

LIVE SYLLABUS AT:

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USCAnnenberg



**CMGT 530: Social Dynamics of
Communication Technologies
(4 Units)**

Spring 2021

Mondays– 5-7:50pm

Section: 21739D

Location: ANN L105A and [Zoom](https://usc.zoom.us/j/4932258731):
<https://usc.zoom.us/j/4932258731>

Instructor: Dmitri Williams

Office: ANN 414k, when possible

Office Hours: By appointment, usually
before or after class. I will try to work
around time zone challenges as they
occur.

Contact Info: dcwillia@usc.edu

I. Course Description

From the Catalog: Impact of television, satellites, computers, and other new technologies; competing theories about the role of technology in society; historical effects of introducing new technologies.

This class is about how we use, are affected by, and interact with communication technologies. It is heavy on community, psychology, and business. It's a mix of understanding the systems themselves--their architectures, their business models, their practices--and the fundamentals of human social psychology. Those things come together and create a lot of change, pressure, crisis and opportunity.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

Students taking the course gain a working knowledge of online industries, human nature, and the mix therein. You get some practical and some theoretical knowledge, making you better prepared as a potential worker in the tech and communication industries, as a consumer, or policy maker.

Prerequisite(s), Co-Requisite(s), Concurrent Enrollment, Recommended Preparation:

- CMGT 540, or another course training in methods and/or writing a research paper, is recommended but not required.

III. Course Notes

- 1) You are expected to read *WIRED* monthly. You need to buy it as it comes out, or (my suggestion) [get a 6-month subscription for \\$5](#).

IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

Reaction papers (10%)

You will write a one-page reaction paper two times during the term. You choose the topic and the timing, but only one in any 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. What are you reacting to? The readings, for a start, but don't describe them. React to them, think about how they go together (or don't), or connect them to real-world events and phenomena.

Term paper (40%)

A term paper project will consist of a 15-20 page (main text, including tables and figures but not references or appendices) paper analyzing an issue from the class. Tailor it to your own interests, and to a practical real-world project if you like. Papers must be based on some kind of empirical data—whether statistical or qualitative. 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 23 pages of main text if needed.

A note on the USC IRB ([Institutional Review Board](#), which monitors all human subjects research, meaning basically anything we do): Papers done only for class do not need IRB review, but if you think you might want to make the results public or peer reviewed, submit an IRB application ASAP. Wait times can be 7-10 weeks, even though most of what you would do would be labeled exempt and wouldn't go to full review. *You can't do this retroactively*, i.e. if you later decide it's cool and want to publish it, you can't. You'd need to get approval and collect new data from scratch. If your class data are only a pilot project for later, more ambitious work, you don't need to worry about this.

Group projects (3: 30% total).

- (1) Find an online community and evaluate it using the tools you've learned in class. Present your community to the class. I suggest you find one that is interesting and active. 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%

Participation (20%)

10% of your participation grade is quantity, and 10% quality. Informed participation in class matters more than in a typical course, i.e. I *will* give a wide variance far more than in the other categories. If you do a good job here, it's easy points. If you do a poor job, expect a poor overall grade. What is a good job? Here are the criteria: Was it obvious that you did the reading and came prepared? Did you speak up in class, or only talk when called on? Had you thought about

the readings and tied them to related material or current events? Were you present and engaged with me and the other students? If we were in person, did you maintain good eye contact with me and with the other students or were you more focused on your laptop? TLDR: Did you show up?

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

If you are on Zoom, you are strongly encouraged to have your camera on. If you can't for some reason, please let me know. See the USC boilerplate notes below for general expectations.

V. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Reaction papers	10	10
Term paper	40	40
Group projects (3)	30	30
Participation	20	20
TOTAL	100	100%

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

c. Grading Standards

Only the highest-quality work earns an A. Average work can expect Bs and Cs, with significant underperforming resulting in Ds and Fs. High quality includes critical thinking rather than basic description and always includes professional writing.

d. Grading Timeline

Assignments are typically graded and returned within 1-2 weeks.

VI. Assignment Submission Policy

- a. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, usually with some kind of documentation, grades are reduced by 10% per day late, starting immediately at the time and date due.
- b. Assignments are generally submitted via paper at the start of class. In pandemic times, submit them by email prior to the start of class.

VII. Add/Drop schedule for Spring '21

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 1/15/2021 – 4/30/2021; Final Exam Period: 5/5-12/2021)

Friday, February 5: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, February 5: Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Tuesday, February 9: Last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, March 5: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, March 5: Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Friday, April 9: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

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>

or read online [here](#).

3) Cialdini, R. (2006). *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (note, this is not *Influence: Science and Practice*). PDF available for free from Prof. Cialdini for reasons I can't explain [here](#).

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

5) Ph.D. students only should get:

Negroponte, N. (1995). *Being digital*. New York: Vintage Books.
and consider buying these two:

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

Meyrowitz, J. (1985) [*No Sense of Place*](#).

Media: You are expected to read *WIRED* monthly. You need to buy it as it comes out, or (my suggestion) [get a 6-month subscription for \\$5](#).

Other: Most articles are posted on Blackboard.

IX. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, etc.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework
Week 1 1/18	MLK day, no class	
Week 2 1/25	Intro, foundations of communities, and basic communication theory. Dead German and French philosophers. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Structuralism 2) What is a community? 3) Types of community: differences, classifications, etc. 4) The question of proximity (Imagined communities) 5) Functions of communities 6) Things that shape community. 7) Wenger's Communities of Practice 8) Basic communication theories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects theory: direct vs. resistant • Uses & gratifications • Cultivation • Priming, framing, agenda-setting • Neomarxism, Gramsci, etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Tönnies, F. <i>On Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft</i>. Just read the short overview (p. 39-42) linked on Blackboard under Content. 2) Read the short, boring and confusing overview of structuralism and see if you can make any sense out of it. <p>Note: These are the driest things you'll read all semester, but they help a lot later.</p>
Week 3 2/1	Histories of media and social networks <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Transportation vs. communication 2) Diffusion of technologies 3) Utopian/Dystopian frameworks 4) Case studies of media and social networks: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Writing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Czitrom, D. <i>Media and the American Mind</i>, Ch. 1. 2) Rogers, E. <i>Diffusion of Innovations</i>, Ch. 1. 3) Webb, My Internet Mea Culpa <p><i>Ph.D. students:</i> above, and read Negroponte, Ch. 1-11.</p>

	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 9) Sci Fi as metaphor	
Week 4 2/8	Theories of Social Impact 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?	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. Optional: Quit social media for a week, and use the class ideas to frame thoughts about the effects it had on you, good and bad. You can do a reaction paper on this. The “Quitting Facebook Experiment” on Blackboard is a study on this.
Week 5 2/15	President’s Day, no class	
Week 6 2/22	Evaluating Online Communities 1) Purpose 2) Activities: Places & events 3) Trusting a site 4) Evaluating current sites: bring examples to class 5) Planning a good term paper (why is he making us add theory!?)	1) Kim, pages 1-18 (purpose), 27-50 (places) & 233-242 (events) 2) Chen & Lin (2014). Building a Sense of Virtual Community: The Role of the Features of Social Networking Sites Vol. 17, No. 7, 460-465. Group project #1: Evaluating a community
Week 7 3/1	Networks, Social Influence, Analytics 1) Networks 2) Centrality, density, depth, breadth 3) Knowledge transfer and expertise	1) Christakis, N & Fowler, J. (2009) <i>Connected: The surprising power of our social networks and how they shape our lives</i> . Ch. 1-3 2) SaS page on analytics Note: the Christakis and Fowler book is worth owning Hand in 1-paragraph tentative term paper topics

Week 8 3/8	Theories of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) CMC basics 2) Code is law (structuralism, but interesting) 3) Four puzzles and themes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.), <i>The Sage Handbook of Nonverbal Communication</i>. 2) Lessig, L. <i>Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace, Version 2.0</i>, Ch. 1-3 3) Ranen, M. (2017). Ethical and legal disruptions of AR. <p>Optional:</p> <p>a) Love in the time of robots (WIRED).</p> <p><i>Ph.D. students:</i> above, plus Gibson and Gibbs (2006). Unpacking the Concept of Virtuality</p>
Week 9 3/15	2020: What the hell just happened? Isolation, mobilization, democracy, information warfare <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mobilization 2) Social Justice 3) Cyberbalkanization 4) Twitter, Parler & Cloudflare 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Shirky, C. (2008) Here comes everybody. Chapters 1-4. 2) Johnson (WIRED). Why Cloudflare Let an Extremist Stronghold Burn 3) Chen (2020). You’re Doomscrolling Again. NYT. 4) Freelon et al (2020). False Equivalencies. <p><i>Ph.D. Students:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Hill (2018) “Thank you, Black Twitter” 2) The balance of Shirky’s book is optional. <p>Optional Heffernan (WIRED). Reddit and Change My View</p>
Week 10 3/22	Persuasion <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Persuasion, consistency, liking, social proof, reciprocity 	<p>Assigned portions from Cialdini, R. (2006) <i>Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion</i></p> <p><i>Ph.D. Students:</i> whole book.</p> <p>Group project #2: Cialdini in action</p>
Week 11 3/29	Company pitch, Term paper workshop <p>Optional: Epic video, analytics catch-up, comm theory redux</p>	<p>Group project #3 (in-class): Pitch a mobile or location-based/aware community</p> <p><i>Preparation:</i> Bring your ideas, questions and a theory-driven hypothesis. We will workshop a handful of student papers, starting with their hypotheses, going to the methods, the results, and what it all means.</p>

Week 12 4/5	Identifiers/Identity, Reputation Systems, Roles <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Balance theory triangle 2) On the Internet, no one knows you're a dog 3) Reputational systems/trust, eBay, MySimon & e-commerce 4) Identity/deception 5) Kim on roles 6) Identity and Authentication 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Kim, Ch. 4, Roles 2) Turkle, S. (1997). <i>Life on the Screen</i>. Ch. 8 3) China's ranking strategy, WIRED 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 <p>Optional for all: Resnick et al, Reputation Systems and the <i>Black Mirror</i>-esque follow-up to the WIRED piece here. Speaking of which, if you haven't seen it, I recommend you watch the <i>Black Mirror</i> episode "Nosedive."</p>
Week 13 4/12	A) Identity, continued B) Play nice with the other kids: Norms and Etiquette <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) More on Turkle, group identity via the Sneetches 2) Identity and mediation of front and back stage 3) Roles, norms, etiquette 4) Deception 5) Dating, sexuality 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Kim, Ch. 6, Etiquette. 2) Meyrowitz, J. <i>No Sense of Place</i>. Ch. 3 & 4 <p>PhD students only: 3) Papacharissi chapter (note the Goffman/Meyrowitz connection)</p>
Week 14 4/19	Online culture: Masses, niches, freaks, and geeks, oh my <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass vs. niche • Customization (letitblog flash video) Convergence culture & DIY <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hacker ethic 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Leetaru, K. (2018). Facebook's new feed changes 2) The Long Tail 3) Smith-Rowsey, D. (2016). Imaginative Indices chapter <p>Optional for masters students, required for Ph.D. students: Negroponte, The Daily Me, customization (Ch. 12-14) 1) Jenkins, H. (2006). <i>Fans, bloggers and gamers: Exploring participatory culture</i>, Ch. 6 2) Jenkins, H. <i>Convergence Culture</i>, Chapters 3 & 4. The rest of the book is recommended, but optional.</p>
Week 15 4/26	Managing the playground <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rituals, an extension of roles? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Lessig, Ch. 6, Cyberspaces 2) Dibbell, J. (1993) A Rape in Cyberspace.

	2) Governance, the role of the state 3) Conflicts/Tragedy of the commons	http://www.juliandibbell.com/articles/a-rape-in-cyberspace/ Course evaluations (in class)
USC STUDY DAYS Dates: 5/1-5/4		
Paper Due	The term paper is due 5/5 by 5 pm to my email inbox. Submit by 4/30 at 5pm get +4% to your paper's grade.	

X. USC technology rental program

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please [submit an application](#). The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester.

XI. Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

Attendance is a key part of your participation grade. If you're going to miss a class, a courtesy notice is helpful, but not required. If you aren't there, you aren't participating, and your grade will naturally go lower as a result. If you need to miss a timed class session, you need documentation explaining (doctor's note, etc.). No documentation means a zero on anything that is part of that day.

Communication

I generally reply to emails within 24 hours, except on weekends.

Online Class Policies for Covid Times

- **Synchronous session recording notice**

Live class sessions will be recorded and made available to students through Blackboard (including transcriptions). Please remember that USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. As a student, you are responsible for the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/>). These rules will be strictly enforced, and violations will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction.

- **Going back to Campus**

Although we are starting the semester with online instruction only, conditions may improve. In such case, courses listed as hybrid will give opportunity to students to attend class in person. This will happen only by following the strictest health guidelines and safety protocols. These are listed in the [Trojans Return](#) page. Please take the time to read this ahead so that you are prepared in case it is possible to return to in-person instruction.

- **Attendance policy**

Students are strongly encouraged to attend live sessions via Zoom. This is the best way to engage with the course and keep up to date with class activities and assignments. However, there will be no penalty for failing to attend live sessions, and students who miss live sessions will be able to keep up with the class by reviewing class recordings and engaging through asynchronous class activities and assignments. Note that university guidelines dictate that faculty should only maintain normal attendance, participation, and assessment expectations for students when the class time falls within reasonable learning hours in the student's time zone, defined as 7:00am to 10:00pm in the student's time zone.

- **Participation**

Participation is part of your grade. The current modality of teaching includes synchronous and asynchronous lessons, assignments, exercises, and evaluation processes, and each affords different types of participation. In a synchronous zoom environment, when proper, participation is synchronous. This may include talking, when appropriate, during a zoom meeting, or using the chat function to generate or participate in discussions. Blackboard offers different types of participation, including participating in forums and completing asynchronous assignments.

The distant nature of these learning environments may prompt us to forget that we are a community and that each of us and our ideas deserve respect. For this reason, it is imperative that you remember to **respect the opinion of others**, regardless of how much you disagree.

- **Zoom etiquette**

Although you are not obligated to turn your camera on, we highly recommend it. Please wear **appropriate clothing**. Please keep your **microphone off** during zoom class, except when you're asked to unmute for discussion or questions. Please use **appropriate backgrounds**.

XII. Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Breaking Bread Program [undergraduate students only]

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/>

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally “breaking bread” over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.

XIII. About Your Instructor

You can learn more about me from a handy Google search, though you'll have to learn to spell my first name. Alternatively, visit my personal website at the creatively titled

www.dmitriwilliams.com or www.keepcalmandcarryons.net