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Associate Professor, Department of Film and Media Studies
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00 - 5:00 pm

SYLLABUS
FMS 144, "Internet Studies"
Fall 2021, hybrid learning, in-person meetings Mondays or Wednesdays 2:00 pm - 3:20 pm

Course description

The internet is arguably the singularly most important, widespread, and influential piece of "media" in existence today. This course will introduce students to a range of ways to study the internet from a humanistic perspective, with an interest in finding the meaning that lies in the internet as an interconnected set of media technologies, histories, and cultures. Like this course itself, the field of internet studies is interdisciplinary, with insights emerging from media studies, cultural studies, the social sciences, information studies, and more. Students can expect to learn about: internet histories, internet imaginaries, internet cultures, issues of identity (e.g. race, gender, sexuality) on the internet, internet infrastructures, and interplays between the internet and societal forces like policy and activism. Ultimately, our goal will be to understand how the internet itself can be understood as a form of media--one with great cultural complexity that goes beyond our casual everyday uses of the internet.

Course logistics

Our course is using a **hybrid learning model**, with some instruction taking place in the classroom and some instruction taking place online. There are many different possible hybrid learning models. Here are the key aspects of the model we will use in our course:

- Instruction will take place **50% in-person and 50% online**. Rather than attending in-person class twice a week (on both Mondays and Wednesdays), all students will attend class in-person once a week (on either Mondays or Wednesdays, depending on which "section" they are assigned to). All students have been asked to submit their preferences for joining the Monday or Wednesday groups; groups were assigned with consideration for these preferences.

- In effect, this means that the class will be broken down into two "discussion sections," each of which meets once a week. So, on any given day, th**e classroom will only be at 50% capacity** - which will give us more of a chance to social distance, sitting every other seat, being exposed to fewer people, etc. Our **in-class time will be used for discussions**, workshopping, and answering questions. You may hear this approach referred to as a "flipped classroom."

- To compensate for your missed in-person class time, I will be releasing **weekly asynchronous learning bundles**. These will contain videos and materials that cover the lecture and logistical components of the course. You can watch and engage with these on your own time, as long as you do so before attending class. Weekly learning bundles will be released by Thursday of the previous week, allowing students time to review the materials before the next week of instruction.

Flexibility & safety precautions

Because the current situation with the COVID pandemic is constantly changing, we must remain open to the possibility that our plan for our course this quarter may shift. If the university issues any new guidelines that will affect our class, the professor will notify you promptly about updates to course logistics or the syllabus. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

As per university guidelines, all students and instructors are required to wear masks in the classroom, with the exception of students with official accommodations from the Disability Services Center. Students who do not wear masks will be asked to do so. Students who do not put on masks when asked will be instructed to leave class and will be reported as per university protocol. You can read more about the university protocol about safety in the classroom [at this link](#).

In addition, our class has been split into two groups (a Monday group and a Wednesday group) so that our in-class meetings will be smaller, allowing us to social distance in the classroom. Students are asked to please sit at least one seat apart from other students. We will do our best to ensure that students participating in group work or collaborative workshopping do not come in close physical proximity with other students unnecessarily. If you have additional concerns about safety, please feel free to contact the professor via email at bruberg@uci.edu.

Assignments

Most of the assignments in this course are designed to be personal, creative, or otherwise customizable to your own interests. Note that, as per the "grading" section below, all assignments except for the final project will be graded for effort and completion.

- **Reading questionnaires:** Each week, students will complete a questionnaire about their most recent readings. These will include questions that help students identify important elements of their readings and prepare them to engage in discussions. These are study tools, not quizzes. Reading questionnaires are due on Mondays at 2:00 pm via Canvas.

- **Assignment #1 (reflective personal history)**: Students will write a short essay reflecting on their own personal history with the internet, starting from their earliest encounters with the internet and moving up to their experiences online during the COVID-19 pandemic. To prepare to write their essays, students will keep an informal "internet journal" during weeks 1 - 3.

- **Assignment #2 (internet history interview)**: Students will interview one family member, friend, mentor, etc. who is at least 20 years older than the student about that person's own history with the internet. Students will translate these interviews into a paragraph-by-paragraph narrative, including a reflection from the student on the meaning of the interview.

- **Final project (analyzing internet culture)**: Students will select a specific internet locale or subculture to observe for roughly two weeks, identifying specific elements of its culture and writing a loosely ethnographic report on the patterns seen there. Reports will also engage with course readings. Students will submit a proposal prior to their observations.

Assignment sheets will be provided for all assignments the week before their due date, if not sooner. These will provide detailed instructions about how to complete the assignment. Reading questionnaires will be made available as part of the weekly learning bundles. For the final project, students will receive a grading rubric by week 10 so that they know the criteria on which they are being graded.

Grading

Most of your assignments for this course will be graded for effort and completion. This means that you will receive a grade of "full credit," "partial credit," or "no credit." The only assignment that will receive a letter grade is your final essay. You will receive a grading rubric for your reference in advance of submitting your final essay to help you understand how your essay will be graded.

Here is a breakdown of the components that make up your final grade:

- 25% reading questionnaires (roughly 3% each)
- 15% reflective personal history
- 20% internet history interview
- 5% final project proposal
- 25% final project
- 10% participation

Please note that the grading tool on Canvas may not reflect a fully complete or up-to-date version of your overall course grade. If you would like to know your current course grade, please email the professor (bruberg@uci.edu), being sure to follow the email etiquette guidelines also listed below.

Late work and extensions

I will do my best to work with you to accommodate your needs during this challenging time. However, depending on the circumstances, know that submitting work late may negatively impact your grade. As a general rule, if you have not received an extension, assignments graded using letter grades (A, B, C, etc.) will be reduced by one letter grade for each day they are received late. Assignments graded for completion (full credit, partial credit, etc.) will receive a grade of "partial credit" if they are received late.

Whenever possible, I am happy to grant extensions on assignments. Please feel free to email me to request an extension (bruberg@uci.edu) for any reason. Most extensions will be for 2 days, but longer extensions may be available depending on your situation. However, because of the structure of the course, please be aware that some assignments cannot be turned in late and/or are not eligible for extensions. For example, weekly reading questionnaires cannot be submitted after the due date, when we begin our group discussions about those readings.

If you miss assignments or turn them in late, you will have opportunities to make up the points that you have missed. For example, each student is allowed to miss one weekly questionnaire with no penalty to their grade; if they complete all questionnaires, they will receive extra credit. Other extra credit opportunities may be announced later in the quarter, depending on student interest.

Platforms and access to course material

Materials for this course will be posted to Canvas. This includes all lecture videos, assignment sheets, readings, etc. There are no books or materials to purchase for this course. Canvas will also be our platform for course announcements; please keep an eye out for these announcements, which will keep you up to date as we progress through the quarter. Note that, if you are attempting to access course materials from off campus, some materials may require you to use off-campus VPN. More information about connecting from off-campus can be found at the UCI library website.

Classroom expectations

Returning to learning in the classroom is challenging after so much time away. It is normal for it to take some time to become comfortable again with in-class learning. We will all do our best to be patient and understanding with one another.

With that said, participation is key to our course. During our in-person meetings, we will be engaging in discussions and doing group activities (while socially distanced). These elements of our course are crucial for your learning and the development of critical skills.

Here are some ways that you can demonstrate your participation during class:

- Contribute to conversations. Share your thoughts or ask questions. We will be a small group, which is great for discussion.

- Be an active participant in group activities. Talk with your classmates and respond to their ideas.

- Engage closely with the readings and viewings before class. Come prepared to discuss them.

- If you are uncomfortable participating in class discussions, contact the professor (bruberg@uci.edu), who can suggest alternate ways of demonstrating engagement, such as writing emails to the professor about your ideas or attending office hours.

Attendance

In fall 2021, with students returning to campus for the first time in more than a year, the question of attendance is especially tricky. For our course this quarter, students only need to attend in-person once per week. Hopefully, this will cut down on the burden and anxiety of attending class during this difficult time. Students are generally expected to attend all in-person meetings for their group (either the Monday or Wednesday group). In-person discussions and activities are integral to the learning experience.

You may miss 1 weekly meeting for any reason at no detriment to your grade. You do not need to provide any explanation for your absence. If you need to miss additional classes due to illness or other personal issues, please email me (bruberg@uci.edu) and I will mark your additional absences as approved; these will also not impact your grade. Each additional unapproved absence lowers your quarter grade by 2%. Students who miss 3 class meetings or more (3 out of 10 weeks) without working with the professor to secure appropriate accommodations may be issued an incomplete or a failing grade.

Contacting the professor

I appreciate hearing from you regarding your experience in our course. If you have a logistical question, please be sure to double check the syllabus and/or relevant course assignments before getting in touch. If your question has not been answered in our course materials or you would like to discuss a different topic, please feel free to get in touch. The **best way to reach me is via email (bruberg@uci.edu)**. Canvas messages often get caught in my spam filters and may go unanswered.

When emailing me, please follow these email etiquette guidelines, which help set a friendly, professional tone. Please anticipate that it will take me between 24 hours and three business days to respond to your email. Emails will not be answered on Saturdays or Sundays, nor after the hour of 5:00 pm PST.

Meeting with the professor

You are encouraged to attend office hours, which are an opportunity to build connections with professors and deepen your learning. In fall 2021, I will hold office hours from 4:00 - 5:00 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. You do not need an appointment to attend office hours; you can simply stop by. However, you are also welcome to email me (bruberg@uci.edu) to schedule an office hours appointment and guarantee a time slot. If you are unavailable during these time slots, you can also email me to find an alternate time to meet.

By default, I will be holding my office hours in-person on campus. Provided it is not raining, we will meet outside at a location near my office in Humanities Gateway, in order to reduce risks related to the COVID pandemic. If you would prefer to meet remotely via Zoom, please send me an email to this effect and we can schedule an online meeting rather than an in-person one.

Graduate school recommendations

If you think you may apply for grad school in the future, please schedule or attend at least one individual office hours appointment with the professor this quarter. This will allow me to get to know you and your interests. I cannot write grad school recommendation letters (now or in the future) for students whom I have not spoken with individually. If you have met with me and would now like to request a recommendation, please contact me with all necessary information at least one month before the letter of recommendation is due.

Plagiarism

UC Irvine's code of conduct states that students who plagiarize may face a variety of serious consequences, ranging from a "0" on an assignment or an "F" for the course to disciplinary action at the university level. Plagiarism is presenting somebody else's words, work, or ideas as your own. The writing that you do in this course must be 100% yours. It is alright to reference other people or quote them, but you must cite them. Be especially careful with language from "common knowledge" sources, such as Wikipedia. If you are concerned that you may accidentally plagiarize, seek out an online university guide about how to avoid plagiarism. Students suspected of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct.

Lab fees

Message from the Department of Film and Media Studies: There is a mandatory non-refundable lab fee of $20.00 for all Film & Media Studies courses, including cross-listed and concurrently scheduled courses. Upon enrollment, lab fees are posted automatically to a student's ZOT Account. Students dropping before the second week drop deadline may request a lab fee cancellation or refund in writing by contacting the Film and Media Studies lab fee Administrator, Sylvia Meza-Tallada at smezatal@uci.edu. No cancellation or refund will be made for an unpaid lab fee that goes to a collection agency.

SCHEDULE (FMS 144 fall 2021)

PART I: Internet History

Week 1 (9/27 - 10/1): Intro to internet studies and internet imaginaries

- Read: "Rethinking Internet History," James Curran (2012); "Social Imaginaries of the Internet in China," Haiqing Yu (2014)
- Watch: "How Does the Internet Work?", Vox (2020)

- Due: **reading questionnaire #1**

Week 2 (10/4 - 10/8): Internet histories from the telegraph to today

- Read: "MOOs to MMOs: The Internet and Virtual Worlds," Mia Consalvo (2013)
- Watch: "The Rise and Fall of the Telegraph (The Victorian Internet)." How&Why (2020)

- Due: **reading questionnaire #2**

PART II: Internet Infrastructures

Week 3 (10/11 - 10/15): The material internet

- Read: *The Undersea Network*, "Introduction: Against Flow," Nicole Starosielski (2015)
- Watch: "Microsoft reveals its massive data center"; "Why Microsoft left dozens of servers on the ocean floor for two years"; "Inside Iceland's Massive Bitcoin Mine" ← all are short YouTube videos

- Due: **reading questionnaire #3** and **assignment #1** (reflective personal history)

Week 4 (10/18 - 10/22): Platform politics

- Read: "The Politics of 'Platforms,'" Tarleton Gillespie (2010)
- Watch: *The Social Dilemma* documentary (2020)

- Due: **reading questionnaire #4**

Week 5 (10/25 - 10/29): Labor and moderation

- Read: *Choose one*:
    - "Volunteer Moderators in Twitch Microcommunities," Donghee Yvette Wohn (2019)
    - *or* Lisa Nakamura, "The Unwanted Labor of Social Media: Women of Color Call out Culture as Venture Community Management" (2015)
    - *or* "The Civic Labor of Volunteer Moderators Online," J. Nathan Matias (2019)
- Watch: "Behind the Screen: Content Moderation in the Shadows of Social Media," presentation by Sarah Roberts (2019)

- Due: **reading questionnaire #5**

PART III: The internet and identity

Week 6 (11/1 - 11/5): Inhabiting identities

- Read: *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*, chapter 2 "Head Hunting on the Internet"
- Watch: *Catfish*

- Due: **reading questionnaire #6** and **assignment #2** (internet history interview)

Week 7 (11/8 - 11/12): Race, discrimination, and expression

- Read: *Algorithms of Oppression*, chapter 1 "A Society, Searching," Safiya Noble (2018)
- Watch: [Black Software](#), presentation by Charlton D. McIlwain

- Due: **reading questionnaire #7**

Week 8 (11/15 - 11/19): Queer and trans online

- Read: "Trans Cultures Online," Avery Dame-Griff (2020); "Tumblr Was a Trans Technology," Oliver L. Haimson, Avery Dame-Griff, Elias Capello & Zahari Richter (2021); ["Remembering the Golden Age of the Queer Internet,"](#) Sofia Barrett-Ibarria (2018)

- Due: **reading questionnaire #8**

PART IV: The internet and society

Week 9 (11/22 - 11/24; Thanksgiving break 11/25 & 11/26): Policy and law

- Read: "Internet Policy"; ["A New Law Intended to Curb Sex Trafficking…"](#)
- Listen: This American Life podcast, [episode 740 "There, I Fixed It,"](#) act one: "Catching Deer When You Wanted Lions" by Lina Misitzis

- Due: **reading questionnaire #9** and proposal for **final project** (analyzing internet culture)

Week 10 (11/29 - 12/3): Activism

- Read: "#NoDAPL: Social Media, Empowerment, and Civic Participation at Standing Rock," Hayley Johnson (2017)
- Watch: ["Competing Ethnoracialized Counterpublics: # OscarsSoWhite, Black Twitter, and Latinx Twitter,"](#) presentation by Arcelia Gutiérrez (2021)

- Due: no assignments due

FINALS WEEK (12/6 - 12/10):

- Tuesday, December 7 by 11:59 pm: ***final projects due via Canvas***