

**Social Media**  
**SPRING 2018**  
Dr. Kara Van Cleaf  
[kvancleaf@fordham.edu](mailto:kvancleaf@fordham.edu)  
Office Hours: Mon 1-2 and Thurs 1-2  
704 Martino Hall

**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 check [fashioningsociology.com](http://fashioningsociology.com) for readings without a URL. Let me know if a link does not work!**

**Course Workload:**

**Attendance:** For the first time, I'm going to count attendance as EXTRA CREDIT instead of as part of your grade. If you miss 0 classes, you will get 8 points added to your total end of semester grade. If you miss 1 class, you'll get 6 points. If you miss 2, you'll get 4 points. Missing more than three or more will get you zero extra credit points. This is the ONLY extra credit I will give!

**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 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 our own use of social media. 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 your research. We will also work together to analyze our social media usage as a class.

The first part is due Feb \_\_\_\_ and should address the following:

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 along with a brief 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? 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. ~3 pages, double-spaced.
2. The next short paper will be a consideration of “affordances”, which we will discuss in class. Briefly, you will choose one platform and consider its affordances, both social and technical. You’ll need to address and shortcomings of the platform and design new features (use your imagination, you don’t need to design these technically!) to address the shortcomings of the platform. Be sure to explain how your new features will make the platform better (and better for who?). DUE:

We will continue working on these throughout the semester so be sure to stay on top of upcoming exercises.

**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 social media, 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.**

Jan 22: First day of class; Introductions; Technological skill share; Social Media Tracking assignment

#### **Week 1      Foundational Theories**

Jan 29: “Engineering the Sociality in a Culture of Connectivity” in *The Culture of Connectivity* by Jose Van Dijck

Baym, Chapter 1 “New Forms of Personal Connection”

#### **Week 2      Theorizing Social Media**

Feb 5: “Social Media” Lindgren

Baym Chapter 2

“‘Our minds can be hijacked’: the tech insiders who fear a smartphone dystopia” The Guardian, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/05/smartphone-addiction-silicon-valley-dystopia>

Feb 12: Media self tracking day

**Week 3 Using Social Media**

Feb 20: Baym Chapter 3

**TUESDAY** “That way we’re all writing now” Clive Thompson, URL:

<https://medium.com/message/that-way-we-re-all-talking-now-49e255037f15>

**Self tracking assignment due**

**Week 4 Digital Connections**

Feb 26: Baym Chapter 4

“Feeling Digital” Lindgren

“Digital Visuality and Visibility” Lindgren

**Week 5 Intimacy Online**

Mar 5 Baym ch 5

Review, catch up

Mar 12: **MIDTERM**

**Week 7 Facebook**

Mar 19: Van Dijck, Chapter 3 “Facebook and the Imperative of Sharing”

Losse, excerpts from “The Boy Kings”

“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**

Apr 9: Van Dijck, Chapter 4 “Twitter and the Paradox of Following and Trending”

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**

Apr 16: 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/>

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

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

Apr 23: 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>

“Software, Algorithms, and Data” by Lindgren

## **Week 11 Surveillance/Privacy**

Apr 30: “Do Not Track” film  
“We Are All Very Anxious” by Plan C URL: <https://www.weareplanc.org/blog/we-are-all-very-anxious/>

## **Week 12 What’s Next?**

May 7: Van Dijck, Chapter 8 “The Ecosystem of Connective Media: Lock In, Fence off, Opt out?”

“A theory of digital media and social change” Lindgren

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

## **REVIEW**

Final TBD