, feel free to knock (loudly). I try not to run late with my appointments but it does sometimes happen—if you notice me running late and have time constraints with your assigned time, please feel free to politely interrupt and let me know.

Grade Breakdown:

Disconnect Paper	15%
Take Home Midterm	25%
Virtual Community Paper	25%
Take Home Final	35%

*****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 have posted some such resources on bCourses under “Files” and “Writing Resources.” You can also check out the Student Learning Center (SLC) at their website <http://slc.berkeley.edu> for more information.

Disabled Students' Program (DSP)

If you are part of the Disabled Students' Program (DSP) and require special accommodations, please try to make arrangements at least a week in advance—this will guarantee you access to your accommodations.

To ask for an extension or accommodation using your DSP letter, you must first be sure that your DSP letter allows for the accommodation you are requesting. Then, follow these two steps:

- 1) Send an email with your DSP letter attached to both the reader grading the assignment you are asking for an accommodation for and me (the instructor). If you are asking for an extension, please **suggest a reasonable due date** (allowed by your letter) to turn in the assignment.
- 2) Once I approve (via email) the extension/accommodation, please post a comment in bCourses for the assignment that you are receiving accommodations for that states **(1)** your new due date, **(2)** the date of my email that approved your accommodation, and **(3)** upload/attach your DSP letter to the comment for reference.

Please follow these instructions carefully. Over the years, DSP has expanded to include many more students, and teaching very large classes without GSIs can make it difficult to handle these cases—so please make our job easier by following these instructions!

Lectures

Lectures will take us through major themes that develop, connect, and reappear throughout the course. I will not only be lecturing, but will also answer questions and engage in discussions.

You are responsible for all material discussed in lectures, as well as any announcements made. I often discuss assignments in more detail, answering important questions and providing extra details—you will be responsible for all of this, so please be sure to consistently attend lecture. Although official lecture attendance is not taken, the midterm and the final exam will look to test lecture (and reading) knowledge.

In general, coming to lecture regularly will make your academic life with this class much easier, so I highly encourage it. I will do my best to make the lectures interesting and engaging.

Readings

All readings will be posted on bCourses. There is no plan to create a course reader, as typically most students do not purchase them (due to their high cost). If this is a significant problem for you, please do speak to me.

Readers

Readers will be grading all assignments in the course. They will be assigned randomly and in a rotating fashion so that a combination of different readers will determine your overall grades. Your assigned reader will be posted a couple weeks in advance of each assignment's due date so that you can reach out to your reader with questions as needed.

Grading Scale for the Class:

A+ (98-100)	C (73-77)
A (93-97)	C- (70-72)
A- (90-92)	D+ (68-69)
B+ (88-89)	D (63-67)
B (83-87)	D- (60-62)
B- (80-82)	F (everything below 60)
C+ (78-79)	

Course Assignments

LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED! The only exception is for approved DSP accommodations and documented extreme emergencies (e.g. hospitalization, death in the family). All assignments will all be “handed out” and completed through the bCourses website. There is a one-hour grace period where you can still submit your assignment even though it will be considered late. Late assignments, even assignments just a couple minutes late, are penalized up to a full grade (e.g. up to a 10% deduction). If you miss this grace period, you will be unable to get credit for your assignment and you will be given a 0 on it. Please be sure to turn things in on time and before the stated due date and time.

*NOTE: The reason I have a strict policy on late assignments is because I am concerned about unknowingly participating in a system that privileges certain racial, cultural, socioeconomic, family background influences that may account for one student asking for an extension while others keep silent about their circumstances. In a rather sizeable class, I feel it is important to have a strict “no late assignments” policy.

- PLEASE submit your assignments early! Do not wait for the last minute, especially given the late assignment policy for the class, so please save us all some stress and extra work and submit things *at least an hour in advance of the due date and time.*
- On bCourses, you can submit assignments early and re-submit them (to override the submission) at a later date. They will not be graded until the due date passes. So submit assignments early to avoid last minute technological errors so that you at least get some credit in case of emergency.
- **Back-up your work!** Stolen laptops, broken laptops, etc. are a real risk of the technological era. If you encounter such a problem, ***no extension will be given.*** It is therefore your responsibility to back up your work so that you can still turn in the assignment in case a technologically related tragedy occurs.
- **If you encounter an error in submission,** please take a screenshot of the error that includes the date and time of the error (your computer’s date/time clock is good enough) and email your assignment with the screenshot attached to your GSI. In order for your assignment to be accepted as on time, **your GSI must receive this email before the submission due date.**
- It is your responsibility to make sure you submitted the correct assignment and that the assignment was fully submitted, so **please after submitting your assignment, check to be sure that the correct document was successfully uploaded onto bCourses.** If you submit the wrong assignment or if it was unsuccessfully uploaded, we have no choice but to give you a 0 on the assignment.

Grading Philosophy:

I believe that the grade you get is the grade ***you earn.*** I also believe that your final grade in the course should reflect an accurate assessment of the entire body of work you submit for the class. If something unexpected or tragic occurs with one assignment (e.g. you do much worse on an assignment due to personal circumstances, you were unable to turn it in on time and received a 0, etc.), I will still evaluate the rest of your coursework to see what grade you deserve for the entire course—in other words, focus on the other assignments and show you deserve an A in the

course in spite of one major slip-up. You will never receive a grade **lower** than what you earned by sheer point calculation, but you may receive a grade **higher** if your work proves it (e.g. improvement, exceptional final exam, etc.).

I review every grade submitted at the end of the course and will handle things like borderline grades, rounding, etc. based on the performance of your work as a whole. I even (sometimes) re-read your already graded work to see if you should be bumped up from a B+ to an A- if you are on the borderline. These are done for **every** student, regardless of whether you email me or not (to ensure a fair playing field for all my students), so there is no need to “advocate” for yourself—just focus on the work and prove you deserve (i.e. earn) the grade you are hoping for.

Re-grade Policy:

If you want a re-grade, please follow the following steps. You have two weeks to initiate the beginning of this process. I do not do re-grades after this two-week cut-off (to avoid people asking for re-grades at the end of the semester because their grades are borderline).

1. Meet with the reader (in person/remotely) to discuss why you got the grade you got.
2. Write a cover letter to the reader and to me that explains how you understand his/her perspective and why you still have an issue with the grade (what you thought was mis-graded). I realize that you hopefully also discussed this in person, but we would like to have something written down for clarity and reference.
3. Your reader or I will re-grade your work (the entire thing) and whatever grade you get becomes the final grade (either higher or lower). Whether your reader re-grades it or I do depends on whether your reader believes there is something that could be adjusted or not.
4. If your reader re-grades the assignment and you are still unsatisfied, you may refer the issue to me. I should warn you that in general (on average from what I have seen), I might be a tougher grader than the reader. Whatever grade I end up giving is the final say on the matter.

Keep in mind, your reader reads **many** papers. They probably have a sense for how your paper compares to other people in the class. But reading many papers could also allow for mistakes, so while that is possible, please have **sober judgment** over your own work and really consider the grader's perspective. Regardless of how much time or effort you put into the assignment, if it simply did not meet the requirements or if you did not adequately communicate what was in your head, you may still have gotten a lower grade (keep in mind, your reader has no idea how much time you spent on the assignment and isn't evaluating effort, but the expectation of the assignment based on a rubric or answer key).

Disconnect Paper:

During the first month of the semester (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, online apps, online games, etc. You will write a short paper about this experience and one key positive or negative effect of virtual communities and social media in response to the first four weeks' readings. See assignment on bCourses for more detailed information about this assignment.

Virtual Community Paper:

During this semester, you will be asked to spend at least four weeks (five hours a week) investing and interacting with a virtual community. This can certainly be a community that you are already a part of, but the interaction must be distinct, involved, deliberate, and intentional—driven for research and social discovery purposes. In other words, you must reach out to the community in a proactive and initiative-taking way to incite a response and deepen your interaction with and understanding of it. If you have any questions about what an appropriate virtual community/online space is, please talk to me in office hours. In the final paper, you will be asked to make an argument relating this experience to themes and course content. See assignment on bCourses for more detailed information about this assignment.

Take-Home Midterm:

Your midterm exam will be a take-home exam. It will cover topics from the first eight weeks of class. It will focus primarily on short answer questions that have objective answers. More information to come as the semester moves along.

Take-Home Final Exam:

Your final exam will be a take-home exam. It will be in essay format requiring you to answer questions that synthesize and evaluate material in the course. It will also require you to cite readings as examples of your argument. More information as the semester moves along.

Reading List and Semester Schedule

Assignments that are “handed out” means they will be explained in class and available on bCourses. Please complete readings before class on the day that they are listed under.

Tips About the Readings:

Most of the readings are provided as a particular view of a topic. They should not be read as “truth,” but rather with some skepticism and analytical criticism—consider whether or not and to what extent you are convinced by the authors’ interpretation and view.

Overall, read for understanding, overarching meanings, and the big picture. Do not worry too much about specific statistics—although they may become useful in constructing your arguments for the midterm, virtual community paper, and final exam, you can always review them then.

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

- 1. Tuesday, January 21 Introduction: Syllabus and Logistics**
- 2. Thursday, January 23 Virtual Communities and Social Media**
 - Wellman, B., & Gulia, M. (1997). Net Surfers Don’t Ride Alone: Virtual Communities As Communities. *Communities and Cyberspace*, Edited by Peter Kollock and Marc Smith. New York: Routledge.
 - Baym, Nancy. (2010). *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity (pp. 1-49).

THEORY

- 3. Tuesday, January 28 Actor Network Theory**
 - Law, John. 1992. “Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity,” *Systems Practice*. 5 (4): 379-393.
- 4. Thursday, January 30 Theories of Technology and Society**
 - Feenberg, Andrew. (1999). *Questioning Technology*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-17.
 - Orlikowski, Wanda. 1992. “The Duality of Technology: Rethinking the Concept of Technology in Organizations,” *Organization Science*, 3 (3): 398-412.

Disconnect Paper Handed Out due Wednesday, February 19
- 5. Tuesday, February 4 Theories of Media Studies**
 - Meyrowitz, Joshua. “Medium Theory,” in *Communication Theory Today*. 50-77.
- 6. Thursday, February 6 Social Network Analysis**
 - Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.

MAJOR DISCOURSES

7. Tuesday, February 11 Utopian Views

- Rheingold, H. (1993). A slice of life in my virtual community. In L. M. Harasim (Ed.), *Global Networks: Computers and International Communication* (pp. 37-80). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Tufecki, Z. (2010). Who Acquired Friends Through Social Media and Why? “Rich Get Richer” versus “Seek and Ye Shall Find.”

8. Thursday, February 13 Dystopian Views

- Kross, E., Verduyn, P., et. al. (2013). Facebook Use Predicts Declines in Subjective Well-Being in Young Adults. *PLoS ONE*. 8(8).
- Carr, N. (2008). Is Google Making Us Stupid? What the Internet is doing to our brains. *The Atlantic*. July/August, (<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868>)
- Przybylski, A., Murayama, K., DeHaan, C., Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 29. 1841-1848.

9. Tuesday, February 18 Alone Together: Psychology and Technology

- Turkle, Sherry. “Introduction,” in *Alone Together*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.

Disconnect Paper Due Wednesday February 19, before 11:59pm

MAJOR THEMES

10. Thursday, February 20 Culture and Technology

- Castells, Manuel. “The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective,” *Change: 19 Key Essays on How Internet is Changing Our Lives*. Openmind, <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/article/the-impact-of-the-internet-on-society-a-global-perspective/?fullscreen=true>

Virtual Community Paper Handed Out due Friday, April 10

11. Tuesday, February 25 Privacy, Surveillance, and Information Capital

- Zuboff, Shoshana. “Big other: surveillance capitalism and the prospects of an information civilization,” *Journal of Information Technology*. 2015. 30: 75-89.

12. Thursday, February 27 Social Capital

- Putnam, R. (1995). Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital. *Journal of Democracy*. 6(1): 65-78.
- Hampton, K. N. and Wellman, B. (2003). Neighboring in Netville: How the Internet Supports Community and Social Capital in a Wired Suburb. *City and Community*. 2(4): 277-311.

13. Tuesday, March 3

Social Networking Sites

- Steinfield, C., Ellison, N. B, and Lampe, C. (2008). Social Capital, self-esteem, and use of online social network sites: a longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 29: 434-445.

14. Thursday, March 5

Geography and Technology

- Takhteyev, Yuri, Anatoliy Gruzd, and Barry Wellman. "Geography of Twitter networks," *Social Networks* 34 (2012): 73-81
- Leetaru, Kalev, Shaowen Wang, Guofeng Cao, Anand Padmanabhan, & Eric Shook. "Mapping the global Twitter heartbeat: The geography of Twitter." *First Monday* [Online], 18.5 (2013): n. pag. Web. 3 Aug. 2016. (Skim for important findings)

15. Tuesday, March 10

Public Spaces

- Hampton, K. N., Livio, O., and Goulet, L. S. (2010). The Social Life of Wireless Urban Spaces: Internet Use, Social Networks, and the Public Realm. *Journal of Communication*, 60(4): 701-722.

16. Thursday, March 12

Social Interactions

- Humphreys, L. (2005). Cellphones in public: social interactions in a wireless era. *New Media & Society*, 7(6), 810-833.

MIDTERM

17. Tuesday, March 17

Midterm Review!

Take-Home Midterm Handed Out via bCourses due Monday, March 23

CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES

18. Thursday, March 19

Wearables: Technology and the Body

- Barfield, Woodrow. "Wearable Computers and Augmented Reality," in Fundamentals of Wearable Computers and Augmented Reality, 2nd Edition. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2016.

*****Take-Home Midterm Due Monday, March 23, before 11:59pm*****
*****March 23-27 NO CLASS SPRING BREAK*****

19. Tuesday, March 31

Internet Dating and Presentation of Self

- Ellison, N., Heino, R., and Gibbs, J. (2006). Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 11: 415-441.
- Whitty, Monica T. (2008) "Revealing the 'real' me, searching for the 'actual' you: Presentations of self on an internet dating site." *Computers in Human Behavior*. 24: 1707-1723.

20. Thursday, April 2 Intimacy Online?

- Hobbs, Mitchell, Stephen Owen, and Livia Gerber. (2017) "Liquid Love? Dating apps, sex, relationships and the digital transformation of intimacy." *Journal of Sociology*. 53(2): 271-284.

21. Tuesday, April 7 Sexting, Cyberbullying, and Moral Panic

- Draper, N. R. A. (2012). Is your teen at risk? Discourses of adolescent sexting in United States television news. *Journal of Children and Media*. 6(2): 221-236.
- Marwick, Alice E. "To catch a predator? The MySpace moral panic," *First Monday*. 13(6) June 2008.

22. Thursday, April 9 Networked Teens

- Boyd, Danah. *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. Yale University Press, 2014: 1-28.

*****Virtual Community Paper due Friday, April 10, before 11:59pm*****

23. Tuesday, April 14 Elections, Voting, and Political Awareness

- Kim, Yonghwan, Hsuan-Ting Chen, and Homero Gil de Zuniga. (2013). Stumbling Upon News on the Internet: Effects of Incidental News Exposure and Relative Entertainment Use on Political Engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 29: 2607-2614.
- Hargittai, Eszter and Aaron Shaw (2013). Digitally Savvy Citizenship: The Role of Internet Skills and Engagement in Young Adults' Political Participation around the 2008 Presidential Election. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. 57: 115-134.

24. Thursday, April 16 Revolutions, Movements, and Political Influence

- Gladwell, Malcolm (2010, October 4). Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not be Tweeted. *The New Yorker*.
- Tufekci, Zeynep and Christopher Wilson. (2012). Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations from Tahrir Square. *Journal of Communication*. 62: 363-379.

25. Tuesday, April 21 Gaming: Violence, Addiction, and Virtual Communities

- Anderson, C., and Dill, K. (2000). Video Games and Aggressive Thoughts, Feelings and Behavior in the Laboratory and in Life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(4): 772-790.
- Steinkuehler & Williams (2006). Where Everybody Knows Your (Screen) Name: Online Games as "Third Places".
- Golub, A. and Lingley, K. (2008). "Just Like the Qing Empire" Internet Addiction, MMOGs, and Moral Crisis in Contemporary China. *Games and Culture*. 3(1): 59-75

26. Thursday, April 23 Gaming: Competitive eSports

- Hamilton, William A., Oliver Garretson, and Andruid Kerne. "Streaming on Twitch: fostering participatory communities of play within live mixed media," *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, New York: ACM, 2014, pp. 1315-1324.
- Taylor, T. L. *Raising the Stakes: E-sports and the professionalization of computer gaming*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.

27. Tuesday, April 28 Education and Online Classrooms and Evaluations

- Roehl, A., Reddy, S. L., and Shannon, G. J. (2013). The Flipped Classroom: An Opportunity to Engage Millennial Students Through Active Learning Strategies. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences*. 105(2): 44-49.

28. Thursday, April 30 Final Review

Take-Home Final Handed Out via bCourses due Friday, May 15

*****Final Exam due Friday, May 15 before 11:59pm submitted via bCourses!*****