

The University of Western Ontario
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

DC 2001 A – Social Media
Course Outline – Fall 2015

Instructor Information

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Course Information

Lectures: Thursday, 2:30 – 5:30 UCC 58
Course website: <https://socialmediadc2001.wordpress.com/>

Description

We will begin by pondering the question ‘What is social about social media?’ to explore the notions of online communities, conversations, networks and meshworks along with the principles of their organization and political economy. We will discover that the online sociality is to a big extent nonhuman. The awareness of such nonhuman agency is crucial for a variety of reasons from security to marketing. For example: in order to effectively communicate your message to other human users, you have to make it readable to the intelligent algorithms that index and crawl the web. On the other hand, in the world where disconnection is no longer an option, we need to imagine, build and use the techniques to limit and control the visibility of our data in order to secure it from indexing and crawling, when we do not need that. At the very least, we should know more of what is “seen” to an algorithm behind a user-friendly interface of a social media platform.

Objectives

This course is a study of the principles and production of social media. Students will gain an understanding of online information architecture and organization by learning different theoretical approaches to social media. Together we will explore various open source tools available for analyzing data and learn the techniques and skills required for creating, managing and analyzing the content on a different platforms including, but not limited to websites, blogs, as well as some major social media platforms.

Materials

All **required readings** are available in PDF format on OWL, where they are organized by week. The **tools** for social media data analysis (Topsy, 25Trends, Netlytic, etc.) are free and listed on the course website. Dave Eggers’ *The Circle* and Byung-Chul Han’s *The Transparency Society* are available for purchase at the University Bookstore. Other supplemental materials will be listed on the website or made available via OWL.

Syllabus

Week	Date	Topic	Readings / Assignments
1	Sep 10	Course introduction. What is social media?	Klaus Bruhn Jensen, “What’s Social About Social Media” Taina Bucher, “Networking, or What the Social Means in Social Media” Jim Giles, “Computational Social Science: Making the Links”

2	Sep 17	Imagined communities. Programmability. Societies of control	Anatoliy Gruzd, Barry Wellman, & Yuri Takhteyev, “Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community” Taina Bucher, “The Friendship Assemblage: Investigating Programmed Sociality on Facebook” Writing assignment 1: Blog concept
3	Sep 24	Grounding clouds: geography, national jurisdictions, cultures	Benjamin Bratton, “The Stack-We-Have and the Stack-to-Come” (online talk) John Perry Barlow, “A Declaration of the Independence of the Internet” Mark Wigley, “Network Fever” Writing assignment 2: Online communities
4	Oct 1	Network and meshwork. Augmented reality	Bruno Latour, from <i>Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory</i> (64-66) Jason Pontin, “What Don’t I Understand About Meshes?” Tom Simonite, “Messaging App Weaves Smartphones Into an Alternative Internet” Blog work 1: WordPress blog
5	Oct 8 WP	Big Data. Metadata Case study: <i>The Exceptional and the everyday</i>	Bruno Latour, from <i>Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory</i> (181-183) Rob Kitchin, from “Big Data, new epistemologies and paradigm shifts” (1-3) Kate Crawford, “The hidden biases of big data” Paul Caplan, “The app-object economy: We’re All Remix Artists Now”; “What is a JPEG? The Invisible Object You See Everyday” Discussion 1: <i>The Exceptional and the everyday</i> ; Svitlana Matviyenko, “Liquid Categories for Augmented Revolutions” Blog work 2: Permalink. Keywords
6	Oct 15 WP	From “markets are conversations” to “communicative capitalism”	Rick Levine, Christopher Locke, Doc Searls, and David Weinberger, <i>The Cluetrain Manifesto</i> Rob Horning, “Feedbags” Writing assignment 3: <i>Do Not Track</i> (Response) + Tracking analysis (via Ghostery) Blog work 3: Tags. Categories
7	Oct 22	Liquid surveillance. Sousveillance Guest lecture by Aleks Essex	Mark Andrejevic, “We Are All Lab Rats Online” Christopher Fuchs, “Privacy and the Political Economy of Facebook” (163-171) Zygmunt Bauman et al, from “After Snowden: Rethinking the Impact of Surveillance” (128-131) Writing assignment 4: Conversations

8	Oct 29	No class	
9	Nov 5 WP	Close-up at a distance: what is <i>seen</i> through the fibre optic medium? Case study: Bellingcat / social media and open source intelligence	Elliot Higgins, “Searching the Earth: Essential Geolocation Tools for Verification” Discussion 2: Bellingcat Blog work 4: Guest blogging
10	Nov 12 WP	Game networks. The pirate organization Guest lecture by JP Vergne	Casey O’Donnell & Mia Consalvo, “Games Are Social/Media(ted)/Technology Too . . .” Rodolphe Durand & Jean-Philippe Vergne, from <i>The Pirate Organization</i> : “What Is the Pirate Organization?” (41-57); “The Pirate Organization in Cyberspace” (101-110); “The Pirate Organization and the Building Blocks of Life” (133-143)
11	Nov 19 WP	Transparency and opacity of social networks	Byung-Chul Han, from <i>The Transparency Society</i> (a chapter of your choice) Alexander Galloway, “Black Box, Black Bloc” Discussion 3: Dave Eggers, <i>The Circle</i>
12	Nov 26	Non-human sociality. Bots. The Uncanny Valley	Benjamin Bratton, “Outing A. I.: Beyond the Turing Test” Steve Jones, “How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bots” <i>Her</i> (Spike Jonez, 2013) and/or <i>Ex Machina</i> (Alex Garland, 2015) Blog work: 5 (FINAL): Blog for peer-revision
13	Dec 3	Again: What is social about social media?	Dominic Pettman, from <i>Infinite Distraction</i> (TBA) Discussion 4: Social media and a new horror genre Writing assignment 5: Blog peer-reviews

Assignment Overview

There is no exam in this course; thus, we have a variety of weekly assignments on the basis of which I will evaluate your course performance in this course.

- **Readings** are assigned for each class. You are required to do the readings before class. Come prepared and demonstrate your understanding of the points raised by the authors as well as all terms and concepts. Your participation in our in-class discussions will be evaluated weekly (except the days when we have four Discussions.)
- **Discussions** will require that you investigate a suggested case study, for which you will do additional research. The questions and guidelines for these discussions will be provided a week in advance.
- **Writing assignments** will be focused on several different subjects. They will also include your reports about your work with social media data analysis tools.
- **Blog work:** you are expected to write 2 posts during the 5 weeks designated “WP” (“weekly posts”) on the syllabus. In addition to that, you will have 5 separate blog work assignments on search engine optimization or else.

For a detailed description of these assignments, see our course website. The due dates for all assignments are provided in the syllabus above.

For achieving best results in this course, it is crucial that you **plan your work**. In some cases, you have to start working on an assignment in advance (i.e., as you build your blog or analyze online communications, which requires monitoring data for a number of days before you can write a report; or when you prepare for a discussion on Dave Eggers' long novel that you will have to start reading ahead of time). Read the syllabus very attentively, set reminders about time-consuming assignment coming; you are responsible for planning your work. I will address this matter during our introductory class, but if you still have questions you are welcome to talk to me separately.

Grade Composition

Type of assignment	Number of assignments	Worth /one	Weight /all
Writing assignment	5	60 (60 x 5 = 300)	30 %
Blog work	5	100 (#1) + 30 (#2&3) + 80 (#4) + 60 (#5) = 300	30 %
Weekly 2 blog posts*	5	20 (20 x 5 = 100)	10 %
Discussions	4	50 (50 x 4 = 200)	20 %
Class attendance & participation	8	2.5 (2.5 x 8 = 20) 10 (10 x 8 = 80)	10 %

NOTE: Weekly posts are due by the time of our class of the following weeks: **5, 6, 9, 10, and 11**. See “**WP**” (“weekly posts”) mark on the syllabus.

Late assignments

Extensions will only be granted for family emergencies, illness, and other University-recognized legitimate reasons for missing assignments. Otherwise late assignments will receive a deduction of 3 % per day. Extensions will not be granted on weekly assignments (such as blog posts). Please contact academic counselling to receive accommodation for family emergencies or illness.

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Laptops and other electronic devices can be helpful in the classroom, both for note taking and for looking up relevant online resources. But they can also be distracting and disruptive. As this is a course about contemporary information technologies, we will together experiment with their constructive educational uses. You are permitted to bring laptops or tablets into the lectures for class related purposes. However, this privilege will be revoked if it is abused, so if you want to continue having access to digital devices in the lecture, don't use them for checking your email, texting, playing games, watching movies, shopping etc. Phones, however, are prohibited to use in class; you can only use phones during the breaks.

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following

Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Academic Accommodation

Medical Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or **assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation in the form of a Student Medical Certificate. It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

For **work worth less than 10% of the final grade**, the instructor will consider requests for academic accommodation on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or by appointment in office

hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may, however, decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Counselling office.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

For Western University policy on accommodation for medical illness, see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Compassionate Accommodation

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations. Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Counsellor. If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire or some other exceptional crises, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation. For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation.

Students seeking additional bereavement leave for religious or other reasons should contact their Academic Counsellors, and provide valid documentation.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. <http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>. Additional information is given in the Western Academic Calendar.

FIMS Grading Policy

The MIT program now has the following class average policy:

- All 1000-level MIT **required** courses (i.e., 1020E; 1025F/G; 1050A/B) will have a class average of between 67 and 72%.
- All 2000-level MIT **required** courses (i.e. 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) will have a class average of between 70 and 75%.
- All 3000-level MIT **required** courses (i.e. 3000, 3100) will have a class average of between 72 and 77%.

Elective courses and 4th year seminar courses have no class average requirement.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

SUPPORT SERVICES -- LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

www.registrar.uwo.ca

Student Development Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca

Psychological Services:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych

Services for Students with Disabilities:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd

Accessibility Information:

www.accessibility.uwo.ca/

Writing Support Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing

Learning Skills Services:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning

Indigenous Services:

indigenous.uwo.ca/

International and Exchange Student

Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca/int

Career Centre at Western:

www.success.uwo.ca/careers/

Appendix A: Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

(<http://www.fims.uwo.ca/current/counselling/undergrad-counselling/appeals.htm>)

Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

Stages in the Appeals Process:

The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor. For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee. Appeals of final grades must be within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendars. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.