Cyberworlds

Tell me and I forget; teach me and I remember; involve me and I learn

Benjamin Franklin

Dr. Marcie Goodman
Office--310 BehS
581-3712 Office
Office Hours: T/Th 8:00 to 9:00 am
Email: marcie.goodman@soc.utah.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

New information technologies based on digital platforms proliferate in our society. Such technologies now affect everyday life, groups, personal identity, culture, safety, and countless other aspects of existence. From a sociological standpoint, digital technology is so pervasively a part of our world as to be almost invisible. The necessity of recognizing impacts of such technologies is of increasing importance. Emphasis in such a course of study will be placed on understanding the beginnings and development of digitization, the internet in its many manifestations, theories about communication and media, online subcultures, gaming, privacy, information management, cyber-terrorism and bullying, business and corporate interface, identity, key individuals within the subject, relationships, criminal overtones, government interfaces, law, virtual worlds, and mass media.

Cyberworlds is an introduction to the information, theory and impact surrounding digitization. The primary objectives of the course are:

♦ familiarize students with the impacts of digital technology on people, culture, institutions & society;
♦ expose students to theories concerning sociological, media and technological aspects of society;
♦ give students an opportunity to conduct their own research on topics concerning digital technology;
♦ aid students in developing their skills in formal, factual writing (qualifies as a University Writing Credit);
♦ offer students experience in both oral and written presentation of original work.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Evaluation Methods

Most upper-level, undergraduate courses in the social sciences require students to demonstrate mastery of material through successful completion of reading, written assignments, and participation. For SOC 3051, an ongoing research project (rough drafts) will contribute 30% to the course grade, and the finalized Microtext will add another 30%. An oral book report with companion topic outline will count 20%. The remaining 20% of the course grade will reflect class participation (notations are made of level of responses during discussions). The purpose of this type of system is to assure maximum results through an ongoing effort by students to stay abreast of course materials, particularly the assigned readings. Success will be greatly impacted by familiarity with information before each class period, with students coming prepared to participate in class discussions (more about all of the assignments in the syllabus).

Required Texts


Note: Older editions available at Amazon.com—older editions O.K! (Not in U of U Bookstore!)

Special Accommodations

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (CDS), 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services. Please discuss any concerns with the professor as soon as possible.
Grading Criterion

A  An excellent work in all or nearly all aspects of the assignment. The student exemplifies originality of ideas, superior depth of thought, and extensive grasp of topics as well as technical superiority.

B  A competent work with a lapse here or there. Ideas are clear and properly expressed; the writing is technically solid. The assignment is effective in meeting all criteria but does not rise to distinction.

C  An adequate work, but not good. Student ideas tend to be oversimplified, reductionistic, and lack sufficient explanation or exploration. Problems may also exist with grammar, logic, or ability to express thoughts in a manner reflective of a junior level class.

D  A minimal effort by the student—the work is marred by problems with almost all aspects of the assignment. This is not considered a competent performance.

E  A failing mark, generally reserved for assignments which are not submitted or miss the target on virtually every criteria of the project.

+/- Plus or minus may be given in addition to each of the grade levels when deemed appropriate.

Grade Range

A  96% and above; A-  90—95.99%; B+  85—89.99%; B  80—84.99%; B-  75—79.99%; C+  70—74.99%;
C  65—69.99%; C-  60—64.99%; D+  55—59.99%; D  50—54.99%; D-  45—49.99%; E  Below 45%.

Course/University Policies

Attendance Policy: Regular class attendance is expected.

Punctuality: Students’ presence in the room for the full class time-period is expected. If you have a scheduling dilemma that makes punctuality difficult, you should reconsider your registration. Classes begin and end on time.

Class Environment: Enrollment in this course indicates that you agree to conduct all discussions and interactions with thought, maturity, and respect for others’ rights to differ. Discussion of personal beliefs is encouraged, and will be conducted in a manner that maintains a climate conducive to the learning of all class members. Students at the University of Utah are encouraged to exercise personal responsibility and self-discipline, and engage in the rigor of discovery and scholarship. Please read the Student Code in the Student Handbook which covers student rights and responsibilities. The Faculty Rules and Regulations provide faculty with the responsibility of enforcing appropriate classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Student appeals in such cases are directed toward the Student Behavior Committee. Cell phones, pagers, and email programs will be turned off for the duration of class.

Academic Honesty / Plagiarism: Compliance with strict standards of academic honesty is expected. Academic misconduct / plagiarism (see Student Code) will not be tolerated and may be grounds for course failure, and suspension or dismissal from the University. Note that “plagiarism” is the failure to correctly cite / reference any words or ideas which are not your own. Always reference the sources of your information. Plagiarism also includes using (or sharing) others’ essays, purchased, or down-loaded materials. All students are expected to be familiar with the video Avoiding Plagiarism [Marriott Library Multi-Media Center: PN 167 A86 2004]. If there is ever a question on this issue, please ask in advance of submitting the work, since once submitted academic standards will be strongly enforced.

Make up Policy: All work is due on the designated day. Work may be penalized for each day late. In the case of emergencies or extreme personal difficulty (e.g., car accident, sudden acute illness), some work may be made up; see the professor as soon as possible in these situations. Finally, should you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact another student regarding missed lecture material, notes, and assignments. After speaking to another student, and making copies of the missed materials, feel free to contact the professor with questions.

PARTICIPATION (20% of course grade)

Given the “hands-on” nature of this course, regular attendance is strongly encouraged. Active participation is also expected. The class will be conducted in a Socratic format with emphasis on professor and student interaction and understanding through questions and comments. The professor will use this forum to present key concepts not detailed in the major texts under consideration. The Socratic model is employed to encourage analysis, critical thinking, preparation, and long term learning on the part of the student. Each should come prepared to discuss the subject scheduled on the calendar. Note cards will be marked for every student, and response notes will be given based on the quality of comments offered: + (plus), √ (check), or 0 (zero)—representing roughly the grades of A, B, and E.
Students should choose a book of interest to them relating to digitization for a report according to the following criteria:

1. read a **200+** page book published **within the last 5 years** (older, historical or theoretical volumes must be cleared through the professor);
2. major subject areas of course must be represented by the book;
3. students will provide a **one-page, topic outline** of book for professor & members of class during **Research Conference** presentation;
4. **oral presentation** on book will be given at **Conference** at end of term (length of report to be determined and assigned at that time).

**MICROTEXT**

**OVERVIEW**

Due to highly time-critical and cutting-edge nature of the subject matter, a traditional textbook will **not** be utilized in Sociology 3051. Instead, **students will create a Microtext** on the topics chosen for discussion during the semester. The subjects to be covered by individual essays or chapters are:

1. A history of digitization—1940 to 2010
2. Digitalized entertainment—radio, television, music & movies
3. Computers, the internet, **World Wide Web** & online subcultures
4. Social media—cell phones, **twitter, texting, facebook, youtube & myspace**
5. Digitized gaming—from **Pong to World of Warcraft & virtual worlds**
6. Digitization & personal identity/security/legal ramifications
7. Digitization & government/politics/military
8. Digitization & education/medicine
9. Digitization & commerce/business

**ROUGH DRAFTS (30 % OF COURSE GRADE)**

At the conclusion of each major section (one per week—drafts submitted Tuesday of week following discussion), students will submit their **chapter** or essay on the **specific areas of the subject of most interest to them**. The professor will return that chapter with corrections and suggestions for improvement to be implemented by the student for final **microtext**. All chapters with the exception of the **introduction, conclusion & works cited** will be **rewrites**. Each essay/chapter will reflect:

1. A meaningful and specific aspect of subject of hand **(in the viewpoint of the student)**;
2. At least **one** reference from a peer-reviewed journal in the field of sociological theory, digital technology or media studies;
3. No less than 1250 words—no more than 2000 words, employing **APA style**;
4. An emphasis on the **three highest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy** (overview follows this section);
5. 10 point academic font with double spaced lines and 1 inch margins (**Arial** is suggested);
6. Writing, logic and grammar skills appropriate for a 3000 level sociology/writing course;
7. **A word count** provided at the end of the essay/chapter.

**FINAL MICROTEXT (30% OF COURSE GRADE)**

At the end of the term, students will create a final, cutting-edge **Microtext** about the **digital society**. **Microtext** will include:

1. An original introduction (1250—2000 words);
2. An original conclusion (750—1250 words);
3. A finalized production of rewritten & improved topic essays/chapters;
4. An appropriate **Table of Contents**
5. A **Works Cited** page with correct references from peer-reviewed journals cited within chapters;
6. An **Appendix** with any relevant and appropriate information, tables, charts, or graphs;
7. A final binding with cover-sheet and appropriate title.
**BLOOM’S TAXONOMY**

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom headed a group of educational psychologists who developed a classification of levels of intellectual behavior important in learning. Bloom found that over 95% of the test questions students encounter require them to think only at the lowest possible level... the recall of information. Bloom identified six levels within the cognitive domain, from the simple recall or recognition of facts, as the lowest level, through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels:

1. **Knowledge**: arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce state.
2. **Comprehension**: classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate,
3. **Application**: apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.

Three highest levels (to be emphasized in Microtext)

4. **Analysis**: analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.
5. **Synthesis**: arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write.
6. **Evaluation**: appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose compare, defend estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate.

**NOTE:** Class discussions concerning Bloom’s Taxonomy and its usefulness will begin at the first of term, and reiteration of the implementation of these concepts will occur throughout the semester. Additionally, the Student Writer’s Manual will be presented and covered in some depth before students begin writing to underpin and facilitate course work, with several suggestions concerning application and improvement of writing techniques as chapters are submitted during the term.

---

**COURSE CALENDAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>Course introduction: presentation of syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May</td>
<td>Bloom’s Taxonomy—from basic knowledge to higher levels of thinking/writing ability; Understanding how to use a <em>College Handbook</em> Harbrace College Handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 May</td>
<td><em>The Sociology Student’s Writing Manual</em> Johnson—Chapters 1—14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>A brief overview of the history of digitization: 1940—Present day (<a href="http://www.computerhope.com/history">www.computerhope.com/history</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 May</td>
<td>Digitization in entertainment—radio, television, music &amp; movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 May</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Jun (Tu)  Computers, the internet, *World Wide Web* (1.0 & 2.0), & online subcultures
7 Jun (Th)

12 Jun (Tu)  Social media—cell phones, twitter, texting, facebook, youtube, myspace
14 Jun (Th)

19 Jun (Tu)  Gaming—from *Pong* to *World of Warcraft* & virtual worlds
21 Jun (Th)

26 Jun (Tu)  Personal identity/security/legal ramifications
28 Jun (Th)

3 Jul (Tu)  Government/politics/military

5 Jul (Th)  **Completing the Microtext**

10 Jul (Tu)  Education/Medicine
12 Jul (Th)

17 Jul (Tu)  Commerce/business
19 Jul (Th)

24 Jul (Tu)  **PIONEER DAY—HOLIDAY—NO CLASSES**

26 Jul (Th)  Oral Book Reports

31 Jul (Tu)  Oral Book Reports**********MICROTEXT DUE!