

Thematic Learning Community (TLC) Seminar (LA&S 101):
Living Online: The Internet in American Society
Fall 2005

Class No. 29929

Thursdays, 11:00 – 11:50 am

Wescoe 4076

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

There are few aspects of modern life that have not been affected by the rise of the Internet. Higher education, in particular, has been reshaped in recent years by the Internet, which has become essential both to the academic and the social life of the 21st-century student. As importantly, there are a number of emerging economic, political, and social issues that revolve around the policies governing Internet use, the availability (or lack thereof) of access to the Internet, and the way in which the Internet has become a forum for interpersonal and public communication.

This course will provide an introduction to the history and structure of the Internet, but will focus on the ways the Internet is shaping our understanding about a range of social issues, including: privacy, freedom of expression, teaching and learning, ethics, and the digital divide. By introducing a range of questions related to this familiar, but ever-changing, medium for the dissemination of information, this course will prepare you to effectively use Internet-based resources for your academic work while also learning about the technology and legal framework governing Internet use on the KU campus.

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- identify issues related to the use of the Internet on campus or in the community;
- critically evaluate the quality of Web-based information resources and their significance for academic research; and

- identify social issues related either to the Internet or, more broadly, to the use of information in American society.

Linked Courses: SOC 104 (Elements of Sociology); EECS 138 (Introduction to Computing); POLS 110 (Introduction to U.S. Politics); SOC 110 (The American People)

ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

There is a virtual component to this course housed on the KU Blackboard system. To access the Blackboard course site, you will need to go to <<http://courseware.ku.edu/>> and select the site associated with this class.

The Blackboard site will include discussion forums through which class discussion and questions related to the readings may continue outside of the class meeting time, as well as links to additional resources.

For more information on using Blackboard at KU, please consult the “Student’s Guide to Blackboard,” available at http://www.ku.edu/~ids/docs/Blackboard_Student_Essentials.doc

COURSE READINGS

There is no textbook required for this class, but there will be a number of short readings made available in a variety of electronic forms. Core readings are listed for each class meeting in the “Class Schedule” (below). In addition, links to additional readings may be made available through the course Blackboard site. The nature of this class is such that there will be news items and other publications of interest that come up during the semester. You will be responsible for regularly checking the “Announcements” feature on Blackboard to look for new readings.

Readings may be drawn from materials freely available on the Web, in which case you will find a URL listed along with the title of the reading in the Class Schedule. Readings may also be provided through the KU Libraries’ “electronic reserves” system, in which case you will see the notation “(available on electronic reserve)” listed next to the title of the reading. Finally, topical readings and readings associated with small group work may be provided either through the “Announcements” feature on the Blackboard site, or through relevant “Discussion Boards” found on the site.

Keeping Up on New Developments

One increasingly popular way to keep up on issues related to the Internet and to information technology on campus is to subscribe to a Weblog (blog). As part of this class, you will subscribe to the Chronicle of Higher Education’s “Wired Campus” blog, which you may visit on the Web (URL below), receive as an RSS feed (requires Feedreader) or receive as an e-mail newsletter.

➤ *Get Connected*

- Visit the Wired Campus site at <http://wiredcampus.chronicle.com/>
- Look for the links to “Syndicate this Site” (requires RSS Feedreader), or to receive the Wired Campus Newsletter (requires registration), in the top-right corner of the page

Need to know more about RSS feeds? Visit the KU Libraries' "Technology Assistance – Understanding RSS News Feeds" page at <http://www.lib.ku.edu/technology/rss/>

Be prepared to read (and to share) information that you find on this (or related) blogs through the Blackboard site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The primary requirements for this course is regular class attendance and active participation in classroom discussions and activities (both face-to-face and virtual). In order to participate actively and effectively, you will need to keep up with the scheduled readings and to post regularly to weekly discussion board threads found on the Blackboard site.

In keeping with the TLC goal of fostering undergraduate research, you will also collaborate with your classmates to conduct and present the results of a small research study on the use of the Internet and attitudes toward Internet use among your fellow KU students.

This project will include the following components:

- identifying research questions
- reviewing existing survey instruments
- composing one (or more) survey instruments
- collecting data
- analyzing data
- presenting results

Further information on this project will be provided throughout the semester. Watch for the "Research Project Checkpoints" listed on the Class Schedule.

The weight of individual assignments in determining your final grade for this course are as follows:

Attendance and Class Participation (30%) – Regular attendance is expected in this course and its seminar format places a premium on informed class discussion. Given this fact, there is little opportunity for one to "make up" missed classes. If circumstances conspire to thwart your good intentions in regard to attendance, you should contact your instructor immediately.

Participation in Discussion Boards (20%) – Discussion boards on topics raised in class or in the readings will be provided throughout the semester. You will be expected to post at least one original contribution to a discussion board each week, and to post at least one comment or response to a classmate's posting. In preparing your posts, you should keep in mind the "Guidelines for Critical Engagement" provided below.

Research Project (50%) – You will work individually and in small groups throughout the semester to design an original research project on a topic of interest within the framework of existing studies of college student use of the Internet. You will be asked to report on your progress throughout the semester following "Research Project Checkpoints" noted in the Class Schedule (summarized in the table below) and will have the opportunity to discuss issues related to the project in the "Research Project" discussion board on the Blackboard site. Your final grade will be based on your progress throughout the semester and on your final class presentation of your work on December 1st

Research Project Checkpoints	
September 1 st	Identify broad areas of interest
September 15 th	Identify research questions
September 29 th	Complete tutorial on Human Subjects Protocol
October 6 th	Present draft survey items
October 20 th	Final draft of survey instrument(s)
October 27 th	Begin data collection no later than this date
November 3 rd	Conclude data collection no later than this date
December 1 st	Final presentations in class
December 7 th	TLC Poster Session

Guidelines for Critical Engagement

Any course that includes an online learning component is dependent on our “engagement” with:

- course readings and assignments
- classmates and facilitators
- the broader context for our subject of study

We foster critical engagement with each other and the course material through:

- active and appropriate use of the threaded discussions available on the Blackboard site (posting both in response to questions posed by your facilitators and to posts sent by your classmates)
- reviewing relevant discussion lists or Weblogs (e.g., the Wired Campus Blog) and referring each other to (and commenting on) issues raised in those environments that relate to course topics
- discussion of issues related to course topics that may arise in your daily life or in your other classes

Ways to demonstrate critical engagement in the online environment include:

- identifying one or more aspects of a topic under discussion as being significant to you (and providing an explanation of its significance)
- critically evaluating the argument(s) found in the source to which you are responding through your posting
- effectively synthesizing multiple resources, arguments, or points of view in a posting
- taking an existing thread in a different (but still relevant) direction
- bringing “real-life experience” into the class discussion

Note: Many of these are good strategies for demonstrating engagement with the course in the face-to-face environment, too!

CLASS SCHEDULE

August 18th

Introduction: Why Study the Internet?

The Internet will be part of your daily life at the University of Kansas and will help to shape your academic experience and your social life. What can you learn from studying the Internet? How can you turn an interest in the Internet into a topic for scholarly inquiry in your chosen field(s)? Today, we will provide an overview of the class, discuss projects and guest speakers, and ask for input from you about what questions you think are most worth asking.

August 25th

Cyberculture Studies: An Overview

Over the past decade, the academic study of the Internet has been shaped by the emergence of the field of "Cyberculture Studies." Today, we will discuss the parameters of this field and some of the basic areas of inquiry around which research questions might be developed.

Read: Silver, "Introducing Cyberculture," available online at
<http://www.com.washington.edu/rccs/intro.asp>

Links: Resource Center for Cyberculture Studies: Featured Links
<http://www.com.washington.edu/rccs/links.asp>

*****OUT-OF-CLASS ACTIVITY*****

Pizza Party & Film: August October 29-31

Take time out to share a meal and a movie with your classmates and TLC facilitators. We'll discuss potential films and times during the first two weeks of class.

September 1st

Cyberculture Studies and You: Studies of the Internet and College Students

The effect of the Internet on education and the study of the ways in which young people use the Internet is a hot topic in Cyberculture Studies. Today, we will discuss the conclusions that have been drawn about young people and the Internet in a number of often-cited studies.

Read: Jones, "The Internet Goes to College: How Students Are Living in the Future with Today's Technology," available online at
http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_College_Report.pdf

Oblinger, "Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials: Understanding the New Students," available online at
<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/erm0342.pdf>

Windham, "The Student's Perspective," available online at
<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/pub7101e.pdf>

➤ *Research Project Checkpoint:*

Identify areas within the topic of "college student use of the Internet and attitudes toward the Internet" on which you might conduct research for the class project

September 8th

Internet Basics: History, Technology, Architecture, Communities

While Cyberculture Studies often focus on the social, economics, and political aspects of the place of the Internet in American life, all such inquiry is based on a basic understanding of the technology behind the Internet. Today, we will provide an introductory overview to the technology behind the Internet and to the different resources and communities accessible through your Web browser.

Guest Facilitator: Cole Robison (KU Libraries)

Read: Rheingold, "Visionaries and Convergences: The Accidental History of the Net," available online at

<http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/3.html>

Links: An Overview of the World Wide Web

http://www.cio.com/WebMaster/sem2_home.html

KU Libraries Instructional Services – Workshops

<http://lark.cc.ku.edu/cgiwrap/training/train/index.php?SCREEN=workshops>

September 15th

Plagiarism and the Ethics of Information Use

Stephen Glass. Stephen Ambrose. Doris Kearns Goodwin. Reports of plagiarism among journalists, popular authors, and scholars have become a regular part of the Internet age. Small wonder then that a 2004 survey of over 2,000 faculty members across the country reported that the potential for "cut-and-paste" plagiarism using Internet resources is a "key concern" on campus. Today, we will discuss the ethical use of information throughout the research and writing process and learn about some of the resources made available to you through the KU Libraries and the KU Writing Center to help you to avoid plagiarism.

Guest Facilitator: Michele Eodice (KU Writing Center)

Read: Edlund, "What is 'Plagiarism' and Why Do People Do It?," available online at

http://www.calstatela.edu/centers/write_cn/plagiarism.htm

Links: Plagiarism and How to Avoid It

http://www.depts.drew.edu/composition/Avoiding_Plagiarism.htm

KU Writing Center – Academic Integrity

<http://www.writing.ku.edu/students/docs/integrity.shtml>

➤ *Research Project Checkpoint*

Identify research question(s) with previously-identified areas of interest that can be addressed through the collection of survey data

September 22nd

Separating the Wheat from the Chaff: Critical Thinking About Internet Resources

Note: Class meets in the Budig Collaborative Learning Environment (Budig 10)

Over a decade ago, a famous cartoon in *The New Yorker* concluded that “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.” How do we go about making critical judgments about which Internet resources are appropriate for our academic research (or for our personal information needs)? Today, we will discuss strategies for applying critical thinking to the selection of information resources accessed through the Internet.

Links: On the Internet, Nobody Knows You’re a Dog
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/jomc/academics/dri/idog.html>

Texas Information Literacy Tutorial
<http://tilt.lib.utsystem.edu/>

Hoax? Scholarly Research? Personal Opinion? You Decide!
<http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/hoax/index.htm>

September 29th

Research Methods for Studying the Internet

Many of the current studies of Internet access and use make use of survey research. Survey research is also among the most popular research methodologies across the social sciences (and may be found in your readings for one or more of our linked courses). In preparing for our own class research project, we will need to know more about how to define research questions that can be addressed through surveys, and learn how survey research differs from other forms of research in Cyberculture Studies, e.g., focus groups and interviews. Today, we will discuss the basics of survey research and continue working to define our own research questions for our class project.

Guest Facilitator: Bruce Frey (Psychology & Research in Education)

Read: TBA

Links: KU Tutorial for Human Subjects Protocol
<http://www.research.ku.edu/tutor/hsp/index.shtml>

- *Research Project Checkpoint:*
Complete the KU Tutorial for Human Subjects Protocol and use the online submission to add your name to the KUCR database (the tutorial will take approximately 25 mins. to complete)

October 6th*Issues in the Community: Privacy, Responsible Use, and Cybersecurity*

Identity theft. File sharing. Password protection. We've all heard the stories about how important it is to protect your online identity, but what does it mean for YOU now that you're a student at KU? Today, we will discuss some of the issues related to identity management and responsible use of information technology here at KU.

Guest Facilitators: Marilu Goodyear (Public Administration) and Jenny Mehmedovic (Office of the Vice-Provost for Information Services)

Read: Garfinkel, "New Technologies Are a Threat to Privacy" (available on electronic reserve)

Miller, "New Technologies Are Not a Threat to Privacy" (available on electronic reserve)

Links: KU Information Technology Security Office

<http://www.security.ku.edu/>

KU ResNet Responsible Use Agreement

<http://www.resnet.ku.edu/datauseragreement.jsp>

➤ *Research Project Checkpoint:*

Present draft survey items based on previously-identified research question(s)

October 13th

Fall Break (No Class Meeting)

October 20th*Communication and Community Online*

How do people communicate online? How do they use the Internet to build community? Do our online identities differ from those we construct in the physical world? What is the impact of the Internet on personal relationships? Today, we will discuss issues related to online communication and the development of communities online through discussion lists, blogs, and MUDs.

Guest Facilitator: TBA

Read: Chenault, "Developing Personal and Emotional Relationships via Computer-Mediated Communication," available online at

<http://www.december.com/cmcmag/1998/may/chenault.html>

Wellman & Gulia, "Net Surfers Don't Ride Alone: Virtual Communities as Communities," available online at

<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/publications/netsurfers/netsurfers.pdf>

Links: TBA

➤ *Research Project Checkpoint:*

Final draft of survey instrument(s) presented for review

*****OUT-OF-CLASS ACTIVITY*****

Cybersecurity Week: October 24-26

Each year, the University of Kansas participates in campus-wide presentations related to cyber-security. You will have the opportunity to sign up to attend events such as a film showing or a concert in order to distribute cyber-security materials and to answer questions on cyber-security on campus. A sign-up sheet will be distributed ahead of time.

October 27th

Issues in the Community: The Digital Divide

The Internet has become essential to the conduct of education, commerce, and government in the United States, but how widespread is access to the Internet in homes across the country? What is the significance of differing levels of access across the boundaries of race, gender, language, and/or country of origin? Today, we will discuss the social and political aspects of the gap between individuals and communities that have ready access to the Internet and those that do not.

Read: Wood & Smith, "Accessing the Machine" (available on electronic reserve)

Irving, "The Information Revolution Has Created a Digital Divide" (available on electronic reserve)

Thierer, "The Information Revolution Has Not Created a Digital Divide" (available on electronic reserve)

Links: PBS: The Digital Divide

<http://www.pbs.org/digitaldivide/>

National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Reports

<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/reports/anol/index.html>

Wikipedia: The Digital Divide

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_divide

- *Research Project Checkpoint:*
Begin data collection

November 3rd

The Citizen in the Information Age: E-Literacy for E-Governance

Read: TBA

Links: TBA

- *Research Project Checkpoint:*
Conclude data collection. Begin data analysis.

November 10th

Search Engine Showdown: Using Search Engines for Research and Real Life

Note: Class meets in the Budig Collaborative Learning Environment (Budig 10)

The search engine (Google, Teoma, Yahoo!, etc.) has become the ubiquitous “first stop” on the Information Superhighway. Today, we will learn strategies for more effective use of search engines, as well as their strengths and weaknesses for finding resources for academic research.

Guest Facilitators: Tami Albin and Debra Riley-Huff (KU Libraries)

Links: Search Engine Watch

<http://searchenginewatch.com/>

November 17th

Prepare for Presentation of Class Project

Today, we will meet in small groups to discuss progress on the class project and to prepare for presentation of results.

November 24th

Thanksgiving Break (No Class Meeting)

December 1st

Presentation of Class Project

December 7th

TLC Poster Session and Review

Note: Time and Place TBA

This is the final event for the TLC students and facilitators and will include a poster session in which students from each TLC will present material from their seminar and TLC awards will be presented. Tentatively scheduled for late afternoon in the Kansas Union.

Good luck with the rest of your semester!