J359T/395 Living in the Information Age (07833/07933)
University of Texas
School of Journalism
Spring 2013

Instructor: Dr. Tom Johnson
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Office Hours: TTH 11-12:30, by appointment and when you least expect it
Class Time: 2-3:30 Tuesday and Thursday, CMA 6.146

I. Course Description

Living in the Information Age will examine communication and information technologies with particular emphasis on the Internet and its components and in particular how they are used by the Millennial Generation. The goal of the course is to understand how the communication and information technologies evolve and the cultural, economic, political and social implications of such technologies for society. The course will also discuss how individuals, media organizations and corporations employ the Internet for their benefit.

II. Goals and Objectives

Living in the Information Age is intended to provide students with a broad understanding of the social, cultural, and economic consequences of new communication technologies and to encourage critical thinking about “new media” generally. Through exams and media-related assignments, students will learn to analyze the evolving information ecology as it affects the media industries as well as media audiences. Through course projects, students will examine issues involving convergent media and the impact of intensive new media use on consumers.

III. Required Texts & Readings

There are no textbooks for this class. Texts on this subject get dated quickly. Readings are available through the class Blackboard page.
ASSIGNMENTS

Exams: There will be three one-hour exams. The exams will be equally weighted and will not be comprehensive. The tests will be multiple choice, definitions and short answer questions.

Book Review: Each undergrad student will read a recent book (one written in 2009 or after) and prepare a 3-5 page book review which provides a description of the scope of the book and analyzes its strengths and weaknesses. Graduate students are required to write a 6-8 page review on a book written 2009 or after. The book can deal with any aspect of the Internet or its components (e.g. social media, blogs) or other new media (e.g. mobile phones, IPods, video games, digital movies). The book cannot be a handbook (e.g. tips for using your IPod). Book titles must be approved in advance. You will also give a 7-10 minute oral review of the book to the class. You need to have a copy of your paper for each member of the class. A powerpoint presentation or a typed outline is also required. We will be picking for due dates for the oral book reports.

Final paper: Each undergraduate student will write a 7-10 page essay on any topic concerning the Internet or new media. Graduate students will write a 10-15 page literature review. You need to choose a manageable topic (such as how international students use Facebook to keep in touch with friends back home) rather than a general topic such as mobile phones. You need to have at least five sources, only two of which can come solely from the Internet. A half page description of your assignment is due Thursday, February 14 by 4:30 p.m. The paper is due Friday, April 26th at 4:30.

Discussion questions: To make sure that you are doing the readings and to try to generate discussion, bring a discussant question based on that day’s reading to class. Each day’s discussion question is worth 3 points

GRADING:
First exam ......................100 points
Second exam ..................100 points
Final exam ......................100 points
Term Paper....................100 points/ graduate students 125 points
Book report...................50 points
Discussion questions..... 100 points
Participation................... 50 points

Class participation will also be factored in. Discussion questions will be sent periodically to the class. We also have a Facebook group Living in the Information Age (J359T Living in the Information Age) which is your place to ask
questions or post things relevant material you find. Also, on Facebook there is a fan site Millennials and News. Every Thursday we will talk about some story you liked (enjoyed or clicked like) on this page. You are not required to join this Facebook page, but there are 50 points devoted to participation and talking about articles you liked (either on this page or in the news in general) will be considered part of participation.

**ATTENDANCE:**
I will allow you three unexcused absences. After the third absence, I will deduct half a letter grade for each additional absence. You need to contact me in advance if you are going to miss a class. All tests must be taken during their scheduled time unless you have made prior arrangements. Assignments are due by 4:30 on the dates indicated. Discussion questions are due at the end of class. I will deduct 10 percent for every day the assignment is late. I will not accept any papers more than a week late.

**Religious Holy Days Observance Policy:**
The Texas Education Code specifies that an institution of higher education shall excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence. http://www.utexas.edu/student/Registrar/catalogs/gi03-04/ch4/ch4g.html

**Students with Disabilities:**
Please notify your instructor of any modification/adaptation you may require to accommodate a disability-related need. You will be requested to provide documentation to the Dean of Student's Office in order that the most appropriate accommodations can be determined. Specialized services are available on campus through Services for Students with Disabilities. http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/

**Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty:**
The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid
participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. 


The Honor Code: 
The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Cell Phones
Few things are more annoying than a cell phone going off during class, so be sure to turn them off before class. I will try to remember too. I also do not want to see them out as texting during class is distracting to me and the students around you.

Lap Tops
I encourage you to bring your lap tops to class. I post the power points online before class and I encourage you to download them and to take notes on the lectures. I cannot police you to see if you are taking notes or updating your Facebook page. Those who pay attention to class, however, perform better. If you are disrupting the class with your lap top use, you will be asked to put it away.

LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Note: Dates for the exams and assignments may change depending on progress of the class. Readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned.

Part 1: Media Environments

A. Introduction: Millennials and The Rise of the Information Society

1. Who are the millennials?
Readings: Pew Internet, Millennials *Confident, Connected, Open to Change*, Overview

2. **Adapting to new Technology**  

3. **Overview of New Technological Development**  
Frances Cairncross, “The Roots of Revolution” and “The Trendspotters Guide to New Communications”

**B. Media Theories: Understanding the New Media**

Readings:  
1. Roger Fidler, *The Principles of Media Morphosis*  

**C. Convergence and Interactivity**

Readings:  
1. John Pavlik and Shawn McIntosh, *Convergence and its Consequences*  
2. Erik Bucy, “Interactivity in society: Locating an elusive concept, The Information Society,”  

**Part II: Old Media in a New Media World**

A. **How the Internet has Affected Traditional Media**  
2. Pew Internet, “In Changing News Landscape, Even Television is Vulnerable.”

**B. Print Media**  
Readings:  
1. **Death of Print Media: Does it Matter?**
a. Daniel Lyons, “Don’t bail out newspapers—Let them die and get out of the way.”
b. Jessica Bruder, “Is the death of newspapers the end of good citizenship?”

2. **Possible Solutions**
a. “Networking News”
b. Clay Shirky “Newspapers and Thinking the Unthinkable”

**B. Broadcast Media**
Eric Spiegelman, “Four weird things the Internet is doing to our understanding of Television”

The State of the News Media, “Network news: The pace of change accelerates.”

**C. Music Industry**
*Readings: Nancy Baym, *Embracing the Flow*”

**D. Concentration**
Siva Vaidhyanathan, “The Googlization of Everything”

**First Exam: Tuesday, Feb. 19**

**Part III. New Technologies, Old Technologies and Millennials**

A. **Millennials and news**

E. **Millennials and Social Media**
   1. Paula Poindexter, “Too busy for news; unlimited time for social media” . *Millennials, News, and social media*
   2. Andrew Mendelson and Zizi Papacharissi, “Look at us: Collective Narcissism in College Student Facebook Photo Galleries
F. Millennials and Twitter
Readings: Aaron Smith and Joanne Brenner, Twitter use 2012

E. Millennials and mobile technology
Aaron Smith, “The Best (and Worst) of mobile connectivity

Part IV: Dark Side of the Internet

A. Utopian and dystopian views of the Internet
Readings: Nicholas Carr, “Is Google making us stupid?”
Adam Clarke Estes, “Google is making us stupid and smart at the same time”

A. Media Acceleration and Information Glut
   Todd Gitlin and the Media Torrent
   David Shenk, The First Law of Data Smog

B. Internet Addiction and Isolation
Robert LaRose. Article from Zizi’s book”

Pew Internet, Millennials Confident, Connected, Open to Change, chapt. 4

C. Selective exposure and political polarization

Readings: Cass R. Sunstein, “Enclave Extremism and Journalism's Brave New World,”
Nieman Reports, Summer 2008.
Talia Stroud Niche News

Part V: Light Side of the Internet

A. The Internet and Interpersonal Communication


B. Networking and Community

Clay Shirky “It Takes a Village to Find a Phone,” in Here Comes Everybody
Howard Rheingold, “Smart Mobs: The Power of the Mobile Many”

C. Social Capital

Readings: Does following the e-lives of ‘friends build social capital?

‘C. Internet and Civic Engagement

Internet and Civic Engagement

Second Exam: Tuesday, March 26

Part VI: Elections in the Internet Age
1. Internet and the 2008 Election

Readings: Jonathan Seitz, “It’s an Online World for Young People and Political News,” Nieman Reports, Summer 2008


John Dickerson, “Don’t Fear Twitter,” Nieman Reports, Summer 2008

2. Internet and the 2010 Campaign


Part VII: Policing the Internet

B. Privacy and Surveillance

C. Online Ethics

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<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students will be able to identify and describe major theories used in the study of the Internet.</td>
<td>Classroom presentations</td>
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<td>• Classroom discussions</td>
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<td>• Written Assignments</td>
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<td>• Exams</td>
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<td>Students will be able to how citizens and journalists use the Internet and other new technologies in their daily life</td>
<td>• Classroom presentations</td>
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<td>Students will be able to identify and describe how the Internet affects individuals and the media</td>
<td>• Classroom presentations</td>
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<td>Students will be able to write a term that uses pertinent evidence to examine how journalists or individuals use a particular new technology or the influence of that technology on the individual</td>
<td>• Term paper</td>
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Part VII: Future of the Internet

Pew Research, Millennials will benefit and suffer due to their hyperconnected lives.

Third Exam: Thursday, May 2.