

SOCIOLOGY OF CYBERSPACE

SOC 415 (3CR) - Sec 601/ CRN 92085

**Summer Session 1 – May 23 to July 1, 2011
Monday to Friday, 10:45-11:15am, POST 127**

UH Catalog Description

SOC 415 Technology and Society (3) Nature of technology, social forces that affect its adoption; impact on society; innovation.DS

Introduction

Cyberspace results from the human collective ability to conceptualize possibilities in the design and use of technological artifacts (Krippendorf 2010)

Cyberspace, the Internet, social networking, the Web... new information and communication technologies are developed and adopted at an amazing rate. From a small group of American scientists, military and government workers twenty-five years ago, **the Net (internet)** now has a population of millions across the globe - human formations of different classes, cultural types, backgrounds and interests.

This course will also examine how information technologies affect social groups especially marginalized communities. We will explore the sociological phenomenon that transpires when people get connected using various internet applications. The net is a complicated collection of technologies, not a single unified thing. We will look at different aspects of the net and try to define and test the contemporary information and beliefs about the network society. Our learning objective is to observe, document what we see and to test hypotheses using sociological perspectives.

Description:

This course provides an introduction to the social issues emerging in *cyberspace today*. We will draw upon useful tools from interactionist sociology, identity and communication studies to examine power of social networks today and what can be expected in the future. Since new powers bring new conflicts, we will examine the challenges and struggles that will define how network technology will be used to influence and shape societies in the next century.

What you will learn in this class:

- Key concepts about cyberspace, network society, internet and related tools
- Some central concepts from sociology that can help understand cyberspace.
- How to form and carry out a research project.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participating in Discussion/Online Forum - Each week there is a new topic to be discussed. Each student is required to visit the online page of the course and answer questions of the week and comment or critique at least two other responses of their classmates for each question. The deadline for each topic is

Sunday 11:59 p.m. (Hawai'i Standard Time). The objective is to prepare the students for the week's discussion.

2. Journal Assignment - Four (4) journal entries, which integrate information from the readings and forums, will be collected on the due date, as indicated. Journal entries will address a specific question and are to be 1-2 pages each. Please submit journal entries electronically to the instructor via e-mail.

3. Case Study Analysis - Each student will select either a social group that demonstrate substantial activity or interaction online. Students will select from a list to be provided by instructor. Case study analyses should examine human formation and social interaction of the subjects under study. A written analysis of 2-3 pages (double-spaced) is required. Citations must be referenced. The reference list does not count as part of the 2-3 pages. A minimum of 5 references is required. The instructor must approve the student's choice of case study.

4. Website Review - Each student will review two websites of their choice. Each student will write a 1-2 page reflection paper of the websites.

All papers will be graded as follows:

- Extent to which the paper demonstrates an understanding of the topic of study. 50%
- Extent to which the intervention addresses larger issues about human formation. 40%
- Correct spelling, grammar, readability, and proper referencing ASA. 10%

Note on Format for Papers: All papers must be typed and emailed to the instructor on or before the day it is due. Fonts must be Times New Roman or Arial and no smaller than 12 point. All papers must be double spaced, with 1 inch margins at all borders. Please use headings to separate ideas in the paper. Style of headings, citations and references must be ASA (American Sociological Association). Papers that do not follow these guidelines will be returned for correction and/or marked down.

Late Papers: Late papers will be marked down. You must notify the instructor if your paper will be late. ½ grade for 1-3 days late. Full grade for 3-5 days late. Not accepted after 5 days.

STUDENT EVALUATION

Evaluation of achievement of course objectives will be based on class participation and the completion of course requirements as follows:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. 6 weeks of discussion | 5 points for each week | = 30 points = 30 % |
| 2. 4 journal entries | 5 points for each | = 20 points = 20 % |
| 3. 1 case study | 30 points | = 30 points = 30 % |
| 4. 2 website reviews | 10 points each | = 20 points = 20 % |

Extra 5 points each for excellent website reviews. Extra 5 points for online discussions that demonstrate extensive reading and engage class members.

Grades will be assigned based on total percentages accumulated:

A= 90% or above

B= 80 to 89%

C= 70-79%

D= 60-69%

F= below 60%

Please note that the instructor does not give "incompletes" unless there are justifiable emergencies.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Castells, Manuel (2011), *Communication Power*, Oxford University Press.

Kollock, Peter and Smith, Marc (1999). *Communities in Cyberspace*, Routledge.

Supplementary Readings:

Curtis, Pavel. 1991. "Mudding: Social Phenomena in Text-Based Virtual Reality", Electronic manuscript. (FTP: parcftp.xerox.com) Pages 1-21.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York: Anchor. Introduction. Pages 1-16.

Hess, Charlotte *Untangling the Web: The Internet as a Commons*, 1996 Paper Presentation at the "Reinventing the Commons" Workshop, Transnational Institute, Bonn, Germany, November 4-5, 1995.

Kling, Rob. *Social Relationships in Electronic Forums: Hangouts, Salons, Workplaces and Communities*. *Computerization and Controversy: Value Conflicts and Social Choices* (2nd Ed.) by Rob Kling. San Diego, Academic Press, 1996.

Kollock, P, Smith MA, 1996. *Managing the Virtual Commons: Cooperation and conflict in computer communities*. In *Computer Mediated Communication: Linguistic, Social and Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, Susan Herring, eds. John Benjamins, 1996.

Krebs, Valdis. "Visualizing Human Networks", Release 1.0, 12 February 1996.
Morningstar, Chip, and F. Randall Farmer. 1991. "The Lessons of Lucasfilm's Habitat", in *Cyberspace: First Steps*, edited by Michael Benedikt, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Pages 273-302.

Poster, Mark. 1990. "Foucault and Databases: Participatory Surveillance". In *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pages 69-98.

Rheingold, Howard. 1992. "A Slice of Life in My Virtual Community". Electronic manuscript. (FTP: ftp.eff.org) Pages 1-14.

Robins, Kevin and Frank Webster. 1990. "Athens without Slaves... Or Slaves without Athens?: The Neurosis of Technology". Science as Culture. Pages 7-53.

Salzenberg, Spafford and Moraes "What is Usenet" <ftp://rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet-by-group/news.answers/usenet/what-is/part1>

Smith, Marc A. "Invisible Crowds in Cyberspace", In Communities in Cyberspace, ed. Marc Smith and Peter Kollock. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Smith, Marc. 1992. "[Voices from the Well: The Logic of the Virtual Commons](#)". Electronic manuscript. Pages 1-58.

Sproull, Lee and Sara Keisler, 1992. Connections: New Ways of Working in the Networked Organization. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Pages 37-78

Stone, Allucquere Rosanne, 1991. "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?: Boundary Stories about Virtual Cultures". In Cyberspace: First Steps, edited by Michael Benedikt, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Pages 81-118.

Templeton et. al. "Emily Postnews Answers Your Questions on Netiquette" <ftp://rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet-by-group/news.answers/usenet/emily-postnews/part1>

The Accidental Superhighway <http://www.economist.com/surveys/internet/index.html>
Van Gelder, Lindsay, 1991. "The Strange Case of the Electronic Lover". In Computerization and Controversy: Value Conflicts and Social Choices, edited by Charles Dunlop and Rob Kling. Pages 364-375.

Vielmetti "What is Usenet? A second opinion." <ftp://rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet-by-group/news.answers/usenet/what-is/part2>

Wellman, Barry, et al. Computer Networks as Social Networks: Collaborative Work, Telework, and

Virtual Community. Annual Review of Sociology 1996 Vol. 22, p 213-238

Wellman, BS, Gulia M. 1996. Net surfers don't ride alone: virtual communities as communities. In Communities in Cyberspace, ed. Marc Smith and Peter Kollock. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wooley, Benjamin, 1992. "Virtuality", and "Cyberspace". Virtual Worlds: A Journey in Hype and Hyperreality. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. Pages. 57-72 and 121-136.