Instructor:

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 8:30-9:30 pm.

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.

Prerequisite(s):

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

See: https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/timetables/mastertt/ttindex.cfm

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. The decision may not 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.

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.

Required Text(s):

See readings.

Method of Evaluation:

Requirement	*Date*	*Course Weight*
Participation	Throughout	20%
Seminar Facilitation	TBA	15%
Mid-term	October 23	30%
Final Paper	November 20	35%
Total		100%

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

Evaluation Breakdown:

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 discussions. Attendance is expected to all classes, but alone is not sufficient to obtain good marks in participation. Please also note that cell phone use and the use of electronic devices during class time for purposes unrelated to the course will also negatively affect your participation grade.

COURSE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS: With the exception of legitimate medical/personal excuses (documentation required to be submitted) students are expected to attend at least 75% of the class meetings for this course. A passing grade in the course cannot be obtained without meeting this attendance requirement.

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.

Mid-Term

Because this is a 'F/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.

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.

How to Contact Me:

Please email me at aquan@uwo.ca if you need to get ahold of me.

How to get important information:

Please visit Western's OWL site for all important information regarding this course. If you can't find the information you are looking forward, please email me.

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment 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 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. The final paper is submitted via OWL and a hard copy is also provided to the instructor at the beginning of class.

A Note on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea 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 scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for 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).

Policies on Examinations

Make-up exams will be granted with approved documentation only.

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html.

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 519 661-2111 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.

Scholastic Offences

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.

Mental Health

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

Topics to be covered:

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   **Sept. 11 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.

*Assignment of Class Facilitation Topics.

2   **Sept. 18 Lecture: Cyberbullying today: All the faces and consequences of cyberbullying**

Seminar: How does cyberbullying affect victims? What motivates people to engage in cyberbullying?

Readings for Seminar:

a) Deschamps, R., & McNutt, K. (2016). Cyberbullying: What's the problem? *Canadian Public Administration, 59*(1), 45–71.
b) Marwick, A., & Boyd, D. (2014). 'It's just drama': Teen perspectives on conflict and aggression in a networked era. *Journal of Youth Studies, 17*(9), 1187–1204.

II. THE INTERNET, ITS USES AND LABOUR

3   **Sept. 25 Uses and Gratifications of Social Media**

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

Readings for Seminar:

a) Phua, J., Jin, S. V., & Kim, J. J. (2017). Uses and gratifications of social networking sites for bridging and bonding social capital: A comparison of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. *Computers in Human Behavior, 72*, 115-122.

b) Billings, A. C., Broussard, R. M., Xu, Q., & Xu, M. (2018). Untangling International Sport Social Media Use: Contrasting US and Chinese Uses and Gratifications Across Four Platforms. *Communication & Sport*, 2167479518790014.

4 **Oct. 2 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) Bucher, E., Fieseler, C., Lutz, C., & Newlands, G. (2018, July). Managing Emotional Labor in the Sharing Economy. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2018, No. 1, p. 16933). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.
b) Fuchs, C. (2018). Authoritarian capitalism, authoritarian movements and authoritarian communication. *Media, Culture & Society*, *40*(5), 779-791.

5 **Oct. 9 NO CLASSES FALL READING WEEK**

6 **Oct. 16 Investigating the Digital Divide:** The role of race/ethnicity, SES, and commerce online.

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

Readings for Seminar:

a) Haight, M., Quan-Haase, A. & 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. (2018). Potential Biases in Big Data: Omitted Voices on Social Media. *Social Science Computer Review*, 0894439318788322.

⇨ **Mid-Term Review**

7 **Oct. 23 Mid-Term Exam**

III. THE INTERNET AND SOCIABILITY

8   **October 30 Social Capital, social isolation, 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) Primack, B. A., Shensa, A., Sidani, J. E., Whaite, E. O., yi Lin, L., Rosen, D., ... & Miller, E. (2017). Social media use and perceived social isolation among young adults in the US. *American journal of preventive medicine*, *53*(1), 1-8.
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

Assignment of Final Paper Topics.

9   **Nov. 6 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) Ging, D., & Garvey, S. (2018). 'Written in these scars are the stories I can't explain': A content analysis of pro-ana and thinspiration image sharing on Instagram. *New Media & Society*, *20*(3), 1181-1200.
b) Tiggemann, M., & Zaccardo, M. (2018). 'Strong is the new skinny': A content analysis of# fitspiration images on Instagram. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *23*(8), 1003-1011.

10   **Nov. 13 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) Sumiala, J., & Korpiola, L. (2017). Mediated Muslim martyrdom: Rethinking digital solidarity in the "Arab Spring". *New Media & Society*, *19*(1), 52-66.

| 11 | **Nov. 20 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) Quan-Haase, A., Nevin, A., & Lukacs, V. (forthcoming). Break-ups on Facebook: A typology of coping strategies. In L. Robinson, J. Schultz, J., & B. Wellman (Eds.) Emerald Studies in Media and Communications.

⇨ **Final Papers Due in Class.**

| 12 | **Nov. 27 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., Mo, G. Y., & Wellman, B. (2017). Connected seniors: how older adults in East York exchange social support online and offline. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(7), 967-983.
b) Quan-Haase, A., Williams, C., Kicevski, M., Elueze, I., & Wellman, B. (2018). Dividing the Grey Divide: Deconstructing Myths About Older Adults' Online Activities, Skills, and Attitudes. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 0002764218777572.

Final Papers Graded Returned to Students.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

| 13 | **Dec. 4: Review Class.** |

What did we cover in class?

Are the effects of the Internet positive or negative?