

USC Annenberg



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

Fall 2022

Thursdays, 6-8:50pm

Section: 21746D

Location: ANN 404

Instructor: Dmitri Williams

Office: ANN 414k, when possible

Office Hours: By appointment, usually before or after class.

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 constant 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

The class is mostly run via emails, but materials and lecture slides will be put on Blackboard.

IV. Policies and Procedures

Respect in the classroom

The classroom is a safe space for ideas and discussion, which requires that everyone does their part to create an atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance. There will be no discrimination based on anyone's background, demographics, or politics, etc. In short, the only thing I don't tolerate is intolerance.

Attendance

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.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Reaction papers (15%)

You will write a one-page reaction paper three times during the term. You choose the topic and the timing, but only one in any week, i.e. not all 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. I'm looking for critical thinking, not description.

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 (15%)

Half of your participation grade is quantity, and half 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, these are 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? 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.

V. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Reaction papers	10	10
Term paper	40	40
Group projects (3)	30	30
Participation	15	15
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.

VII. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/22/22 – 12/2/22)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20223/calendar/>

Friday, September 9: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

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

Friday, September 9: Last day to change enrollment option to audit for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass to a letter grade for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Tuesday, September 13: 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 7: 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, November 11: 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 subscription](#).

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 8/25	<p>Intro, foundations of communities, and basic communication theory.</p> <p>Dead German and French philosophers.</p> <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 2 9/1	<p>Histories of media and social networks</p> <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 4) Robot delivery at UCLA (Daily Bruin) <p><i>Ph.D. students:</i> above, and read Negroponte, Ch. 1-11.</p>

	<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</p>	
<p>Week 3 9/8</p>	<p>Guest: Henry Jenkins</p> <p>Online culture: Masses, niches, freaks, and geeks, oh my</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mass vs. niche ● Customization (letitblog flash video) <p>Convergence culture & DIY</p> <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) Raymond Williams, Culture is Ordinary 2) Fiske, Intro to Media Matters 3) Carpentier & Jenkins, What Does God Need With Two Starships? 4) The Long Tail 5) 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>
<p>Week 4 9/15</p>	<p>Theories of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)</p> <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: 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>

<p>Week 5 9/22</p>	<p>Traditional Media Business Models, Evaluating Online Communities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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!?) 6) Comm theory carryover from week 1 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Litman, p. 265-272 2) Kim, pages 1-18 (purpose), 27-50 (places) & 233-242 (events) 3) Chen & Lin (2014). Building a Sense of Virtual Community: The Role of the Features of Social Networking Sites Vol. 17, No. 7, 460-465. <p>Group project #1: Evaluating a community</p>
<p>Week 6 9/29</p>	<p>Theories of Social Impact</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. or, if you feel lazy, here is a popular press writeup of the same thing: Conti, Do Yourself a Favor (The Atlantic) Ph.D. students: 4) Hirschman, A. Exit, Voice, and Loyalty. Ch. 1-3. <p>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 it. The “Quitting Facebook Experiment” on Blackboard is a study on this.</p>
<p>Week 7 Dates: 10/6</p>	<p>Networks, Social Influence, Analytics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Networks 2) Centrality, density, depth, breadth 3) Knowledge transfer and expertise 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>Note: the Christakis and Fowler book is worth owning</p> <p>Hand in 1-paragraph tentative term paper topics</p>
<p>Week 8 Fall Recess Thursday and Friday, so no class 10/13</p>		
<p>Week 9</p>	<p>Technology and Politics through a pandemic and out again:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Shirky, C. (2008) Here comes everybody. Chapters 1-4.

<p>Dates: 10/20</p>	<p>Isolation, mobilization, democracy, information warfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mobilization 1) Social Justice 2) Cyberbalkanization 3) Twitter, Parler & Cloudflare 	<p>2) Johnson (WIRED). Why Cloudflare Let an Extremist Stronghold Burn 3) Chen (2020). You're Doomscrolling Again. <i>NYT</i>. 4) Freelon et al (2020). False Equivalencies.</p> <p><i>Ph.D. Students:</i> 1) Hill (2018) "Thank you, Black Twitter" 2) The balance of Shirky's book is optional.</p> <p>Optional Heffernan (WIRED). Reddit and Change My View</p>
<p>Week 10 Dates: 10/27</p>	<p>Persuasion</p> <ul 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> <i>Ph.D. Students:</i> whole book.</p> <p>Group project #2: Cialdini in action</p>
<p>Week 11 Dates: 11/3</p>	<p>Company pitch, Methods basics, Term paper workshop</p> <p>Optional: Epic video, analytics catch-up, sci-fi</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. If you want to propose a method, that's optional. We will workshop a handful of student papers, starting with their hypotheses, going to possible methods, the results, and what it all means.</p>
<p>Week 12 Dates: 11/10</p>	<p>Identifiers/Identity, Reputation Systems, Roles</p> <ul 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 	<ul 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>
<p>Week 13 Dates: 11/17</p>	<p>A) Identity, continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Kim, Ch. 6, Etiquette. 2) Meyrowitz, J. <i>No Sense of Place</i>. Ch. 3 & 4

	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 	PhD students only: 3) Papacharissi chapter (note the Goffman/Meyrowitz connection)
Week 14 Thanksgiving is Wed 23-Sun 27, so no class 11/24		
Week 15 Dates: 12/1	Managing the playground <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rituals, an extension of roles? 2) Governance, the role of the state 3) Conflicts/Tragedy of the commons 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Lessig, Ch. 6, Cyberspaces 2) Dibbell, J. (1993) A Rape in Cyberspace. http://www.juliandibbell.com/articles/a-rape-in-cyberspace/ Content trigger warning: this article involves descriptions of a virtual sexual assault. Skip if this is problematic. Course evaluations (in class)
	STUDY DAYS Dates: 12/3-12/6	
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Dates: 12/7-12/14	The term paper is due 12/8 by 5 pm to my email inbox. Submit by 12/4 at 5pm get +4% to your paper's grade.	

X. 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

uscса.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://annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenbergscholarshipsandawards>

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.

XI. 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