

**Social Media**  
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Office Hours: TBA  
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**Course Description:** This course is a critical investigation into the operations—cultural, interpersonal, and technical—of social media. The Internet has changed daily life dramatically, and in a short period of time. Here we will consider the ramifications of this rapid shift in not only social life, but in commercial, economic, political, ethical, and inter/intrapersonal arenas too. Our readings will help us understand the broader socio-technical environment (or the ways social media gets made and used in real life) of social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. We'll draw from disciplines including: science and technology studies (STS), sociology, anthropology, and communication theory. We will study social media as an anthropologist studies an artifact: a product of culture, made and modified by those who use it. Media refusal, privacy, labor, gender, race, and big data are topics under consideration.

**Required Texts:**

Baym, Nancy (2015). *Personal Connections in a Digital Age*. Second Edition. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

**Online Readings are listed with a URL on the schedule below. Please let me know if a link does not work! All other readings can be found on Blackboard.**

**Course Workload:**

**Participation/Attendance (10%):** Attendance and participation are imperative! I will measure your participation mainly through in class work, such as short in-class writing assignments that you turn in that day. These will not be graded: as long as you complete the exercise, you will receive credit. Attendance/participation work can never be made up. Sometimes I will pass around a sign in sheet, other times you'll work in groups. If everyone is participating in discussion, I will give everyone credit for the period.

You are allowed to miss 2 classes without penalty to your grade. Please contact me immediately if unforeseen circumstances cause you to miss 2 or more classes. If you are very ill, or have extenuating circumstances, you need to be proactive about contacting me. If you do that, makeup assignments are possible—but they MUST be cleared with me first. 3 absences automatically take your final grade down one tier of grade lower (i.e. from an A- to a B+). 4 absences result in a full letter grade lowering (A- to B-). **Fordham's university-wide policy is that 4 unexcused absences results in a failing grade.** It is your responsibility to get readings/assignments for missed days from other students, and you are encouraged to come to my office to discuss topics you're unclear on.

**Concept-Connect (20%):** Once during the semester you will have to bring in an example of an outside media supplement (an image, a campaign, a speech, video, article, hashtag trend, song...anything) that illustrates ONE concept from our scheduled reading for that day. You should spend no more than 1-2 minutes explaining the concept. You are banned from using PowerPoint or text to explain the concept, you must either write on the board or explain to the class. You do need to use media to share example of the concept, however. You do not have to summarize the scheduled reading. In fact, if you do summarize,

I will deduct points! You *do* have to show and tell us how your media object exemplifies ONE key aspect of the reading. We will schedule these the first week of class.

**Social Media Tracking Project (30%):** This is a multi part assignment in which we engage and analyze social media—our own use and another website or platform. In addition to analyzing your own use, you will choose one social media object, event, campaign, hashtag, narrative, character, website (you name it!) to study. This project is a semester long sustained exercise in critically analyzing media. We will have workshop days throughout the semester where you report/present (in the form of a short papers, sharing slides, and class presentations) on the following:

1. **Part ONE:** Self-Study. Two parts. 1. Part of studying social media is understanding the pull (or push) it has on us. Take a day to keep a social media diary. Record when you use social media, what sites you visit, how much you participate or lurk, and what type of devices you use. Turn in your log. 2. For the second part, write a short paper on what pulls you to social media. What do you like or hate about it? Do you have a social media “guilty pleasure”? What draws you to certain websites—the people there? The look of the site? The ways you can click through it? These are auto-ethnographic (reflective and analytical) writings on your use and feelings about social media. You will need to use, and cite, concepts and ideas from at least two of our class readings. 2-3 pages, double-spaced.
2. **Part TWO:** Audience Analysis/Bubble Check. Choose any social media “object” or place (blog, page, website, tweeter, celebrity) you don’t normally follow and report on the content and whom you think the intended audience is. What are the types of messages, narratives, or symbols used to communicate? What does the media object offer the audience, how do they interact with it? Does it create a community? Be able to describe the norms of interaction with your chosen object—how does the audience interact? How do users treat each other? What symbols signal membership in this thread/community/hashtag? Be sure to cite outside sources you find/use. You’ll need to capture a screen shot or live-feed that represents the general pace and tone of your media object. Your findings will vary tremendously based on your object. You will need to use and cite ideas from at least two of our class readings. Be ready to share with the class! 2-3 pages double-spaced.
3. **Part THREE:** Media presentation/Reflection. For the last portion of the this exercise, you will need to create a presentation on either part one or part two, or share your reflections on a something new you learned this semester. You will need to use media for this—no paper! These should be about 5 minutes. The goal is to use media to effectively communicate your insight or analysis. More to come on this assignment.

**Exams (40%):** Two exams, both will be multiple choice, true or false, and short answer. The final is not cumulative—it will be over what we cover from the midterm onwards.

**GRADING SCALE:**

100=A+	79-77 = C+
99-93=A	76-72 = C
92-90=A	71-70 = C-
89-87=B+	69-60 = D
86-83=B	Below 58 = F
82-80=B-	

**RULES/POLICIES:** No cell phones—we can do it! No laptops (unless we are scheduled to have a tech day in class). No cheating, no plagiarism. Respect each other and different opinions.

1. **No cell phones:** Silence them, put them away. If you cannot keep your hands and eyes off, I'm open to bringing a basket in for us all to leave them during class. If you have an emergency or childcare or need your phone on your desk, please let me know before class starts. If I see you using them, I will hold up class until the phone is put away.
2. **Laptops:** Please do not bring to class unless I ask you to for specific workshop days. Laptops, like phones, are distracting to you, to me, and to those sitting around you.
3. **No earbuds/headphones:** Seriously, DO NOT SIT IN CLASS WITH ONE EARBUD IN. If you do this, you'll be instructed to leave immediately and I will take 10 points off your next upcoming test.
4. **Lateness/leaving early:** If you repeatedly are late to class or leave early (more than 3 times), I will take off a point for each late/early from your final grade. Let me know before class if you need to leave early.
5. **Final grades are FINAL:** I do not negotiate grades. Do not ask. I do not need to hear about your GPA, or what grade you *need* or *must* get. You are responsible for your grades. Regardless of what other faculty tolerate, I do not negotiate grades with students. ALL GRADES ARE FINAL. If you wish to learn more about why you earned the grade you were assigned, you must see me *in person* during my posted office hours. Do not request email explanations of your grades; I will not respond in that venue. I also do not give extra credit. If you are struggling, be sure you come see me right away. Some of you might have to prepare yourselves to come see me on a regular basis. You may also have to prepare yourself to seek additional college services, such as tutors, if your grades reflect that you are struggling. Do NOT wait until the end of the semester to tell me you have been struggling all along. By then, it is much too late in the course to remedy the situation. Nonetheless, students should remember that coming early and often for help *does not guarantee* that I will pass you. *In the final hour, you need to demonstrate proficiency in sociology, no matter how hard you tried.* Coming to class, trying hard/studying many hours in college is a given. In the end, you must produce college-level work.

\*\*\*\*\*I reserve the right to change, delete or ADD readings to this schedule. I will always give you notice but you must come to class to stay abreast of any changes.

\*\*\*\*\*Do not be offended if I call you and do not be offended if I do not call on you! I will try to call on everyone at least once over the course of the semester so be prepared.

\*\*\*\*\*Please email me if you are having trouble with the course material in anyway.

\*\*\*\*\*Plagiarizing in anyway, shape or form will result in a zero for that assignment or test. I take this very seriously so please see me if you're nervous about properly citing your work.

**Reading Schedule:**

**Subject to change! Come to class to stay on top of reading list—things will change, deletions and additions.**

Aug, 31: First day of class; Introductions; Technological skill share; Social Media Tracking assignment

**Week 1      Foundational Theories**

Sept 6: “Engineering the Sociality in a Culture of Connectivity” in *The Culture of Connectivity* by Jose Van Dijck

Sept 7: No Class  
Please attend “Storytelling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” Saturday Sept 23, 2017 at Lincoln Center.  
I’ll hand out flyers with details—go to one panel and prepare a page write up of the topics discussed, ideas you found interesting, or describe new possibilities.

**Week 2      The Social side of media**

Sept 11: Baym, Chapter 1 “New Forms of Personal Connection”  
Ellison and Boyd, “Sociality of Social Network Sites” URL:  
<http://www.danah.org/papers/2013/SocialityThruSNS-preprint.pdf>

Sept 14: Baym Chapter 2

**Week 3      Using Social Media**

Sept 18: Baym Chapter 3  
Sept 21: Baym Chapter 4

**Week 4      Digital Connections**

Sept 25: Baym Chapter 5  
Sept 28: Baym Chapter 6

**Week 5      Intimacy Online**

Oct 2: “Brave New World of Digital Intimacy” Clive Thompson, URL:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/07/magazine/07awareness-t.html?mcubz=3>

Oct 5: Review, catch up

Oct 9: NO CLASS

**Oct 12:      MIDTERM**

**Week 7      Facebook**

Oct 16: Van Dijck, Chapter 3 “Facebook and the Imperative of Sharing”  
Oct 19: Losse, excerpts from “The Boy Kings”  
Also:  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-07-06/facebook-banning-algorithms-block-lesbians-from-using-dyke/8676284>

“Mark Zuckerberg is in Denial” URL:

[https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/15/opinion/mark-zuckerberg-is-in-denial.html?mcubz=3&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/15/opinion/mark-zuckerberg-is-in-denial.html?mcubz=3&_r=0)

## **Week 8 Twitter**

Oct 23: Van Dijck, Chapter 4 “Twitter and the Paradox of Following and Trending”

Oct 26: Rosen, “The “Twitter Can’t Topple Dictator” Genre” URL:

<http://pressthink.org/2011/02/the-twitter-cant-topple-dictators-article/>

Fuchs, Chapter 8 “Twitter and Democracy: A New Public Sphere?”

URL: <http://fuchs.uti.at/wp-content/smchapter8.pdf>

## **Week 9 Labor of Social Media**

Oct 30: Senft, “Microcelebrity and the Branded Self” (from *Companion for New Media Dynamics*)

Wilson, “Hate Sinks” in *The New Inquiry*, URL: <http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/hate-sinks/>

Nov 2: Kathleen Kuehn, Tom Corrigan “Hope Labor” (blackboard)

Barnes, “Essena O’Neil Quits Instagram” in *The Daily Mail*, URL:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3320431/Model-Essena-O-Neill-quits-Instagram-reveals-ways-dieted-internet-approval.html>

Fashion Blogging Article, TBA

## **Week 10 News, Fake?**

Nov 6: Rosen, “The People Formerly Known as the Audience” URL:

[http://archive.pressthink.org/2006/06/27/ppl\\_fmr.html](http://archive.pressthink.org/2006/06/27/ppl_fmr.html)

Tufecki, “What Happens to #Ferguson Affects Ferguson” URL:

<https://medium.com/message/ferguson-is-also-a-net-neutrality-issue-6d2f3db51eb0#.4p3pnop2s>

Nov 9: Gillespie, “The Politics of Platforms”

## **Week 11 Surveillance/Privacy**

Nov 13: De Laat, Paul, 2008. “Online Diaries: Reflections on Trust, Privacy, and Exhibitionism”

Nov 16: Van Dijck, Chapter 8 “The Ecosystem of Connective Media: Lock In, Fence off, Opt out?”

“Tinker, Taylor, Hacker, Spy” URL: <https://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21709773-who-benefiting-more-cyberisation-intelligence-spooks-or-their>

## **Week 12 Social Media Refusal, Anti Social**

Nov 20: Goldberg, 2016. “Anti-Social Media: Digital Dystopianism as a Normative Project.” *New Media and Society*, 18, 5, pages: 784-799.

Nov 27: Laura Portwood-Stacer “Care work and the Stakes of Media Refusal”  
<http://www.newcriticals.com/care-work-and-the-stakes-of-social-media-refusal>

**Week 13** Review/Catch up/Presentations

Nov 30: Project Sharing

Dec 4: Catch up

Dec 7: Review!