

**COMMUNICATION STUDIES 60213:
Social Networking Sites and Personal Relationships
T 2:00-4:40 PM, Moudy South 300, Class #34734**

Course Syllabus, Spring Semester 2018

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Ledbetter

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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)

This course has two interconnected foci. The first is *communication technology*. You use it every day. Much of it is new; some of it dates back to antiquity. It has drawn a lot of popular attention, generated a lot of controversy, and sparked decades worth of theory and research. But what does it all mean for the interpersonal relationships we so frequently sustain using the technology?

The second focus provides a partial answer: *networks*. Networks aren't a hot new fad created by Mark Zuckerberg when he created Facebook. Rather, being networked appears to be a fundamental part of what it means to be human. Throughout history, humans have exchanged all manner of things through networks: ideas, resources, money, power and influence, prestige, viruses, affection, and so forth. We live in networks that we influence, and they in turn influence us in many ways that we don't readily perceive.

This class occurs at the intersection of these two grand foci. Communication technology both renders our social networks more visible than ever before, and also reshapes how those social networks function. We will seek to understand what this means in the context of interpersonal relationships. Specifically, by the end of this class you will be able to:

- Explain how social and scholarly thought regarding communication technology has developed from the 1950s through today;
- Describe how the *psychological*, *cybernetic*, and *cultural* traditions of communication inquiry theorize communication technology, social networks, and their outcomes;
- Apply these theories to explain the nature of human communication on a current-day social media platform;
- Develop a case study, theoretical essay, or research project proposal designed to extend understanding of communication technology and relationships.

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. Statement on TCU's Discrimination Policy:** TCU prohibits discrimination and harassment based on age, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, ethnic origin, disability, predisposing genetic information, covered veteran status, and any other basis protected by law, except as permitted by law. TCU also prohibits unlawful sexual and gender-based harassment and violence, sexual assault, incest, statutory rape, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence, bullying, stalking, and retaliation. We understand that discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage students who have experienced any of these issues to talk to someone about their experience so they can get the support they desire (see the list of TCU campus resources below). To review TCU's Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Conduct or to file a complaint, please visit: <https://titleix.tcu.edu/title-ix/>.
- 11. Statement on Title IX at TCU:** As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep any information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, I have a mandatory reporting responsibility under TCU policy and federal law and I am required to share any information I receive regarding sexual harassment, discrimination, and related conduct with TCU's Title IX Coordinator. **Students can receive confidential support and academic advocacy by contacting TCU's Confidential Advocate in the Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education office at (817) 257-5225 or the Counseling & Mental Health Center at <https://counseling.tcu.edu/> or by calling (817) 257-7863. Alleged violations can be reported to the Title IX Office at <https://titleix.tcu.edu/> or by calling (817) 257-8228.** Should you wish to make a confidential report, the Title IX Office will seek to maintain your privacy to the greatest extent possible, but cannot guarantee confidentiality. Reports to law enforcement can

be made to the Fort Worth Police Department at 911 for an emergency and [\(817\) 335-4222](tel:817-335-4222) for non-emergency or TCU Police at [\(817\) 257-7777](tel:817-257-7777).

12. 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).

Course Assessment (400 points total)

Weekly questions (50 points) – For each reading, you’ll post one question about the reading on TCU Online. Your questions could address something you found confusing, extend the reading in some way, or critique it. But whatever you do, the question should (a) demonstrate that you’ve read the reading and thought meaningfully about it and (b) aim to generate meaningful class discussion. We will use these to stimulate conversation in class.

Midterm Exam (100 points) – The midterm exam will occur on 3/6. At the start of the exam, I will give you three questions and you will choose two to write about. You won’t receive these questions beforehand, but you can access any class readings as you write. I will also set up an online space on TCU Online where you can chat with other class members during the exam.

Social Media Application Project (125 points) – Each class member will choose a specific social media technology. I will assign a day that you will lead the class in a discussion of the connection between that communication platform and the readings/theories on that day. See the assignment sheet for more detail.

Final Paper Assignment (125 points) – You have three options for your final paper, which will also count as the final project for the course. See the assignment sheet for more information.

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 TCU Online 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).

Tentative Course Schedule

SECTION I: FOUNDATIONS OF INTERPERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA SCHOLARSHIP

Week 1 (1/16): Course introduction.

Old technology: 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. doi:10.1111/j.0022-3840.1990.2304_21.x

New norms: 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 (1/23): Utopia or dystopia?

Dystopia?: Turkle, S. (2015). The flight from conversation. In *Reclaiming conversation: The power of talk in a digital age* (pp. 19-56). New York: Penguin.

Utopia?: Rainie, L., & Wellman, B. (2012). The new social operating system of networked individualism. In *Networked: The new social operating system* (pp. 4-20). Cambridge, MA: MIT.

Week 3 (1/30): The dawn of computing (1950s-1960s)

Cybernetics: Kline, R. R. (2015). War and information theory. In *The cybernetics moment: Or why we call our age the information age* (pp. 9-36). Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

McLuhan's media ecology: Excerpts from McLuhan interview with *Playboy* magazine, March 1969.

Week 4 (2/6): The mainframe and hobbyist era (1970s)

Strong and weak ties: Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78, 1360-1380. doi:10.1086/225469

Uses & gratifications theory: Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37, 509-523. doi:10.1086/268109

Week 5 (2/13): The personal computer era (1977-1992)

Reduced social context cues: Sproull, L., & Kiesler, S. (1986). Reducing social context cues: Electronic mail in organizational communication. *Management Science*, 32, 1492-1511. doi:10.1287/mnsc.32.11.1492

Media richness theory: 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. doi:10.2307/248682

Week 6 (2/20): Web 1.0 era (1993-2003), part I

Social influence model: Fulk, J., Schmitz, J. A., & Steinfield, C. W. (1990). A social influence model of technology use. In J. Fulk & C. W. Steinfield (Eds.), *Organizations and communication technology* (pp. 117-140). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Social information processing theory: Walther, J. (1996). Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal and hyperpersonal interaction. *Communication Research*, 23, 3-43. doi:10.1177/009365096023001001

Week 7 (2/27): Web 1.0 era (1993-2003), part II

Time displacement theory: 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. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.53.9.1017 (Also check out the two newspaper articles reporting on this study.)

Impression management model: 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. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2000.tb00763.x

Week 8 (3/6): Midterm exam.

3/13: *SPRING BREAK***! #happydance**

SECTION II: CURRENT TOPICS IN SOCIAL MEDIA SCHOLARSHIP

Week 9 (3/20): Social media and web 2.0

Defining social media: 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.

Extruded media: Ryan, J. (2010). *A history of the Internet and the digital future* (chs. 10 & 11; pp. 137-163). London: Reaktion Books.

Week 10 (3/27): Mobility

Observational approach: Humphreys, L. (2005). Cellphones in public: Social interactions in a wireless era. *New Media & Society*, 7, 810-833. doi:10.1177/1461444805058164

Dialectical approach: 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. doi:10.1177/1461444811415047

Week 11 (4/3): Multimodality

Media multiplexity theory: Haythornthwaite, C. (2005). Social networks and Internet connectivity effects. *Information, Communication & Society*, 8, 125-147. doi:10.1080/13691180500146185

Modality contraction & expansion: Ramirez, A., Sumner, E. M., & Spinda, J. (2017). The relational reconnection function of social network sites. *New Media & Society*, 19, 807-825. doi:10.1177/1461444815614199

Week 12 (4/10): Audience, privacy, and community

Context collapse: Vitak, J. (2012). The impact of context collapse and privacy on social network site disclosures. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56, 451-470. doi:10.1177/1461444815614199

Social supernets: Donath, J. (2007). Signals in social supernets. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 231-251. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00394.x

Week 13 (4/17): Media choice & relational maintenance

Affordances: Evans, S. K., Pearce, K. E., Vitak, J., & Treem, J. W. (2017). Explicating affordances: A conceptual framework for understanding affordances in communication research. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22, 35-52. doi:10.1111/jcc4.12180

What I've been up to lately: Taylor, S. H., Ledbetter, A. M., & Mazer, J. P. (in press). Initial specification and empirical test of media enjoyment theory. *Communication Research*.

Week 14 (4/24): The dark side of social media

A really controversial study: 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. doi:10.1073/pnas.1320040111

Is Facebook bad for you?: Shakya, H. B., & Christakis, N. A. (2017). Association of Facebook use with compromised well-being: A longitudinal study. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 185, 203-211. doi: 10.1093/aje/kww189

Misogyny in online video games: Kuznekoff, J. H., & Rose, L. M. (2013). Communication in multiplayer gaming: Examining player responses to gender cues. *New Media & Society*, 15, 541-556. doi:10.1177/1461444812458271

Week 15 (5/1): The past and the future

The technological singularity: Goertzel, B. (2007). Human-level artificial general intelligence and the possibility of a technological singularity: A reaction to Ray Kurzweil's *The Singularity Is Near* and McDermott's critique of Kurzweil. *Artificial Intelligence*, 171, 1161-1173. doi:10.1016/j.artint.2007.10.011

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

Final paper projects are due on Wednesday, May 2. We will set up a time during finals week to discuss your papers; time and location to be determined.