

CJT780-001: Special Topics in Communication - Social Media Theory & Research Spring 2013

Instructor: Zixue Tai, Ph.D. & Associate Professor
Meeting Time: Monday, 3:30 pm – 6:00 pm
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Office Hours: TR 1:00 pm – 3:10 pm; M 1:15pm – 2:30 pm; & by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OVERVIEW

This course is an advanced graduate seminar focusing on the burgeoning but exploding field of the cross-disciplinary interrogation of the spectrum of myriad social media platforms and applications. It incorporates an interdisciplinary perspective on its theoretical and methodological approaches, and offers an up-do-date review of analytics and tools in gathering and analyzing data from a variety of popular social media platforms. Although the field of social media research is supra-disciplinary by nature and by necessity, we will pay special attention to topical issues, innovative approaches, theoretical implications and research findings in direct relevance to the field/discipline of communication.

In particular, there are three intervening lines of emphasis in the course materials and throughout class discussions: first, we will develop an understanding of major theoretical strains and conceptualizations in relation to social media uses and impact in society; second, we will scrutinize and evaluate a core set of state-of-the-field research literature encompassing contributions from diverse academic disciplines and research traditions; third, we will assess and be familiar with the expanding repertoire of analytics and research tools in tapping into and making sense of the ocean of social media data in regard to questions and inquiries of your own interest.

As graduate students in a major communication research program, it is our goal to train you into rising scholars so that you are able to not only appreciate other people's research but also leave your own footprints in the discipline through your own original research endeavors and outputs. In this course, each doctoral student *is required* to complete a research study from conceptualization to writing up the paper in a specific area of his/her interest with regard to social media.

READINGS

There is no required book to buy for the course. There will be an extensive list of journal articles and book chapters that we will read throughout the semester. Weekly reading assignments will be made available to class members digitally.

CLASS FORMAT & PARTICIPATION

This class is an advanced-level graduate seminar, and your participation ultimately defines the success (or failure, if you will) of the course. Each seminar session will be structured around an extensive, but manageable, series of readings. Given that the readings form the foundations of class discussions, you are expected to come to class having completed the readings assigned for

that week. This means that you should arrive at class prepared with questions, comments, and criticisms.

Being a valued member of the community of scholars in any particular field entails practices best summarized in these two words: collegiality and communality. We will build this course into a community and collegial atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable to contribute to and engage themselves in all activities. Diverse, and even unorthodox opinions, are encouraged. Meanwhile, no student should refrain from criticisms and constructive comments on the work/words of others (among them, members of this class, your professor included). Yet all this should be done in a respectful, courteous, and professional manner.

As a courtesy to all members of this class, you should avoid any type of disruptive or distracting activities, such as text messaging, Web surfing and conversations unrelated to the course during class time.

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory, and punctuality is expected. Participation in class discussion and activities will be counted toward your grade. Excused absences are only reserved for personal emergencies, as defined by the University Senate, at the discretion of the professor. Excessive (i.e., three or more) absences, even if they are for emergency purposes, will jeopardize one's chance of passing the course. It is the responsibility of the individual student to find out from fellow classmates what material has been covered in the session(s) they have missed, and to make up all missed readings and assignments.

LATE ASSIGNMENT & INCOMPLETE

Stick to all important deadlines. Late assignments may be accepted (possibly with a penalty), but this acceptance is not automatic. I have to be convinced why the request for extension should be warranted.

An "I" (Incomplete) grade will be given only if a substantial amount of the course work has been satisfactorily completed at the time of the request. Furthermore, you have to demonstrate that insurmountable circumstances are stopping you from completing the course in the remainder of the semester. This requires submitting a written appeal with all necessary documentation at the earliest date possible.

PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

There is a zero tolerance policy for any form of cheating and/or plagiarism. This includes (but is not limited to) using sources without proper attribution, fabricating research data, presenting another's work as one's own, using the same assignment for more than one class, and colluding with others in committing dishonesties. Any offense of the aforementioned nature will lead to a zero in this course and/or other possible consequences (e.g., resulting in a grade of "XF" – failed for academic dishonesty – being put on your permanent transcript). Any question or confusion about academic integrity must be resolved before any writing is submitted to the professor.

GRADING

Your final grade for this course is based on the following percentage breakdown:

Session Moderator/Discussant	20%
Class Participation	20%
Research Paper (Including Presentation)	60%

PARTICIPATION

This is a seminar rather than a lecture. So with the help of the assigned readings, you will critique relevant theories, analyze research designs and approaches, and brainstorm ideas. As a result, active participation of *all* class members is expected, and each member should be ready to answer questions posed by moderators/the professor and provide feedback to others' answers.

A significant portion (20%) of your course grade depends on your participation in class discussions and activities. Simply showing up at class won't automatically qualify for a passing grade. Students will need to demonstrate that: (1) they have done the required readings; and (2) they can make meaningful contributions to and enlightening insights on discussions in class.

MODERATING

Each student is asked to sign up for a week that ideally pertains to her own research interests in the role as a discussion moderator. As such, the student will need to fulfill these specific duties: (1) fully understand and digest the assigned readings; (2) suggest additional literature in relation to this topic, if necessary; (3) present a short, integrated summary outlining main theoretical strains and research lines in this subspecialty of inquiry as gleaned from the readings; (4) pinpoint salient topics and (significant and well-trodden, significant but underexplored, promising, groundbreaking, etc.) areas of future research; and (5) lead the class through discussions by preparing a list of thought-provoking questions.

The moderating assignment may entail additional research on top of the assigned readings. You will become the expert on this topic in this class by getting yourself intimately familiar with extant research literature and emerging fronts, and you will put yourself in a position to identify fertile lines of research down the road. To do that, it may be desirable to suggest a few (let's say, four or five) additional readings in wake of your own evaluations of current research literature. You will need to prepare a handout to the class (running about two pages) based on the tasks specified in the previous paragraph.

RESEARCH PAPER

I am assuming that all students coming into this class have already developed a sufficient level of sophistication with research methods and an intimate familiarity with communication theories. For each doctoral student, you will need to complete a research project from start to finish. This means you will need to turn in a finished paper reporting *your original research developed through this class* at the end of the semester. So it cannot be based on an existing project you are doing or have done for other purposes. I expect the paper to be at the level of acceptability by a reputable conference (e.g., ICA, NCA, AEJMC), or better yet, to be publishable by a recognized journal.

We will discuss the progress you will need to make for this paper in class on a regular basis. If the research involves human subjects, then you will need to take into consideration the IRB process in your planning.

For Master students, you have the option of either working out a research proposal or conducting a comprehensive literature review pertaining to a particular aspect of social media research within domains of your personal interest.

For all projects, topics need to be approved by the professor before you can proceed to the next step.

Here is a rough timeline to follow in planning ahead

January end: Research topic finalized

February – early March: Literature review and tools preparation

Mid- to late-March: Data gathering

Early to mid-April: Data gathering (con't); analyzing data and drafting the paper

If IRB approval is needed, then you will need to get the paper work going in mid-February for that part of the process. In most cases, I anticipate an Exemption request considering the typical type of research we do in this field.

Schedule & Readings (Tentative)

Week 1 (Jan. 14)

Introduction & Logistics

Week 2 (Jan. 21)

MLK Holiday.

Week 3 (Jan. 28)

Topic: State of the Field Overview

Readings

boyd, d. m. & Ellison, N. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1). Available: <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>

Good, K. D. (2013). From scrapbook to Facebook: A history of personal media assemblage and archives. *New Media & Society*.

Miller, D. (2011). Fifteen theses on what Facebook might be: What makes Facebook important. Chapter in D. Miller, *Tales from Facebook* (pp. 164-204). Malden, MA: Polity.

Murthy, D. (2012). Towards a sociological understanding of social media: Theorizing Twitter. *Sociology*, 46(6), 1059-1073.

Thelwall, M. (2009). Social network sites: Users and uses. In M. Zelkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in computers*, vol 76 (pp. 19-73). Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Wilson, R. E., Gosling, S. D. & Graham, L. T. (2012). A review of Facebook research in the social sciences. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(3), 203-220.

Week 4 (Feb. 4)

Topic: Self-Presentation and Identity Building

Readings

Back, M. D., Stopfer, J. M., Vazire, S., Gaddis, S., Schmukle, S. C., Egloff, B. & Gosling, S. D. (2010). Facebook profiles reflect actual personality, not self-idealization. *Psychological Science*, 21, 372-374.

Cover, R. (2012). Performing and undoing identity online: Social networking, identity theories and the incompatibility of online profiles and friendship regimes. *Convergence*, 18(2), 177-193.

DeAndrea, D. C., Allison S. Shaw, A. S. & Timothy R. Levine, T. R. (2010). Online language: The role of culture in self-expression and self-construal on Facebook. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 29(4), 425-442.

Mehidizadeh, S. (2010). Self-presentation 2.0: Narcissism and self-esteem on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 13(4), 357-364.

Miller, V. (2008). New media, networking and phatic culture. *Convergence*, 14(4), 387-400.

Schwämmlein, E. & Wodzicki, K. (2012). What to tell about me? Self-presentation in online communities. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(4), 387-407.

Week 5 (Feb. 11)

Topic: (Un-)Friending, (Un-)Following and Abstinence

Readings

Baek, K., Holton, A., Harp, D. & Yaschur, C. (2011). The links that bind: Uncovering novel motivations for linking on Facebook. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(6), 2243-2248.

Bevan, J. L., Pfyl, J. & Barclay, B. (2012). Negative emotional and cognitive responses to being unfriended on Facebook: An exploratory study. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(4), 1458-1464.

Kwak, H., Chun, H. & Moon, S. (2011). Fragile online relationship: A first look at unfollow dynamics in Twitter. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, pp. 1091-1100.

Lewis, J. & West, A. (2009). 'Friending': London-based undergraduates' experience of Facebook. *New Media & Society*, 11(7), 1209-1229.

Portwood-Stacer, L. (2013). Media refusal and conspicuous non-consumption: The performative and political dimensions of Facebook abstention. *New Media & Society*. In press.

Quinn, K. (2013). We haven't talked in 30 years!: Relationship reconnection and Internet use at midlife. *Information, Communication & Society*. In press.

Tufekci, Z. (2008). Grooming, gossip, Facebook and Myspace: What can we learn about these sites from those who won't assimilate? *Information, Communication & Society*, 11(4), 544-564.

Week 6 (Feb. 18)

Topic Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation

Readings

Bennett, W. L. (2012). The personalization of politics: Political identity, social media, and changing patterns of participation. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 644(1), 20-39.

Ellison, N., Steinfield, C. & Lampe, C. (2011). Connection strategies: Social capital implications of Facebook-enabled communication practices. *New Media & Society*, 13(6), 873-892.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, N. & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(3), 319–336.

Howard, P. N. & Parks, M. R. (2012). Social Media and political change: Capacity, constraint, and consequence. *Journal of Communication*, 62(2), 359-362.

Johnson, T. J., Zhang, W., Bichard, S. L. & Seltzer, T. (2011). United we stand? Online social network sites and civic engagement. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 185-207). New York: Routledge.

Kaye, B. K. (2011). Between Barack and a net place: Motivations for using social network sites and blogs for political information. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 208-231). New York: Routledge.

Vitak, J. & Ellison, N. B. (2013). 'There's a network out there you might as well tap': Exploring the benefits of and barriers to exchanging informational and support-based resources on Facebook. *New Media & Society*. In press.

Week 7 (Feb. 25)

Topics: Mourning & Bereavement; Imagined Audiences & Publics

Readings Related to Mourning & Bereavement

Brubaker, J. R., Hayes, R. R. & Dourish, P. (2013). Beyond the grave: Facebook as a site for the expansion of death and mourning. *The Information Society*. In press.

Marwick, A & Ellison, N. B. (2012). “There Isn't Wifi in Heaven!” Negotiating visibility on Facebook memorial pages. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(3), 378-400.

Walter, T., Hourizi, R., Moncur, W., & Pitsillides, S. (2011). Does the Internet change how we die and mourn? Overview and analysis. *OMEGA--Journal of Death and Dying*, 64(4), 275-302.

Readings Related to Imagined Audiences & Publics

Highfield, T., Harrington, S. & Bruns, A. (2013). Twitter as a technology for audiencing and fandom. *Information, Communication & Society*. In press.

Litt, E. (2012). Knock, knock. Who's there? The imagined audience. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(3), 330-345.

Marwick, A. & boyd, d. (2011). To see and be seen: Celebrity practice on Twitter. *Convergence*, 17(2), 139-158.

Paul, B. (2008). Re-reading fandom: Myspace character personas and narrative identification. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25 (5), 514-536.

Week 8 (Mar. 4)

Topic: Interplay of Social Media and Conventional Media

Readings

Anstead, N. & O'Loughlin, B. (2011). The Emerging Viewertariat and BBC Question Time: Television debate and real time commenting online. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 16(4), 440-462.

Arceneaux, N. & Weiss, A. S.. (2010). Seems stupid until you try it: Press coverage of Twitter, 2006-9. *New Media and Society*, 12(8), 1262-1279.

Hermida, A. (2010). Twittering the news: The emergence of ambient journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 4 (3), 297 - 308.

Hong, S. (2012). Online news on Twitter: Newspapers' social media adoption and their online readership. *Information Economics and Policy*, 24(1), 69-74.

Lasorsa, D. L., Lewis, S. C. & Holton, A. E. (2012). Normalizing Twitter: Journalism practice in an emerging communication space. *Journalism Studies*, 13(1), 19-36.

Murphy, D. (2013). *Twitter: Social communication in the Twitter age*. Ch. 4 – “Twitter and journalism” (pp. 51-69). Malden, MA: Polity.

Stefanone, M. A., Lackaff, D. & Rosen, D. (2010). The relationship between traditional mass media and “social media”: Reality television as a model for social network site behavior. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 54(3), 508-525.

Week 9 (Mar. 11)

Spring Break.

Week 10 (Mar. 18)

Topic: Analytics and Research Tools.

Readings TBA.

Week 11 (Mar. 25)

Topic: Analytics and Research Tools

Readings TBA.

Week 12 (Apr. 1)

Topics: Ethnographic Approaches & Perspectives; Social Media Activism

Readings (Ethnographic Approaches & Perspectives)

Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. Ch. 4 (pp. 58-73) & 10 (pp. 174-184).

Miller, D. (2011). *Tales from Facebook*. Ch. 1, 3, 5 & 8. Malden, MA: Polity.

Miller, D. & Slater, D. (2000). *The Internet: An ethnographic approach*. Ch. 1. (pp. 1-25). New York: BERG.

Readings (Social Media Activism)

Brabham, D. C. (2008). Crowdsourcing as a model for problem solving: An introduction and cases. *Convergence*, 14(1), 75-90.

Seegerberg, A., & Bennett, W. L. (2011). Social media and the organization of collective action: Using Twitter to explore the ecologies of two climate change protests. *The Communication Review*, 14(3), 197-215.

Week 13 (Apr. 8)

Topic: Public Health

Readings

Bull, S. S., Levine, D. K., Black, S. R., Schmiede, S. J. & Santelli, J. (2012). Social media-delivered sexual health intervention: A cluster randomized controlled trial. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 43(5), 467-474.

Dredze, M. (2012). How social media will change public health. *Intelligent Systems*. 27(4), 81-84.

Eytan, T., Golla, V., Parikh, R. & Stein, S. (2011). Social media and the health system. *The Permanente Journal*, 15(1), 71-74.

Hawn, C. (2009). Take two aspirin and tweet me in the morning: how Twitter, Facebook, and other social media are reshaping health care. *Health Affairs*, 28(2), 361-368

Kontos E. Z., Emmons, K. M., Puleo, E. & Viswanath, K. (2010). Communication inequalities and public health implications of adult social networking site use in the United States. *Journal of Health Communication*, 15(s3), 216-223.

Landry, M., Gonzales, F. A., Wood, S. & Vyas, A. (2013). New media use and sexual behavior Among Latino adolescents. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 37(3), 422-430.

Luxton, D. D., June, J. D. & Fairall, J. M. (2012). Social media and suicide: A public health perspective. *American Journal of Public Health*. 102(S2), s195-s200.

Munson, S. (2011). Beyond the share button: Making social network sites work for health and wellness. *IEEE Potentials*, 30(5), 42-47.

Murphy, D. (2013). *Twitter: Social communication in the Twitter age*. Ch. 7 – “Twitter and health” (pp. 115-143). Malden, MA: Polity.

Prochaska, J. J., Pechmann, C., Kim, R. & Leonhardt, J. M. (2012). Twitter=quitter? An analysis of Twitter quit smoking social networks. *Tobacco Control*, 21(4), 447-449.

Schmidt, C. W. (2012). Trending now: Using social media to predict and track disease outbreaks. *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 120(1), a30–a33.

Week 14 (Apr. 15)

Topic: College Students & Teens

Readings

Hasinoff, A. A. (2013). Sexting as media production: Rethinking social media and sexuality. *New Media & Society*. In press.

June, A. (2011). The effect of social network sites on adolescents’ academic and social development: Current theories and controversies. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology*, 62(8), 1435-1445.

Madge, C., Meek, J., Wellens, J., & Hooley, T. (2009). *Facebook*, social integration and informal learning at university: “It is more for socialising and talking to friends about work than for actually doing work.” *Learning, Media and Technology*, 34(2), 141-155.

Pedersen, S. (2013). UK teens’ safety awareness online – is it a ‘girl thing’? *Journal of Youth Studies*. In press.

Reynol, J. (2012). Too much face and not enough books: The relationship between multiple indices of Facebook use and academic performance. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28 (1), 187-198.

Robards, B. (2012). Leaving MySpace, joining Facebook: “Growing up” on social network sites. *Continuum*, 26(3), 385-398.

Roblyer, M. D., McDaniel, M. & Webb, M. (2010). Findings on Facebook in higher education: A comparison of college faculty and student uses and perceptions of social networking sites. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 13(2), 134-140.

Week 15 (April 22)

Research Presentations. May continue into the Finals Week if needed.

May 1 (at noon): Final Paper Due.