School of Communications, University of Hawaii at Manoa
COM691: Investigations into the Digital Divide and Digital Inequality in Hawaii
Fall 2014
Course Syllabus

Course Information

Meetings: Thursday, 3:00-5:30pm, BUSAD E203
Instructor: Wayne Buente
Office hours: Fridays, 9-11am or by appointment
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Course description:
Recent research on the digital divide demonstrates a more complex problem than merely the access to information and communication technology (ICT). As the widespread diffusion of ICTs appear to bridge the gap, what is becoming clear is how the digital divide represents greater facets of social, economic, and political inequality. As a result, the digital divide is now being understood as a “digital inequality”. Digital inequality examines access as a spectrum ranging from technical access to skills, usage and motivation. An important question to address is how we, as a society, address these new understandings of digital inequality. By analyzing this question, communication professionals can contribute to more effective and productive appropriate of ICTs for those members of society attempting to bridge the digital divide or inequalities. This course will investigate the digital divide and digital inequality issues in Hawaii.

Course objectives and outcomes:
• Understand the theoretical foundations of the digital divide, digital inequality and other aspects related to inequality and ICTs
• Evaluate ICTs from a social justice perspective
• Assess government policies and efforts to address digital divide and/or digital inequality issues

Readings:
Readings will be provided through Laulima. We will read a few chapters from the following title.


Course assignments:
Weekly comments/Class participation - 15%
Three graded assignments
1. Topic and Outline 10%
2. Prospectus - 20%
3. Peer Review - 20%

Final Paper - 35%

**Evaluation:**


**Grading Criteria**

These grading standards establish four major criteria for evaluation at each grade level: rhetorical situation, reasoning and content, organization and expression. Since papers may have some characteristics of "B" and others of "C," the final grade depends on the weight the instructor gives to each criterion. A paper grossly inadequate in one area may still receive a very low grade even if it successfully meets the other criteria. A brief summary of the grading criteria is provided below. Please consult the grading criteria in Appendix C for a more detailed explanation.

The "A" Paper: An "A" paper is clear and consistent and the content is appropriate for the assignment. It also demonstrates clear organization and expression.

The "B" Paper: The "B" paper shows an awareness of the audience and purpose. Its content is reasonably well developed with adequate evidence. The organization is clear and expression is competent.

The "C" Paper: The "C" paper has a clear purpose but lacks originality in topic selection. The content is adequately developed and supported with valid reasoning. Organization is clear with mechanical but appropriate transitions. The paper also demonstrates mastery of most conventions of edited English.

The "D" Paper: The "D" paper has an unclear purpose and an inappropriate topic for its intended audience. The content is inadequately developed and evidence is insufficient. The paper also shows flawed reasoning. Organization is deficient and the paper exhibits poor grammar.

The "F" Paper: The "F" paper has no clear purpose or remotely appropriate for its intended audience. The content is not developed nor adequately supported. The paper has no organization and serious errors with English comprehension.

**Attendance:**

I expect you to be at all class sessions. Excessive absences that are not excused will lower your final grade.

**Course Schedule**

**Digital Divide/Inequality: Background and Context**

This starts one of three class sessions to examine the history and development of the research on the digital divide and digital inequality. Examining its theoretical and conceptual dimensions provides a solid background to build sound policy, practices and measurements for addressing the ICT inequalities that you will encounter as a communications professional.

**Week 1 (08/28): Introduction**

Introduction to the course and expectations

We trace the origins of the digital divide to a 1998 NTIA report where the term served as a metaphor for inequality in the information age. In this session, we read excerpts from the original NTIA report and other notions of information inequality/poverty.


Week 3 (09/11): Digital Divide Background and Context: Theorizing Divides


Week 4 (09/18): Digital Divide Background and Context: Theorizing Divides and Social Context


Week 5 (09/25): Digital Inequality and Psychological Factors


**Week 6 (10/02): Digital Inequality, Social Context, and Social Justice**


**Week 7 (10/09): Digital Inequality and Skill Development**


**Week 8 (10/16): Digital Inequality and Digital Skills**


**Week 9 (10/23): Digital Divide and Education**


**Week 10 (10/30): No class**

**Week 11 (11/06): Digital Divide and Mobile Devices**


**Week 12 (11/13): Digital Divide and Inequity in the Technopolis**

Chapter 1, 7, and 8


**Week 13 (11/20): Public Libraries and Digital Divide**


**Week 14 (11/27): Thanksgiving**

**Week 15 (12/04): TBD**

**Week 16 (12/11): Final Discussion of Survey Results**