

A Hyperconnected World
Honors 113, Spring 2018
Professor Rogers Brubaker

Preliminary – subject to change!

Wednesday 12-2:50, Boelter 5514

Website: <https://moodle2.sscnet.ucla.edu/course/view/18S-HNRS113-1>

Office hours: Tuesday 3-4 and Thursday Tuesday 2-3 or by appointment, Haines 232

[I will not be holding office hours the week of April 30 or the week of May 28]

This course will explore the psychological, social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions of our hyperconnected world. This is a world into which your generation was born, though it has changed dramatically during your lifetime. Since you are digital, internet, and social media “natives,” having been socialized into online habits and practices from a young age, it is not always easy for you to grasp the novelty and distinctiveness of this world, or to think critically about it. This course seeks to help you develop the tools to understand the distinctiveness and even peculiarity of a social world whose basic structures and forms of life your generation tends to take for granted. It also seeks to cultivate the skills, perspectives, and habits of mind needed to think critically about the social, political, and economic forces that shape this world – and shape the people that inhabit it.

Note on schedule

There will be no class meeting May 2 or May 30, as I will be out of town. To make up for these missed classes, the first class meeting on April 4 will be a substantive meeting, for which reading will be assigned. And we will meet during finals week on Wednesday, June 13. If you cannot attend this June 13 meeting (where students will present their final projects), please let me know in advance.

Required books. Two books are required for purchase. Please note that since these are readily available online, they have **not** been ordered at the ASUCLA bookstore.

Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. Note: you may purchase **either** the 2011 edition or the 2017 edition: the only difference is a new preface

Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*

We will be reading significant portions of two additional books. These are **not** required for purchase; selections will be made available online. But some of you may prefer to purchase these.

Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, *Networked*

José Van Dyck, *The culture of connectivity*

Other required readings will be posted on the course website, except as otherwise noted. They can be accessed under the date of the corresponding class meeting on the left side of the main page of the course website

Please bring assigned readings -- books and/or printed copies of assigned articles -- to class with you.

Reading questions will be posted on the course website each week; these will provide some guidelines for things to think about as you read.

Grades will be based on class participation and short writing assignments (50%) and on the research paper (50%). Students are expected to do all the readings carefully each week and to participate actively in discussion. Individual students will also be assigned to initiate discussion of particular topics throughout the course. Class participation will be assessed on how well you have mastered the readings (as indicated by the quality of your contributions to discussion). The short writing assignments will not be graded, though they will be returned with comments.

Research paper (about 2500-3000 words). Please note the following deadlines, so that you can plan ahead:

1. A two-page proposal should be submitted online (as a PDF file) by Monday, May 7 (you will find the prompt under the May 9 tab).
2. After you meet individually with me to discuss the proposal, a revised proposal with a preliminary bibliography should be submitted online (as a PDF file) by Wednesday, May 16 (under the May 16 tab)
3. Brief oral presentations on projects will be made during our final class meeting, June 13 (see note above about the schedule).
4. The final paper will be due Friday, June 15 – submit as PDF file under June 13 tab.

The research paper should engage in some way issues addressed in the readings and class discussions. But there is a great deal of flexibility in how you choose to do so, and it need not be limited to these issues.

As a research paper, the paper should not be based only, or primarily, on assigned readings, but rather on your own research and further readings. However, the assigned readings may be useful in suggesting ideas about topics, as well as indicating further relevant readings. For this reason, you want to read ahead, or at least scan the readings for later in the quarter, before the paper proposal is due.

You have a great deal of leeway in choosing a topic for the research paper. This is an opportunity, but it is also a responsibility. It takes some advance planning. For this reason, there is a structured series of deadlines for the initial paper proposal, for a revised proposal, and for brief oral presentations of the project in class, as well as for the final paper.

Schedule of topics, readings, and assignments

Important note: reading and other assignments may be modified as the course goes on. Such modifications will be communicated by e-mail. Please make sure you regularly check your registered UCLA e-mail account.

INTRODUCTION

April 4

Rainey and Wellman, *Networked*, Chapter 1 (pp. 3-19), Chapter 3 (pp. 59-74), Chapter 4 (entire). Chapters can be downloaded through the UCLA library catalog entry for the book.

Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here*, Introduction, Chapter 1, and the first half of Chapter 2 (through p 39, also pp 61-62). (book required for purchase)

PART ONE: MIND, SELF, INTERACTION, RELATIONSHIPS

April 11. "Always on" (1): psychological perspectives. "Social overload"; continuous partial attention; multitasking; FOMO; envy; "Facebook depression"; addiction?

Writing assignment. Choose one 24-hour period this week, and go without social media, texting, the web, apps, or network-connected devices of any kind for the full 24 hours: laptops, tablets, smart phones, networked music players, etc. (Although you may need to use your laptop or the internet for some homework, try to pick a 24-hour period when you won't have to do so.) Write a report of about 750-1000 words (about three to four double-spaced typed pages) describing and analyzing this experience. What does the experience of disconnecting reveal about our hyperconnected world? What does it reveal about our relation to our devices?

If you fall short of disconnecting completely during this period, be honest about this: note in your report how this happened.

The report should be submitted **no later than 9am Tuesday, April 10** The report can be submitted by clicking the writing assignment link under April 11 on the course website.

Please note that these reports will be available to other enrolled students; some students will have the responsibility for reading, analyzing, and presenting the reports in class.

Reading: The readings for today fall roughly into three topics: (1) cognitive aspects of the always-on, hyperconnected world; (2) emotional aspects of this world; and (3) the question of addiction or dependency. There are lots of readings for today, but all are quite short.

Note: the readings for today have been consolidated into 3 PDF files, one for each sub-section.

(1) Cognitive perspectives: multitasking, distraction, competition for attention

Shirky, "Why I just asked my students to put their laptops away."

Levitin 2015, excerpt from *The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload*

Wu, "How today's computers weaken our brain"

Carr, "Is Google making us stupid?"

Wayne, "Our (Bare) Shelves, Our Selves."

(2) Emotional perspectives: "Facebook depression"; FOMO; social media and envy; social comparison

Konnikova, "How Facebook Makes Us Unhappy"

Morgan, "I Quit Liking Things On Facebook for Two Weeks. Here's How It Changed My View of Humanity"

White, "Research finds link between social media and the 'fear of missing out'"

Williams, "The Agony of Instagram"

Anderson, "The Instagram effect: How the psychology of envy drives consumerism"

Krasnova et al, "Envy on Facebook," first three pages only

Franzen, "Liking is for cowards. Go for what hurts"

(3) Addiction?

Davidow, "Exploring the Neuroscience of Internet Addiction"

Weinschenk, "Why We're All Addicted to Texts, Twitter and Google"

Yoffe, "Seeking"

Weinstein and Lejoyeux, "Internet Addiction or Excessive Internet Use", introductory section only (277 to top of 278)

Archer, "Smartphone Addiction"

Donley, "Does Social Media Addiction Really Exist?"

Singer, "Can't Put Down Your Device? That's by Design." Optional: explore the site "[Network Effect](#)" (discussed in this article).

Dougherty, "Addicted to Your Phone? There's Help for That." Optional: check out the devices mentioned in this article and find newer devices designed to do the same sort of thing.

Kwak, "How I achieved peace by crippling my phone"

In addition to the readings:

Watch "[A magazine is an iPad that does not work](#)"

Take multitasking tests and share them with your friends: briefer tests of [juggling tasks](#) and [focus](#) and (optional) the more elaborate "[gatekeeper](#)" or "supertasker" test

Take '[internet addiction quiz](#)' and share it with your friends

April 18: "Always on" (2): social relationships. Self-presentation; identity construction; transformations of family life, friendship, dating, intimacy

Reading:

Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together* (book required for purchase)

new 2017 preface, pp. xxi-xxvi [Note: this preface is available online in case you have purchased the original, 2011 edition of the book. The editions are identical except for this new preface]

Author's note (through first complete paragraph on p. xiv)

Introduction: pp. 1-middle of 3, middle of 13-middle of 19

Chapter 8: pp. 155-170

Chapters 9 and 10: entire (pp. 171-209)

Chapter 14: entire (pp. 265-277)

Conclusion: pp. 279-top of 281; 284; bottom of 287-289; 293-296;

Epilogue: entire (pp. 297-305)

Rainie and Wellman, *Networked*, chapters 5 and 6. Chapters can be downloaded through the UCLA library catalog entry for the book.

Schwarz, “Who Moved My Conversation? Instant Messaging, Intertextuality and New Regimes of Intimacy and Truth.” pp. 71-78 only

Kearney, “Losing our touch”

Watch the video “I forgot my phone”

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OINa46HeWg8>) and then read the critique of the video (and of the broader “digital detox” fad): “The Disconnectionists”: <https://thenewinquiry.com/the-disconnectionists/>

April 25: “Always on” (3): social relationships (continued)

The reading for this week will consist of essays you write yourselves. These will be made available on the course website; details to follow.

Writing assignment. In order to give everyone enough time to read the essays, the essays will be due **by midnight on Monday, April 23** (specific instructions will follow about posting them on the course website). Drawing on your own experience and the experience of those you know well, write a short essay (4-5 double-spaced pages, or about 1000-1250 words) about how hyperconnectivity has transformed social relationships. You may choose to focus on family relationships, friendships, or romantic and sexual relationships. Whichever you choose, the point is not to celebrate or denounce, but to analyze.

The essay should not be *about* the readings we have done so far; it should be based on your own experience and observations. But you may draw as seems appropriate on the readings. No bibliography is necessary; for citations, it is sufficient to give the author's name in parentheses and – for longer works – the page number.

The essays should be submitted **under the April 25 tab** on the course website.

Transformations of friendship and family relations are extensively addressed in readings we have done. Transformations of dating, romance, and sexuality have not been extensively covered. Those choosing to write on this should read these two items:

Rosenfield, “Marriage, Choice, and Couplehood in the Age of the Internet.” Pp 490-492 only for theoretical background

Schwarz, “Going to Bed with a Camera: On the Visualization of Sexuality and the Production of Knowledge.”

May 2 – No class meeting; no office hours this week

PART TWO: ECONOMICS, SURVEILLANCE, CULTURE, AND POLITICS

May 9: Economics, law, technology, and power. Advertising; monopoly; winner-take-all markets; intellectual property and copyright; centralization vs decentralization

overview

Benkler, “Degrees of Freedom, Dimensions of Power.”

network effects and monopoly tendencies [bundled as a single PDF]

Wu, “In the Grip of the New Monopolists”

Malik, “In Silicon Valley Now, It’s Almost Always Winner Takes All.”

engineering sociality

van Dijck, *The culture of connectivity*, chapter 1, chapter 2 (pp 36-41 only)

The economy of metrics [bundled as a single PDF]

Grosser, “What do metrics want?” [If you find the print on the PDF too small, this can also be read at <http://computationalculture.net/what-do-metrics-want/>]

Confessore et al, “The Follower Factory.” This is included in the bundled PDF, but some additional material and interactive graphics are available in the online version of the article :

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/01/27/technology/social-media-bots.html>

from the open web to “walled gardens”

Anderson, “The Web Is Dead. Long Live the Internet.”

Advertising and surveillance as a business model [bundled as a single PDF]

Zuckerman, “The Internet’s Original Sin”

Morozov, “Will tech giants move on from the internet, now we’ve all been harvested?”

Tufekci, “Mark Zuckerberg, Let Me Pay for Facebook”

The music industry [bundled as a single PDF]

Levine, *Free Ride*, Introduction (pp 3-13 only)

Negus, “Digital Divisions and the Changing Cultures of the Music Industries”

May 16: Surveillance and privacy

(1) Overviews

Rainie and Wellman, *Networked*, pp 235-243: surveillance, coveillance, sousveillance

Bennett et al, *Transparent Lives*, Chapter 1: "Expanding surveillance: from the atypical to the routine"

(2) self-surveillance and social surveillance; panopticism; the quantified self; the social implications of self-tracking; algorithmic social surveillance

Marwick, "The public domain: Social surveillance in everyday life"

Morozov, *To save everything, click here*, Chapter 7, pp. 226-259 only

Singer, "Risks in Using Social Media to Spot Signs of Mental Distress"

[optional] parental surveillance: check out popular apps for parents seeking to keep tabs on the physical whereabouts or digital activities of their children. but you may want to look for others as well. How do surveillance technologies change the relationship between parents and children? [some are reviewed at <https://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/best-parental-control-apps/>]

[optional] partner surveillance: Investigate what apps are available for partner surveillance or for catching a cheating spouse or partner. How does the potential availability of surveillance technologies change intimate relationships?

(3) Big data and government and corporate surveillance; "predictive policing"; workplace surveillance

van Dijck, "Datafication, Dataism and Dataveillance: Big Data between Scientific Paradigm and Ideology."

Morozov, *To save everything, click here*, 181-189, 296-end of 301

Set of shorter articles on government and corporate surveillance [bundled into a single PDF] (note that there is some overlap between these and other readings):

Marwick, "How Your Data Are Being Deeply Mined."

Morozov, "Information Consumerism: The Price of Hypocrisy"

Duhigg, "How Companies Learn Your Secrets"

Rosenblatt et al, "Workplace Surveillance."

May 23 Culture, information, knowledge: new digital intermediaries; “algorithmic gatekeeping”; customized content; cultural populism; the putative neutrality of digital filters

Morozov, *To save everything, click here*, Chapter 5

Pariser, *The Filter Bubble*, “Introduction”

Rainie and Wellman, *Networked*, pp 223-235

van Dijck, *The culture of connectivity*, chapters 6 and 7

Greenfeld, “Faking cultural literacy”

Schwarz, “The Past next Door: Neighbourly Relations with Digital Memory-Artefacts.”

Big Data and Music [bundled into a single PDF]

Hanrahan, “Big Data, Little Music.”

Sisario, “The Sweet, Streaming Sound of Data.”

Moon, “How data is transforming the music industry”

Augur, “Will Big Data Write the Next Hit Song?”

May 30. No class meeting; no office hours this week

June 6: Politics: the “engineered public sphere”; the closing of the open Internet; politics by referendum; the limits of transparency; polarization and fake news

Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here*, pp. 100-128

Three articles by Zeyenp Tufekci. These are somewhat overlapping, but I’ve assigned all of them because Tufekci is doing particularly interesting work in this area

“It’s the (Democracy-Poisoning) Golden Age of Free Speech”

“Engineering the Public: Big Data, Surveillance and Computational Politics”: <http://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/4901> [not available as PDF]

“As the Pirates Become CEOs: The Closing of the Open Internet”

Polarization and fake news [bundled into a single PDF]

Tufekci, “YouTube, the Great Radicalizer”

Jack Nicas, “How YouTube Drives People to the Internet’s Darkest Corners”
[this is included in the pdf but can be more effectively read online:
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-youtube-drives-viewers-to-the-internets-darkest-corners-1518020478>]

Aral, “How Lies spread online” [this summarizes a study published in Science; those technically inclined can check out the study itself :
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559>.]

Brubaker, “Digital hyperconnectivity and the crisis of public knowledge”

Wheeler, “How to Monitor Fake News.”

Persily, “Can democracy survive the Internet?”

June 13: Student research presentations