CMGT 530: Social Dynamics of Communication Technologies
Spring 2015

6:30-9:20 pm Thursdays, ANN 309
Professor Dmitri Williams
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Office hours: Preceding class (5:00 – 6:00 pm) or alternate times, by appointment
Office: ANN 414k

Books
1) Lessig, L. (2006). Code, Version 2.0. The atoms can be purchased lots of places, but the bits are available via Creative Commons license as a free pdf at http://codev2.cc/
6) Ph.D. students only should also buy:

Media: You are expected to read WIRED monthly. You need to buy it as it comes out, or (my suggestion) get a year subscription.

Readings: Available via the Blackboard site, and noted in the weekly rundown below. PhD students taking the course for PhD-level credit will have extra reading noted.

Assignments & Grading
1) You will write a one-page reaction paper two times during the term. You choose the topic and the timing, but only one per week, i.e. not both at the very end. Someone always asks what one page is, so it is exactly this: 12 pt Times font, double spaced, 1” margin. No more, no less, no other font, no other spacing. 10%.
2) A term paper project will consist of a 15-20 page paper analyzing an issue from the class. Tailor it to your own interests, and to a practical real-world project if you like. Papers based on some kind of empirical data—whether statistical or qualitative—are highly encouraged. Ph.D students will be expected to write a paper that could be submitted to a conference or a journal, and so may go up to 30 pages if needed. Submit an IRB application early if needed! 40%
3) Presentations. The last two class sessions (including the finals slot) are comprised of presentations of your term project. You will be graded on your content, the presentation itself, and your constructive critique of your classmate’s projects. For Ph.D. students, this is a trial run for a conference presentation. 10%.
4) Group projects (3).
   (1) Find an online community and evaluate it using the tools you’ve learned in class. Present your community to the class. 10%
   (2) You will be assigned in a group to master a chapter from Cialdini and asked to both present the basics to the class as well as apply it to an online or new communication technology. 10%
   (3) Propose a mobile or location-aware community. Pitch the class as if you were seeking funding. Include the problem or opportunity, explain the proposed technology/product/service/idea, briefly cover the market potential, and state the outlines of a business plan. 10%

5) Participation. *Informed participation in class matters more than in a typical course, i.e. I will give a wide variance.* 10%.

Use professional-grade English, whether writing a paper or an email.

**Ethics:** All students are subject to the University’s Academic Integrity Code as detailed at www.usc.edu/scampus. More can be found at http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/

If you cheat, steal, plagiarize, etc. from each other or some other source (on purpose or on accident), bad things will happen to you. Cite your sources and do original work, and all will be well. Similarly, treat each other and me with respect.

**Disabilities Policy:** Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.
Class 1, January 15: Intro, foundations of communities, and basic communication theory. Dead German philosophers.

Readings
1) Tönnies, F. On Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (available online at http://media.pfeiffer.edu/ridener/courses/GEMEIN.HTML or, google gemeinschaft and it’ll pop up).

Topics
1) What is a community?
2) Types of community: differences, classifications, etc.
3) The question of proximity (Imagined communities)
4) Functions of communities
5) Things that shape community.
6) Revisit: Wenger’s Communities of Practice (covered in Ben Lee’s class)
7) Basic communication theories:
   • Effects theory: direct vs. resistant
   • Uses & gratifications
   • Cultivation
   • Priming, framing, agenda-setting
   • Neomarxism, Gramsci, etc.

Class 2, Thursday, January 22: Histories of media and social networks.

Readings
1) Czitrom, D. Media and the American Mind, Ch. 1.
2) Rogers, E. Diffusion of Innovations, Ch. 1.
3) Negroponte, N. Being Digital, Ch. 1 and 6.

Ph.D. students: above, but read Negroponte, Ch. 1-11.

Topics
1) Transportation vs. communication
2) Diffusion of technologies
3) Utopian/Dystopian frameworks
4) Case studies of media and social networks:
   a) Writing
   b) Telegraph
   c) Telephone (Fischer)/“Terrors of the Telephone” picture
5) The Medium is the Message/The Global Village
6) Bits are bits (Ch. 1)
7) Delivering bits (Ch. 6)
8) Internet history

Class 3, Thursday, January 29: Theories of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)
Readings
2) Lessig, L. Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace, Version 2.0, Ch. 1-3

Ph.D. students: above, plus:

Topics
1) CMC basics
2) Code is law
3) Four puzzles and themes

Class 4, Thursday, February 5.
Theories of Social Impact
Readings
1) Putnam, R. Bowling Alone. Ch. 13: Technology and Mass Media
2) Galston, W. Does the Internet Strengthen Community?
3) Oldenburg, R. The Great, Good Place. Ch. 2: The Character of Third Places.

Ph.D. students:

Topics
1) Social Capital: bridging and bonding
2) SocioTechnical Capital
3) Social Capital and displacement
4) Entry and Exit Costs
5) Tie strength, bridging and bonding online vs. offline
6) Third places
7) Best vs. Worst thing ever: Halloween, framing, PR, dealing with the press
8) The changing, empowered audience, or dupes?

Class 5, Thursday, February 12.
Social Networks
Readings

Ph.D. students: whole book

Topics
1) Networks
2) Centrality, density, depth, breadth
3) Knowledge transfer and expertise

Class 6, Thursday, February 19
Evaluating Online Communities
Group project #1: Evaluating a community
Readings
1) Kim, pages 1-18 (purpose), 27-50 (places) & 233-242 (events)

Topics
1) Purpose
2) Activities: Places & events
3) Trusting a site
4) Evaluating current sites: bring examples to class
5) Planning a good term paper
Note: Have a 1-paragraph paper idea for next class. Will you need IRB clearance?

Class 7, Thursday, February 26
Hand-in 1-paragraph paper ideas
Identifiers/Identity, Reputation Systems, Roles
Readings
1) Kim, Ch. 4, Roles
2) Turkle, S. (1997). Life on the Screen. Ch. 8
3) Resnick et al, Reputation Systems
4) Optional for master’s students, required for Ph.D. students: Donath, Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community http://smg.media.mit.edu/people/Judith/Identity/IdentityDeception.html
5) Optional for master’s students, required for Ph.D. students: Video of a panel of execs at social networking sites http://fora.tv/fora/showthread.php?t=496

Topics
1) On the Internet, no one knows you’re a dog
2) Reputational systems/trust, eBay, MySimon & e-commerce
3) Identity/deception
4) Kim on roles
5) Identity and Authentication
**Class 8, Thursday, March 5**
No class on this date. This is the substitute for the extra class at the end that allows for presentations. This also gives you an extra week to think about your term paper. Note that there is a 1-page outline due after Spring Break.

**Class 9, Thursday, March 12**
**A) Identity, continued**
**B) Play nice with the other kids: Norms and Etiquette**

*Readings*
1) Kim, Ch. 6, Etiquette.
2) Meyrowitz, J. *No Sense of Place*. Ch. 3 & 4
5) Optional: PhD students, Meyrowitz’s book is worth owning and reading. Seminal stuff.

*Topics*
1) Identity and mediation of front and back stage
2) Roles, norms, etiquette
3) Deception
4) Dating, sexuality (lavalife.com, amihotornot.com, jdate, match.com)

**SPRING BREAK IS MARCH 16-21**

**Class 10, Thursday, March 26**
*Group project #2: Presenting Cialdini in action*
*Hand in 1-page term paper outline*

*Persuasion*

*Readings*
*Ph.D. Students*: whole book.

*Topics*
1) Persuasion, consistency, liking, social proof, reciprocity
2) Pitch demo
Class 11, Thursday, April 2
Location, mobility, mobilization
Group project #3 (in-class): Pitch a mobile or location-based/aware community
Readings

Topics
1) Local vs. global
2) Hyperlocalism
3) Mobilization
4) Mobile phones/apps
5) If needed: paper format expectations/idea workshop

Class 12, Thursday, April 9
Term paper workshop
Preparation: Bring your feedback and questions. We will workshop a handful of student papers, starting with their hypotheses, going to the methods, the results, and what it all means.

Class 13, Thursday, April 16
Online culture: Masses, niches, freaks, and geeks, oh my
Readings
1) Jenkins, H. (2006). Fans, bloggers and gamers: Exploring participatory culture, Ch. 6
2) The Long Tail (article version: http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html)
3) Then the Netflix case: http://www.longtail.com/the_long_tail/2006/10/why_better_dvd_.html
4) Optional for masters students, required for Ph.D. students: Negroponte, The Daily Me, customization (Ch. 12-14)

Topic
1) Mass vs. niche
2) Customization (letitblog flash video)
3) The Hacker ethic
4) Cyberbalkanization

Convergence culture & DIY
Readings
1) Jenkins, Chapters 3 & 4. The rest of the book is recommended, but optional.
2) WIRED’s DIY issue. Browse around this:
http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/03/ff_makestuff_projects/

Topics
1) Convergence culture
2) User-generated content (Minecraft/TUG, YouTube, Machina, DIY movement, KickStarter)
3) In-class video, Lessig on user-generated content:
http://www.ted.com/talks/view/id/187

Class 14, Thursday, April 23
Managing the playground
Readings
1) Kim, Ch. 8, Rituals
2) Lessig, Ch. 6, Cyberspaces
3) Kollock, P. & Smith, M. Managing the Virtual Commons: Cooperation and Conflict in Computer Communities
http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/kollock/papers/vcommons.htm
http://www.ludd.luth.se/mud/aber/articles/village_voice.html

Topics
1) Rituals, an extension of roles?
2) Governance, the role of the state
3) Conflicts/Tragedy of the commons

Class 15, Thursday, April 30
Course wrap up/Presentations part I

Class 16, Thursday, May 7 (Final Exam time slot)
Presentations part II
Note: If we have a smaller class and do not need the second slot, the final paper due date will be moved forward by a week to Saturday, May 2.

Final papers are due Saturday, May 9 by 5pm by email.
If you want feedback you need to give me a self-addressed-stamped-envelope in advance, i.e. by the end of the May 7 class.