

## **Soc. 190 Seminar: Families and Technology**

Spring 2022, UC Berkeley  
Tuesdays, 2-4pm  
155, Social Sciences Building

**Instructor:** Joanna Reed, PhD  
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### **Office hours:**

Appointments: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12-1pm, in-person or remote appointments. Sign up:

<https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/vqixo>

Drop-in: Thursdays, 1-2pm.

You can also contact me by email for an appointment if you are unable to make these times.

### **Course description:**

Technology offers new opportunities and threats to contemporary families across a broad range of social contexts. In this seminar we will explore how different forms of technology affect relationships and expectations between family members, and how they are connected to old and new forms of social inequality. We will explore a variety of different technologies used by (and on) families and examine how an increasing reliance on digital technology across a variety of social institutions creates both pressures and opportunities. We will cover topics such as assisted reproduction, robots, various topics related to the internet, ways that algorithms influence and control our lives, workplace technologies and more.

In addition to the in-depth, discussion-based exploration of this material, as a class we will design and complete a qualitative research project that explores the use and impact of technology on UC Berkeley students' communication and relationships with parents and family members. We will spend the beginning of the semester developing an interview guide, conducting interviews to create a class data set, and contributing to a shared annotated bibliography. Toward the end of the semester, students will individually or in small groups perform their own analysis of the class interview data, present their findings to the class, and write up a final research paper about their results.

### **What to expect this semester**

Last semester, I was very glad to be back teaching in-person, and I hope the transition back to campus went well for you. That said, here we are starting the semester with two weeks of remote classes and office hours. While I expect that we will be back in person after that, the ongoing pandemic is requiring that we—yet again—try to be flexible and ready to adapt to changing circumstances. I ask for your flexibility and understanding as we move forward, and I will extend the same to you.

- **Public health guidelines:** We will be following all campus guidelines regarding public health and masking. Masks are required in indoor spaces for everyone, vaccinated or not. *If you are feeling sick, or experiencing symptoms, please err on the side of caution and don't come to class. You can email me about your circumstances, and we will decide together what people can do to make up absences if they end up missing more than one class.*
- **Check your email before class!** Just in case there is a last-minute change of plans. I will be using the bCourses announcement feature to communicate with you.
- **Hybrid classes?** I do not anticipate having an option to attend remotely and do not plan to record our classes. Depending on circumstances, we may end up occasionally needing to have someone zoom in (for example, if they are in quarantine but are one of the discussion leaders for that week). We will see how the situation develops as we go, and adapt as needed.
- **Office hours:** We will start the semester with remote office hours, but after Jan. 31, office hours will be in-person, with a option to have appointments remotely. Please bear in mind that I may shift these around depending on how things go.
- **Please reach out to me if you have problems or concerns!**

## **Navigating the course and finding the information you need**

- **Syllabus:** You are reading this right now. This is the full plan and overview for the course. Information about course policies is also included here. If you would like the course schedule in a more digestible weekly format, check the "Pages" in bCourses. *Please read through the full syllabus.*
- **bCourses:** This is the name of UCB's online course management platform. There is a bCourses site for our class. If you are enrolled, you should automatically have access to it. You can find all assignment prompts, schedule information, and course readings here. You will also use bCourses to turn in your work and view your grades and comments. *Be sure to check the weekly pages regularly, which will have the most up to date information for each week!*
- **Readings:** All readings will be available to you through bCourses. You should have completed all readings before the class in which they will be discussed. The easiest way to access the readings will be to 1) buy the Course Reader at the Copy Central store on Telegraph Ave. This will give you easy, offline access to the course readings (there are a few small exceptions). I hope you will seriously consider this option as it will make it easier for you to concentrate on the readings and minimize digital distractions (not to mention save your eyes).

- 2) Go to the bCourses “page” for the week and access the readings there. Go to the “Pages” tab and click the button at the top that says “view all pages”. (For example: go to “Pages”> “Week 1”.) You can find the complete collection in “Files”> “Readings”.

## **Evaluation**

**Participation: 15%**

**Reading Responses (five): 20%**

**Discussion Facilitation: 15%**

**Class Research Project and Paper: 50%**

- Contribution to annotated bibliography (5%)
- Interviews and write-ups (15%)
- Data Analysis Report (5%)
- Class presentation (5%)
- Research paper (20%)

### **Participation (15% of course grade)**

This is a seminar course, which is quite different from the large lecture courses that are typically offered in our department and that I usually teach. Instead of structured lectures where I present material and facilitate any discussion, we will discuss the week’s material together. You, the students, will be responsible for much of the facilitation and will be doing most of the talking. This means that attendance and participation are much more important components of the class than you may be used to. Come to each class having completed the readings and ready to discuss them. Be ready with your own comments, questions, interpretations, and critiques and be ready to listen to and respond to those of your classmates. We will work together to establish an atmosphere in class that is comfortable, respectful and hopefully also enjoyable and interesting.

I understand, given the current public health situation, that you may not be able to attend every class if you get sick or need to quarantine. We will need to see how the situation develops in terms of thinking through what will be appropriate in terms of make-up work. We will plan to discuss this as a class once the semester starts. We will try to be both accommodating and creative. However, you can expect that if you miss more than one class, you will need to submit make-up work or the absence will negatively affect your grade. If you miss more than two classes, you need to come to office hours to discuss the situation with me. If you are sick during your facilitation week, you will likely need to record or deliver your part of the presentation remotely, depending on how you are feeling.

### **Reading Responses (20% of course grade)**

In order to help you prepare for class discussion, you will write 5 responses to the week’s readings. You will choose the weeks that you want to cover. While your reflection may include a *short* summary of each reading’s main points, the aim of the paper is to critically engage with the readings; this is the part that will help you later, when you are in class! It will also be the

primary consideration in grading these papers. To “critically engage” means to consider one or more of the following:

- Describe how the readings relate to each other, or represent different approaches to a topic. What do they have in common? Are there points of disagreement?
- Describe connections to other readings or topics.
- Describe how the readings contribute to our understandings of the main themes of the course: 1) how different forms of technology affect family roles and relationships; 2) how technologies are connected to social inequalities; 3) how different technologies are relationships between family members and expectations for family roles and caregiving, and are connected to old and new forms of social inequality
- Can you apply the readings to current events?
- Describe what you think may be left out, or what questions a reading brings up, or another substantive critique.

Each Reading Response should be at least two pages, double-spaced (longer is OK) and are due on Tuesdays (before the class where they will be discussed), at 12:30pm.

### **Discussion Facilitation (15% of course grade)**

Each week 2 to 3 students will be responsible for leading class discussion on that week’s readings. You are expected to do three things during the class you facilitate: 1) provide a brief summary and overview of the readings ; 2) provide some thoughts on how they are connected, or provide different perspectives on a topic, and/or relate to other readings and the broad themes of the class, and 3) most importantly, be prepared with discussion questions and topics. *You will need to coordinate with each other and plan your presentation ahead of time, so be sure to get an early start.* I would be happy to consult with you during office hours prior to your presentation. You are free to use any media or additional information that you feel is relevant and present slides or include a handout. (If you plan to use a handout, please email it to me ahead of time so I can make copies for the class.) Short video or audio clips, images, etc. can also be helpful for providing context and stimulating discussion.

### **Class research project**

We will work together during the first two thirds of the semester to create a class data set and other resources that students will then use for their individual or small-group research projects that will be due at the end of the semester. While I have selected a broad topic for us to investigate—how UC Berkeley students use mobile technology and social media to communicate with their families, and how that impacts their relationships with parents and siblings—we will be collectively deciding on and carrying out the other aspects of planning for and doing the data collection. This will involve both discussions and work that we will do together during class, and also some assignments. We will start the process during Week 2, when we map out some more specific ideas of the data that we want to collect, and work together on developing an interview guide, and depending on the interests of the class, possibly a survey as well. With the exception of the final research paper, these assignments will

be evaluated with contract-based grading (i.e., points are based on doing the assignment on time, and putting in a good effort, in contrast to a letter grade scale).

**Research project assignments: (50% of course grade)**

-Contribution to class annotated bibliography. (5%) Due Feb 18.

Each student will independently research the academic literature on an aspect of our topic and contribute three sources that will become part of a shared annotated bibliography. Later, you will draw from this resource to write up the literature review for your research paper.

-Interviews and write-ups. (15%) Due Mar. 11

Each student will conduct and write-up at least two interviews with other students. The interview write-ups (an “almost” transcription of the interview) will be our class data that you will later analyze for the research paper. Students taking the seminar to fulfill the requirements for the sociological methods concentration will need to conduct and write-up five interviews.

-Data Analysis Report.(5%) Due Apr. 1

Each student, or small group (can be two students, groups of three will need to get approval from me) will submit some preliminary results of their analysis of the interview (and possibly the survey) data. Keep in mind that expectations for the scope and depth of the project will be higher for groups than individuals.

-Class Presentation. (5%) Due Apr. 19 or 26

During the last two weeks of class, individuals and small groups will present their project and preliminary findings to the group. Plan on a 15 min. presentation for individuals, and 20-25 min. for groups. These presentations will allow you to get feedback before you turn in your final paper.

-Research Paper. (20%) Due May 10

This will be your final write-up of your project, where you present your or your group’s analysis of our class data, as well as discuss the significance of your findings. The paper will be 10-15 pages long, and will include all of the typical sections of a research paper prepared for submission to an academic journal: introduction, literature review, methods, results, conclusion and discussion.

**Grading Policies:**

**Late Assignments Policy:** If you have a personal situation or are sick, contact me at the *earliest opportunity* to discuss an extension, and certainly prior to the due date. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each day they are late. At times, I may request documentation of an illness, emergency, or other situation.

**Academic Accommodations:** Ask for accommodations if you are a DSP student (according to your LOA). You can assume that the DSP office will send me a copy of your letter. If you have an accommodation for take-home assignments though (the only assignments we have in this class, really), it is your responsibility to contact me to make arrangements if you need additional time.

You are always welcome to reach out to me to discuss accommodations. If something is not working well, we will try to make adjustments. Accommodations are also available for the observance of religious holidays, or due to conflicts related to student athletics. Please also reach out to me if you have another issue not “officially” covered and we can talk about it. Here is a link to more information from UCB about academic accommodations and resources:

<https://evcp.berkeley.edu/programs-resources/academic-accommodations-hub>

**Re-grade policy:** If you believe I made a mistake in grading your assignment, write a short statement explaining why you think your assignment deserves a different grade, making sure to reference the assignment rubric/or comments you were given. This statement should be about the substance of your work, rather than effort. I will then take another look at your assignment paper and determine the final grade. All re-grade requests must be made within a week of when an assignment is handed back.

**Incomplete Grades:** Incompletes are an option of last resort for students experiencing medical or other emergencies that make it impossible for them to complete their coursework on time. To be considered for an incomplete grade, students need to speak with me about it BEFORE THE END of the semester, have completed about half of the coursework, be earning a grade of C or better, and provide documentation of the reason for the request.

**Academic honesty is expected of all students.** It is extremely important that everyone submits their own original work, produced specifically for this course, in order to receive credit. Suspected violations relating to this course will be reported to the office of student conduct and dealt with according to university policies. *Be aware of plagiarism.* Word for word use of even a single sentence from any author, publication or website without proper citation is plagiarism and is unethical and unacceptable. So is very closely following the structure and wording of another author’s work. In addition, please be aware that you may not turn in any portion of *your own* previous work submitted for credit in another course without substantial revision. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade on the paper or exam in question with no opportunity to rewrite, as will any other kind of academic dishonesty. If you have questions about how to properly cite materials, or how to paraphrase appropriately, please ask! The student writing center is a good resource for questions about this. All of your assignments will be checked for plagiarism by Turnitin.

### **Office Hours and communicating with me:**

**Office Hours:** There are many different reasons to come to office hours. If you are having trouble with the class, or are experiencing personal problems that are hindering your ability to do well in it, please come! I can’t help you if I don’t know what is going on! Please also come to drop by to say “hi” and introduce yourself, or ask questions about the class, share a personal experience, or ask me about anything you think that I could help you with. I am glad you are my student this semester, and I want you to do well. I will be glad to talk with you. Remember also that if I know you, I will be able to write you a much better letter of recommendation if you find yourself in need of one in the future.

**Email:** This is generally a good way to get in touch with me, but I may not be able to respond right away. Do not expect a response on weekends or outside of regular working hours. Email is best for short, logistical questions or issues. If you need to discuss something complicated and/or important, a real conversation will be a lot better.

**Names and Pronouns:** You have the right to be referred to by the name you prefer and with the correct gender pronouns. Because the name listed in University records may not correspond to your preferred name, please inform me of your name (and pronunciation) and your pronouns so that I can ensure you are properly recognized and respected. You can refer to me as Prof. Reed, Dr. Reed, or Joanna. My pronouns are she/her.

## University Resources for Students

**Your Health and Well-Being:** Being a college student can be full of excitement and possibilities, but at times may feel overwhelming or be difficult in other ways. Some degree of this is to be expected and is part of discovering your own identity and the person that you are and want to be. That said, if you are experiencing distress, anxiety or another problem to the point that it is affecting your academics, or have a pre-existing mental health issue, there are resources on campus to help. You are not alone; many others share your difficulties. Even if you don't think you need them, I encourage you to look at these websites now, so you know what is available. There is much more than counseling appointments: there are web tutorials and videos, support groups and mindfulness classes, for example. Counseling center staff have told me these groups and classes can be a great preventative resource, and are a great way to get the semester off to a good start. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), (510) 642-9494, <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling>. More general resources on mental health, services are at <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/health-topics/mental-health> .

**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."

**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; I am a mandated reporter. You can speak to a Confidential Care Advocate.

**Undocumented Students** can find university resources and support at:

<https://undocu.berkeley.edu/>

**Economic, Food, and Housing Support:** If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at the Basic Needs Center (<https://basicneeds.berkeley.edu/home>).

**Technology resources and support for students:** Please see this page for the latest information on university-provided support: <https://studenttech.berkeley.edu/home>

## Course schedule\*

**Jan. 18, Week 1. Technology and families: hopes and fears**

**Jan. 25, Week 2. Looking backward: adopting the telephone in U.S. society**

Reading: Fischer, C. (1992) *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Ch. 1, 8, 9

**Feb. 1, Week 3. Research refresher**

Gordon, L. (2019) *Real Research: Research Methods Sociology Students Can Use*. New York: Sage. Ch. 1, 2, 4.

**Feb. 8, Week 4. Forming families: Assisted Reproductive Technologies**

Inhorn, M.C. & Birenbaum-Carmeli, D. (2008) "Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Culture Change" *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 37:177-196

Rudrappa, S. (2015) *Discounted Life: The Price of Global Surrogacy in India*. Ch. 5, "Babies as Commodities" and Ch. 6, "Fetuses as Persons, Surrogate Mothers as Nonpersons". New York: NYU Press

**Feb. 15, Week 5. Relationships with Robots**

Turkle, S. (2011) *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other*. New York: Basic Books. Part 1, The Robotic Moment, Ch. 1-7

**Feb. 22, Week 6. The internet and today's digital landscape: digital divides**

Pew Research Center, Digital Divide articles,  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/internet-technology/technology-policy-issues/digital-divide/>

-Internet/Broadband Factsheet, Apr. 7, 2021

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/>

-(Choose an additional three or so to read on your own)

*Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students*. (2021) U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights

MacGillis, A. (2020) "The Students Left Behind by Remote Learning". Pro Publica/*The New Yorker*

<https://www.propublica.org/article/the-students-left-behind-by-remote-learning>



**Mar. 1, Week 7. The internet and today's digital landscape: surveillance capitalism**

Zuboff, S. (2019) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. New York: Public Affairs. Ch. 1, 2, 3

**Mar. 8, Week 8. The internet and today's digital landscape: social media**

Twenge, J. (2017) *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—And Completely Unprepared for Adulthood (and What That Means for the Rest of Us)*. New York: Atria Books. Introduction (pp. 1-16) and Ch. 4

Freitas, D. (2017) *The Happiness Effect: How Social Media is Driving a Generation to Appear Perfect at Any Cost*. New York: Oxford University Press. Introduction and Chs. 1-4

*Protecting Youth Mental Health, The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory* (2021) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (skim)

**Mar. 15, Week 9. Devices and Desires: parents' approaches to regulating children's technology use**

Clark, L.S. (2013) *The Parent App: Understanding Families in the Digital Age*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 6 & 7

Pugh, A. (2009) *Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children and Consumer Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 4 & 5

**Mar. 22, SPRING BREAK, no class.**

**Mar. 29, Week 10 (and probably into week 11). Algorithmic control and the "digital poorhouse"**

O'Neil, C. (2016) *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. Introduction, Ch. 1 and 8

Eubanks, V. (2018) *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police and Punish the Poor*. New York: Picador. Introduction, Ch. 4, 5.

**Apr. 5, Week 11. More algorithms in our lives: online dating**

Rosenfeld, M., Thomas, R. & Hausen, S. (2019) "Disintermediating Your Friends: How Online Dating in the U.S. Displaces Other Ways of Meeting". *PNAS*, Vol. 116, 36.

Sharabi, L. (2021) "Exploring How Beliefs About Algorithms Shape (Offline) Success in Online Dating: A Two-Wave Longitudinal Investigation". *Communication Research*. Vol. 48, 7

**Apr. 12, Week 12. Work and Technology**

Kelly, E. & Moen, P. (2020) *Overload: How Good Jobs Went Bad and What We Can Do About it*. Ch. 2 "Overload", Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Ch. 2 & 3

Schneider, D. & Harknett, K. (2019) "Consequences of Routine Work Schedule Instability for Worker Health and Well-being". *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 84, no. 1

Abril, D. & Harwell, D. (2021) "Keystroke tracking, screenshots and facial recognition: The boss may be watching long after the pandemic ends". *The Washington Post*, Sept. 24, 2021

Monroe, R. (2020) "98 Million TikTok Followers Can't Be Wrong". *The Atlantic*, Dec. 2020,  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/12/charli-damelio-tiktok-teens/616929/>

**Apr. 19, Week 13. Presentations**

**Apr. 26, Week 14. Presentations**

**RRR week, Week 15. No class.**

**Final paper due May 10.**

\*Course schedule subject to change at the instructor's discretion.