The Internet: Then, Now, and Right Now

Mon/Wed 5:30pm – 7:25pm
5/29/18 – 8/7/18
Instructor: Ryan Tsapatsaris

(tentative schedule and case studies/readings)

**Description:** Through a series of case-studies, this course will seek to answer the questions “how do people behave online” and “when and how are online behaviors specific or universal”. The course will primarily focus on contemporary behaviors in spaces like YouTube, Facebook, (Black) Twitter, Grindr, Tinder, Myspace, and MMORPGs (*World of Warcraft*) along with a brief analysis of the early web spaces of the 1970s-1990s. It will also explore cultural production, such as memes, and other user-generated content. In the final weeks of the course, we will examine contemporary Internet happenings from Summer 2019 and investigate how current behaviors are similar and dissimilar from historical practices. While previous familiarity with various Internet spaces will be helpful, this course is meant as a primer, and as such, will make no assumptions about students’ prior knowledge of the myriad sites being analyzed. That being said, students will be encouraged to discuss spaces they engage with online that may not appear in the assigned readings.

**Assignments and Grading**

**Attendance and active participation** are crucial for class discussions. Please have read the readings before the date of the class for which they are assigned (10%).

**Discussion Lead** – Each student will select one class on which they will help lead the discussion and bring in outside materials that relate to the subject matter. This can include memes, hashtags/tweets, viral videos or any other type of Internet-related content. Student’s will also post 2 questions about the week’s assigned readings on Canvas 48 hours before the class (15%)

**Interactive Class Preparation** – For the classes on July 31st and August 5th, instead of assigned readings, students will lead the discussion in a sort of “Internet Show and Tell”. For July 31st, the theme is “Internet Guilty Pleasures” – students will be expected to discuss a part of the internet that they spend considerable time on and how it connects to the semester’s readings. For August 5th, the theme is “Current Controversies” – students will be expected to come to class with a current conflict that is occurring in a networked space. Be prepared to explain the controversy, the claims that are being made by both sides, and how this relates to the discussions we’ve had throughout the semester (10%). (A full explanation of this assignment will be posted to Canvas)

**Annotated Bibliography** – In preparation for the final paper, students will construct an annotated bibliography of 4 sources (2 from the assigned reading list, 1 outside scholarly source, and 1 thinkpiece or similar type of writing from a popular source) (15%).

**Presentation on Final Paper** – At our last class meeting, student’s will present a brief, 5-10 minute sketch of their final papers, using 2-3 PowerPoint slides (or other form of media) (15%).
Research Paper – At the culmination of the class, students will submit a 7-8 page research paper on a topic of their choosing. Students must meet with the instructor at least once by early July to discuss their ideas (35%).

Academic Integrity

Don’t Plagiarize.

Penn’s Code of Academic Integrity: http://www.vpul.penn.edu/osl/acadint.html
Penn Library Guide “What is Plagiarism”: https://guides.library.upenn.edu/copyright/plagiarism

Schedule

Weds 5/29: Introduction to the Course

Watch: “Alanis Morisette Updates ‘Ironic’ Lyrics” (3m4s)

“Senior Citizens Try Tinder for the First Time” (4m4s)

Mon 6/3: Dating Apps


Weds 6/5: Dating Apps (Con’t.)


Watch: Will Means “Grindr in Real Life” (59s)

Mon 6/10: Status in Virtual Spaces


Watch: College Humor “Look at this Instagram (Nickelback Parody)” (2m54s)

Weds 6/12: How We Live Now


Mon 6/17: How We Live Now (con't)


**Wed 6/19: The Downside of User-Generated Content**


Watch: Alex Jones “Turning the Freaking Frogs Gay” (1m10s)

**Mon 6/24: Tumblr, Positive Views**


Visit at LEAST 3 of the Tumblrs from this list of Women of Color Tumblrs: [http://wocinsolidarity.tumblr.com/poctumblrs](http://wocinsolidarity.tumblr.com/poctumblrs)

**Wed 6/26: Tumblr, Negative Views**


**Mon 7/1: Memes**


Read at least 3 entries for memes on [“KnowYourMeme.com”](http://knowyourmeme.com)

**Wed 7/3: Anonymous / 4chan**


**Mon 7/8: Black Twitter**

Read: Harlow, Summer and Benbrook, Anna. “*How #Blacklivesmatter: exploring the role of hip-hop celebrities in constructing racial identity on Black Twitter.*” *Information, Communication, & Society*, 2017, pp. 1-16

Jones, Feminista. “*Is Twitter the Underground Railroad of Activism?*” *Salon* Jul 17, 2013.


**Wed 7/10: Storytelling on Twitter, At Home and Abroad**

@Vickto_willy. “The Story of Uber-bae”


Mon 7/15: Research and Writing Discussion for Final Paper

*Research Question for Final Paper Due*

Wed 7/17: When Technologies Construct Users


Mon 7/22: Facebook/Myspace


Wed 7/24: World of Warcraft


*Annotated Bibliography Due* by 11:59pm Saturday 7/27

Mon 7/29: YouTube


Wed 7/31: Internet Guilty Pleasures

E.g. Postsecret; Yik-Yak / Interactive Class

Mon 8/5: Current Topics

Interactive Class

Wed 8/7: Student Final Presentations