The Digital Society Syllabus

Tell me and I forget; teach me and I remember; involve me and I learn—Benjamin Franklin

DR. MARCIE GOODMAN
Phone: (801) 581-3712
Office: 310 BehS
Consultations: 9:30—10:30 am (T/Th))
Email: marcie.goodman@soc.utah.edu

COURSE CONTENT

New information technologies based on digital platforms proliferate in our society. Such technologies now affect everyday life, groups, personal identity, culture, safety, and virtually all aspects of existence. From a sociological standpoint, The Digital Society is so pervasively a part of our world as to be almost invisible. Therefore, the necessity of recognizing the impacts of such technologies on us as individuals as well as the societal repercussions is of increasing importance. Emphasis in such a course of study will be placed on understanding the beginnings and development of digitalization, the internet in its many manifestations, 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.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Each student, upon completion of this course, should be able to recognize, define, and understand core issues of The Digital Society. Due to the broad scope of such a topic, students will be encouraged to creatively pursue areas of interest to them. Additionally, students will gain a working knowledge of the key elements of the content identified as critical to this field of learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

The format of the course will include lecture, student participation and class discussions concerning the two core texts, along with student book reports on related topics.

EVALUATION METHODS AND GRADING CRITERIA

Most upper-level, undergraduate courses in the social sciences require students to demonstrate mastery of material through successful completion of reading, assignments, AND participation. For SOC 3051, two book reports will contribute 40% each to the course grade. 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).

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 sustained 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 by the professor.

REQUIRED TEXT

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

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. ([www.hr.utah.edu/oeo/aca/guide/faculty/](http://www.hr.utah.edu/oeo/aca/guide/faculty/)).

**PARTICIPATION**

Research indicates that students who attend class on a regular basis earn higher marks than those who do not. *SOC 3051* has been purposely designed to reward those who attend, having read the assigned chapters *in advance*, prepared to discuss the material. Class size notwithstanding, each student will be able to discuss important aspects of the texts under consideration on a regular basis. One of five marks (+, \(\sqrt{-}\), \(\sqrt{-}\), - or 0/N) will be noted on the student’s card for each time they are called to comment in class. Additionally, a daily roll will be maintained for attendance. Participation contributes **20%** to the overall course grade, and represents a very critical part of the student’s effort. Participation marks will be available for student’s perusal upon request before or after class, or by appointment.

**BOOK ANALYSIS/ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

For *SOC 3051*, two book reports (one book each from *LIST A & LIST B*) will contribute **40%** of the course grade (students may suggest an alternative, similar book to be approved by the professor). The most important aspect of the report is how well students *analyze, evaluate, and glean critical ideas* from the book. A sample paper will be distributed. Students will present an oral presentation of their book during the term (if more than one person is reading the same book, reports may be done in teams). *Book reports are due the day of the oral presentation*. As part of the oral report, students will supply an outline or written overview of their book report to members of the class. The book report will reflect:

**Content**

1. correctly formatted Abstract;
2. introductory paragraph with overview of entire paper;
3. an analysis/evaluation of the volume;
4. conclusion.

**Technical**

1. 2500 words minimum;
2. 10 point academic font/double spacing;
3. Sentence outline for distribution to class members during presentation.

**Oral Report**

1. length of presentation to be determined during term;
2. handout of book outline/overview for entire class;
3. *Powerpoint* or overhead projector may be utilized if desired (make certain *in advance* equipment is working correctly!).

**CLASS CALENDAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Jan (Tu)</td>
<td>Introduction to course and presentation of syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Jan (Th)</td>
<td>Digital theory: theorizing new media</td>
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<td><strong>Creeber—Chpt 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>19 Jan (Tu)</td>
<td>On the net: navigating the <em>World Wide Web</em></td>
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<td><strong>Creeber—Chpt 2</strong></td>
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<td>21 Jan (Th)</td>
<td>Digital television: high definitions</td>
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<td><strong>Creeber—Chpt 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>26 Jan (Tu)</td>
<td>Digital cinema: virtual screens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><strong>Creeber—Chpt 4</strong></td>
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28 Jan (Th)  Video games: platforms, programmers and players
Creeber—Chpt 5

2 Feb (Tu)  Digital music: production, distribution and consumption
Creeber—Chpt 6

4 Feb (Th)  Participatory culture: mobility, interactivity and identity
Creeber—Chpt 7

9 Feb (Tu)  The digital divide: scarcity, inequality and conflict
Creeber—Chpt 8

11 Feb (Th)  Digital democracy: enhancing the public sphere
Creeber—Chpt 9

16 Feb (Tu)  After new media: everywhere always on
Creeber—Chpt 10

18 Feb (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

23 Feb (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

25 Feb (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

2 Mar (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

4 Mar (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

9 Mar (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

11 Mar (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

16 Mar (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

18 Mar (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

22 Mar—27 Mar  SPRING BREAK—HOLIDAY—NO CLASSES!

29 Mar (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

31 Mar (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

6 Apr (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

8 Apr (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

13 Apr (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

15 Apr (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

20 Apr (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

22 Apr (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

27 Apr (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

REMEMBER YOUR WRITTEN BOOK REPORT IS DUE THE DAY OF YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION!
APPROVED BOOK LIST A—CHOOSE ONE!

1. *All The Rave: The Rise and Fall of Shawn Fanning’s Napster.* Joseph Mann.
10. *The PayPal Wars: Battles With eBay, the Media, the Mafia, and the Rest of Planet Earth.* Eric M. Jackson.

APPROVED BOOK LIST B—CHOOSE ONE!


*Remember you may submit alternative titles for approval by the professor!*