

CMGT 530: Social Dynamics of Communication Technologies  
Spring 2010

6:30-9:20 pm Thursdays, Kerckhoff Living Room (will move to 6:00-8:50 if it's OK with all)

Professor Dmitri Williams

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Office hours: Preceding class (5:00 – 6:00 pm) or alternate times, by appointment

Office: KER 312

### 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/>

2) Kim, A.J. (2000) *Community Building on the Web*. This is out of print, but can be purchased as a pdf at:

<http://www.peachpit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=0321488911>

3) Cialdini, R. (2006). *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (note, this is not *Influence: Science and Practice*).

4) Shirky, C. (2008) *Here comes everybody*.

5) Christakis, N & Fowler, J. (2009) *Connected: The surprising power of our social networks and how they shape our lives*.

6) Ph.D. students only should also buy:

Negroponte, N. (1995). *Being digital*. New York: Vintage Books.

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

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

### Assignments & Grading

- 1) You will write a one-page reaction paper five times during the term. Write on the readings assigned for that session. 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.
- 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!
- 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.
- 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. 5%
  - (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. 5%
  - (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%

Grades are 10% participation and attendance, 20% group work, 20% reaction papers, 15% final presentations and 35% final paper. Informed participation in class matters more than in a typical course.

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](http://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 16: 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/lridener/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, Wednesday, January 23: 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, Wednesday, January 30: Theories of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)**

### *Readings*

- 1) Walther, J. (2006) Nonverbal dynamics in computer-mediated communication, or :( and the net :(‘z with you, :) and you :) alone. In V. Manusov & M. Patterson (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Nonverbal Communication*.
- 2) Lessig, L. *Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace, Version 2.0*, Ch. 1-3

*Ph.D. students*: above, plus:

- 3) Yee, N., Bailenson, J., Urbanek, M., Chang, F., & Merget, D. (2007). The unbearable likeness of being digital: The persistence of nonverbal social norms in online virtual environments. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 10, 115-121.

### *Topics*

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

## **Class 4, Wednesday, February 6.**

### **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*:

- 4) Hirschman, A. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*. Ch. 1-3.

### *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, Wednesday, February 13.**

### **Social Networks**

#### *Readings*

- 1) Christakis, N & Fowler, J. (2009) *Connected: The surprising power of our social networks and how they shape our lives*. Ch. 1-5

*Ph.D. students*: whole book

### *Topics*

- 1) Networks
- 2) Centrality, density, depth, breadth

- 3) Knowledge transfer and expertise

### **Class 6, Wednesday, February 20**

#### **Evaluating Online Communities**

*Group project #1: Evaluating a community*

##### *Readings*

- 1) Kim, pages 1-18 (purpose), 27-50 (places) & 233-242 (events)
- 2) Flanagin, A. & Metzger, M. (2007). The role of site features, user attributes, and information verification behaviors on the perceived credibility of web-based information. *New Media & Society*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 319-342.
- 3) Optional for master's students, required for Ph.D. students: Kollock, P. *Design Principles for Online Communities*,  
<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/kollock/papers/design.htm>

##### *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, Wednesday, February 27**

*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, Wednesday, March 6**

### **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
- 3) Smith et al (1995). Conduct Control on Usenet  
<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol2/issue4/smith.html>
- 4) Optional for master's students, required for Ph.D. students: Ellison et al (2006) *Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment*  
<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue2/ellison.html>
- 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)

## **Class 9, Wednesday, March 13**

### *Group project #2: Presenting Cialdini in action*

### **Persuasion**

#### *Readings*

- 1) Assigned portions from Cialdini, R. (2006) *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*  
Ph.D. Students: whole book.

#### *Topics*

- 1) Persuasion, consistency, liking, social proof, reciprocity

***SPRING BREAK IS MARCH 18-22***

## **Class 10, Wednesday, March 27 we will have no class.**

This is the substitute for the extra class at the end that allows for presentations. This also gives you an extra week to plan out your term paper and work on the upcoming group project. Note that there is a 1-page outline due next week.

## **Class 11, Wednesday, April 3**

### *Hand in 1-page term paper outline*

### **Location, mobility, mobilization**

*Group project #3 (in-class): Pitch a mobile or location-based/aware community*

*Readings*

- 1) Shirky, C. (2008) Here comes everybody. Chapters 1-7.

*Ph.D. Students:* Chapters 1-11 (whole book).

*Topics*

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

**Class 12, Wednesday, April 10**

**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, Wednesday, April 17**

**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](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/](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 24**

#### **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>
- 4) Optional for master's students, required for Ph.D. students: Dibbell, J. (1993) A rape in cyberspace.  
[http://www.ludd.luth.se/mud/aber/articles/village\\_voice.html](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, Wednesday, May 1**

#### **Course wrap up/Presentations part I**

### **Class 16, Wednesday, May 8**

#### **Presentations part II**

**Final papers are due Friday, May 10 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 8 class.***