
JOUR 840 SEMINAR: SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

Fall 2019

Monday, 4:30-7:00pm (Bailey 103)

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Office Hours: Monday 2:00-3:30 p.m. and by appointment

(Document as of August 26, 2019)

COURSE OVERVIEW

Increasing availability and affordability of digital technologies has influenced how we obtain and share information and build and maintain relationships. These changes have raised new questions in communication research and challenged scholars to rethink how we conduct research on core concepts including power, information diffusion, collaboration and privacy.

This seminar is aimed at helping graduate students develop knowledge and skills essential for conducting conceptual and empirical research on topics related to digital communication technologies, in particular social media. In this seminar, we will examine emerging properties of digital technologies and their implications for theoretical and methodological approaches to communication research. We will discuss how social media is studied and explore how research questions might be pursued in the future. While this seminar focuses primarily on communication aspects of social media, we will incorporate scholarship from other disciplines relevant to the course topic.

Students are expected to read and critically assess scholarly articles in the area and actively engage in informed discussion on related topics. As part of the seminar, students will conduct an original theoretical or empirical research study and write it up as a paper suitable for presentation at an academic conference or submission to a refereed academic journal.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To understand current trends in social/emerging media research and explore future directions in the area
- To develop an understanding of leading theories and theoretical models used in social/emerging media research
- To develop an understanding of different qualitative and quantitative research methods in studying social/emerging media
- To learn to identify researchable hypotheses and research questions in the area
- To learn how to select and apply appropriate theoretical frameworks and research methods to study those hypotheses or research questions
- To understand data collection and measurement issues in social/emerging media research
- To learn about ethical and privacy issues related to social/emerging media research
- To learn about diversity issues related to social/emerging media research
- To improve skills for communicating research results in written and oral reports

READINGS

All course readings are available on our Blackboard site. Download and read the documents specified in the course schedule before coming to each lecture. Most readings come from leading academic journals in our field and relevant books including:

- *Journal of Communication*
- *New Media & Society*
- *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*
- Sloan, L. & Quan-Haase, A. (2017). *The SAGE handbook of social media research*.
- Burgess, J., Marwick, A., & Poell, T. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of social media*.
- Broudsard, M. (2019). *Artificial Unintelligence: How computers misunderstand the world*. MIT Press.
- Dutton, W. H. (2013). *The Oxford handbook of internet studies*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Russell, M. A. (2014). *Mining the social web*. Cambridge, UK: O'Reilly.
- Berman, J. J. (2013). *Principles of big data*. New York: Elsevier.

COMMUNICATIONS

The University of Kansas email account (@ku.edu) will be used as a primary vehicle for official communications including announcements of any changes in the course schedule or assignments. Thus, it is your responsibility to regularly monitor your KU email account. I will use the class Blackboard space to post class materials. Email is the best way to reach me out of scheduled office hours. It is recommended that you use your KU email account when corresponding with me, since messages sent from other servers can be interpreted as junk or spam and thus not received.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class attendance and discussion participation (15%)

In a graduate seminar, your active participation in class discussion is expected. You should complete assigned readings prior to class and be prepared to engage in discussion about them (i.e., answering a discussion question, asking a question, and making an informed comment). High quality and regular class participation will be worth 15% of your course grade.

Individual research project (55%)

Each student will conduct a theory-informed empirical study and write a paper in a format suitable for presentation at an academic conference. Papers will be developed in stages: one-page proposal; introduction & theory sections; methods section; and preliminary results & discussion sections. The instructor will grade and provide feedback section by section, and the student will revise the sections of the paper throughout the semester. Toward the end of the semester, each student will give a final presentation on their research project. Guidelines and examples of research papers will be posted on Blackboard.

Annotated bibliography (10%)

Each student will identify 10 articles relevant to their research project and build an annotated bibliography of those articles. Ideally, the annotated bibliography should be used for their own final paper. Detailed guidelines and examples will be posted to the course Blackboard site.

Two response papers (10%)

Each student will submit two brief response papers (2 pages, double-spaced for each) critically assessing some aspect of the week's readings. Each response paper will account for 5% of your course grade. Each student will sign up for two weeks for this—one response paper per one week's reading(s). The papers should critically discuss a portion of the week's readings. You do not need to shoehorn in every article or chapter, and you may choose to critique one or multiple articles or chapters from the week's reading list. The issues you may discuss in the response papers include, but are not limited to:

- What is the main argument/ thesis of the paper(s)?
- Does the empirical evidence support an author(s)'s claims?
- What do you consider the most important insight—either theoretical or methodological—the paper(s) offers?
- What are the primary holes or gaps in theoretical and/or methodological frameworks of the paper(s)?
- What questions for future research emerge from the readings, and how might those questions be answered?

Discussion leader participation (5%)

For certain weeks, one or two students will be designated to lead class discussion on the topic of the week. On your week, you will be responsible for giving a short presentation (10-15 minutes) on one of the readings of the week. For your presentation, you are expected to synthesize main arguments or findings from the reading and pose 2-3 discussion questions at the end of your presentation. This should not take the form of a lecture or lengthy summary of the material. Instead, you should highlight the most important arguments, findings or questions arising from the readings and use this to generate discussion among the rest of class.

Guidelines for submitting written assignments

All written assignments must be double-spaced, 12 point font, with 1-1.15 inch margin on all sides. For in-text citation and bibliography, refer to the guidelines of the American Psychological Association – commonly referred to as the APA style (6th edition of *Concise Rules of APA Style*). You should upload your assignments to Blackboard before class begins on the date scheduled. Assignments are graded on grammar, spelling, and punctuation as well as on their content.

GRADING

Summary of assignments and evaluation

Assignments	Deadlines	Points	Percent
Class participation		60	15%
Research Paper		220	55%
One-page proposal (2%)	September 9		
Introduction & theory sections (5%)	October 14		
Methods section (5%)	November 4		
Preliminary results & discussion (5%)	December 2		
Final presentation (8%)	December 9		
Final research paper (30%)	December 16		
Annotated bibliography	September 23	40	10%
Discussion leader participation	TBD	20	5%
Two response papers	TBD	40	10%
Total		400	100%

The final grading is based on the accumulated number of points. The following scale will be used:

370-400 = A	308-319 = C+
360-369 = A-	290-307 = C
348-359 = B+	280-289 = C-
330-347 = B	270-279 = D
320-329 = B-	0-269 = F

Policy on late assignments

Papers and assignments are due when indicated on the syllabus. Late assignments are penalized one letter grade. Only under extreme circumstances (e.g., documented family or medical emergencies) will I agree to a delay in the submission of assigned material. Late assignments must be completed and turned in by the last day of the class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY/MISCONDUCT

In this class, and in all journalism classes, honesty and integrity are critical. Any work you do must be original and reflect your own ideas, thoughts, and research. You are bound by the university rules on academic misconduct. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating, please ask before your endeavor.

Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence. Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for the course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor of the course.

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

Plagiarism: Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

Fabrication and Falsification: Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Office of Disability Resources (DR), 22 Strong Hall, 785-864-2620 (V/TTY), coordinates accommodations and services for KU students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes and have not contacted DR, please do so as soon as possible. Please also contact me privately in regard to this course.

INCLEMENT WEATHER AND SPECIAL NEEDS

In the event of inclement weather, the decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials. To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call 864-7669 (864-SNOW). The Office of Disability Resources (DR), 22 Strong Hall, 785-864-2620 (v/tty), coordinates accommodations and services for KU students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes and have not

contacted DR, please do so as soon as possible. Please also contact me privately in regard to this course.

JOURNALISM SCHOOL POLICY ON CLASS ATTENDANCE:

No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester. Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent. The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting.

FINANCIAL AID POLICY

The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid."

Students who receive any form of financial aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours of enrollment and grades to qualify for and retain that aid.

COPYING OR RECORDING OF CLASSROOM LECTURES

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the instructor's property. Video and audio recording of lectures without instructor consent is prohibited. On request, the instructor usually will permit students to record lectures, on the condition that these recordings are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless the instructor gives explicit permission, recordings of lectures may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.