

INLS 490.151 Online Social Networks
Spring 2010

Instructor

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Meeting Place and Time

Tuesday, 6:15PM – 8:45PM, Manning Hall 304

Class Website

http://ibiblio.org/fred/inls_490/
Authentication credentials: *Username:* inls490, *Password:* inls490

Facebook Group

The class Facebook group is “INLS 490 Spring 2010”, you may either search for it or browse directly via this URL: <http://bit.ly/8a2GNb>. If you do not wish to join the Facebook group, please email me your weekly question.

Office Hours

Tuesday, 4:30PM – 6:00PM, Manning Hall 213. Other times by appointment.

Important Dates

January 19	Presentation Sign-up
February 2	Time Diary Due
March 2	Mid-Term Exam
April 6	Final Project Proposal Due
April 27	Final Project Presentations and Final Projects Due

Course Description

This course is a primer on the study of online social networks. By taking this class, you will learn about social network sites - what they are, who uses them and how they are used, and how they affect our lives. We will explore the theory, methods and findings of a growing literature on the study of online social networks. General issues, such as the historical lineage of online social networks, as well as major themes like privacy and technological adoption are covered. We will also explore applications and use cases, particularly with regards to international adoption of online social networks, social action through online social networks, and other emergent themes in the area. This course should provide you a strong set of fundamentals for exploring the multiple facets of our pervasive online sociality.

What is an online social network? At the artifactual level, we can employ something like boyd and Ellison’s (2007) definition:

We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

With this definition, we can easily imagine a site like Facebook or Myspace, or perhaps even Twitter or FriendFeed as a social network. Another way of looking at online social networks might

be as a social phenomena. Fred Turner (2006) and Howard Rheingold (1993) discuss online social networks as just that – our social networks, online. Pervasive adoption of computing devices combined with mass connectivity (Horrigan, 2008) has introduced new forms of rich, mediated interaction. We can maintain contact with more people, irrespective of geographical distance, than at any time prior. At the same time, we are faced with emergent challenges such as protecting our privacy, presenting a consistent identity, and tending to an ever-expanding network of relationships.

This course will provide a lens for exploring these challenges and opportunities. To do so, we will cross a number of disciplines, including Sociology, Communications, Psychology, Library and Information Science and Computer Science. Our goal will be to develop a breadth of knowledge on the topic. I find this method provides the familiarity necessary for engaging in future research and analysis of online social networks or social software – whether it be in school, on the job, or for your start-up (there have been a few!).

Textbook

There is no required text for INLS 490.

Readings

We will read a combination of primary research papers and chapters, overview studies, and popular press articles. These readings are organized by week in the syllabus, and are available online via the course website. If you have any trouble downloading the files, please let me know as soon as possible.

Format

This class will employ a mixture of lecture and seminar formats. The class begins with a video and discussion of current topics in social networks. To suggest a video or story for discussion, please bookmark the link with tag "inls490" in <http://delicious.com>.

Expectations

First and foremost, participation and active discussion are essential for the success of this class. To this extent, I expect you to come to every class prepared and ready to think critically about the issues presented. Be bold, be imaginative, find ways to relate what we're studying to your life, don't be afraid to take and *defend* your opinions. The study of online social networks is an emergent field; there are few "right" or "wrong" answers. It is likely that these technologies will continue to impact your social, professional and academic life for quite some time – so come ready to explore, share and question.

In addition to active participation in class, there are three assignments you will be expected to complete this semester. The first assignment is an analysis and presentation of an online social network. The second assignment is a time diary, during which you will record and reflect upon your use of online social networks over a two-day period. The final assignment is a term project. Further instructions on your assignments follow. All assignments should be emailed to the instructor in PDF, RTF or Word format.

Assignment: Reading Discussion

By 2PM on the Tuesday of each week, you will be expected to pose a question, observation or enhancement to our online discussion board, located in our Facebook group. This Q, O, or E should arise from our reading, and generally be one or two paragraphs long (if you're especially inspired, feel free to go longer). Why not just a question? I'd like for the fora to be conversational, so if someone asks a question that you can build on, or draw on your personal experience to enhance, feel free.

Each week, I will start a new thread (the thread name will correspond to the upcoming week number), and I ask that you try to keep your discussions inside the thread if possible. However, feel free to contribute links, photos, videos and wall postings to our group, have fun with it.

Assignment: Analysis of an Online Social Network

Students will present an overview and analysis of an online social network. In the presentation, the student should cover the history, adoption and growth of the social network. Special attention should be paid to geographic and demographic aspects of adoption. The student should also cover the forms of interaction on the site, novel features, and what differentiates it in the market. The purpose of this assignment is to give the class exposure to a wide range of online social networks, therefore the presentation should be treated as a briefing to management or colleagues; screenshots, references and sources are required. Finally, the student will be limited to **seven slides and twelve minutes** for the presentation.

Presentation sign-up will be held on January 19. To prepare, students should make a list of 5-10 online social networks about which they would like to present. If you need inspiration, please visit <http://mashable.com> or <http://techcrunch.com> - these sites have literally covered hundreds of online social networks. Duplicate presentations will not be permitted, nor will presentations on Facebook, Myspace or Twitter. A rubric will be provided for this assignment.

Assignment: Time Diary

A time diary is a research instrument used for the recording of daily activities. Over two days, you will record your use of online social networks, focusing on the following: Mode, time of day, time spent, interaction partners, activities and goals. Upon the completion of your time diary, you will provide a two-page reflection on your activities in the online social network over the two days. A specific instrument and rubric will be provided for this assignment.

Mid Term Exam

The mid term exam is scheduled for March 2.

Term Project

The term project will be a substantive original piece of literature, research or a topical project in the area (research proposals acceptable as well). I encourage you to develop a project that is relevant to your area of interest; to this extent I am quite flexible in the types of projects I'll approve. As social networks pose interesting questions to industry, the academy and society at large, there are many opportunities for you to develop a project that is relevant to your interests.

Twice during the semester you will be asked to deliver a short description of your project idea to the class. During these sessions, you will deliver a two-minute description of your project.

You will be required to turn in a project proposal. The project proposal should be a 2-page description of your project; you will be expected to present your idea, rationale and why the project is relevant to your interests.

As this project counts for 35% of the overall grade, significant effort is expected. The final project should be professional, written in academic tone and style, and should not include any typographic errors. The instructor is flexible in terms of fitting the project to the student's discipline or interests. I would suggest that you talk to me early and often about your project; if you keep me in the loop, I'm happy to provide feedback, guidance and connections. Group work (max group size: 2) is allowed, though group projects must reflect the substantive work of all parties.

Project presentations will occur on the last day of class, April 27. On this day you will be expected to deliver a 5 slide, 5 minute presentation or demonstration of your term project. Term project writeups will be due at 5PM on April 28. All assignments should be emailed to the instructor in PDF, RTF or Word format.

Grading Policy

Participation, Attendance, Reading Discussion: 15%
 Analysis of an Online Social Network: 10%
 Time Diary: 10%
 Midterm Exam: 25%
 Term Project Proposal: 5%
 Term Project: 35%

Grade Distribution

Graduate students are graded on the H/P/L/F scale, and undergraduates are graded on the A-F scale.

<i>Points Earned</i>	<i>Graduate Grade</i>	<i>Undergraduate Grade</i>
91-100%	H	A
81-90%	P	B
74-79%	P-	C
70-73%	L	D
< 70%	F	F

Administrative

I reserve the right to amend this syllabus.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required at each class. Students with more than two absences will be penalized a half-grade for each subsequent absence.

Statement on Academic Integrity

Students are expected to conform to the Honor Code in all academic manners. For more information about the Honor Code, please visit the following URL: <http://honor.unc.edu/honor/>.

References

- Boyd, D. and Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1).
- Horrigan, J. B. (July 2, 2008). *Home Broadband Adoption 2008*. Pew Internet and American Life Project.
- Rheingold, H. (1993). *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Turner, F. (2006). *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*. Chicago, Illinois: University Of Chicago Press.

Course Schedule

1/12 - Week 1: Introductions and Course Overview

Discussion of syllabus and assignments, introductions, online social networks problems exercise.

Due: Nothing.

Due for next class: Prepare list of online social networks for presentation sign up.

1/19 - Week 2: General Topics and Issues in Online Social Networks

Discussion of basic concepts, overview of the field. Time diary distributed.

Due: Sign up for presentation slots.

Due for next class: Presentations begin.

Required

- boyd, d. and Ellison, N. (2007). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13 (1).
- boyd, d. and Hogan, B. (2009). Would the real social network please stand up? Retrieved July 28, 2009 from http://www.zephorio.org/thoughts/archives/2009/07/28/would_the_real.html.
- Lampe, C., Ellison, N. B., and Steinfeld, C. (2008). Changes in use and perception of Facebook. In *CSCW '08: Proceedings of the ACM 2008 conference on Computer supported cooperative work*, New York, NY, USA, 2008 (pp. 721-730). ACM.

1/26 - Week 3: Online Social Networks in Everyday Life

Exploring the effects of online social network use.

Due: Presentations begin.

Due for next class: Time diary assignment.

Required

- Thompson, C. (September 7, 2008). I'm So Totally, Digitally Close to You. *New York Times*.
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfeld, C., and Lampe, C. (2007). The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communications*, 12(4).
- (Selections) Hampton, K., Sessions, L., Her, E. J., and Rainie, L. (November 4, 2009). Social Isolation and New Technology. *Pew Internet and American Life Project*.

2/2 - Week 4: Research Ethics in Online Social Networks

Discussion of online social networks research methods and ethics, with case examples.

Due: Time diary assignment.

Due for next class: Guest lecture.

Required

- Moreno, M. A., Fost, N. C., and Christakis, D. A. (2008). Research Ethics in the Myspace Era. *Pediatrics*, 121(1), 157--161.
- Walton, N. (June 14, 2009). Facebook and research. Retrieved June 14, 2009 from <http://www.researchethics.ca/blog/2009/06/facebook-and-research.html>.
- Lewis, K., Kaufman, J., Gonzalez, M., Wimmer, A., and Christakis, N. (2008). Tastes, ties, and time: A new social network dataset using Facebook.com. *Social Networks*, 30(4), 330-342.
- Zimmer, M. (2009). "But the Data is Already Public": On the Ethics of Research in Facebook. Paper presented at AoIR 2009.

2/9 - Week 5: Guest Lecture, Jacob-Kramer Duffield

Instructor at CSCW conference. Jacob Kramer-Duffield is a doctoral candidate at SILS, UNC-Chapel Hill. No presentations.

Due: Nothing.

Due for next class: Nothing.

Required

- TBD

2/16 - Week 6: Privacy I, Theories and Action

Exploring privacy in online social networks.

Due: Nothing.

Due for next class: Nothing.

Required

- Lampinen, A., Tamminen, S., and Oulasvirta, A. (2009). All My People Right Here, Right Now: management of group co-presence on a social networking site. In *GROUP '09: Proceedings of the ACM 2009 international conference on Supporting group work*, New York, NY, USA, 2009 (pp. 281-290). ACM.
- Acquisti, A. and Gross, R. (2006). Imagined communities: awareness, information sharing, and privacy on the Facebook. In *PET*, Heidelberg, 2006 (pp. 36-56). Springer-Verlag.
- Solove, D. J. (August 18, 2008). Do Social Networks Bring the End of Privacy? *Scientific American*. Retrieved August 18, 2008 from <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=do-social-networks-bring>.

3/23 - Week 7: Online Social Networks: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives

Theoretical and historical overview of mediated communication.

Due: Nothing.

Due for next class: Mid term exam.

Required (Selections)

- Standage, T. (1998). *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers*. New York, NY: Berkley Trade.
- Thurlow, C., Lengel, L., and Tomic, A. (2004). *Computer Mediated Communication: Social Interaction and the Internet*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Garcia, A. C., Standlee, A. I., Bechkoff, J., and Cui, Y. (2009). Ethnographic Approaches to the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 38(1), 52-84.

3/2 - Week 8: Mid Term Exam

Mid term exam. No presentations.

3/9 - Spring Break, no class meeting

3/16 - Week 9: Using Online Social Networks for Action

Case studies of how online social networks can affect political, charitable, informational and business outcomes.

Due: Nothing.

Due for next class: Nothing.

Required (View Online)

- Kanter, B. (2008). Using social media for good causes. Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zys9SJcVPJ8>
- Shirky, C. (2008). Designing for generosity. Video: <http://www.poptech.org/popcasts/?viewcastid=215>
- Additional videos TBD.

3/23 - Week 10: Studying Recent Adopters of Online Social Networks

Instructor to present study of recent adopting online social network users. Final project brainstorm.

Due: Nothing.

Due for next class: Nothing.

Required

- Lenhart, A. (2009). *Adults and Social Network Websites*. Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved January 14, 2009 from http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/272/report_display.asp.
- Martin, M. (September 28, 2008). Old People Facebook Disasters. *Salon Magazine*. Retrieved November 19, 2008 from http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2008/09/29/old_people/index.html.
- Stutzman, F. (2009) TBD.

3/30 - Week 11: International Adoption of Online Social Networks

Exploring international adoption of online social networks.

Due: Nothing.

Due for next class: Final project proposals.

Required (View these online)

- Cardon, P., Marshall, B., Norris, D., Cho, J., Choi, J., Cui, L., Collier, C., El-Shinnawy, M., Goreva, N., Nillson, S., North, M., Raunpaka, V., Ravid, G., Svensson, L., Usluata, A., Pablo, P., Wang, S., Whelan, C. (2009) Online and offline social ties of social network website users: An exploratory study in eleven societies. *Journal of Computer and Information Systems*.
- Cardon, P. W., Norris, D. T., Goreva, N., and D'Souza, R. (2008). Social networking websites in India and the United States: A cross-national comparison of online privacy and communication. *Issues in Information Systems*, 9(2).

4/6 - Week 12: Privacy II, Recent Work

Instructor to present two recent studies using theoretical lens from previous class, group meetings.

Due: Final project proposals.

Due for next class: Nothing.

Required

- Stutzman, F. and Hartzog, W. (2009) TBD
- Stutzman, F. and Kramer-Duffield, J. (2009) TBD

4/13 - Class Cancelled, CHI Conference

4/20 - Week 13: Online Social Network use and Transitions

Online social networks and information needs during transitions.

Due: Nothing.

Due for next class: Final project presentation.

Required

- Cummings, J. N., Lee, J. B., and Kraut, R. (2006). Communication technology and friendship during the transition from high school to college. In Kraut, R., Brynin, M., and Kiesler, S. (Eds.), *Computers, Phones, and the Internet: Domesticating Information Technology* (pp. 265-278). USA: Oxford University Press.
- Quan-Haase, A. (2007). University Students' Local And Distant Social Ties: Using and integrating modes of communication on campus. *Information, Communication & Society*, 10(5), 671 - 693.
- Stutzman, F. (2009) TBD.

4/27 - Week 14: Final Projects

Final presentations. All projects due at 5PM on April 28.

Due: Final project presentations.