

INLS 490.151 Online Social Networks
Spring 2009

Instructor

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Meeting Place and Time

Monday, 6:00PM – 8:30PM, Murphey Hall 304

Class Website

http://ibiblio.org/fred/inls_490/
Authentication credentials: *Username:* inls490, *Password:* inls490

Facebook Group

The class Facebook group is “INLS 490 Spring 2009”, you may either search for it or browse directly via this URL: <http://is.gd/fzXy>. If you do not wish to join the Facebook group, please email me your weekly question.

Office Hours

Monday, 12:00PM – 1:00PM, SILS Library or The Public Domain. Other times by appointment.

Course Description

This course is a primer on the study of online social networks. We will explore the theory, methods and findings of a growing literature on the topic. We will also explore applications and use cases, particularly in the context of education and library/information services. While online social networks are but a subset of social software, this course should provide you a strong set of fundamentals for exploring the multiple facets of our pervasive online sociality.

What is an online social network? At the artifactual level, we can employ something like boyd and Ellison’s (2007) definition:

We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

With this definition, we can easily imagine a site like Facebook or MySpace, or perhaps even Twitter or FriendFeed as a social network. Another way of looking at online social networks might be as a social phenomena. Fred Turner (2006) and Howard Rheingold (1993) discuss online social networks as just that – our social networks, online. Pervasive adoption of computing devices combined with mass connectivity (Horrihan, 2008) has introduced new forms of rich, mediated interaction. We can maintain contact with more people, irrespective of geographical distance, than at any time prior. At the same time, we are faced with emergent challenges such as protecting our privacy, presenting a consistent identity, and tending to an ever-expanding network of relationships.

This course will provide a lens for exploring these challenges and opportunities. To do so, we will cross a number of disciplines: Sociology, Communications, Psychology, Library and Information Science are examples. We will cross this ground with the goal of building a breadth of knowledge on the topic. I find that this method provides the familiarity necessary for engaging in future research of online social networks or social software – whether it be in the academy, on the job, or for your start-up (there have been a few!).

Textbook

There is no required text for INLS 490. As we will be reading primary research, you may wish to have a resource for making sense of some of the statistics. Cathy Zimmer of UNC's Odum Institute recommends Vogt's (2005) *Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology*. I've looked through this volume and was very impressed with Vogt's ability to make sense of complex topics.

- Vogt, W. Paul (2005). *Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology: A Nontechnical Guide for the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

You may also find that a social science research methods text is a useful reference when analyzing study design.

Readings

We will read a combination of primary research papers and chapters, overview studies, and popular press articles. These readings are organized by week in the syllabus, and are available online via the course website. If you have any trouble downloading the files, please let me know as soon as possible.

Format

This class will employ a mixture of lecture and seminar formats. In the first half of class, I will lead a semi-structured discussion based on the reading and contributed questions. Active participation and discussion is expected. In the second half of the class, students will deliver topical presentations and help lead the class discussion.

Expectations

First and foremost, participation and active discussion are essential to the success of this class. To this extent, **I expect you to come to every class** prepared and ready to think critically about the issues presented. Be bold, be imaginative, find ways to relate what we're studying to your life, don't be afraid to take and *defend* your opinions. The study of online social networks is an emergent field; there are few "right" or "wrong" answers. It is likely that these technologies will continue to impact your social, professional and academic life for quite some time – so come ready to explore, share and question.

In addition to active participation in class, there are a number of assignments you will be expected to complete this semester. First, you will be expected to contribute a question, observation or enhancement to our online forum each week. Second, you will be expected to produce a topical issues presentation once this semester, as well as act as a discussion facilitator on your presentation day. Third, you will be asked to complete a term project; as part of this term project you will be expected to submit a proposal, outline and bibliography. Further instructions on your assignments follow. All assignments should be emailed to the teacher in PDF, RTF and Word .doc format (.docx will be returned for revision).

Finally, please note that this course is being taught at the graduate level. There is significant reading each week, but I hope you'll find it enjoyable and thought-provoking. Additionally, I reserve the right to amend this syllabus if I see a need to do so.

Assignment: Class Questions

By 2PM on the Monday of each week, you will be expected to pose a question, observation or enhancement to our online discussion board, located in our Facebook group. This Q, O, or E should arise from our reading, and generally be one or two paragraphs long (if you're especially inspired, feel free to go longer). Why not just a question? I'd like for the fora to be conversational, so if someone asks a question that you can build on, or draw on your personal experience to enhance, feel free.

Each week, I will start a new thread (the thread name will correspond to the upcoming week number), and I ask that you try to keep your discussions inside the thread if possible. However, feel free to contribute links, photos, videos and wall postings to our group, have fun with it.

Assignment: Topical Issues Presentation and Discussion Facilitation

You will be expected to deliver a topical issues presentation once during the semester. Drawing on our reading for the week, you will present a relevant current issue in the online social networks space. I encourage you to make your presentation not only relevant to the reading, but your interests at large. Presentations should be no more than 15 minutes in length, and you may use Powerpoint. Examples of topical presentations may be: *Presenting a new social network site, exploring a feature shift by an online social network, analysis of a technology delivered by a social network site*. Other examples may include presentations on *how social networks integrate in your area of practice, how communities of practice are utilizing social networks, or a current news issue about social networks*. I encourage you to be creative and find interesting or novel connections between your topical presentation and the class material.

On the day you deliver your topical issues presentation, you will also be expected be a facilitator of discussion in the second half of the class. Prepare a few questions about the material to get the discussion rolling, but again feel free to be creative in your facilitation.

Assignment: Term Project, Proposal and Bibliography

The term project will be a substantive original piece of research, literature or a topical project in the area (research proposals acceptable as well). I encourage you to develop a project that is relevant to your area of interest; to this extent I am quite flexible in the types of projects I'll approve. As social networks pose interesting questions to industry, the academy and society at large, there are many opportunities for you to develop a project that is relevant to your interests.

Twice during the semester you will be asked to deliver a short description of your project idea to the class. Additionally, you will be required to turn in a project proposal and bibliography/outline. The project proposal should be a 2-page description of your project; you will be expected to present your idea, rationale and why the project is relevant to your interests.

For the bibliography/outline, you will be required to turn in two things. The first is a list of at least 8 source citations (APA or whatever style your field uses) you plan to use in your project. With the citations, include a paragraph-long original abstract of the work. Note, you should not be copying the paper's abstracts, but creating your own. Second is a detailed outline of the paper. Your outline should be an in-depth exploration of your project's roadmap; a simple bullet list is not sufficient.

As this project counts for 1/2 of the overall grade, significant effort is expected. The final project should be professional, written in academic tone and style, and should not include any typographic errors. The instructor is flexible in terms of fitting the project to the student's discipline or interests. I would suggest that you talk to me early and often about your project; if you keep me in the loop, I'm happy to provide feedback, guidance and connections. Group work (max group size: 2) is allowed, though group projects must reflect the substantive work of all parties.

Project presentations will occur on the last day of class, April 27. On this day you will be expected to deliver a 5-7 minute presentation or demonstration of your term project. Term project writeups will be due at 5PM on Friday, May 1. All assignments should be emailed to the teacher in PDF, RTF and Word .doc format (.docx will be returned for revision).

Grading Policy

Participation and Attendance: 20%

Topical Issues Presentation: 10%

Weekly Questions, Comments or Enhancements: 10%

Term Project Proposal/Bibliography/Outline: 10%

Term Project: 50%

Statement on Academic Integrity

Students are expected to conform to the Honor Code in all academic manners. For more information about the Honor Code, please visit the following URL: <http://honor.unc.edu/honor/>.

References

- Boyd, D. and Ellison, N. B. (2007). *Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship*. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1).
- Horrigan, J. B. (July 2, 2008). *Home Broadband Adoption 2008*. Pew Internet and American Life Project.
- Rheingold, H. (1993). *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Turner, F. (2006). *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*. Chicago, Illinois: University Of Chicago Press.

Course Schedule

1/12 - Week 1: Introductions and Course Overview

Discussion of syllabus and assignments, introductions.

1/19 - No Class

Martin Luther King Holiday.

1/26 - Week 2: Surveying the Field of Online Social Networks

Discussion of basic concepts, overview of the field, networks exercise.

Required

- boyd, danah. (2008). Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life. In *Youth, Identity and Digital Media*. Edited by David Buckingham. MacArthur Foundation on Digital Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Pages 119-142.
- boyd, danah and Nicole Ellison. (2007). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13 (1).

Recommended

- Lenhart, A. and Madden, M. (2007). Teens, Privacy & Online Social Networks. *Pew Internet and American Life Project Research Report*.
- Lenhart, A, Madden, M., Macgill, A. and Smith, A. (2007). Teens and Social Media. *Pew Internet and American Life Project Research Report*.

2/2 - Week 3: Approaches to Studying Online Social Networks

Exploring the application of theory and methodology in OSN research.

Required

- Aday, L. A. (1996). Matching the Survey Design to Survey Objectives. In *Designing and Conducting Health Surveys: A Comprehensive Guide* (pp. 25-43). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., and Lampe, C. (2007). The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communications*, 12(4).
- Mazer, J. P., Murphy, R. E., and Simonds, C. J. (2007). I'll See You On "Facebook": The Effects of Computer-Mediated Teacher Self-Disclosure on Student Motivation, Affective Learning, and Classroom Climate. *Communication Education*, 56(1), 1-17.

2/9 - Week 4: Controversies and Dilemmas

Analyzing popular opinion regarding use of Online Social Networks.

Required

- Nussbaum, E. (2007). Say Everything. *New York Magazine* (12 February), 24-29, 102-103.
- Collins, L. (2008). Friend Game. *New Yorker*, 83(44), 34 - 41.
- Levy, S. (2007). Facebook Grows Up. *Newsweek* (August 20), 40-46.
- Martin, M. (September 28, 2008). Old People Facebook Disasters. *Salon Magazine*. Retrieved November 19, 2008 from http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2008/09/29/old_people/index.html.

Recommended

- Palfrey, J. and et. al. (December 31, 2008). Enhancing Child Safety and Online Technologies. Internet Safety Task Force. Retrieved January 10, 2009 from <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/pubrelease/isttf/>.
- Ito, M. et. al. (2008). Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Report. John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

2/16 - Week 5: Computer-Mediated Communication

Learning about CMC, group dynamics, and online identity formation

* *Term Project Proposal Due*

Required

- Units 3-6 (Pgs. 35-79) in Thurlow, C., Lengel, L., and Tomic, A. (2004). *Computer Mediated Communication: Social Interaction and the Internet*. London: SAGE Publications.

Recommended

- Walther, J. B., Van Der Heide, B., Kim, S., Westerman, D., and Tong, S. T. (2008). The Role of Friends' Appearance and Behavior on Evaluations of Individuals on Facebook: Are We Known by the Company We Keep? *Human Communication Research*, 34(1), 28-49.
- Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., and Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(5), 1816-1836.

2/23 - Week 6: Online Social Networks and Information Services

Using OSN in the library and information services

Required

- Connell, R. S. (2008). Academic Libraries, Facebook and MySpace, and Student Outreach: A Survey of Student Opinion. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 9(1), 25-36.
- Mack, D., Head, A., Roberts, B., and Rimland, E. (2007). Reaching Students with Facebook: Data and Best Practices. *Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship*, 8(2).
- Miller, S. E. and Jensen, L. A. (2007). Connecting and Communicating with Students on Facebook. *Computers in Libraries*, 27(8), 18-22.
- Charnigo, L. and Barnett-Ellis, P. (2007). Checking Out Facebook. com: The impact of a digital trend on academic libraries. *Information Technology and Libraries*, 26(1), 23-34.

Recommended

- DeRosa, C., Cantrell, J., Havens, A., Hawk, J., and Jenkins, L. (September 11, 2007). Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World. OCLC. Retrieved March 9, 2008 from <http://www.oclc.org/reports/sharing/default.htm>.

3/2 - Week 7: Identity and Privacy

Identity, privacy and social software.

Required

- Lewis, K., Kaufman, J., and Christakis, N. (2008). The Taste for Privacy: An Analysis of College Student Privacy Settings in an Online Social Network. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14(1), 79-100.
- Tufekci, Z. (2008). Can You See Me Now? Audience and Disclosure Regulation in Online Social Network Sites. *Bulletin of Science Technology and Society*, 28(1), 20-36.
- Palen, L. and Dourish, P. (2003). Unpacking "privacy" for a networked world. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems*, New York, NY, USA, 2003 (pp. 129-136).

Recommended

- Fogel, J. and Nehmad, E. (2008). Internet social network communities: Risk taking, trust, and privacy concerns. *Computers in Human Behavior*, In Press.
- Hinduja, S. and Patchin, J. W. (2008). Personal information of adolescents on the Internet: A quantitative content analysis of MySpace. *Journal of Adolescence*, 31(1), 125-146.
- Marwick, A. E. (2008). To catch a predator? The MySpace moral panic. *First Monday*, 13(6).
- Livingstone, S. (2008). Taking risky opportunities in youthful content creation: teenagers' use of social networking sites for intimacy, privacy and self-expression. *New Media & Society*, 10(3), 393--411.
- Rau, P. P., Gao, Q., and Ding, Y. (2008). Relationship between the level of intimacy and lurking in online social network services. *Computers in Human Behavior*, In Press.
- Andrejevic, M. (2005). The work of watching one another: Lateral surveillance, risk, and governance. *Surveillance and Society*, 2(4), 479-497.
- Albrechtslund, A. (2008). Online Social Networking as Participatory Surveillance. *First Monday*, 13(3).
- Dourish, P. and Anderson, K. (2006). *Collective Information Practice: Exploring Privacy and Security as Social and Cultural Phenomena*. *Human-Computer Interaction*, 21(3), 319--342

3/9 - No Class

Spring Break.

3/16 - Week 8: Business Aspects of Online Social Networks

Or, why Mark Zuckerberg and Tom fly in Learjets.

Required

- Engstrom, J. (2005). Why some social network services work and others don't – Or: the case for object-centric sociality. http://www.zengestrom.com/blog/2005/04/why_some_social.html.
- Engstrom, J. (2007) Social Objects (Video). <http://is.gd/gbwE>
- Gabbay, N. (2006). Facebook Case Study: Offline behavior drives online usage. <http://www.startup-review.com/blog/facebook-case-study-offline-behavior-drives-online-usage.php>
- Stone, B. (2007, October 3). *In Facebook, Investing in a Theory*. *New York Times*.

Recommended

- Li, Charlene. (2007). Social Technographics. Forrester Research.
- Fabernovel Consulting. (2007). Social Network Websites: Best practices from leading services.
- Langenberg, T. and Schellong, A. (2007). ASW.COM – Monetizing Connectivity? John F. Kennedy School of Government, PNG07-004.
- Ambrozek, J. and Cothrel, J. (2004). Online Communities in Business: Past progress, future directions.

3/23 - Week 9: Social Networks and Social Capital

Social networks as a resource for social capital.

Required

- Wellman, B. (2001). Physical Place and Cyberplace: The Rise of Personalized Networking. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 25(2).
- Senior, J. (2008). Alone Together. *New York Magazine* (23 November).

Recommended

- Pfeil, U., Arjan, R., and Zaphiris, P. (2008). Age differences in online social networking - A study of user profiles and the social capital divide among teenagers and older users in MySpace. *Computers in Human Behavior*, In Press.
- Postill, J. (2008). Localizing the internet beyond communities and networks. *New Media Society*, 10(3), 413-431.
- Gilbert, E., Karahalios, K., and Sandvig, C. (2008). The network in the garden: an empirical analysis of social media in rural life. In *Proceedings of the twenty-sixth annual SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing*, Florence, Italy, 2008 (pp. 1603-1612).
- Ling, R. (2008). Chapter 9 and 10 in *New Tech, New Ties: How Mobile Communication Is Reshaping Social Cohesion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

3/30 - Week 10: Ubiquitous and Mobile Social Networks

Exploring the fully-connected life.

Required

- Thompson, C. (September 7, 2008). I'm So Totally, Digitally Close to You. *New York Times*. Note: Read Article and Author Responses.
- Ling, R. and Yttri, B. (2006) Control, Emancipation and Status. In *Computers, Phones and the Internet: Domesticating Information Technology*, edited by R. Kruat and M. Brynin and S. Kiesler. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Stald, G. (2007). Mobile Identity: Youth, Identity, and Mobile Communication Media. In Buckingham, D. (Ed.), *The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning* (pp. 143-164). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Recommended

- Lugano, G. (2008). Mobile social networking in theory and practice. *First Monday*, 13(11).
- Turkle, S. (2008). Always-on/Always-on-you: The Tethered Self. In *Handbook of Mobile Communications and Social Change*, edited by James Katz. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Mobile Life. (2006). The Mobile Life Youth Report.

4/6 - Week 11: Education and Online Social Networks

Social networks and implications for education.

* Term Project Bibliography/Outline Due

Required

- Yardi, S. (2007). Whispers in the Classroom. In McPherson, T. (Ed.), *The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning* (pp. 143-164). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Goldman, S., Booker, A., and McDermott, M. (2007). Mixing the Digital, Social, and Cultural: Learning, Identity, and Agency in Youth Participation. In Buckingham, D. (Ed.), *The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning* (pp. 185-206). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Recommended

- Gonick, L. (January 29, 2008). The Horizon Report. The New Media Consortium. Retrieved March 9, 2008 from <http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2008-Horizon-Report.pdf>.
- Stutzman, F. (Under Review). Integrating Web 2.0 in the Instructional Process.
- Creating & Connecting: Research and Guidelines on Online Social and Educational Networking. 2007, National School Boards Association.

4/13 - Week 12: Transitional Populations and OSN

Exploring uses of social technology by transitional populations.

Required

- Cummings, J. N., Lee, J. B., and Kraut, R. (2006). Communication technology and friendship during the transition from high school to college. In Kraut, R., Brynin, M., and Kiesler, S. (Eds.), *Computers, Phones, and the Internet: Domesticating Information Technology* (pp. 265-278). USA: Oxford University Press.
- Chen, Y. and Katz, J. E. (2009). Extending family to school life: College students' use of the mobile phone. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, In Press.

Recommended

- Salaway, G., Caruso, J. B., and Nelson, M. R. (2007). The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology. EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research.
- Salaway, G., Caruso, J. B., and Nelson, M. R. (2008). The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology. EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research.

4/20 - Week 13: Floater Week

TBD

4/27 - Week 14: Final Projects

Final presentations. All projects due at 5PM on May 1.