COMM 6014

Communication on the Internet

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Computers are everywhere in our daily lives, and nowhere are they as pervasive as in our communication. Indeed, the number of phenomena and activities that can be broadly classified under the label of "computer-mediated communication" is so large as to make it impossible to cover adequately in a single semester.

In this course, we narrow our focus to examine the ways that individuals use the Internet and other related technologies in their everyday lives and social interactions. We will do this by reading contemporary and foundational research on CMC and by using and critically evaluating these technologies ourselves. Specific topics to be covered include: interpersonal and group communication, language change, online communities and social networks, identity and self-presentation online.
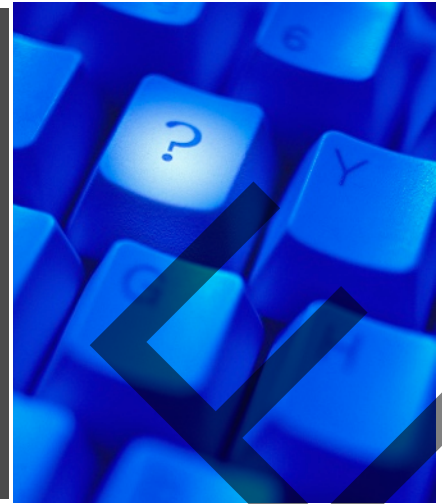
Course Objectives

In this course you will engage with key theories and research findings from the field of CMC in furtherance of the following objectives:

- understand the development of the Internet & related computer technologies as they relate to human social interactions
- understand the impact of networked computing technologies on interpersonal and group dynamics
- understand the impact of the Internet on the relationship between our sense of self and our perceptions of others

Students will work toward achieving these objectives by developing and practicing the following skills:

- describing how individuals have incorporated new technology into their social interactions since the early 1970s
- analyzing examples of interpersonal & group interaction in various online settings and comparing with other media (including face-to-face)
- analyzing examples of online communities & social networking sites (SNS) and comparing with traditional examples of communities and social networks
- identifying and describing changes in language & linguistic form that have arisen through the use of networked computing technologies
- identifying key issues with respect to the representation of demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, race, etc.) in online environments
- analyzing examples of identity construction/presentation in various online settings

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FACULTY INFORMATION

Assignments

The assignments in this class are designed to help you further your understanding of the course material by applying what you learn to your own observations of CMC phenomena. Specifically, over the course of the semester you will be assessed on the following assignments:

Short Papers

You will write a series of short papers (1100-1400 words UG; 1600-1800 words Grad) that ask you to analyze some aspect of CMC. The short paper topics are as follows:

1. Language & the Internet
2. Self-presentation in SNS
3. Participating in online communities

Detailed instructions for these papers will be distributed separately.

Blog Entries

Because this is an online class, your primary method of participation will be to write and comment on blog entries using the course blog that has been set up on blogs.memphis.edu. There will be a total of 14 graded blog entries over the course of the semester. You will be provided with specific prompts, generally related to the class readings, to respond to in your blog entries. Blog entries will be short (150-300 words UG; 250-400 words Grad), informal writings that will be graded based on their responsiveness to the prompts. You will not be graded for spelling and grammar or style in your blog entries, but I will be looking for direct evidence that you have read and reflected on the assigned readings. You will also use these blog entries and the experience as a basis for comparison for the final paper. For each blog entry, you will also be required to comment on the blog entries of your peers-- comments should be substantive (minimum 1-3 sentences) and should reflect engagem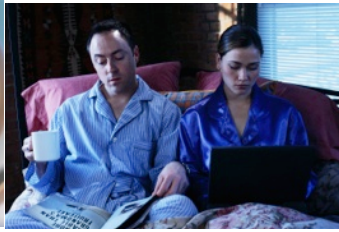ent with your peers' ideas and thoughts. Comments will be in-cluded in the blog assignment grade. Undergraduate students should comment on a *mini-mum* of five different peers' entries per blog assignment; graduate students should comment on a minimum of eight different classmates' entries.

Semester Blog Analysis

As a companion to your own blogging, you will be asked to choose a regularly-updated blog written by a person unknown to you and follow it over the course of the semester. The final paper will ask you to analyze some aspect of this blog and compare the experiences of writing and reading blogs. Additional details for this assignment will be distributed separately.

Chat Sessions

There will be six scheduled synchronous chat sessions held over the course of the semester. These sessions will require you to be logged in to Adobe Connect at a predetermined time. The chat sessions also function as class participation, and will

give us a chance to discuss assignments, ask and answer questions, and just generally get to know each other a bit more. Chat attendance is required.

In all assignments, graduate students will be expected to engage the readings at a deeper level and to incorporate higher-level theoretical concepts into their writings.

Class Policies

Email

•Always include a subject line. Please include the course number in your subject line.

•Remember without facial expressions some comments may be taken the wrong way. Be careful in wording your emails. Use of emoticons might be helpful in some cases.

•Use standard fonts.
•Do not send large attachments without permission.
•Special formatting such as centering, audio messages, tables, html, etc. should be avoided unless necessary to complete an assignment or other communication.

•Respect the privacy of other class members.

Chat

•Introduce yourself to the other learners in the chat session. Change your screen name to your first name if possible.

•Be polite. Choose your words carefully. Do not use derogatory statements.

•Be concise in responding to others in the chat session.

•Be prepared to open the chat session at the scheduled time.

•Be constructive in your comments and suggestions.

Technical Assistance

Helpdesk: 901-678-8888

https://umhelpdesk.memphis.edu/

Grade Disputes & Questions

Assignments are developed to achieve a variety of academic and assessment goals and I always attempt to describe exactly what is required. However, if you have a question about the assignment—it's content, format, etc., do not hesitate to ask.

As a general rule I will return graded assignments within 8-14 days. All grades will be posted on eCourseware, giving

you a running total of your grade in the course. If you have additional questions about your progress you may check with me at any time throughout the semester.

If you would like to discuss any assignment after receiving feedback/grades, please wait 24 hours to "catch your breath" and collect your thoughts; again, be sure you bring specific questions to our discussion. I hope you will approach the grading philosophy as a challenge, not as an obstacle :-)

Students with Disabilities

Any student who may need class or test accommodations based on the impact of a disability is encouraged to speak with me privately to discuss his or her specific needs. Students with disabilities should also contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at 100 Wilder Tower, 678-2880. SDS coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Understanding Your Grades

A = Outstanding Achievement
Should be understood as truly excellent work that integrates concepts, and theories and presents them in a well-argued

manner. The written work is generally error-free in spelling and grammatical errors. To earn an "A" on an assignment, you will need to be extremely proficient at explaining, applying, evaluating, and synthesizing the concepts, models, etc., covered in this class.

B = Good Achievement

Should be understood as good work that demonstrates a firm grasp of concepts and class material and presents them in a solid manner. The written work has a minimal number of spelling and grammatical errors and is structured with an appropriate introduction and conclusion.

C = Satisfactory Achievement

Should be understood as passable work that fulfills the requirements of the assignment in a basic way. It may have some organizational flaws but generally demonstrates an understanding of the key concepts.

The written work has a moderate number of spelling and grammatical errors. An assignment that does the bare minimum to meet, but does not exceed the basic requirements will receive a grade somewhere in the "C" range.

D = Poor Achievement

Should be understood as not acceptable work that demonstrates competence in less than half of the required concepts, theories, etc. It may have major writing or organizational flaws that hamper the interpretation of the work. Required elements for the assignment may be missing or undeveloped.

F = Unsatisfactory

Should be understood as work that does not address the criteria of the assignment and does not indicate an understanding of the course material. It may have severe problems in expression, organization and writing, and accuracy.

POLICY ON LATE WORK

All assignments, including all blog entries and any homework, are due at the start of class on the date specified by the instructor. Late blog entries will not be counted towards your grade.

 Late papers will be penalized with a 10-point deduction for each day the paper is late, including weekends. Papers more than 7 days late will not be accepted.

As a general rule I do not grant extensions, so it is your responsibility to make sure to keep track of deadlines and turn all assignments in on time. Any exceptions to this will be granted at the sole discretion of the instructor.

POLICY ON WRITTEN WORK

With the exception of work completed in class, all written work must be computer-generated, double-spaced, with proper margins. Please adhere to the word limits established for each assignment, as points will be deducted for papers that are egregiously under or over the limits.

All papers must be accurately and completely documented using APA 5th or 6th edition style. Papers must be turned in electronically through the eCourseware site.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STUDENT CONDUCT

I use Turnitin to evaluate the originality of your assignments submitted for class. As part of this process, you will be required to submit electronic copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. According to the U of M's Office of Legal Counsel (10/17/ 2005) by taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

According to the University of Memphis Student Handbook, your assignments must reflect your own effort. When using outside sources--those written by other individuals-- you must acknowledge your sources and add your own analysis. Failure to properly cite sources constitutes plagiarism. **If you plagiarize or cheat, the minimum penalty is an F on the assignment; other penalties could include an F for the course and/ or suspension.**

All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Expectations for academic integrity and student conduct are described in detail on the website of the Office of Student Judicial and Ethical Affairs:
http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs/dishonesty/definitions.htm

Grade Breakdown:

Assignment	Undergrad	Grad
Short Paper 1	10%	10%
Short Paper 2	15%	10%
Short Paper 3	15%	10%
Blog Entries/Comments	25%	30%
Chat Sessions	10%	10%
Semester Blog Analysis	25%	30%
Total	100%	100%

Breakdown of Letter Grades (in %)

A = 94-100   A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89   B = 84-86   B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79   C = 74-76   C- = 70-73

D+ = 66-69   D = 60-65   F = 0-59

Required Materials

This class is conducted entirely online. Please see the eCampus website for specific technology requirements:
http://www.memphis.edu/ecampus/technical.php
Students must use their university email addresses and take responsibility for checking email regularly. The following book is **required** for this class: *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, Nancy K. Baym, 2010. ISBN: 9780745643328. **Additional required readings will be available on eCourseware.**