Soc 167 – Virtual Communities and Social Media
University of California, Berkeley
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8am – 9:30am
155 Dwinelle Hall

Instructor: Edwin Lin, Fall 2023   **Email: edklin@berkeley.edu**
Office Hours, Sign-Up at http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/icwie
        Tuesdays 11:00am – 1:30pm
        487 Social Sciences Building OR via Zoom online
Zoom Office Hours Link: https://berkeley.zoom.us/j/99441395960

Head GSI: Fatinha Santos, fsantos@berkeley.edu

Readers: **TBD**

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 sociological lens of understanding.
      Explicitly, the goals of this course are: 1) to teach key themes and theories that will deepen one's ability to analyze virtual communities and social media, 2) to consider specifically to what extent are virtual communities and social media are changing our society, 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.

Office Hours:
        Feel free to come into office hours for anything, course or life related! Please sign up at the link at the top 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/Zoom call when there is no appointment to run a quick errand.

        If office hours are full or you cannot make the times, you may email me to set up another time. 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.

        Office hours can be done in-person (487 Social Sciences Building) OR online via Zoom (**https://berkeley.zoom.us/j/99441395960**).

Grade Breakdown:

Disconnect Paper	15%
Take Home Midterm	20%
Virtual Community (VC) Paper	35% Total
Early Data Report	10%
VC Final Paper	25%
Take Home Final	30%

        ***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.

        Also, if you are part of the **Disabled Students' Program (DSP)** and require any special accommodations, please try to make arrangements at least a week in advance—this will guarantee you access to your accommodations. Please make such arrangements directly with the Head GSI.

Structure of our Class
The class will be held in person. This is the expectation of the course and attendance is essentially mandatory. Attendance for lecture is not regularly taken but is considered mandatory and expected. It is possible that **I may plan to take attendance on days when fewer students attend to give credit** for students who attend lecture. This is meant to be a positive incentive to provide recognition and a direct value to your grade for attendance (but this will not explicitly hurt anyone's grade who does not attend).

You are responsible for all materials discussed in our times together, as well as any announcements made or questions answered. I make it a point to make lecture attendance valuable in helping with assignments, quizzes, and tests. I will also do my best to make these times manageable, interesting, and engaging! Finally, as we do not have discussion sections, there will also be important moments throughout the semester for our lectures to be used as a space for processing information.

Disconnect Paper:
        During the first five weeks 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 connect it to one of the readings from the first three weeks of class. 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.

Virtual Community Paper:

During this semester, you will be asked to choose and immerse yourself with an online 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 and not just your own entertainment. 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. The paper is broken down into two parts: a data and analysis report and a final paper.

The early data report will ask you to describe your virtual community and encourage you to engage in it in a deeper way. You will need to start gathering some data and connect them to key concepts in the course or on the syllabus. This is a kind of preparation for writing the VC final paper.

In the VC final paper, you will be asked to make an argument relating your experience to course themes and readings. While there might be some overlap between previous reports and the final paper, the paper should overall be distinct, as you will be arguing a thesis and using course materials as well as the data you collected to prove this argument.

Take-Home Final Exam:

Your final exam will be a take-home exam. You will submit the exam via bCourses. 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.

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 (Graders)
This class has a Head GSI who will be helping with grading, DSP requests, questions on assignments, and organizing readers. They will be an important resource and will be regularly communicating with you throughout the semester.

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 via bCourses so that you can reach out to them in case you have grading discrepancies. You will have the same reader for both virtual community project assignments (for consistency, feedback, and growth).

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 Policies (detailed info also available on bCourses)

Extensions are only approved for DSP accommodations and documentable emergency circumstances (e.g. hospitalization, death in the family, COVID-19 related issues, etc.). 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 and may get up to a 5% grade deduction. After that one-hour grace period, the paper will be considered a day late and will have a 10% grade deduction. Each additional day a paper is late, it will be penalized an additional 5%. After being four days, the paper will no longer be accepted. 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 extensions 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. Especially in larger classes, I feel it is important to have clear guideline to provide some equity.

That said, overall, **please communicate with the Head GSI** about difficulties that may prevent you from succeeding in the class if these emergencies do come up during the semester.

- 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, *there is NOT a guarantee of an extension*. 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.

This is the course wide policy, but the Head GSI is able to make exceptions as they see fit.

Disabled Students' Program (DSP)

If you are part of the Disabled Students' Program (DSP) and require special accommodations, please try to make arrangements in advance—this will guarantee you access to your accommodations. If you do make arrangements last minute, we will try our best to still accommodate, but try to ask in advance, even if it's just in case.

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, <u>send an email with your DSP letter attached to the Head GSI.</u> If you are asking for an extension, you will work with the Head GSI to establish a new due date.

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

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 ever 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 after receiving your grade 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 (remotely or in-person) the reader who graded your paper to discuss why you got the grade you got.
2. Write a cover letter to the Head GSI and to me that explains how you understand their 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 your meeting, but we would like to have something written down for clarity and reference.
3. Your reader, the Head GSI, 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, the Head GSI does, or I do depends on whether your reader believes there is something that could be adjusted or not.
4. If your reader/Head GSI 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 historically), 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 grades **many** assignments. They probably have a sense for how your assignment compares to other people in the class. But grading many assignments 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).

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.

I have kept the reading load to be rather manageable, but some days will have more reading than others. Overall, read for understanding, overarching meanings, and the big picture. Do not worry too much about detailed specifics, such as dates of historical events, economic statistics, etc.—you can always go back and look at key parts of the reading to apply to your assignments. **If you can write 3-5 sentences to summarize the main concepts of the readings, you are doing great.**

Depending on how much time you have this semester, skim aggressively—learn when to slow down and focus and when to speed up and even skip! I **DO NOT expect you to read every word of every reading**, nor should you, as this is actually a bad reading habit to develop (for academic, course reading). Almost all readings will be discussed in lecture, so between your aggressive and smart skimming and the lectures, I believe this reading load is manageable. Do your best to *at least* skim through every reading on the syllabus before class, and perhaps after lecture, you can revisit the reading and fine tune your reading notes.

List of Important Due Dates:

Disconnect Paper due	Tuesday, September 26
VC Early Data Report due	Tuesday, October 17
Take Home Midterm due	Friday, October 27
VC Final Paper due	Friday, November 17
Take Home Final Exam due	Friday, December 15

UNIT 0: INTRODUCTION
Week 1
  1. **Thursday, August 24**   **Introduction: Syllabus and Logistics**
     - Aichner, Thomas, et al. "Twenty-five years of social media: a review of social media applications and definitions from 1994 to 2019." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 24.4 (2021): 215-222.

Week 2
  2. **Tuesday, August 29**   **Virtual Communities and Social Media**
     - Baym, Nancy. (2010). *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity (pp. 1-49).

  3. **Thursday, August 31**   **Actor Network Theory**
     - Law, John. 1992. "Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity," *Systems Practice*. 5 (4): 379-393.

UNIT 1: UTOPIAN AND DYSTOPIAN DISCOURSES
Week 3
   4. Tuesday, September 5   Theories of Technology and Society
- Orlikowski, Wanda. 1992. "The Duality of Technology: Rethinking the Concept of Technology in Organizations," *Organization Science*, 3 (3): 398-412.
 HANDOUT: Disconnect Paper via bCourses due Tuesday, September 26

   5. Thursday, September 7   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.
- Tufekci, Zeynep, and Matthew E. Brashears. "Are we all equally at home socializing online? Cyberasociality and evidence for an unequal distribution of disdain for digitally-mediated sociality." Current Research on Information Technologies and Society. Routledge, 2016. 96-112.

Week 4
   6. Tuesday, September 12   Dystopian Views (I)
- 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.

   7. Thursday, September 14   Dystopian Views (II): Big Data, AI, and Algorithms
- Zuboff, Shoshana. "Big other: surveillance capitalism and the prospects of an information civilization," *Journal of Information Technology*. 2015. 30: 75-89.
- YouTube Video Discussion with "The Social Dilemma" Filmmakers and Katie Couric [via bCourses or YouTube link: https://youtu.be/yGi2YKZZNFg?t=532]

Week 5
   8. Tuesday, September 19   Dystopian Views (III): Psychology and Relationships
- Turkle, Sherry. "Introduction," in *Alone Together*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.

   9. Thursday, September 21   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.
- Boyd, Danah. "Introduction," *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. Yale University Press: pp. 1-28, 2014.

UNIT 2: THEORIES AND TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS
Week 6
   10. Tuesday, September 26   Theories of Media Studies

- Meyrowitz, Joshua. "Medium Theory," in *Communication Theory Today*. 50-77.
    Disconnect Paper Due Tuesday, September 26

11. Thursday, September 28   The Attention Economy
- Goldhaber, M. H. (1997). "The attention economy and the net." *First Monday*.
   HANDOUT: VC Early Data Report via bCourses due Tuesday, October 17

Week 7
12. Tuesday, October 3   Culture on the Internet
- Chen, Carl. "The creation and meaning of Internet memes in 4chan: Popular Internet culture in the age of online digital reproduction." (2012): 6-19.

13. Thursday, October 5   Global Societies(?) and Global Change
- 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

UNIT 3: SOCIAL NETWORKS, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND SOCIAL CHANGE
Section 1: Social Networks and Social Capital
Week 8
14. Tuesday, October 10   Social Network Analysis
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.

15. Thursday, October 12   Social Decapitalization
- Putnam, R. (1995). Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital. *Journal of Democracy*. 6(1): 65-78.

Week 9
16. Tuesday, October 17   Social Capital and SNS
- 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.
      VC Data and Analysis Report Due Tuesday, October 17

17. Thursday, October 19   Public Spaces and Social Interactions
- 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.
- Humphreys, L. (2005). Cellphones in public: social interactions in a wireless era. *New Media & Society,* 7(6), 810-833.
        HANDOUT: VC Final Paper due Friday, November 17
Week 10
18. Tuesday, October 24   Midterm Review
            HANDOUT: Take Home Midterm due Friday, October 27

Section 2: Social Change

19. Thursday, October 26 Engagement in Virtual Communities
- Rafaeli, Sheizaf, Gilad Ravid, and Vladimir Soroka. "De-lurking in virtual communities: A social communication network approach to measuring the effects of social and cultural capital." 37th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, 2004. Proceedings of the. IEEE, 2004.

Take Home Midterm Due Friday, October 27

Week 11
20. Tuesday, October 31 Elections, Voting, and Political Awareness
- Feezell, Jessica T. "Agenda setting through social media: The importance of incidental news exposure and social filtering in the digital era." *Political Research Quarterly* 71.2 (2018): 482-494.

21. Thursday, November 2 Fake News and Disinformation
- Vosoughi, Soroush, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral. "The spread of true and false news online." *Science* 359.6380 (2018): 1146-1151.

Week 12
22. Tuesday, November 7 Political Polarization
- Sunstein, Cass R. "Chapter 3: Polarization," *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Princeton University Press: pp. 59-97, 2017.
- Fisher, Max and Amanda Taub. "How YouTube Radicalized Brazil," *The New York Times*, August 11, 2019.

23. Thursday, November 9 Revolutions and Social Movements
- 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.
- De Choudhury, Munmun, Shagun Jhaver, Benjamin Sugar, and Ingmar Weber. "Social media participation in an activist movement for racial equality." In Tenth International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media. 2016.

UNIT 4: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND CONCLUSION
Week 13
   24. Tuesday, November 14   Gaming (I): Dystopian Views
   - 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.
   - Golub, Alex and Kate Lingley (2008). Just Like the Qing Empire: Internet Addiction, MMOGs, and Moral Crisis in Contemporary China. *Games and Culture*, 3(1): 59-75.

   25. Thursday, November 16   Gaming (II): Utopian Views
   - Steinkuehler & Williams (2006). Where Everybody Knows Your (Screen) Name: Online Games as "Third Places".
   - 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.

   VC Paper Due Friday, November 17

Week 14
   26. Tuesday, November 21   Privacy Panic: 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.

   27. Thursday, November 23   THANKSGIVING NO CLASS

Week 15
   28. Tuesday, November 28   AI Bots (and Future of Tech)
   - Sallam, Malik. "ChatGPT utility in healthcare education, research, and practice: systematic review on the promising perspectives and valid concerns." Healthcare. Vol. 11. No. 6. MDPI, 2023.

   29. Thursday, November 30   Final Review
          HANDOUT: Take-Home Final via bCourses due Friday, December 15