

**INLS 490.151 Online Social Networks**  
Fall 2007

**Instructor**

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**Meeting Place and Time**

Wednesday, 6PM – 8:30PM, Phillips Hall 328

**Class Website**

[http://ibiblio.org/fred/inls\\_490/](http://ibiblio.org/fred/inls_490/)  
Authentication credentials: *Username:* inls490, *Password:* inls490

**Facebook Group**

The class Facebook group is “INLS 490”, you may either search for it or browse directly via this URL: <http://tinyurl.com/2cdv4o>

**Office Hours**

Wednesday, 10AM – 12PM, Weaver Street Market, Carrboro  
Other times by appointment

**Course Description**

This is a course about our relationship with our networked selves. As online social networks become ubiquitous, the role of one’s digital identity gains a unique prominence. In this course, we will explore digital identity, self-representation in online worlds, and the new information questions being raised as we embrace these new technologies. Indeed, networks surround us – be they social or informational networks, and they have a robust impact on our everyday life.

In the following course, we will examine online networks from multiple perspectives. In the first section of the class, we will explore the dynamics of networks. With this perspective, we will see how networks influence things such as the ranking algorithms of search engines and information flow in the blogosphere. In the second section of the class, we will explore the nature of online identity as presented in social networks. In the final section of the class, we will look a number of applications of social network, including mobile and community-based networking.

*Note:* This course will explicitly stay away from the mathematics of networks; no special mathematical skills are necessary for the completion of this course.

**Textbooks**

- Barabasi, Albert-Laszlo. (2002). *Linked*. Cambridge, MA: Plume Books.
- Goffman, Erving. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Turkle, Sherry (1995). *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

All textbooks for this course are available in trade paperback.

**Readings**

Readings are organized by week in the syllabus, and are available online via the course website.

## **Format**

This class will employ a mixture of lecture and seminar formats. In the first half of class, I will lead a semi-structured discussion based on the reading and contributed questions. Active participation and discussion is expected. In the second half of the class, two students will deliver topical presentations and help lead the class discussion.

## **Expectations**

First and foremost, participation and active discussion are essential to the success of this class. To this extent, I expect you to come to every class, ready to think critically about the issues presented. Be bold, be imaginative, find ways to relate what we're studying to your life, don't be afraid to take and *defend* your opinions. The study of online social networks is an emergent field; there are few "right" or "wrong" answers. It is likely that these technologies will continue to impact your social, professional and academic life for quite some time – so come ready to explore, share and question.

In addition to active participation in class, there are a number of assignments you will be expected to complete this semester. First, you will be expected to contribute a question, observation or enhancement to our online forum each week. Second, you will be expected to produce a topical issues presentation once this semester, as well as act as a discussion facilitator on your presentation day. Third, you will be asked to complete a term project; as part of this term project you will be expected to submit a proposal and bibliography. Further instructions on your assignments follow.

Finally, please note that this course is being taught at the graduate level. There is significant reading each week, but I hope you'll find it enjoyable and thought-provoking. Additionally, I reserve the right to amend this syllabus if I see a need to do so.

## **Assignment: Class Questions**

By 2PM on the Tuesday of each week, you will be expected to pose a question, observation or enhancement to our online discussion board, located in our Facebook group. This Q, O, or E should arise from our reading, and generally be one or two paragraphs long (if you're especially inspired, feel free to go longer). Why not just a question? I'd like for the fora to be conversational, so if someone asks a question that you can build on, or draw on your personal experience to enhance, feel free.

Each week, I will start a new thread (the thread name will correspond to the upcoming week number), and I ask that you try to keep your discussions inside the thread if possible. However, feel free to contribute links, photos, videos and wall postings to our group, have fun with it.

## **Assignment: Topical Issues Presentation and Discussion Facilitation**

You will be expected to deliver a topical issues presentation once during the semester. Drawing on our reading for the week, you will present a relevant current issue in the online social networks space. I encourage you to make your presentation not only relevant to the reading, but your interests at large. Presentations should be no more than 15 minutes in length, and you may use Powerpoint. Examples of topical presentations may be: *Presenting a new social network site, exploring a feature shift by an online social network, analysis of a technology delivered by a social network site*. Other examples may include presentations on *how social networks integrate in your area of practice, how communities of practice are utilizing social networks, or a current news issue about social networks*. I encourage you to be creative and find interesting or novel connections between your topical presentation and the class material.

On the day you deliver your topical issues presentation, you will also be expected be a facilitator of discussion in the second half of the class. Prepare a few questions about the material to get the discussion rolling, but again feel free to be creative in your facilitation.

### **Assignment: Term Project, Proposal and Bibliography**

The term project will be a substantive original piece of research, literature or a topical project in the area (research proposals acceptable as well). I encourage you to develop a project that is relevant to your area of interest; to this extent I am quite flexible in the types of projects I'll approve. As social networks pose interesting questions to industry, the academy and society at large, there are many opportunities for you to develop a project that is relevant to your interests.

Twice during the semester you will be asked to deliver a short description of your project idea to the class. Additionally, you will be required to turn in a project proposal and bibliography. The project proposal should be a 2-page description of your project; you will be expected to present your idea, rationale and why the project is relevant to your interests.

Your project bibliography is a combined bibliography/outline. You will be required to turn in a list of at least 5 sources and abstracts you plan to use in your project. Please note, the abstracts should not be the paper's abstracts, but a summary of your own creation. Your outline should be an in-depth exploration of your project's roadmap; a simple bullet list of section titles will not be sufficient.

As this project counts for 1/2 of the overall grade, significant effort is expected. The instructor is flexible in terms of fitting the project to the student's discipline or interests. I would suggest that you talk to me early and often about your project; if you keep me in the loop, I'm happy to provide feedback, guidance and connections. Group work (max group size: 3) is allowed, though group projects must reflect the substantive work of all parties.

Project presentations will occur on the last day of class, December 5. On this day you will be expected to deliver a 6-10 minute presentation or demonstration about your term project. Term projects will be due at 5PM on Tuesday, December 12.

### **Grading Policy**

Participation and Attendance: 20%

Topical Issues Presentation: 10%

Weekly Questions, Comments or Enhancements: 10%

Term Project Proposal/Bibliography/Outline: 10%

Term Project: 50%

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to conform to the Honor Code in all academic manners. For more information about the Honor Code, please visit the following URL: <http://honor.unc.edu/honor/index.html>.

### **Course Schedule**

#### **8/22 - Week 1: Introductions and Course Overview**

Discussion of syllabus and assignments, introductions.

#### **8/29 - Week 2: Surveying the Field of Online Social Networks**

A look at youth adoption and privacy trends, and an introduction to boyd's ethnographic work in online social networks.

- boyd, danah. (Forthcoming) "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life." MacArthur Foundation on Digital Learning, Identity Volume (ed. David Buckingham).
- Lenhart, A and Madden, M. (2007) Teens, Privacy & Online Social Networks. *Pew Internet and American Life Project Research Report*.
- Turkle, Introduction

### **9/5 - Week 3: The Properties of Networks**

A lay introduction to the fascinating science of networks.

- Barabasi Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Shirky, C. (2003). Power Laws, Weblogs and Inequality.  
[http://www.shirky.com/writings/powerlaw\\_weblog.html](http://www.shirky.com/writings/powerlaw_weblog.html)

### **9/12 - Week 4: Network Dynamics**

Exploring the dynamics and characteristics of online social networks.

- Kumar, R., Novak, J., and Tomkins, A. (2006). Structure and evolution of online social networks. In *Proceedings of KDD 2006*, pages 611–617.
- Golder, S., Wilkinson, D., and Huberman, B. (2006). Rhythms of social interaction: messaging within a massive online network. 3rd International Conference on Communities and Technologies (CT2007), East Lansing, MI.
- Barabasi Chapters 5, 6

### **9/19 - Week 5: Exploring Digital Identity**

\* *Term Project Proposal Due*

Thinking about the production of our digital self.

- Turkle Chapters 3, 7
- Choi, J. H. (2006). Living in Cyworld : Contextualising Cy-Ties in South Korea. In Bruns, A. and Jacobs, J. (Eds.) *Use of Blogs (Digital Formations)*. New York: Peter Lang.

### **9/26 - Week 6: Identity and Interaction**

How our digital identities create our information places and forms; the relationships we mediate through online spaces.

- Dwyer, Cathy. (2007). Digital Relationships in the 'MySpace' Generation: Results From a Qualitative Study. 40th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS), Waikoloa, HI.
- boyd, danah. (Forthcoming) "None of this is Real." *Structures of Participation* (ed. Joe Karaganis).
- Valentine, G and Holloway, S. (2002) Cyberkids? Exploring Children's Identities and Social Networks in On-line and Off-line Worlds. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 92(2), 2002.
- Lampe, Cliff, Ellison, Nicole, and Steinfeld, Charles. (2006). A face(book) in the crowd: social searching vs. social browsing. Banff, Alberta, Canada: *Proceedings of CSCW 2006*.

### **10/3 - Week 7: Signaling and the Art of Impression**

Thinking about how we construct and experience online identity

- Donath, J and boyd, d. (2004). Public displays of connection. *BT Technology Journal*, 22(4).
- Lampe, C, Ellison, N and Steinfeld, C. (2007). *A Familiar Face(book): Profile Elements as Signals in an Online Social Network*. *Proceedings of CHI 2007*. San Jose, CA, ACM Press.
- Donath, J. (1999) Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community. *Communities in Cyberspace* (ed. P. Kollock and M. Smith)
- Goffman, Introduction.

### **10/10 - Week 8: The Presentation of Self in Networked Life**

Individual presentation and representation in online social worlds.

- Goffman Chapters 1 and 3
- Gosling, S., Gaddis, S. and Varize, S. (2007) Personality Impressions Based on Facebook Profiles. *Proceedings of ICWSM 2007*, Boulder. CO.
- Whitty, M. and Gavin, J. (2001) Age/Sex/Location: Uncovering the Social Cues in the Development of Online Relationships. *CyberPsychology and Behavior* 4(5).

### **10/24 - Week 9: Online Social Networks and Social Capital**

The role of social capital in online social networks.

- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4), article 1. <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue4/ellison.html>
- Millen, D. and Patterson, J. (2003) Identity Disclosure and the Creation of Social Capital
- Resnick, P. (2001). Beyond Bowling Together: SocioTechnical Capital. In Carroll, J. (Ed.) *HCI in the New Millenium*.
- Engstrom, J. (2005). Why some social network services work and others don't – Or: the case for object-centric sociality. [http://www.zengestrom.com/blog/2005/04/why\\_some\\_social.html](http://www.zengestrom.com/blog/2005/04/why_some_social.html)

### **10/31 - Week 10: Privacy and Online Social Networks**

Examining information sharing behavior in social network sites.

- Barnes, S. (2006). A privacy paradox: Social networking in the United States. *First Monday* 11(9).
- Acquisti, A. and Gross, R. (2006). Imagined Communities: Awareness, Information Sharing, and Privacy on the Facebook. 6th Workshop on Privacy Enhancing Technologies. Cambridge: June 28-30.
- boyd, danah. (2007). Social Network Sites: Public, Private, or What? *Knowledge Tree* 13, May 2007.
- Stutzman, F. (2006) An Evaluation of Identity-Sharing Behavior in Social Network Communities. *iDMA Journal*, 3(1).

### **11/7 - Week 11: Ubiquitous and Mobile Social Networks**

\* *Term Project Bibliography/Outline Due*

Exploring social networks at the device and grid level.

- Ling, R. and Yttri, B. (2006) Control, Emancipation and Status. In *Computers, Phones and the Internet: Domesticating Information Technology* (eds. R. Kruat and M. Brynin and S. Kiesler) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Ling, R. and Yttri, B. (2002) Hyper-coordination via mobile phones in Norway. In *Perpetual contact: Mobile communication, private talk, public performance*. (eds. Katz, J. and Aakhus, M.) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Palen, L. and Dourish, P. (2003) Unpacking "Privacy" for a Networked World. *Proceedings of CHI 2003*.

### **11/14 - Week 12: Networked Publics**

The intersection of social networks and physical space.

- Wellman, B. (2001) Physical Place and Cyberplace: The Rise of Personalized Networking. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 25(2).
- Wellman, B. (2002) Little Boxes, Glocalization and Networked Individualism. *Proceedings of Digital Cities II: Second Kyoto Workshop on Digital Cities*, Kyoto, Japan, October 18-20, 2001. Springer, Berlin.
- Millen, D. and Patterson, J. (2002) Stimulating Social Engagement in a Community Network. *Proceedings of CSCW 2002*.

### **11/28 - Week 13: Online Social Networks and the Practice**

Social networks in the Academy

- Charnigo, L. and Barnett-Ellis, P. (2007) Checking out Facebook.com: The Impact of a Digital Trend on Academic Libraries. *Information Technologies and Libraries*, March 2007: 23- 34.
- Mazer, J., Murphy, R. and Simonds, C. (2007) I'll See You on Facebook. *Communication Education* 56(1), 1-17.
- Hewitt, A. and Forte, A. (2006) Crossing Boundaries: Identity Management and Student/Faculty Relationships on the Facebook. *Proceedings of CSCW 2006*.

**12/5 - Week 14: Project Presentations**

Final presentations, All projects due at *5PM on December 12.*