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
Fall 2009 (Sec 1)
11:50—12:55
MWF (WEB 105)

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 25% each to the course grade and an Annotated Bibliography of Journal Articles will add another 30%. 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 TEXTS

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/).

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) 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 REPORTS

For SOC 3051, two book reports will contribute 25% each to the course grade. One book report will be on either of the two assigned texts discussed in class during the term. The second report will be on any volume from the Approved Reading List attached to this syllabus. The book reports are 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 second book (from the Approved Reading List) at the end of 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 reports will reflect:

Content
1. introductory paragraph with overview of entire paper;
2. an analysis of the volume;
3. conclusion.

Technical
1. 2000 words;
2. 10 point academic font.
3. Sentence outline for distribution to class members during presentation.

Oral Report for book from Approved Reading List
1. 15 to 30 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!).

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF JOURNAL ARTICLES

In order to better appreciate the current, scholarly work conducted on digitalization and its effects on society, students will gather a list of timely articles published in recognized scholarly journals since 2000. The articles must reflect aspects of both digitalization and society/culture. The assignment counts 30% of course grade. Each article notation will include:
1. Title of article;
2. Author(s)
3. Full title of journal with date of publication;
4. Journal number/article page numbers;
5. A two or three sentence description (annotation) of contents of article;
6. Use 10 point font and single spacing in presentation of bibliography;
7. A numerical listing format is required;
8. Please use a cover sheet with name and class information in center of page.

Students will be rewarded in grading for the number of articles submitted fitting the required criteria:
5 to 7 = C
8 to 10 = C+
11 to 15 = B-
16 to 20 = B
21 to 24 = B+
25 to 29 = A-
30 or more = A

Students may work together on this assignment, but individual final papers will be submitted.
24 Aug (M)  Introduction to course material; presentation of syllabus
26 Aug (W)  What is digital culture?
             Gere—Introduction
28 Aug (F)  What is digital culture?
             Gere—Introduction
31 Aug (M)  The beginnings of digital culture
             Gere—Chpt 1
2  Sept (W)  The beginnings of digital culture
             Gere—Chpt 1
4  Sept (F)  What is digital culture?
             Gere—Introduction

7  Sept (M)  HOLIDAY—LABOR DAY—NO CLASSES!
9  Sept (W)  The cybernetic era
             Gere—Chpt 2
11 Sept (F)  The cybernetic era
             Gere—Chpt 2
14 Sept (M)  The digital avant-garde
             Gere—Chpt 3
16 Sept (W)  The digital avant-garde
             Gere—Chpt 3
18 Sept (F)  The digital avant-garde
             Gere—Chpt 3
21 Sept (M)  The digital counter-culture
             Gere—Chpt 4
23 Sept (W)  The digital counter-culture
             Gere—Chpt 4
25 Sept (F)  The digital counter-culture
             Gere—Chpt 4
28 Sept (M)  Digital resistances
             Gere—Chpt 5
30 Sept (W)  Digital resistances
             Gere—Chpt 5
2  Oct (F)   Digital resistances
             Gere—Chpt 5
5  Oct (M)   Digital natures
             Gere—Conclusion
7  Oct (W)   Digital natures
             Gere—Conclusion
9  Oct (F)   Completing the 1st Book Report
12—16 Oct  FALL BREAK—NO CLASSES!

19 Oct (M)  Your brain right now--------------------------------------------BOOK REPORT 1 DUE!  
            Small—Chpt 1

21 Oct (W)  Brain gap: technology dividing generations  
            Small—Chpt 2

23 Oct (F)  Brain gap: technology dividing generations  
            Small—Chpt 2

26 Oct (M)  Addicted to technology  
            Small—Chpt 3

28 Oct (W)  Technology and behavior: *ADHD, Indigo Children*, and beyond  
            Small—Chpt 4

30 Oct (F)  High-tech culture: social, political, and economic impact  
            Small—Chpt 5

2 Nov (M)  Brain evolution: where do you stand now?  
            Small—Chpt 6

4 Nov (W)  Brain evolution: where do you stand now?  
            Small—Chpt 6

6 Nov (F)  Reconnecting face to face  
            Small—Chpt 7

9 Nov (M)  The technology tool kit  
            Small—Chpt 8

11 Nov (W)  Bridging the brain gap: technology and the future brain  
            Small—Chpt 9 -------------------------------------------ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE!

13 Nov (F)  

16 Nov (M)  
18 Nov (W)  
20 Nov (F)  
23 Nov (M)  
25 Nov (W)  Completing the 2nd Book Report

27 Nov (F)  THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY—NO CLASSES!

30 Nov (M)  
2 Dec (W)  
4 Dec (F)  
7 Dec (M)  

9 Dec (W)  BOOK REPORT 2 DUE!  **NOTE:** For final paper and course mailed—attach a self-adhesive,  
            *legal size*, self-addressed, *stamped* envelope with their final paper.
1. 15 Minutes of Fame: Becoming a Star in the YouTube Revolution. Frederick Levy.
3. All the Rave: The Rise and Fall of Shawn Fanning’s Napster. Joseph Mann.
18. Everything Bad is Good for You. Steven Johnson.
34. Medicine by Design: The Practice and Promise of Biomedical Engineering. Fen Montaigne.
44. Spacewars: The First Six Hours of WWII. Richard Coumatos, William Scott & William Birnes.
49. The Anarchist in the Library: How the Clash Between Freedom and Control is Hacking the Real World and Crashing the System. Siva Vaidhyanathan.
50. The Cult of the Amateur: How Blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and Rest of Today’s User-Generated Media are Destroying our Economy, our Culture, and our Values. Andrew Keen.
51. The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don’t Trust Anybody Under 30). Mark Bauerlein.
52. The Future of the Internet—and How to Stop It. Jonathan Zittrain.

56. The Internet and Society. James Slevin

57. The Man behind the Microchip: Robert Noyce and the Invention of Silicon Valley. Leslie Berlin.


60. The PayPal Wars: Battles With eBay, the Media, the Mafia, and the Rest of Planet Earth. Eric Jackson.


64. The State of Play: Law, Games, and Virtual Worlds. Jack Balkin & Beth Noveck.


66. What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy (2nd Ed). James Paul Gee.
