

COMMUNICATION STUDIES 60213:
Social Networking Sites and Personal Relationships
T 2:00-4:40 PM, Moudy South 300, Class #34193

Course Syllabus, Spring Semester 2016

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All readings are listed on the syllabus below and are available through eCollege.

Course Description

“New technologies come and go but the human context within they are used remains . . .”
-- Hameet Sawhney, *Communication Monographs* (2007)

After at least three decades of sustained scholarly attention, the study of “new” communication technology is no longer new. Yet despite the proliferation of computer-mediated communication research, and prestige and recognition garnered throughout the broader discipline, some scholars argue that our understanding of mediated communication has not yet reached theoretical maturity. A quick survey reveals that many studies are solely descriptive and contextually limited, thus hindering our ability to address how technology use intersects with traditional concerns vis-à-vis interpersonal relationships.

This course enters this discourse via the term *social networking sites*. As used here, this term is construed *broadly*, referring to both the relatively recent adoption of sites for articulated social connections, yet also realizing that “sites” for “social networking” far predate the development of any form of computer technology. Thus, our approach to this seminar contains an historical flavor. Our chief question is this: *How do the constraints and affordances of technologies change the antecedents, outcomes, characteristics, and patterns of interpersonal communication?* As such, by the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Describe key strands of theoretical understanding in the field of interpersonal computer-mediated communication;
- Articulate strengths and weaknesses of these theoretical perspectives;
- Debate key questions pertaining to the role of communication technology in society;
- Develop theory pertaining to interpersonal uses of communication technology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

- 1. Class Attendance and Participation:** For all students, but especially graduate students, I expect punctual attendance and participation in all scheduled class sessions. This includes reading all course readings prior to class and bringing a copy of the readings with you. If you cannot attend a class session, please notify me as soon as you possibly can.
- 2. Deadlines:** All work is due electronically (sent via e-mail attachment to a.ledbetter@tcu.edu) by the start of class on the designated due date. If a situation arises that hinders this, please contact me as soon as possible (ideally before the assignment is due). I reserve the right to deduct points if work is turned in late, and especially if you do not notify me beforehand.
- 3. Academic Misconduct:** TCU's mission is "to educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community." The ideals of ethics and responsibility are completely incompatible with academic misconduct. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating on tests, presenting someone else's assignment or paper as your own work, and not documenting papers with the source of word-for-word or paraphrased material. **Please also note that TCU's academic misconduct policy forbids submitting the same paper (or portions thereof) to multiple classes without prior instructor approval.** You can find a more extensive definition of academic misconduct at TCU in the Student Handbook, http://www.studenthandbook.tcu.edu/student_handbook.pdf. The master syllabus also contains information about what constitutes academic misconduct in this course and at TCU. In this course, paying money to another student currently in the course for information such as class notes, completed review sheets, and so forth is considered a form of academic misconduct. Taking photographs or videos of quiz or exam materials is also academic misconduct. I reserve the right to record exams and quizzes on video to identify academic misconduct during those exercises.

If you have questions concerning what constitutes academic misconduct, please discuss this with me. Not knowing the definition of academic misconduct does not excuse you from the consequences. **In this course, any form of academic misconduct will result in automatic failure (i.e., grade of "F") for the relevant assignment(s) and recommendation to the academic dean that the offender be dropped immediately from the course with a grade of "F". In a group project, all project members will, by default, receive the same penalty.** TCU's undergraduate and graduate catalogs provide information about appeal procedures in cases of alleged academic misconduct.

- 4. Turnitin.com:** Consistent with item #4 (Ethical Conduct), I reserve the right to examine submitted papers using the turnitin.com plagiarism detection service.
- 5. Recording Class Sessions:** Class sessions contain my own and others' intellectual property. Except when I have granted prior written approval, recording audio or video from class sessions is prohibited and will be treated as academic misconduct (see #3).
- 6. Obtaining Copies of PowerPoint Slides, etc.:** PowerPoint slides and other course materials may be placed on eCollege or distributed in other ways. I fully intend that you will download them, keep them, and consult them in future projects. You also have my permission to freely (i.e., without cost to the recipient) redistribute, reuse, or modify them for your personal or instructional purposes (although some form of acknowledgment would be appreciated especially for the latter).
- 7. Electronic Devices:** Use of electronic devices is encouraged in class, as long as you are using it in ways that enhance your learning or the learning of others. If your technology use interferes with classroom activity, I reserve the right to ask you to (a) cease your technology use and/or (b) leave the classroom.

- 8. Changes to the Syllabus:** Although I've made every effort to craft this syllabus as accurately as possible, sometimes unforeseen events arise, including but not limited to inclement weather days, instructor illness, relevant current events that merit class discussion, or the availability of guest speakers. I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus as the semester progresses, including but not limited to changes in the course schedule, grading criteria, and attendance policies. Syllabus changes will be communicated to you in three ways: (a) by e-mail, (b) announcement in class, and (c) posting of the revised syllabus on eCollege. You are responsible to check your e-mail, attend class, and visit eCollege to receive such announcements.

In all cases, the most recent version of the syllabus posted on eCollege supersedes all previous versions. Also, a change in one section and/or policy of the syllabus does not invalidate any other section and/or policy of the syllabus. Likewise, if one section and/or policy of the syllabus is found to be invalid by a university or legal authority, that decision shall apply to that section and/or policy of the syllabus only, and the validity of the remainder of the syllabus shall remain intact.

- 9. Disability Statement:** Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 1010. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-6567.

Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator. Guidelines for documentation may be found at http://www.acs.tcu.edu/disability_documentation.asp.

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

- 10. TCU Campus Resources for Students:** Many resources exist on the TCU campus that may be helpful to students: Mary Coats Burnett Library (257-7117); Center for Academic Services (257-7486, Sadler Hall, 1022); the William L. Adams Writing Center (257-7221, Reed Hall 419); Student Development Services (257-7855, BLUU 2003); and Office of Religious & Spiritual Life (257-7830, Jarvis Hall), Campus Life (257-7926, Sadler Hall 2006), and the Counseling, Testing, and Mental Health Center (257-7863, Brown Lupton Health Center).

- 11. Respect:** At all times, I expect that you will speak and act in a manner consistent with the ideals of collegiality and integrity that should characterize academic discussion. We will debate important and difficult questions this semester. Let's debate with vigor, but also with a sense of humility and a good dose of fun.

Course Assessment (500 points total)

Point-Counterpoint-Response Papers (2 @ 50 points each = 100 points) – The course schedule below contains controversial statement about the role of communication technology in society. Across the semester, class members will write a series of papers debating these statements. You will write two papers, with each paper addressing a different statement.

Vexing Question Paper (150 points) – The theories covered in the course raise vexing questions. You'll try to tackle one of them. The paper is due by the start of class on 4/26.

Midterm and Final Exams (100 points each) – You will complete two exams in the general format of comprehensive exams. I realize there are a variety of practices among the professors in our department for such exams. In this course, I am interested in knowing what you can articulate from the readings based on your study of them. At least a week before the exam, I will provide you with four possible essay questions. At the start of the exam period, I will randomly choose two for you to write on during the exam period. You may bring a copy of the syllabus (with no notes on it) to the exam, in order to remind you of the citations and readings in the course. You may not bring a notecard, the articles themselves, or any other aids.

Quality of Class Participation (50 points) – During the class, I expect you to hold firm opinions, but express them respectfully; to disagree, but do so generously; and to question, but do so honestly. I reserve the right to deduct points if your classroom behavior does not exemplify the ideals of scholarly discussion and respect for the academic freedom and inherent worth of others.

Grading Scale – Overall, in graduate courses, I believe an 'A' should reflect outstanding work, a 'B' should reflect good/acceptable work, a 'C' should reflect problematic work, and (of course) an 'F' should reflect unacceptable work. Your point total will guide grade assignment, with 360 or more points (90% and above) reflecting 'A'-quality work, 320-359 points (80-89%) reflecting 'B'-quality work, 260-319 (70-79%) reflecting 'C'-quality work, and 259 points or below indicating 'F'-quality work. To provide the most accurate assessment of your work, I will use the +/- system when grading (e.g., 83% as the cut-off for a B-, and 87% as the cut-off for a B+). You may examine your grade at any time by logging into eCollege and examining the gradebook. Comments on written assignments will be returned to you via e-mail (I often make comments using Word's track changes feature).

Course Schedule

SECTION I: FOUNDATIONS OF INTERPERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA SCHOLARSHIP

Week 1 (1/12): Course introduction.

Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). "Will he get my letter?": Popular portrayals of mail and morale during World War II. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 23, 21-43.

Lasar, M. (2010). "Keep the mustache out of the opening": A history of phone etiquette. *Ars Technica*. <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2010/08/what-would-emily-post-say-about-droids-in-cafes/>

Week 2 (1/19): What is social networking?

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78, 1360-1380.

Ellison, N. B. & boyd, d. (2013). *Sociality through social network sites*. In Dutton, W. H. (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 151-172.

Week 3 (1/26): Technology-driven theories of media choice

Sproull, L., & Kiesler, S. (1986). Reducing social context cues: Electronic mail in organizational communication. *Management Science*, 32, 1492-1511.

Daft, R. L., Lengel, R. H., & Trevino, L. K. (1987). Message equivocality, media selection, and manager performance: Implications for information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 11, pp. 355-366.

Point #1: Interpersonal conflict should not be handled through e-mail.

Week 4 (2/2): Technology-driven theories of relational outcomes

Walther, J. (1996). Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal and hyperpersonal interaction. *Communication Research*, 23, 3-43.

Kraut, R., Patterson, M., Lundmark, V., Kiesler, S., Mukhopadhyay, T., & Scherlis, W. (1998). Internet paradox: A social technology that reduces social involvement and psychological well-being? *American Psychologist*, 53, 1017-1031.

Counterpoint #1: Interpersonal conflict should not be handled through e-mail.

Point #2: Frequent Internet use makes people depressed and lonely.

Week 5 (2/9): Socially-driven theories of media choice

Sitkin, S. B., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Barrios-Choplin, J. R. (1992). A dual-capacity model of communication media choice in organizations. *Human Communication Research*, 18, 563-598.

O'Sullivan, P. B. (2000). What you don't know won't hurt me: Impression management functions of communication channels in relationships. *Human Communication Research*, 26, 403-431.

Response #1: Interpersonal conflict should not be handled through e-mail.

Counterpoint #2: Frequent Internet use makes people depressed and lonely.

Week 6 (2/16): Socially-driven theories of relational outcomes

Haythornthwaite, C. (2005). Social networks and Internet connectivity effects. *Information, Communication & Society*, 8, 125-147.

Caplan, S. E. (2005). A social skill account of problematic Internet use. *Journal of Communication*, 55, 721-730.

Hall, J. A., & Baym, N. K. (2012). Calling and texting (too much): Mobile maintenance expectations, (over)dependence, entrapment, and friendship satisfaction. *New Media & Society*, 14, 316-331.

Response #2: Frequent Internet use makes people depressed and lonely.

Point #3: Texting and social networking reduce face-to-face interpersonal communication competence.

Week 7 (2/23): MIDTERM EXAM

SECTION II: CURRENT TOPICS IN SOCIAL MEDIA SCHOLARSHIP

Week 8 (3/1): Privacy and social media

Child, J. T., Duck, A. R., Andrews, L. A., Batauski, M., & Petronio, S. (2015). Young adults' management of privacy on Facebook with multiple generations of family members. *Journal of Family Communication*, 15, 349-367. doi:10.1080/15267431.2015.1076425

Kanter, M., Afifi, T., & Robbins, S. (2012). The impact of parents "friending" their young adult child on Facebook on perceptions of parental privacy invasions and parent-child relationship quality. *Journal of Communication*, 62, 900-917.

Counterpoint #3: Texting and social networking reduce face-to-face interpersonal communication competence.

Point #4: Parents should not allow their teenage children to use social media.

3/8: *SPRING BREAK***! #happydance**

Week 9 (3/15): Self-disclosure and social media

Bazarova, N. N., & Choi, Y. H. (2014). Self-disclosure in social media: Extending the functional approach to disclosure motivations and characteristics on social network sites. *Journal of Communication*, 64, 635-657.

Vitak, J. (2012). The impact of context collapse and privacy on social network site disclosures. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56, 451-470.

Bayer, J. B., Ellison, N., Schoenebeck, S. Y., & Falk, E. B. (in press). Sharing the small moments: ephemeral social interaction on Snapchat. *Information, Communication & Society*.

Response #3: Texting and social networking harm face-to-face interpersonal communication competence.

Counterpoint #4: Parents should not allow their teenage children to use social media.

Week 10 (3/22): Impression formation and social media

Walther, J. B., Van Der Heide, B., Hamel, L. M., & Shulman, H. C. (2009). Self-generated versus other-generated statements and impressions in computer-mediated communication: A test of warranting theory using Facebook. *Communication Research*, 36, 229-253.

Humphreys, L. (2005). Cellphones in public: Social interactions in a wireless era. *New Media & Society*, 7, 810-833.

Schoenebeck, S., Ellison, N., Blackwell, L., Bayer, J., and Falk, E. (forthcoming). *Backstalking, impression management, and play: How young adults look back on their teen Facebook use*. In Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW '16). San Francisco, CA. Feb 27-Mar 2, 2016.

Response #4: Parents should not allow their teenage children to use social media.

Point #5: 'Creeping' on other people through social media is rude.

Week 11 (3/29): Relational maintenance and social media

McEwan, B., Fletcher, J., Eden, J., & Sumner, E. (2014). Development and validation of a Facebook relational maintenance measure. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 8, 244-263.

Sosik, V., & Bazarova, N. N. (2014). Relational maintenance on social network sites: How Facebook communication predicts relational escalation. *Computers and Human Behavior*, 35, 124-131.

Vitak, J. (2014). Facebook makes the heart grow fonder: Relationship maintenance strategies among geographically dispersed and communication-restricted connections. *Proceedings of CSCW '14*, 842-853.

Counterpoint #5: 'Creeping' on other people through social media is rude.

Point #6: Access to social media has improved the TCU community.

Week 12 (4/5): Social media and other media

Caughlin, J. P., & Sharabi, L. L. (2013). A communicative interdependence perspective of close relationships: The connections between mediated and unmediated interactions matter. *Journal of Communication*, 63, 873-893.

Ramirez, A., Jr., & Bryant, E. M. (2014). Relational reconnection on social network sites: An examination of relationship persistence and modality switching. *Communication Reports*, 27, 1-12.

Ruppel, E. K., & Burke, T. J. (2015). Complementary channel use and the role of social competence. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20, 37-51.

Response #5: 'Creeping' on other people through social media is rude.

Counterpoint #6: Access to social media has improved the TCU community.

Week 13 (4/12): Social media and well-being

Deters, F. g., & Mehl, M. R. (2013). Does posting Facebook status updates increase or decrease loneliness? An online social networking experiment. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 4, 579-586.

Kross, E., et al. (2013). Facebook use predicts declines in subjective well-being in young adults. *PLOS One*, 8.

Guillory, J. E., Hancock, J. T., Woodruff, C., & Keilman, J. (2014). Text messaging reduces analgesic requirements during surgery. *Pain Medicine*, 16, 667-672.

Response #6: Access to social media has improved the TCU community.

Point #7: Technology shapes society, rather than the other way around.

Week 14 (4/19): Dark side of social media

Kasumovic, M. M., & Kuznekoff, J. H. (2015). Insights into sexism: Male status and performance moderates female-directed hostile and amicable behavior. *PLOS ONE*, 10.

Kramer, A. D. I., Guillory, J. E., & Hancock, J. T. (2014). Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks. *PNAS*, 111, 8788-8790.

Ledbetter, A. M., Taylor, S. H., & Mazer, J. P. (2016). Enjoyment fosters media use frequency and determines its relational outcomes: Toward a synthesis of uses and gratifications theory and media multiplexity theory. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 149-157.

Counterpoint #7: Technology shapes society, rather than the other way around.

Week 15 (4/26): The future of social media

Lewis, C. S. (1947). *The Abolition of Man*, pp. 67-71. New York: Macmillan.

Borah, P. (in press). Emerging communication technology research: Theoretical and methodological variables in the last 16 years and future directions. *New Media & Society*.

Response #7: Technology shapes society, rather than the other way around.

VEXING QUESTION PAPER DUE AT START OF CLASS

FINAL EXAM PERIOD: I will send out a series of questions to you around noon on Wednesday 4/27. Your answers are due by 5 PM on 5/3.