



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 3301G-001
The Internet & Society
Winter 2022
Tuesdays from 9:30am-12:30pm in SSC 2020

Instructor: Molly-Gloria Harper

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Office Hours: By Appointment (In-person and via Zoom)
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Course Description:

With the Internet becoming ubiquitous in many parts of the world, connecting individuals near and far, especially in the era of COVID-19, digital media (i.e., mobile phones, laptops, tablets) and social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat) have become normalized and are an integral part of many people's lives. Knowing this, this course has three primary objectives: (1) Discuss and assess the intersection of the digital and the social, (2) Become familiar with different theoretical approaches to examining the effects of the Internet on society, (3) Learn about methodological approaches scholar employ to study the effects of the Internet on society, and (4) Learn to critically examine the role of the Internet in society. Discussions will focus on investigating various platforms and the social implications they have on our understanding of social phenomenon including friendship, work, privacy, culture, activism, and identity.

This course is designed to enhance your critical thinking skills by applying sociological and digital concepts, theories, approaches, and ideas to a range of facets of life (both online and offline). The materials (lessons, videos, readings, films) explored in this course will help enable you to critically examine a diverse range of topics, issues, and debates relating to socio-digital and how the Internet impacts our lives and the lives of the others.

***Prerequisite(s):** Enrollment in a third- or fourth-year sociology or criminology honours specialization or honours double major.*

***Antirequisite(s):** None.*

Learning Outcomes:

1. Critically examine the role of the Internet on society, particularly identifying both benefits and challenges associated with the Internet.
2. Become familiar with different theoretical approaches and their application for examining the effects of the Internet on society.
3. Begin to understand methodological challenges inherent to studies of the socio-digital.
4. Apply key concepts, ideas, and theoretical approaches to the study of the Internet and social life.

Required text(s):

None. All required course readings are available electronically through Western Libraries. If not available via Western Libraries, readings will be posted on OWL in the Resources folder. Any additional weekly suggested readings and materials will also be posted on OWL, also in the Resources folder.

Students are expected to do the weekly readings as these will be the basis for class discussions, assignments, and evaluations. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to engage with any additional/suggested material as these will help to contextualize class discussions and provide further examples.

Method of Evaluation/Evaluation Breakdown:

<i>Description</i>	<i>Weight</i>
In-class participation	15%
Mid-term	35%
Paper proposal	10%
Final paper	40%
TOTAL	100%

Course Attendance Requirement:

Unless a student has a legitimate medial/personal excuse (documentation must be submitted), there is an expectation that students attend at least 75% of the class meetings for this course. A passing grade cannot be obtained without meeting this requirement.

How to contact me:

The best way to contact me is via email (mharpe22@uwo.ca). Please put the course code as your subject line. From Monday to Friday, I will usually respond within 24 hours. Emails received over the weekend will be promptly responded to the following Monday. Alternatively, students can also email me to arrange a time to meet either in-person, before or after class, or via Zoom.

How to Get Important Information:

Visit the course OWL site, see the course outline, and key dates and class materials. It is strongly encouraged for students to check the course OWL site regularly to properly engage with course material, to not miss any important announcements, and to receive any course-related updates.

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment Deadlines:

All assignments MUST be submitted via OWL under the assignments tab by the deadline unless a formal extension or accommodation has been granted. Assignments will not be accepted via email unless special accommodations have been made. Late reflection assignments will not be accepted. Students should plan accordingly and in advance which weeks they want to submit their reflections. Late final paper assignments are subject to a grade reduction of 5% per day.

If you miss the due date because of illness or for any other unforeseen circumstance, you must provide notification of and documentation to your Academic Counsellor within 48 hours. Please see the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Please note that computer problems are not an excused circumstance. You are expected to follow good computer practices and back up your work regularly.

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 for Examinations:

Electronic devices will not be allowed during tests and examinations. All tests must be completed in the time allotted for doing so. If you are absent because of illness or for any other unforeseen circumstance, you must provide notification of and documentation to your Academic Counsellor within 48 hours. If a student has been granted accommodation to write up a make-up test, the date/time of the make-up are non-negotiable and cannot be rescheduled. If a make-up is missed, students will need to write the make-up the following year (see Western Senate regulations).

Policy of digital devices 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. Participation marks will be negatively affected if a student is texting in class, checking content unrelated to class material, or on social media during class time.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at http://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: counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a Self-Reported Absence (SRA) form online provided that the absence is 48 hours or less and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy are met. Two important exceptions to this rule: SRAs will NOT be allowed for final examinations or assessments worth more than 30% of a given course. Students whose absences are expected to last longer than 48 hours, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds) to your Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances. www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf

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/academics/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: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Technical Support:

If you are experiencing problems with OWL, please contact the WTS Help Desk at (519) 661-3800. For hours and additional contact information please visit www.uwo.ca/wts/helpdesk/. Troubleshooting and help information is available for students: <https://owlhelp.uwo.ca/>.

Mental Health and Student Wellness:

Western University is committed to a thriving campus. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and wellbeing. Additionally, the following link

provides available resources to support students on and off campus: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>. Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western (www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Course Schedule

Week	Topics	Details
Week 1 January 4 th	Introduction	Course overview – introduction to the course, course material, course assignments, and course expectations Lecture: Introducing the Internet’s impact on society: Digital connection in the COVID-19 era
Week 2 January 11 th	Sociodigital Theories	Lecture: A glimpse into sociodigital theories: Uses & Gratifications Theory & Affordance Theory
Week 3 January 18 th	The Digital Divide	Lecture: Investigating the digital divide within and across countries: Digital inequalities, barriers to access, and other issues affecting the digital divide (i.e., age, race/ethnicity, gender, SES)
Week 4 January 25 th	Internet, Sociability, & Social Networks	Lecture: Online social networks: Can we build trusting relationships online?
Week 5 February 1 st	Digital Work	Lecture: Labour in the digital era: How digital media has impacted work and labour
Week 6 February 8 th	Cyberbullying	Lecture: Bullying in the 21 st century: Understanding and responding to cyberbullying
Week 7 February 15 th	Mid-term	<i>Mid-term examination during class time</i>
Week 8 February 22 nd		Reading Break NO CLASS
Week 9 March 1 st	Online Identity & Digital Self-Presentation	Lecture: The online self: Strategies for digital self-presentation and managing context collapse

Week	Topics	Details
Week 10 March 8 th	Online Deviance, Crime, & Criminality	Lecture: Using the Internet for evil: Online forms of deviance and criminality and the challenges of digital evidence
Week 11 March 15 th	Digital Activism or Slacktivism?	Lecture: Taking a stand on social media: Social/political movements (i.e., #BLM, #MeToo, #MMIW)
Week 12 March 22 nd	Cancel Culture: Power of the Internet	Lecture: You're cancelled: The rise in cancel culture via the Internet
Week 13 March 29 th	What is real and what is fake online?	Lecture: Fake news: Navigating an influx of information online, dealing with misinformation, and knowing what sources are reliable