The Digital Society Syllabus

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

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Sociology 3051
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10:45—12:05 am
Tu & Th (BehS 114)

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).

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/).

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 rigors 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. You should always reference the sources of your information. Plagiarism also includes using (or sharing) others’ essays, quizzes, and the use of pre-written, 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 me in advance of submitting the work since once it is submitted I will act strongly to enforce academic standards.

Make up Policy: All work is due on the designated day. Work may be penalized one-half of a letter grade for each day late. In the case of emergencies or extreme personal difficulty (e.g., major car accident, sudden acute illness), some work may be made up; see me 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 me with questions.

Requests for Reevaluation: The burden of proof in a reevaluation of graded work rests with you. Before meeting with me, a rationale for a different grade should first be submitted in writing. This should identify the specific concerns / changes and provide detailed evidence in support of the argument. Requests for reevaluation must be made within one week of the student’s receipt of assignment.

Grading:
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.

Grade Ranges:
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%.

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 (+, √, -√, -, 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 request upon request before or after class, or by appointment.

BOOK REPORT
For SOC 3051, two book reports on any volume from the Approved Reading Lists attached to this syllabus will contribute 40% each of the course grade (students may suggest an alternative book to be approved by the professor). The book report is a serious and important part of the overall class effort, meant to evidence to the instructor the student’s working knowledge of topics presented, and will be discussed in depth as the term progresses. The most important aspect of the report is how the book reflects major ideas of the course. A sample paper will be distributed. Students will present an oral presentation of their book during the term. As part of the presentation, students will supply an outline or written overview of their book report to members of the class. The book report will reflect:

Content
1. introductory paragraph with overview of entire paper;
2. an analysis of the volume;
3. conclusion.
**Technical**
1. 2500 words; 
2. 10 point academic font. 
3. Sentence outline for distribution to class members during presentation.

**Oral Report**
1. 20 to 40 minutes in length (grades posted on Participation points cards); 
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!). 

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**CLASS CALENDAR**

19 Jan (Tu)  Digital News Discussion  
21 Jan (Th)  Digital News Discussion  
26 Jan (Tu)  Digital theory: theorizing new media  
            Creeber—Chpt 1  
28 Jan (Th)  On the net: navigating the World Wide Web  
            Creeber—Chpt 2  
2 Feb (Tu)  Digital television: high definitions  
            Creeber—Chpt 3  
4 Feb (Th)  Digital cinema: virtual screens  
            Creeber—Chpt 4  
9 Feb (Tu)  Video games: platforms, programmers and players  
            Creeber—Chpt 5  
11 Feb (Th)  Digital music: production, distribution and consumption  
            Creeber—Chpt 6  
16 Feb (Tu)  Participatory culture: mobility, interactivity and identity  
            Creeber—Chpt 7  
18 Feb (Th)  The digital divide: scarcity, inequality and conflict  
            Creeber—Chpt 8  
23 Feb (Tu)  Digital democracy: enhancing the public sphere  
            Creeber—Chpt 9  
25 Feb (Tu)  After new media: everywhere always on  
            Creeber—Chpt 10  

2 Mar (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS  
4 Mar (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS  
9 Mar (Tu)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS  BOOK LIST A—Report about  
11 Mar (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS  20 minutes in length  
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  BOOK LIST B—Report about  
15 Apr (Th)  ORAL PRESENTATIONS  30 minutes in length
BOOK LIST A

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.


BOOK LIST B


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