



DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION

COURSE OUTLINE – WINTER SEMESTER 2021

SO 4000 A3 – Sociology of the Internet 3 (3-0-0) UT 45 Hrs.

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OFFICE

HOURS: Remote: Monday thru Friday, 08:30 hrs. to 17:00 hrs.

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE(S): SO 3500 or permission of the instructor

REQUIRED TEXT(S)/RESOURCE MATERIALS: M. Graham & W. Dutton, (eds.), 2019 2nd ed., Society and the Internet Oxford; R. Deibert, 2020, Reset: Reclaiming the Internet for Civil Society Anansi; V. Mosco, 2017, Becoming Digital: Toward a Post-Internet Society Emerald; N. Selwyn, 2019, What is Digital Sociology? Polity Press.

WINTER 2021 DELIVERY: Remote Delivery. This course is delivered remotely. There are no face-to-face or on-site requirements. *Students must have a computer with a webcam and reliable internet connection.* Technological support is available through helpdesk@gprc.ab.ca.

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: The sociology of the Internet addresses the use of digital media as part of everyday life, and how this technology contributes to patterns of human behavior, social relationships, and concepts of the self. It applies sociological theory and method to the Internet as a source of information and communication, and examines the social implications of this technology on the new social networks, virtual communities, and ways of interaction that have arisen.

CREDIT/CONTACT HOURS: 3 (3-0-0) UT 45 hours

DELIVERY MODE(S): lectures, class discussion, group work, class presentations, on-line written tests, on-line written projects

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The Internet is seen as an object of social enquiry, as a tool for researching social life, and as a communication/media tool. Three aspects of the sociology of the Internet are addressed: *first*, sociological analyses of the Internet involves researching the ways in which people's use of digital media configures and shapes their sense of selves and their social relations (e.g., social activism; critiquing data industries such as Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon). *Second*, engaging in a critical digital sociology that involves a critique of digital media tools (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) by applying contemporary sociological theory to their use. *Third*, the course explores the implications of 'the digital' for sociological practice itself – working with social science data from on-line social media activities.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students will be able to understand how the internet and world wide web (Web 1.0 - 3.0) developed/evolved with respect to design and infrastructure. They will be able to apply the principles of 'digital sociology' to research social issues in on-line contexts as well as gain computer, digital, and Web literacy – 21st Century skills. Students will have the means to critique the use of analytics and algorithms by Big Data (data collected from the Internet of Things [IoT], wearable technologies, smart devices, and apps). Students will be able to see the importance of greater internet/Web governance, regulation, and accountability as the boundaries between our on-line and off-line lives blur.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

For a more precise definition of plagiarism and its consequences, refer to the Student Conduct section of the College Admission Guide at <http://www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/> or the College Policy on Student Misconduct: Plagiarism and Cheating at www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/

TRANSFERABILITY:

***Warning:** Although we strive to make the transferability information in this document up-to-date and accurate, **the student has the final responsibility for ensuring the transferability of this course to Alberta Colleges and Universities.**

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferralberta.ca> or, if you do not want to navigate through few links, at <http://alis.alberta.ca/ps/tsp/ta/tbi/onlineSearch.html?SearchMode=S&step=2>

**** Grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

GRADING CRITERIA:

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE			
GRADING CONVERSION CHART			
Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Designation
A⁺	4.0	91 – 100	EXCELLENT
A	4.0	86 – 90	
A⁻	3.7	81 – 85	FIRST CLASS STANDING
B⁺	3.3	77 – 80	
B	3.0	73 – 76	GOOD
B⁻	2.7	69 – 72	
C⁺	2.3	66 – 68	SATISFACTORY
C	2.0	63 – 65	
C⁻	1.7	60 – 62	
D⁺	1.3	55 – 59	MINIMAL PASS
D	1.0	50 – 54	
F	0.0	0 – 49	FAIL
WF	0.0	0	FAIL, withdrawal after the deadline

EVALUATIONS:

Mid-Term Exam (20%).....	February 24
Final Exam (30%).....	TBA
Daily 'Digital Dialogue' (5 x 1% = 5%).....	starts January 15
Book Analysis & Zoom Presentation (1 x 15%).....	March 5
Text Chapter Research & YouTube Presentation (2 x 15% = 30%)...	(#1) February 12; (#2) March 26

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

EXAMS: The *Mid-Term Exam* will consist of short answer questions/definitions of terminology (20%), as will the *Final Exam* (30%, date TBA).

SEMESTER WORK: Here's the basic breakdown:

- (1) Daily '**Digital Dialogue**' (x 5) – choose a link/website and discuss *any* article relating to the Internet/WWW in the context of our textbooks, readings, and lectures (10 minutes; submit link, story, & PP slides). Starts **January 15th**

Topic examples: internet research ethics, privacy and surveillance issues, media manipulation and false news, the virtual classroom, the 'dark web', online activism, racism and sexism on Twitter, *etc.* The topics are endless! Simply Google search a subject or topic you like!

- (2) Book Analysis (x 1) – choose **one book** from my **Suggested Book List** provided for this course.
Prepare an evaluative essay (so, more than just a casual review of the book) on how the subject/topic of the book relates to the sociology of the internet as studied in this course. Submit as a **Word** document; then, you will share your opinion/evaluation in a short Zoom presentation to the class as per schedule posted.
(due **March 5th**; a rubric for this analysis will be provided as the course gets underway).

Book examples: 'How Google Works' (E. Schmidt); 'The Everything Store: Jeff

Bezos and the Age of Amazon' (B. Stone); 'Inside Apple' (A. Lashinsky); 'Zucked: Waking up to the Facebook Catastrophe' (R. McNamee); 'Digital Demagogue: Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Trump and Twitter' (C. Fuchs), 'The Rise of Big Data Policing' (A. Ferguson), 'Black Code: Surveillance, Privacy, and the Dark Side of the Internet' (R. Deibert), *etc.*

See my Suggested Book List for the whole list

(3) Text Chapter Research & Presentation (**x 2**) – choose **two chapters** from our text "Society & the Internet, 2nd ed., 2019). [The book has 5 Parts, each devoted to an issue or topic, with each Part offering between 4 and 6 chapters (so lots to choose from!)]. **#1 is due February 12; #2 is due March 26.** *Your task is to...*

(a) Prepare a detailed and in-depth treatment of the chapters, their issues and subject matter. Go beyond the chapters for more information.

Submit as a **Word** document attached to an email.

(b) Then, arrange to post your work as a presentation on YouTube.

(c) Your YouTube link will be posted under 'Discussion' (a Forum/Topic 'thread' will be created); everyone will be expected to post their comments for each presentation (that is, the original presenter will receive comments from every member of the class and will respond).

[Deadlines as posted. Rubrics will be provided both for the chapter analysis and presentation, and the expected responses and comments by fellow students]

What the semester course work entails will be discussed in more detail as classes get underway and as the course progresses. You will be provided with other instructions and more relevant information in class/on BrightSpace (D2L) with plenty of lead time regarding the daily 'Digital Dialogue' presentations, book analysis, and the two text chapters that you have to research and present.

PLEASE NOTE:

A missed exam unfortunately cannot be accommodated - *unless* the situation is an unexpected personal or family emergency.

Any late work will result in an automatic loss of 5 percent (of the value of the work) PER DAY INCLUDING WEEKENDS, up to and including the day of a late submission, unless prior arrangements based on extenuating circumstances have been made. Documented personal/family emergencies will be accommodated. Example: if an assignment is valued at 10%, one day late makes it 5%. Forgetfulness and/or poor planning won't be accommodated.

COURSE SCHEDULE/TIMELINE (Winter 2021)

Please note that the topic sequence below is tentative, and that topics and subject matter related to our texts (where noted by author below) may be subject to modifications. Also note that topics will be supplemented by material from many other sources. *Text authors are referenced by their last names, below.*

January 6, 8 – Introduction to the course and course requirements and assignments; 21st- century skills and Internet/Web studies (*idea! read the introductions and table of contents to all our course texts, to familiarize yourself with their contents*)

January 13, 15 – Cont'd; introduction to/review of approaches in the study of technology (SCOT, STS, etc.); what are 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-order technologies?
Daily 'Digital Dialogue' starts on the 15th

January 20, 22 – Cont'd; introduction to/review of Industry 4.0; identifying the main themes in Internet and Web studies; introduction to Digital Sociology (**Graham & Dutton; Selwyn**)

January 27, 29 – Cont'd; Digital Sociology in the context of communication and media studies; brief history and evolution of the Internet and the World Wide Web; the 'Infosphere' and 'Technosphere' as features of post-Industrial society (**Graham & Dutton; Mosco**)

February 3, 5 – Cont'd; are we researching society or technology? What makes digital technologies social? The diversity of digital technology use; digital technologies and the study of culture, society, social class, race, gender – forms of digital scholarship (**Graham & Dutton; Selwyn**)

February 10, 12 – Cont'd; the sociology of the Internet, social media, and the Information Revolution; the Internet/Web as a tool of sociological research (**Graham & Dutton; Selwyn**) **1st Text Chapter Research and YouTube Presentations due on Feb. 12th**

February 17, 19 – **No classes this week; Family Day & Reading/Winter Break**

February 24, 26 – Cont'd; a critical sociology of Big Data (Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple); algorithms of oppression; data discrimination; surveillance and digital tracking (**Mosco; Deibert; Graham & Dutton**)

March 3, 5 – Cont'd; reframing well-known concepts such as justice, privacy, consent (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube & wearable technologies) (**Deibert; Mosco**) **Book Analysis due March 5th**

March 10, 12 – Cont'd; digital relationships and the sociology of connection; finding meaning in online spaces; personal data practices; digital impression management (including fake news, conspiracy theories, etc.)

March 17, 19 – Cont'd; personal relationships, intimacy and the Self in a mediated and global digital age (**Graham & Dutton**)

March 24, 26 – Cont'd; Internet and Web governance, regulation, and accountability in the age of abuse, misuse, and authoritarianism; the environmental costs of producing and using internet/Web technology hardware (**Graham & Dutton; Deibert**) **2nd Text Chapter Research and YouTube Presentations due on March 26th**

March 31, April 2 – Cont'd; Internet research ethics for the social age; situating the researcher within internet and digital sociology (**Selwyn**)

April 7, 9 – Cont'd; being a digital sociologist; conclusions and review; preparations for the final exam

[Classes end Monday April 12, 2021 – Final Exams are April 14-22, 2021]

Six Ways To Make This Course More Valuable:

- 1. Participate, to engage your learning**
- 2. Question, to enhance your learning**
- 3. Read, to expand your learning**
- 4. Reflect, to measure your learning**
- 5. Apply, to transfer your learning**
- 6. Innovate, to adapt your learning**