CMGT 520 Social Roles of Communication Media
Units: 4

Fall 2021 – 21729D
Wednesday, 2:00 - 4:50 pm
Location: ASC 328

Instructor: Liuning "Matt" Zhou, Ph.D.
Office Hours: Wednesday, 1–2 pm
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Course Description
Digital media, undergoing fundmental changes over the past few decades, have now permeated every aspect of our society, from news and entertainment to personal relationships and social movements. As a result, daily lives, business models, and organizational structures have witnessed profound transformation in almost every possible way. While facilitating communication and transactions, digital media also bring many challenges, such as fake news, online bullying, and hacking, allowing certain groups to harm or dominate others.

This course focuses on digital media and their impact on individuals, institutions, and society. It analyzes the interactions between digital media and societal actors and forces in different contexts. It traces the development of digital media technologies and explore how they are integrated into society and reshape our understanding of individual behavior, institutional choices, and social norms. "Communication media," in the context of this course, not only refers to the technology and platform through which information and content are trasmitted, but also refers to the whole ecosystem that involves the delivery of knowledge and content as well as the parcitipation of individuals and institutions as enablers in the process. More specifically, we will examine how digital media facilitate interpersonal communication, streamline business activities, and unite societal forces. We will also examine how digital media challenge or re-define public-private boundaries, business models, and social norms. The course consists of the following modules: (i) News and Fake News; (ii) Interpersonal Relationships, (iii) Entertainment, (iv) Online Collective Action, and (v) Gaming and Fandom. Through readings and discussions on these topics, we can not only better understand the interactions of digital media and society, but also critically analyze their intertwined evolution.

Student Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, you will be able to:
1. Explain how digital technology influences social practices, and how societal actors shape digital technology
2. Evaluate both positive and negative effects of digital media on individuals, businesses, and institutions
3. Examine diverse communication patterns, beliefs, values and norms in the context of digital media

4. Discuss and analyze contemporary forms of digital media and their impact using digital media theories and paradigms

Course Notes
A hybrid model is adopted for this class, with some students taking the class in-person, while others doing it remotely. Copies of lecture slides and other class information will be posted on Blackboard.

Policies and Procedures
a. Additional Policies
All students are encouraged to use the classroom as a safe (and brave) space in which to speak and voice their opinions. We all come to the classroom with different backgrounds and experiences—defined by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, class, ideology, even personality. This diversity can be our greatest strength and an asset as we learn together. My expectation is that you respect not only me and our guests, but also your classmates/peers when they participate in discussion. We may not truly understand another person's perspective, but we can/should listen with acceptance and empathy. Every student should feel comfortable participating and being part of a productive, engaging dialogue. Given the focus on gender and other facets of identity, this class and the discussions we have may make you feel some discomfort. You may not always agree with me or your peers. This is normal, and part of the learning. If you ever feel that I've misspoken or misrepresented something or you have an emotional response to the material or to something someone in class has said, please reach out to me to discuss. Above all, please be flexible (and forgiving) with me, your peers and yourself as we navigate these issues together.

Additionally, to maximize the learning experience students are expected to attend every class, check their USC email regularly, and refrain from social media and other technology use not related to the class.

b. Communication
Students are encouraged to contact the instructor outside of class. If you cannot come to office hours, email the instructor to arrange a meeting time. Emails to the instructor are normally replied within 48 hours.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
There are reading assigments every week (except for the first and final two weeks). In addition to book chapters, readings come from peer-review journals on relevant topics, industry sources (in the form of reports and white papers), and online publications. These materials are either posted on Blackboard under "Weekly Materials" or accessible through USC online libraries.

Students are expected to complete assigned readings before class and prepare for in-class discussions of the materials. Participation in discussion and response to instructor's questions are part of the participation score. Assigned readings are not a substitute for the class; nor is the class designed to summarize the readings. You will find many materials in lecture that are not there in your readings (and vice-versa).

Description and Assessment of Assignments
Student performance in this class is evaluated based on a group presentation, two short papers, a group case analysis, and class participation.

Students will form groups of three to do a group presentation on one of the topics covered in the class. Students will also complete two short papers (5-6 pages not including references) on relevant topics designated by the instructor. There is a final group project due at the end of the semester. It requires students to work in groups, using digital media theories to analyze a relevant case. Detailed descriptions and guidelines regarding assignments will be distributed and explained in class when they come up.

Class participation accounts for 5% of the final grade. It consists of attendance, contributions to class discussions, interaction with guest speakers, and good efforts in group assignments.

Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Weeks 3-13: Group presentation	100	15%
Week 5: Short paper 1	100	20%
Week 10: Short paper 2	100	20%
Week 14: Group case analysis	100	40%
Participation	100	5%
TOTAL	500	**100%**

Grading Scale
Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

94 to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 93%: 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

Grading Standards

Letter Grade	Description
A	Excellent; demonstrates extraordinarily high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded.

B	Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings.
C	Satisfactory/Fair; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.
D	Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding.
F	Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding.

Grading Timeline
Grading Timeframe and Missing or Inaccurate Score Inquiries/Disputes
For effective learning, students should receive timely feedback on assignments and exams. Therefore, every attempt will be made to grade assignments/exams and post grades within two weeks. Scores for all assignments and exams are regularly updated on Blackboard. You are responsible for notifying the instructor within one (1) week of a score posting if you think a score is missing or inaccurate. Moreover, you only have this period of time to contest a score on an assignment/exam. If you fail to inquire/notify the instructor of any discrepancy, missing score, or contest a score within one week of the date the score is posted, no further changes will be made.

Assignment Submission Policy
Students will receive details about each assignment/exam separately. All assignments need to be completed and handed in on time (by 2pm of the due date) to avoid a grade reduction (10% reduction from the original point). If unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, s/he must provide written documentation that will allow him/her to be excused, or discuss the situation with the instructor in a timely manner.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/23/21 – 12/3/21)
Link: https://classes.usc.edu/term-20213/calendar/
Friday, September 10: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001
Friday, September 10: Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001
Friday, September 10: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall
Tuesday, September 14: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001
Friday, October 8: 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, October 8: 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, November 12: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001
Saturday, November 13: Last day to change between letter grade or Pass/No pass in a letter graded course for Session 001.

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, events, and/or guest speaker availability, where relevant. Students should consult the Registration Calendar for dates regarding add/drop deadlines, fees, grading options, etc.

VI. Schedule of Class Meetings

Week 1, 08/25	**Topics** Review of course syllabus Lesson Activity Form groups for group presentation and case analysis
Week 2, 09/01 **I. Roles of New Technology**	**Topics** Survey of communication technologies; how technologies shape society and are shaped by social forces; diffusion of innovations; omnipresent connectivity and portable media
Week 3, 09/08 **II. News and Fake News**	**Topics** New business/revenue models; new entrants; algorithm in news feed
Week 4, 09/15 **II. News and Fake News**	**Topics** Misinformation and fake news; political misinformation and conspiracy theories; perception of actuality in the post-truth era; alternative facts and social construction of reality
Week 5, 09/22 **II. News and Fake News**	Guest speaker 1: on the news business Assignment: Short paper 1
Week 6, 09/29 **III. Interpersonal Relationships**	**Topics** Virtual communities and social networks; online dating and romantic relationships **Note**: Short paper 1 **DUE** by 2pm
Week 7, 10/06 **III. Interpersonal Relationships**	**Topics** Malicious behavior (e.g., social spam, trolling, and hacking); mass surveillance; privacy concerns

Week 8, 10/13 **IV. Entertainment: Distribution and Viewing**	<u>**Topics**</u> Media evolution and revolution for content distribution and consumption; streaming and mobile entertainment; binge viewing and social viewing
Week 9, 10/20 **IV. Entertainment: Distribution and Viewing**	<u>**Topics**</u> Operations, structure, and business models of the entertainment industry; international landscape
Week 10, 10/27	Guest Speaker 2: on the entertainment industry Assignment: Short paper 2
Week 11, 11/3 **V. Online Collective Action**	<u>**Topics**</u> Network society; online organizing and activism **Note**: Short paper 2 <u>**DUE**</u> by 2pm
Week 12, 11/10 **V. Online Collective Action**	<u>**Topics**</u> Rebellious communication and social movements
Week 13, 11/17 **VI. Gaming and Fandom**	<u>**Topics**</u> Gaming; gamification of engagement; fan communities and fan culture
November 24	Thanksgiving Holiday; No Class
Week 14, 12/01	Work on group case analysis; meeting with instructor
Week 15, 12/08	Group case analysis due by 11:59 pm in instructor's emailbox (liuningz@usc.edu)

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." Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy.

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course, without approval of the instructor.

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/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards
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.