COM 300

Spring 2016

TTH 3:30pm – 5:20pm

CMU 302

Instructor: Yunkang Yang (yunkang@uw.edu)

Office hours: Thursday 2:00pm – 3:30pm

Office: CMU 340 L

Today, new media are ubiquitous. We wake up to the sound of cell phone alarms, we read the news and check our bank accounts on electronic tablets, we meet romantic partners online, and we stream movies via Wi-Fi. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to identify an area of life untouched by new media technologies.

So what does this ubiquity of new media mean for us? For our identities? Our political participation? Our democracy? Our societies? Part of this course will introduce you to some tentative answers to these questions. But because these answers are *tentative*, because the technologies, laws, cultures, and communities that structure our experience of new media are still in flux, this course also aims to help you to ask better questions about media in general. By training your ability to think critically about different media platforms, this course will enable you to determine what is at stake when new media technologies are introduced, to see how such technologies may be different from older media, and to understand how our society and our social life are transformed.

To this end, we will begin this course by defining new media conceptually and build a “theoretical toolbox”, with which we can analyze specific media platforms. Next, we will take a broader view to explore theories of communication tools and technologies in general – including historical approaches, comparison to “old” media, and a look at the impact of technological innovation more generally. In addition, we will explore the political implications of new media and investigate how technological changes enable new modes of political participation.

* **Understand what new media share with earlier media, and what distinguishes the two.**
* **Analyze the ways in which a given media platform may influence and be influenced by social, political, and economic forces.**
* **Identify key debates concerning the role of new media in contemporary society.**
* **Understand the social, cultural, and political implications of new media.**

Topics Include:

* Privacy
* Digital activism
* Surveillance
* Peer production
* Digital divide
* Search engine and algorithm
* Big data

Required Texts:

1 Baym, Nancy K. (2010), Personal Connections in the Digital Age, Cambridge: Polity.

2 Greenwald, Glenn. (2014), No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Course Website:

The course website can be found at **https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1039254**. All assignments, discussion, some reading materials, grade postings, and the like will be managed through this website. It is your primary contact with course content outside of class, and as such, you should consult it regularly. (One exception to this rule: Canvas’s internal message system is unwieldy at best, so please contact me via email instead of messaging me through Canvas.)

Email Policy:

Email is a double-edged sword. While it offers many conveniences as a medium of communication, those same conveniences can also foster miscommunication. To facilitate clear and useful communication, please attend to the following policies:

* I will only answer email between 9:00 AM and 6:00 PM.
* Please allow for up to 48 hours for me to respond. Generally, such a time frame will not be necessary, and I should usually respond within 24 hours, but contingencies can arise, so it is best to plan for them.

Email is *formal* communication, and I expect it to be composed as such. Please include a clear subject heading (including the course number); proper spelling, grammar and punctuation; and an appropriate salutation, valediction, and signature. Without these elements, I may not be able to adequately respond to your email. For   example, it can be difficult or impossible to answer an emailed question if the email fails to indicate the identity of its author.

* Please be aware that I cannot disclose your grade via email. If you wish to discuss grade-related matters, please come to office hours or see me after class.
* Questions whose answer can be found in the syllabus or on the course website will be considered my lowest priority. It is to your benefit to carefully examine both the syllabus and the website *before* emailing me.

**Overview of Assignments**

**Class discussion (10 points)**:

            I believe learning is usually more productive when the students come with questions in mind before the class begins. Therefore, each student should finish **required readings** and post his/her questions before class. This counts towards your final grade.

* From Week Two to Week Nine, everyone must post at least one discussion question regarding the readings on the Canvas site the night before class per week (Mon & Wed 10 PM at the latest). Post these questions under discussion (normal discussion, not pinned) and post them as separate entries, not as comments to other questions – but please do comment on other people’s questions. And please begin each question with your name, the week number, and the date – e.g. Yunkang Yang, week 2, 4/5). The question should be at least five-sentence long. Each question accounts for 0.5 point in your final grade and students get the 0.5 point as long as they post at least one question each week. No late submission is accepted. (4 points)
* Students also need to choose one week to be discussion leaders. In order to focus our discussion, student discussion leaders will introduce a short summary of key points in other students’ questions and organize these questions into similar groupings and incorporate them into the discussion. Each person will be asked to summarize and elaborate his/her question when they come up for discussion. Discussion leaders also need to nominate three best questions for each class by following the criteria: is the question interesting; is the question important; and can the question be realistically answered. Each class from Week 2 to Week 9 shall start with discussion and then proceed with lecture. (6 points)

*Response papers (40 points; 8 papers, 2 pp each, double-spaced):*

* Students must submit one response paper through Canvas each week from Week Two to Week Nine. The deadline for submission response papers is 10pm Saturday. To illustrate, if you want to write the response paper for the class on Tuesday, you need to submit it by Saturday in the same week. Please submit the paper in PDF format.
* No late submission will be accepted. Each response paper accounts for 5 points in your final grade.
* The response paper should address all required readings for a particular class. Students are expected to summarize key points in the reading and make linkages between the readings and students’ own interest.

*Group Project (20 points, group of three or four):* You will have a group project that will be presented in class in Week Ten. You will be divided up into groups and asked to propose a topic related to new media. You can either build upon an existing topic in the syllabus such as surveillance or propose a new topic such as digital currency, net neutrality, online piracy, and so on. You need to conduct your own research on the topic area and present the materials near the end of the quarter. To illustrate, you can broaden the scope of our discussion by providing more examples or elaborating on a sub-topic that interests you. This is an opportunity to hone in your research and presentation skills. Each group member is expected to contribute to the project equally, and you are graded as a group.

*Final Exam (30 points)*

The final exam will include both multiple choice and short answer questions. Students are responsible for bringing their own Scantron sheet and #2 pencil. Further instructions will be made available in class or on the course website.

**Extra Credits**

Students who have been nominated for best questions 4+ times will receive 2 extra points. There might be other extra credit opportunities during the lecture (e.g. quiz).

**Missed/Late Assignments Policy**

* The final exam cannot be made up unless you encounter a dire and documentable emergency, and you contact me about the situation in advance of the exam. Consultation with me within 24 hours *and* appropriate documentation of the event (e.g., a note from your physician or dean) *may* result in the scheduling of a make-up exam.
* In-class activities such as leading discussion cannot be made up.
* Generally, no late assignment is accepted. However, if you have a dire and documentable emergency (illness, family problem, accident, etc.), please inform me as soon as possible. If other trouble arises with an assignment, please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss it.

**Academic Integrity**

Any violation of academic integrity (e.g., cheating, plagiarism) will result in a score of zero for that assignment and disciplinary action by the University. In cases of academic work copied from one student by another, this policy applies both to the student copying and the student who allowed their work to be copied. If you are at all unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or any other violation of academic integrity, please consult:

* http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/ honesty.htm
* http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/plag.html **Accommodation of Disabilities**  To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services: *011 Mary Gates, Box 352808, tel. 206-543-8924, <uwdss@uw.edu*>. If you already have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating that you have a disability requiring academic accommodations, please present this letter to me as soon as possible.

**Accommodation of Disabilities**

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services: *011 Mary Gates, Box 352808, tel. 206-543-8924, <uwdss@uw.edu*>. If you already have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating that you have a disability requiring academic accommodations, please present this letter to me as soon as possible.

Week One: New media

3/29 Introduction: what is new media?

3/31 Key concepts of new media

Required readings:

* Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, ch. 1

Recommended readings:

* Manovich, Lev. 2001, What is New Media? In the Language of New Media, Cambridge, Mass: MIT. (1-2-1)
* Marvin, C. 1987, When Old Technologies Were New, Oxford: Oxford University Press. “Introduction” (1-2-2)
* Gane, Nicholas, and Beer, David, 2008, ["Introduction: Concepts and MediaLinks to an external site.](https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/file/download/64b591302992ed59ea5e1f37fad9e856fcf9c39186bc3c26a32aeab31af6c13d?inline=1)", from *New Media: The Key Concepts*, Berg, pp. 1-13. (1-2-3)

Week Two: Theories of technology and agency

4/5 Three theories of technology

Required readings:

* Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, ch. 2

Recommended readings:

* Kline, Ronald and Trevor Pinch, 1996, “Users as Agents of Technological Change: The Social Construction of the Automobile in the Rural United States”, Technolgy and Culture, 37(4): 763-795 (2-1-1)

4/7 The politics of technology

Required readings:

* Winner, Landon, 1980, Do artifacts have politics? Daedalus, 109: 121-36. Reprinted in MacKenzie and Majcman, eds, The Social Shaping of Technology. (2-2-1)

Recommended readings:

* Yunkang, Yang, 2014, The Material, the Social and the Discursive: Unpacking the Politics of Technology. (2-2-2)

Week Three: Affordance & Peer production

4/12 Affordance and the case of social media

Required readings:

* Earl, Jennifer & Katrina Kimpton. Section on affordances from *Digitally Enabled Social Change*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 32-38.

4/14 Peer production

Required readings:

* Benkler, Y. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. Yale University Press, 2006. Chapters 3, and 4.

Recommended readings:

* The need to protect the Internet from “Astroturfing” grows ever more urgent

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/georgemonbiot/2011/feb/23/need-to-protect-internet-from-astroturfing>

[(Links to an external site.)](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/georgemonbiot/2011/feb/23/need-to-protect-internet-from-astroturfing)

* China’s fifty cent party for Internet Propaganda, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/usha-haley/chinas-fifty-cent-party-f\_1\_b\_749989.html (Links to an external site.)](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/usha-haley/chinas-fifty-cent-party-f_1_b_749989.html)
* How covert agents infiltrate the Internet to manipulate, deceive, and destroy reputations

https://theintercept.com/2014/02/24/jtrig-manipulation/

* Crowds are not people, my friend

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/23/magazine/crowds-are-not-people-my-friend.html?\_r=0

* The cognitive surplus is made of fossil fuels,

http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/4120/3356

* The Undue Weight of Truth on Wikipedia

<http://chronicle.com/article/The-Undue-Weight-of-Truth-on/130704/>

[(Links to an external site.)](http://chronicle.com/article/The-Undue-Weight-of-Truth-on/130704/)

Week Four: Social network and networked public sphere

4/19 Social Network

Required readings:

* [Penelope Hawe (Links to an external site.)](http://jech.bmj.com/search?author1=Penelope+Hawe&sortspec=date&submit=Submit), [Cynthia Webster (Links to an external site.)](http://jech.bmj.com/search?author1=Cynthia+Webster&sortspec=date&submit=Submit), [Alan Shiell (Links to an external site.)](http://jech.bmj.com/search?author1=Alan+Shiell&sortspec=date&submit=Submit), 2004, A glossary of terms for navigating the field of social network analysis, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 58:971-75.(4-1-1)

Recommended readings:

* Garton, Laura, Caroline Haythornthwaite, and Barry Wellman, "[Studying Online Social Networks (Links to an external site.)](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/enhanced/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.1997.tb00062.x/)," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, V. 3, N. 1, June, 1997. (4-1-2)

4/21 Public Sphere

Required readings:

* Papacharissi, Z. (2009) The virtual sphere 2.0, The Internet, the public sphere, and beyond. (4-2-1)
* Benkler, Y. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. Yale University Press, 2006. Chapters 7.

Recommended readings:

* Calhoun Craig, (1992) “Introduction”, *Habermas and the public sphere,* The MIT Press.

Week Five: New Media and Democracy

4/26 Networked Public sphere

Required readings:

* Gerhard's, J. & Schafer, M. (2010) Is the Internet a better public sphere? Comparing old and new media in the USA and Germany, *New media & Society (5-1-1)*
* Wahlberg, L. (2001) The Internet and democratic discourse: Exploring the prospects of online deliberative forums extending the public sphere, *Information, Communication & Society (5-1-2)*

4/28 Activism

Required readings:

* Young, I. (2001) Activist challenges to deliberative democracy, *Political Theory*, 29(5) (5-2-2)
* Lievrouw Leah, 2011, Chapter 1: Introduction, from *Alternative and Activist New Media*, Polity Press: UK. (5-2-3)

Recommended readings:

* Fraser, N. (1990) Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution the critique of actually existing democracy, *Social Text*, Vol.26 (5-2-1)

Week Six: Digital Activism

5/3 Collective action

Required readings:

* Earl, J. & Kimport, K. (2011) “Introduction”, *Digitally enabled social change: Activism in the Internet age,* The MIT Press.
* Kelly Garrett (2006): Protest in an Information Society: a review of literature on social movements and new ICTs, Information, Communication & Society, 9:02, 202­224. (6-1-1)

5/5 Personalized politics and connective action

Required readings:

* *Bimber, B. (2005) Reconceptualizing collective action in the contemporary media environment. Communication Theory, 15(4), 365-388 (6-2-2)*
* Bennett, L. & Segerberg, A. (2012) The logic of connective action, *Information, Communication & Society,* 15(5) (6-2-1)

Week 7 Social cues and privacy

5/10 Rich and lean media: social cues

Required readings:

* Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, ch. 3

Recommended readings:

* Crair, “The Period is Pissed”, *The New Republic*, https://newrepublic.com/article/115726/period-our-simplest-punctuation-mark-has-become-sign-anger

5/12 Privacy

Required readings:

* Andrews, *I Know Who You Are and I Saw What You Did*, ch. 2

Recommended readings:

* Greenwald, *No Place to Hide*, Intro and ch. 1

Week Eight: Algorithm and narrowcasting

5/17 Search engine and algorithm

Required readings:

* Tarleton, Gillespie, (2014), “The Relevance of Algorithms”, Media Technologies, ed. Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo Boczkowski, and Kirsten Foot, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
* Shirky, “A Speculative Post on the Idea of Algorithmic Authority” [http://www.shirky.com/weblog/2009/11/a-speculative-post-on-the-idea-of-algorithmic-authority/ (Links to an external site.)](http://www.shirky.com/weblog/2009/11/a-speculative-post-on-the-idea-of-algorithmic-authority/)

Recommended readings:

* Hargittai, Eszter, 2007 "[The Social, Political, Economic, and Cultural Dimensions of Search Engines: An Introduction (Links to an external site.)](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/enhanced/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00349.x/)," Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, V. 12, N. 3, April. (8-1-1)

5/19 Epistemology, narrowcasting, and democracy.

Required readings:

* Bennett, L. & Iyengar, S. (2008) A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication, *Journal of Communication*, 58(4), (8-2-1)
* Philip Howard, (2005) “Deep Democracy, Thin Citizenship: The Impact of Digital Media in Political Campaign Strategy”, Annals of AAPS, (8-2-2)

Recommended readings:

* Lippmann,W. (1997), “Introduction”, Public opinion, Transaction Publishers. Free Press.

Week Nine:

Data, new media and surveillance

5/24 Big data and new media

Required readings:

* Mayer-Schonberger, V. & Cukier, K. (2014) Big data: A revolution that will transform how we live, work, and think, Eamon Dolan/Mariner Books. (You pick any two chapters)
* Boyd, D. & Crawford, K. (2012) Critical questions for big data, Information, communication & Society, 15:5. (9-1-1)

Recommended readings:

* Howard, P. (2015) “Introduction”, Pax Technica: How the Internet of things may set us free or lock us up, Yale University Press.

5/26 Big data and surveillance

Required readings:

* Greenwald, *No Place to Hide*, ch. 2, 3, and 4.
* MacAskill & Dance, “NSA Files Decoded”. *The Guardian*,

Week Ten

5/31 Group presentation

6/2 Final Exam