



**Western**  
UNIVERSITY • CANADA

Western University  
**Department of Sociology**  
**Sociology SOC 3301G-001**  
**The Internet and Society**  
*Winter 2017*

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**Classes**

Time: Fridays 9:30 am-12:20 pm  
Location: UCC-59

**Instructor: Prof. Anabel Quan-Haase (Ph.D.)**

Associate Professor, FIMS/Sociology

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Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 pm.

**1. Course Description**

The Internet is becoming ubiquitous in many parts of the world connecting individuals near and far. Digital technologies (Facebook, Twitter, mobile phones) have become normalized and are an integral part of many people's everyday lives. This course has three primary objectives: 1) to discuss the relevance of studying the intersection of the digital and social. 2) To become familiar with different theoretical approaches to examining the effects of the Internet on society. 3) To learn about contemporary uses of the Internet. We will investigate various platforms and the social implications these have had for our understanding of social phenomena, such as friendship, work, the public sphere, and privacy. Our aim is to not only have a good understanding of the theories of Internet, but also of the methodological challenges inherent in studies of the sociodigital.

**2. Learning Outcomes**

**Students completing this course will:**

1. Become familiar with different theoretical approaches to examining the effects of the Internet on society.
2. Learn about different methodological approaches to examining the effects of the Internet on society.
3. Learn to critically examine the role of the Internet in society.

### 3. Prerequisites

Enrollment in third or fourth year of Sociology or Criminology Honors Specialization or Honors Double Major.

“Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

### 4. Course Website and Other Resources

Course material is on the OWL system.

The Web site for Registrarial Services is <http://registrar.uwo.ca/>.

### 5. Course Requirements and Grading

Requirements	Date	Proportion of Test Grade
Participation	Throughout	15%
Seminar Facilitation	TBA	15%
Mid-term	February 10	30%
Final Paper	March 24	40%
Total		100%

Students are expected to do the weekly readings. The weekly readings will be the basis for class discussions and the assignments.

### 6. A few words about the assignments and deadlines

I will not give extensions except under special circumstances. 5% will be deducted per day for late assignments. Please see the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf). If you cannot meet the deadline, notify the instructor as soon as possible, preferably before the scheduled date and present adequate documentation.

Medical documentation will be required to reschedule your seminar facilitation, the mid-term test, and assignment deadline. Please send an email to your professor as soon as possible to make arrangements and submit documentation to the appropriate Faculty Dean’s office (Social Science). No electronic devices are allowed during the mid-term test or other aids. Be sure to keep a copy of all work submitted in fulfilment of this class.

### Policy Regarding Missed Exams

Make-up exams will be granted with approved documentation only. If you have a conflict with one of the exam dates, it is your responsibility to discuss it with the Academic Counseling office at least one week before the regularly scheduled exam and provide documentation of the conflict. If approved, you will be allowed to schedule a make-up exam. If you miss an exam due to illness or for any other unforeseen reason, you must provide documentation of the reason for missing the exam to your Academic Counselor within 48 hours of the regularly scheduled exam. If your Academic Counselor agrees that your reason for missing the exam is legitimate and is supported by your medical doctor’s documentation, you will be allowed to write a makeup exam.

## **6.1 Participation**

The course will use a seminar format (as this is a 3000 level course) where we will engage each other's ideas and opinions to negotiate our learning. Students are requested to come prepared to class, to participate actively in the discussions, and to allow others space to express their views. Your class participation grade will reflect the frequency and quality of contributions. Students who do not participate in class discussions can expect a very low grade for participation. Your participation will be based on attendance and active engagement in class and online discussions. Attendance is expected to all classes, but alone is not sufficient to obtain good marks in participation.

**COURSE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:** With the exception of legitimate medical/personal excuses (documentation required to be submitted) students are expected to attend at least 80% of the class meetings for this course. A passing grade in the course cannot be obtained without meeting this attendance requirement

## **6.2 Seminar Facilitation**

Students are expected to prepare a 40 minute seminar facilitation on the various topics covered in the course. The seminar facilitations will be based on the topic covered in class during that week. The first day of class a list with the weekly topics will be distributed and students can choose what papers they would like to discuss. Please choose 1 paper from the list of readings. If in doubt about the appropriateness of your paper, please email your professor for approval before your seminar facilitation. The main objective in your facilitation will be to ensure that the class gains a firm and critical grasp of the concepts in the readings. You are free to facilitate the discussion in any way you choose (e.g. through the use of exercises, examples, cases, etc.). You can, for example, identify 2-3 general questions based on the reading and use these questions to guide discussion on the readings of the week. You should also try to identify links between the week's readings and material covered earlier in the course. The facilitation will be graded based on comprehensive coverage of subject matter, pertinent links with other assigned readings, critique and questions raised, and handling of discussion.

## **6.3 Mid-Term**

Because this is a 'G' course, the mid-term test will consist of 4 short-answer questions and 1 essay question (choose one of two options). The mid-term test will take 2 hours and there will be no class on that day.

## **6.4 Final Paper**

This is a comprehensive research paper. The research paper should be a critical and analytical exploration of a topic discussed in class or related to Internet and Society. The paper should clearly state what your topic is and what key lines of argument you are putting forward. Your paper should include sources discussed in class as well as primary sources you have identified from the library. In this paper, you will be assessed for the ability to bring independent, critical thinking to bear on the topic. Specify clearly what you are arguing for and against, as this will be key for the structure of your essay. A detailed handout on the assignment will be given in class.

## **7. Plagiarism**

The statement: "Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)."

In accordance with policy at UWO:

“Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).”

“All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)).”

## **8. Accessibility Options**

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar’s website: [www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

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## **Mental Health**

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western ([http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

## **9. Course Schedule**

It is your responsibility to consult the course schedule in order to keep up with the course readings and ensure you do not miss the deadlines for the assignments. The course schedule outlines the topics to be discussed each week, the readings corresponding to the lectures, and deadlines for the assignments. Assigned readings should be completed **before** attending the class. Seminar readings are suggested, but not required.

## Class Schedule

### I. INTRODUCTION TO INTERNET RESEARCH

- 1 **Jan. 6 Introduction to the Course:** Overview of course material and assignments. Course organization and assignment of seminars and readings.

**Introductory Lecture:** The Internet as a changing technology and its impact on society.

**Assigned Reading:** Chapter 1 of *Technology and Society*.

**\*Assignment of Class Facilitation Topics.**

- 2 **Jan. 13 Lecture: The Geography of the Internet and Technology: Does distance still matter?**

**Seminar:** Does distance matter and how? Understanding the complexities of virtual and real space and their interrelation.

**Readings for Seminar:**

- a) [Gruzd, A., Wellman, B., & Takhteyev, Y. \(2011\). Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community. \*American Behavioral Scientist\*, 55\(10\), 1294-1318.](#)
- b) [Mok, D., Wellman, B., & Carrasco, J. A. \(2010\). Does distance matter in the age of the Internet? \*Urban Studies\*, 47\(13\), 2747-2783.](#)

### II. THE INTERNET, ITS USES AND LABOUR

- 3 **Jan. 20 Uses and Gratifications of the Internet and Technology**

**Seminar:** What motivates individuals to use the Internet? What gratifications do they obtain?

**Readings for Seminar:**

- a) [Quan-Haase, A., & Young, A. L. \(2010\). Uses and gratifications of social media: A comparison of Facebook and instant messaging. \*Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society\*, 30\(5\), 350-361.](#)
- b) [Chen, G. M. \(2011\). Tweet this: A uses and gratifications perspective on how active Twitter use gratifies a need to connect with others. \*Computers in Human Behavior\*, 27\(2\), 755-762.](#)

- 4 **Jan. 27 Digital Work: How does work take place in digital networks? What is the meaning of UGC?**

**Seminar: Labour in a Digital Era.** How does the digital affect labour?

### Readings for Seminar:

- a) [Brown, B., & Quan-Haase, A. \(2012\). 'A worker's inquiry 2.0': An ethnographic method for the study of produsage in social media contexts. \*TripleC\*, 10\(3\).](#)
- b) [Fuchs, C. \(2011\). A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of Google. \*Fast Capitalism\*, 8\(1\).](#)

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### Feb. 3 Gender and the Internet: How is the Internet gendered? Why do men and women use the Internet differently?

**Seminar:** How do women and men compare in their use of the Internet? Is there a gender bias?

### Readings for Seminar:

- a) [Ono, H. & M. Zavodny. 2003. Gender and the Internet. \*Social Science Quarterly\* 84\(1\), 111-121.](#)
- b) [Hargittai, E. & Shaw, A. \(2015\). Mind the skills gap: the role of Internet know-how and gender in differentiated contributions to Wikipedia. \*Information, Communication & Society\*.](#)

⇒ **Mid-Term Review**

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### Feb. 10 Mid-Term Exam

## III. THE INTERNET AND SOCIABILITY

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**Feb. 22 Investigating the Digital Divide:** The role of race, SES, and commerce online.

**Seminar:** Issues affecting the digital divide: across and within countries.

### Readings for Seminar:

- a) [Haight M, Quan-Haase A and Corbett B. \(2014\) Revisiting the digital divide in Canada: The impact of demographic factors on access to the internet, level of online activity, and social networking site usage. \*Information, Communication & Society\* 17\(4\): 503-519.](#)
- b) [Hargittai, E. \(2002\). Second-level digital divide: Differences in people's online skills. \*First Monday\*, 7\(4\).](#)

### Assignment of Final Paper Topics.

Feb. 24

**Reading Week—No Class.**

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**March 3 Social Capital and the Internet:** How has the Internet affected social capital? Has social capital increased or decreased?

**Seminar:** Social capital and the net.

### Readings for Seminar:

- a) [Wellman, B., Quan-Haase, A., Witte, J., & Hampton, K. \(2001\). Does the Internet increase, decrease, or supplement social capital? Social networks, participation, and community commitment. \*American Behavioral Scientist\*, 45\(3\), 437-456.](#)
- b) [Barbosa Neves, B. \(2013\). Social capital and internet use: The irrelevant, the bad, and the good. \*Sociology Compass\*, 7\(8\), 599–611. doi: 10.1111/soc4.12059](#)

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**March 10 The Internet as a Form of Embodiment:** Research beyond text: voice, body, gestures, practices, culture...

**Seminar:** The body in virtual space: Engagement and trust

### Readings for Seminar:

- a) [Phillips, N. K. \(2011\). Academic Library Use of Facebook: Building Relationships with Students. \*The Journal of Academic Librarianship\*, 37\(6\), 512–522. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2011.07.008](#)
- b) [Ferreday, D. \(2003\) Unspeakable bodies: Erasure, embodiment and the pro-ana community. \*International Journal of Cultural Studies\*, 6\(3\), 277-295.](#)

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**March 17 Blogs/Twitter and Political Movements**

**Seminar:** The Arab Spring.

### Readings for Seminar:

- a) [Tufekci, Z. \(2013\). “Not this one”: Social movements, the attention economy, and microcelebrity networked activism. \*American Behavioral Scientist\*.](#)
- b) [Zhuo, X., Wellman, B., & Yu, J. \(2011\). Egypt: The first Internet revolt? \*Peace Magazine\*, 27\(3\), 6-10.](#)

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**March 24 The Internet as a Form of Sociability:** What is the nature of online friendship? Can we build trusting relationships online?

**Seminar:** Relationships on the Web.

### Readings for Seminar:

- a) [Lu, W. & Hampton, K. \(2016\). Beyond the Power of Networks: Differentiating Network Structure from Social Media Affordances for Perceived Social Support. \*New Media and Society\*.](#)
- b) [Russo, T, Zhang, J, & Fallon, M. \(2015\). Influence of perceived technology use of university students on academic and social performance in college.](#)

**Final Papers Due in Class.**

- 12 **March 31 Aging in a Digital Age:** How older adults cope with technology and obtain social support?

**Seminar:** Aging and the Internet.

**Readings for Seminar:**

- a) Quan-Haase, A., Guan Ying, M., & Wellman, B. (nd). How older adults in East York exchange social support on and offline. *Information, Communication & Society*. Uploaded to OWL, under Resources, Week 12.
- b) Schreurs, K., Quan-Haase, A., & Martin, K. (n.d.). The seniors digital literacy paradox: Aging, media discourse, and self-determination. *Canadian Journal of Communication*.

**Final Papers Graded Returned to Students.**

**IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

- 13 **April 7: Review Class.**  
**What did we cover in class?**  
**Are the effects of the Internet positive or negative?**

**Textbooks of Interest**

Rainie, L., & Wellman, B. (2012). *Networked: The new social operating system*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

**Additional Readings:**

- Baym, Nancy K, Yan Bing Zhang, and Mei-Chen Lin. 2004. Social interactions across media: interpersonal communication on the internet, telephone and face-to-face. *New Media and Society* 6(3):299-318.
- Boase, Jeffrey, and Barry Wellman. 2004. Personal relationships: On and off the internet. In *Handbook of personal relations*, eds. D. Perlman and A. L. Vangelisti, 18 pages. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Boneva, Bonka S., Amy Quinn, Robert E. Kraut, Sara Kiesler, and Irina Shklovski. 2006. "Teenage communication in the instant messaging era." Pp. 201-218 in *Computers, phones, and the Internet: Domesticating information technology*, edited by R. E. Kraut, N. Brynin, and S. Kiesler. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The rise of the network society*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Coser, Rose Laub. 1975b. "The complexity of roles as a seedbed of individual autonomy." Pp. 237-62 in *The idea of social structure: papers in honor of Robert K. Merton*, edited by L. A. Coser. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Cummings, Jonathon N., John B. Lee, and Robert Kraut. 2006. "Communication Technology and Friendship during the Transition from High School to College." Pp. 809-851 in *Computers, phones, and the Internet: Domesticating information technology*, edited by R. E. Kraut, N. Brynin, and S. Kiesler. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Erickson, Thomas and Wendy A. Kellogg. 2000. "Social translucence: An Approach to Designing Systems that Support Social Processes." *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction* 7:59-83.
- DiMaggio, Paul, Eszter Hargittai, W. R. Neuman, and J. P. Robinson. 2001. Social implications of the Internet. *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:307-336.

- Hampton, Keith, and B Wellman. 2003. Neighboring in Netville: How the Internet Supports Community and Social Capital in a Wired Suburb. *City & Community* 2(4):277-311.
- Herring, S. C., Scheidt, L. A., Bonus, S. & Wright, E. (2004a). Bridging the Gap: A Genre Analysis of Weblogs.
- Jacobs, Gloria. 2004. Complicating contexts: Issues of methodology in researching the language and literacies of instant messaging. *Reading Research Quarterly* 39(4):394-406. (accessed October-December 2004).
- Lewis, C., and B. Fabos. 2005. Instant messaging, literacies, and social identities. *Reading Research Quarterly* 40(4):470-501.
- Ling, Rich. 2002. *The mobile connection: the cell phone's impact on society*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Ling, Rich, and Per E Pedersen, eds. 2005. *Mobile Communications: Re-negotiation of the Social Sphere*. London: Springer Verlag.
- Lotherington, Heather, and Yejun Xu. 2004. How to chat in English and Chinese: Emerging digital language conventions. *ReCALL* 16(2):pp. 308-329.
- Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Regan Shade, Leslie. 2002. *Gender and Community in the Social Construction of the Internet*. NY: Peter Lang.
- Simmel, George. 1955. *Conflict/Translated by Kurt H. Wolff & The Web of Group Affiliations/Translated by Reinhard Bendix*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Wellman, B., Boase, J., & Chen, W. 2002. The networked nature of community: Online and offline. *IT & Society* 1(1):151-165.