

SI429 eCommunities

Winter 2014 Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Nicole Ellison

Overview

This course is intended to help students understand and analyze communities that are formed in or maintained via online environments. Although there is a fair bit of disagreement about the definition of community (and therefore, online community), we will generally use 'community' as a term to describe a group of people who engage in sustained interaction over time. The group may be held together by a common identity, a collective purpose, or merely by the individual utility gained from the interactions. We will use the terms e-community and online community interchangeably, as shorthand, both for communities that conduct all of their interactions online and for communities that use online interaction to supplement face-to-face interactions.

The course introduces students to important concepts, terms, and theories that will help them understand how online communities are used by millions of people every day for a variety of purposes. Roughly, about one third of the course will be devoted to developing a language for and understanding of online interaction, community, and online relationships; approximately one third will be devoted to exploring different kinds of online communities; and the final third of the course will review design principles for successful online communities. This component of the course connects social science theories with the goals of designers, online community managers and online community participants.

Logistics

Meets Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-11:30am in Room 2255 North Quad

Instructor: Dr. Nicole Ellison

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3pm, NQ 3443, or by appointment

enicole@umich.edu

Graduate Student Instructor: Ayse G. Buyuktur

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12-1pm, NQ 4352, or by appointment

abuyuktu@umich.edu

Course communication:

The best way to reach us is by email. We will respond to all email within 24-48 hours. Please feel free to get in contact with us and drop by office hours. Knowing more about the students in the class and their respective interests helps us adjust our approach to the material that we'll be covering. For grading queries, please contact Ayse first.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, a student should be able to:

- Describe an online community using the concepts and vocabulary of multiple theoretical perspectives
- Be familiar with a range of online communities and how they differ from one another in terms of user practices, goals, design decisions, and other metrics
- Understand design choices for online communities as they relate to social science theory and research

Pre-requisites

There are no formal pre-requisites.

This course assumes some familiarity with online tools such as search engines. This course will spend very little time explicitly teaching about technology, but will frequently assume it as background.

Texts

The required textbook for this class is the Resnick and Kraut book on online communities:

Kraut, R. E., Resnick, P. (2011). *Building successful online communities: evidence-based social design*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

All readings not from the textbook will be available on the CTools website for this class (Resources → Readings), unless they are available online in which case a URL will be provided. See the schedule at the end of the syllabus for the list of readings. If you cannot access a reading for some reason, please let the instructors know ASAP so they can address the problem for the entire class.

Note the entire (draft) text of this book is also available online (<http://kraut.hciresearch.org/content/books>); however the online version has no page numbers, different numbering of design claims, and the text of this online version differs from the final book version in multiple, minor ways. If you can, I recommend purchasing the book.

Please note, **everyone in the class is expected to come to class having read the required readings for that class**. If you do not do the required readings, your understanding of the course material will suffer, as will your grade and the classroom discussions. Please plan on spending ten hours of work outside class meeting times on course assignments and readings. We will also have periodic reading quizzes, so it will benefit you in multiple ways to do the reading before class.

You will need regular access to a computer with Internet access in order to get the online readings. Students are responsible for checking CTools and their email accounts regularly to stay up-to-date on announcements. If you don't check your University email account, you should forward it to an account that you do check. Students are responsible for any information

distributed via email and/or CTools. Any changes to this syllabus will be announced via CTools and in class. Please note there may be adjustments to the reading schedule and calendar as well; these will be announced in CTools and in class.

Class Activities

Each week there will be assigned readings. Occasionally, there will also be optional readings which are (obviously), not required, but might be useful to students particularly interested in a certain topic. All of these will be available electronically through CTools. Our engagement with these readings will begin online, before the class session for which they're assigned, and will continue in class. We will engage in four ways:

- Description: statements or questions about what the author claims.
- Critique: arguments about whether the author is correct or what the author has left out.
- Connection: how the claims or concepts relate to those in other readings.
- Application: how the reading applies to the communities we are studying.

Initial online engagement with readings will take the form of comments and questions posted prior to class (by 7pm the day before the class session). These reaction posts are a part of your overall grade (more details under Assignments).

We may have guest speakers during the course of the semester. Be prepared with good questions, engage with them actively, and appreciate their time. Guest speakers are always energized by an engaged audience.

Assignments & Points (1000 pts total)

Short Papers (50 pts = 10 pts each)

Throughout the class you will write five short (~2 page) papers. Each of these short papers is initially graded pass/fail (10 or 0 pts). Although these will be graded pass/fail, you will receive comments on each paper intended to let you know what areas need more attention when you work on your final, longer paper. Note that these need to be submitted as Word .doc files. More information about these papers will be provided via documents in CTools. These papers ask you to study an online community and then write a paper applying material from the Kraut & Resnick chapter and other readings to the “problem” you are trying to address.

P1: Third Places

P2: Newcomers

P3: Contribution

P4: Commitment

P5: Regulating Bad Behavior

Final Paper (300 pts)

There is one final community description paper that is a cumulative paper. It is based in large part on synthesizing the five short papers that you will have written previously. The short papers are an opportunity to get feedback upon and improve your ideas and arguments. The final paper itself will be graded for 300 total points. Submit in CTools as a .doc file. Note that this paper should synthesize earlier work and offer some new thoughts and conclusions; it should also reflect edits and revisions in response to instructor feedback on paper 1 through 5.

Reaction Posts (up to 10 pts each class session x 20 posts = 200 pts)

You'll receive points for submitting a reaction post to one of the readings for each class session. We'll use some of these questions, comments, and ideas to jumpstart our in-class discussions. Each reaction post should be two paragraphs, each about 3-5 sentences. The first paragraph should include a summary of the reading – be sure to describe what you found especially interesting, useful, surprising, or confusing about the reading. After your summary, your second paragraph should be a response to the reading. It can be either in the form of a question (something you didn't understand and would like clarification about); a response to another student's post or question; a comment or a reaction to the readings; or a link to a related resource with a note about its relevance to the reading. In your post, you must demonstrate the connection to the reading(s) and your mastery of the material. For example, writing a 1-sentence question does not constitute an adequate reaction paragraph and will not result in full points; if you're asking a question please provide context for the question, tying it clearly to the reading.

Reaction posts are to be submitted to Piazza by 7pm the night before the reading is due. More details on submitting to Piazza will be provided. To access Piazza, go to the CTools site for this course and use the link to Piazza in the main menu on the left-hand side of the screen.

Posts will be graded on a scale of 0-10:

0 points: No submission

2 - 4 points: Low effort, misspellings, little engagement or understanding of reading.

Posts that do not meet basic requirements (e.g., posts with a missing and/or underdeveloped summary paragraph or reaction paragraph) will also fall into this point range.

6 points: Post meets the basic requirements and evidences familiarity with the reading, but does not provide clear arguments or move beyond basic reiteration of reading.

8 - 10: A well-crafted, interesting, thoughtful post with clear statements. The post meets all requirements, including both a summary and a reaction paragraph.

Note that we may have more than 20 possible reading days. If you do more than 20 posts, you can drop the lowest score(s). However, extra credit will not be provided for additional posts; the maximum number of points that can be received over the course of the semester is 200pts.

Specific Online Interaction & Recon (200 pts/50 ea.)

You'll also be receiving points for four specific actions online:

- Editing a Wikipedia entry and reflecting on that experience
- Participating in an online forum/discussion and recording/reflecting on the results
- Posting a question to a QA (e.g., Quora, Yahoo Answers) site and to a social network site such as Facebook and reflecting on the differences between the experiences
- Conducting an online search to determine what information is available about you and reflecting upon how your online presence could be improved

Details for each of these activities will be provided. You will be asked to write a ~2 page paper for each of these four activities.

Community Show & Tell Report (150 pts)

You'll be choosing a specific community to profile in a 5 minute report. This will be an in-person presentation to the class, so the audience will be your peers. Along with hitting all of the necessary information in the assignment, you'll also want to be sure to make it interesting, engaging, and informative. You are free to use the community you have been writing about and studying, or you may select a new one. If you decide to use a new community for your presentation, please get permission from the instructors.

In-Class Participation (Up to 10 points each; 10 opportunities, 100 pts possible)

Participation will be based on a number of things including attendance as well as participation in class discussions and breakout sessions. Even if you aren't the person commenting at the moment in class, your attention and engagement during lecture or discussion times is important. Your classmates deserve your attention and thoughtfulness. You are asked to give constructive feedback and questions during other reports.

While the course has no formal attendance policy, students are required to attend class regularly and to come prepared. Randomly scheduled, graded in-class activities will reward students who do so. These graded in-class activities will not be announced in advance and the timing and nature (quiz, paper, group activity, etc.) of the activity will be decided by the instructor. These activities will be graded on a scale of 0 to 10 pts. **There will be no "make up" opportunities for these in-class activity points so please do not ask, nor will they be announced in advance.** Examples of in-class activities include:

- Reading/Content Quizzes: Students will be given a short quiz covering the required readings and/or in-class lecture/discussion. Each quiz will be graded on a scale from 0 points to 10 points.
- "Minute" papers: Students will be asked to write a short response to class readings and content for credit. These minute papers might ask students to explain a concept or to list any concepts or readings they find confusing. Minute papers may be graded or be given credit/no credit.
- In class group activities: Students will be asked to form small groups and will be given a set of questions to answer and discuss as a group. Each group will elect a liaison, who may be asked to report back to the entire class. Each group will provide the instructors with the names and email addresses of the students participating in each group, each of whom will receive full credit.

Grading Scheme

The final grade of record will be based on the following:

- 5 Short Papers: 50 points possible
- Final Paper: 300 points possible
- Recon Activities: 200 points possible
- Reading Reaction Posts: 200 points possible
- Community Show and Tell Presentation: 150 points possible
- In-Class Participation: 100 points possible

TOTAL: 1000 points possible

These will be recorded as letter grades using the standard University conversion. Students are responsible for viewing their grades in CTools and informing the instructors of any discrepancies. Also, students must keep copies of any work submitted until final grades are submitted. If you are concerned about your grade, please make an appointment to discuss the situation with the graduate student instructor or professor as early in the semester as possible. After April 22, the only basis for changing your grade will be to correct errors on our part in recording or calculating your grades. No petitions for grade adjustments will be considered after April 22.

For in-class activities as well as paper and reaction post grades, students must check CTools frequently and inform the instructors within one week if there are any problems with the scores entered in CTools.

Grading Appeals and Late Policy

Few students will feel the need to appeal a grade, but we want to provide a clear and fair process for students to do so.

If students have questions about feedback on an assignment, they should review their performance with the GSI. Any questions or concerns that cannot be addressed by the GSI should then be taken up with the professor. **Students should prepare a document stating their rationales for the grade appeal, which should be submitted via email to the GSI within one week of receiving the grade in question.** The professor reviews all grade appeals. **Grades can increase, decrease, or stay the same. The re-grade is final, even if it is lower than the original grade.**

Late work will not be accepted for credit after 48 hours. Before then it will be accepted but there will be a penalty of 20% for each 24-hour period after the time it is due (usually 10am on the due date specified in the syllabus, unless announced otherwise). In extreme cases (death in the family, severe illness), extensions may be granted. **Students must communicate with instructors *before* the deadline.**

For reaction posts, no credit will be given after 8pm, and late entries will be docked 2 points.

Effort

This is a 3-credit course, so you should expect to spend, on average, 9-12 hours per week on the course over the course of the semester.

Courtesy to Fellow Students and Instructors

Please try to come on time so your arrival is not disruptive. If you do come in late, please enter from the back and choose a seat quietly. If you need to have a conversation with your neighbor, please step outside the classroom or pass a short note so that others in the classroom are not distracted. When you are in the classroom, it is expected that you are actively engaged in the class and not another activity, such as texting or reading the newspaper. **Bringing your laptop and engaging in non-class related activities is distracting to your fellow students and to the instructor.** Additionally, it defeats the purpose (learning) of coming to class and it is disrespectful to others in the class. If you bring a laptop, limit its use to taking notes or supplementing the discussion with online research which you then share with the class. **Students who engage in activities that detract from the educational experience of other students (including laptop use unrelated to class goals and materials) need to sit in the last row of the classroom in order to avoid distracting other students sitting nearby.**

I am a big proponent of technology in educational contexts, but I also understand how distracting it can be. There is a time and a place for everything, and class time is not an appropriate time for engaging in WOW quests or other unrelated online activities. It is distracting to other students, insulting to the instructor, and constitutes problematic behavior that limits your ability to do well in the course. If it is too tempting to bring a laptop, take notes on paper.

Extra Credit

Extra credit assignments may be assigned throughout the semester at the instructor's discretion. Students are responsible for checking that CTools has correctly registered their participation and will have one week after extra credit grades are uploaded to inform the instructor about any problems. After this, scores will not be adjusted. Regardless of how many extra credit opportunities are offered, students can receive a maximum of 30 points in extra credit during the semester.

What to Do in Case of Illness

In order to limit the transmission of illness as we head into flu season, we strongly encourage you to follow recommended infection-control practices, such as handwashing and social exclusion. If you come to lecture or section ill, you are not doing what is necessary to get better quickly, and you also put other students, your instructors, and our families or roommates at risk. If you come to class ill, we will ask you to go home until you are feeling better. Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the online system (go to: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/students/> and click on "What to do if you're sick") to self-report an illness; this system automatically informs all of your instructors that you will be absent. Because most assignments are due via CTools, you can still hand them in if you are ill.

Academic Integrity

All students in this course will be held to high standards of scholarship and integrity. Personal responsibility and integrity are assumed, and all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct are prohibited. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for you or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the class. The instructor will not tolerate any conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards of the University community. Issues of academic integrity will be handled according to the policies established by LSA. See <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/procedures/index.html>

NOTE: Signing another students' names on an attendance sheet constitutes a violation of academic integrity principles and will be penalized severely.

Accommodations

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way we teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://ssd.umich.edu/>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.

Reading and Assignments Schedule

Note: Any aspect of this syllabus, including the content and reading schedule, may be adjusted throughout the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and/or via CTools. Students are responsible for checking CTools on a regular basis. All readings are in CTools or online.

Date	Topic	Readings
1/9/14	Intro, syllabus, etc.	No readings due the first day
1/14/14	Attention in Online Contexts	Rheingold, H. (2012). <i>Net Smart: How to thrive online.</i> (Introduction and Chapter 1)
		Carr, N. (2008). Is Google Making Us Stupid? <i>The Atlantic</i> : http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/6868/
1/16/14	Online social interaction & the "socio-technical"	Lessig, L. (2006). <i>Code: And Other Laws of Cyberspace, Version 2.0.</i> New York, NY: Basic Books. (Chapter 7)
		Resnick, P. (2001). Beyond Bowling Together: SocioTechnical Capital. In J. Carroll (Ed.), <i>HCI in the New Millennium</i> : Addison-Wesley
1/21/14	Defining Terms/What We're Talking About	Baym, N. (2010). <i>Personal Connection in the Digital Age.</i> Cambridge, MA: Polity. (Chapters 1 and 4)

1/23/14	Virtual communities/early virtual communities	Rheingold, H. (2000). <i>The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier</i> . Cambridge, MA, MIT Press. (Introduction and Chapter 1: http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/intro.html and http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/1.html)
		Recommended: <i>Virtual Communities as Communities: Web Surfers Don't Ride Alone</i> by Wellman & Gulia (google for URL)
1/28/14	Third Place	Oldenburg, R. (1999). <i>The Great Good Place</i> . New York, Marlowe & Company. (Chapter 2 and Chapter 4)
1/30/14	Gaming Communities	Steinkuehler, C. A. and D. Williams (2006). Where Everybody Knows Your (Screen) Name: Online Games as 'Third Places.' <i>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication</i> 11(4): 885-909.
		Watch this video: "Jane McGonigal: How gaming makes us better" http://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world.html
	Third Place Paper due	Recommended: McGonigal, J. (2011). <i>Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World</i> . New York: Penguin Press. (Chapters 5 and 6)
2/4/14	Newcomers	Kraut, R. E. and Resnick, P. (2011). <i>Building Successful Online Communities: Evidence-Based Social Design</i> . Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. (Chapters 1 and 5)
		Crumlish, C. and Malone, E. (2009). <i>Designing Social Interfaces</i> . Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, Inc. (Pages 70-75)
2/6/14	Research Ethics of Studying E-communities	Bruckman, A. (2006). Teaching Students to Study Online Communities Ethically. <i>Journal of Information Ethics</i> .
	Newcomers Paper Due	
2/11/14	Theories of Computer-Mediated Communication	Walther, J. B. and Parks, M. R. (2002). Cues filtered out, cues filtered in: Computer-mediated communication and relationships. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), <i>Handbook of interpersonal communication</i> . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [Only read pp. 529-542]
2/13/14	Discussion Communities	Gilbert, E. (2013). Widespread Underprovision on Reddit. Presented at 2013 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work.
	DUE: Discussion Community Participation Assignment	Lampe, C. and Resnick, P. (2004). Slash(dot) and Burn: Distributed Moderation in a Large Online Conversation Space. Presented at ACM Human Computer Interaction Conference.

2/18/14	Health & Wellness Communities	Frost, H. J. and P. M. Massagli (2008). "Social Uses of Personal Health Information Within PatientsLikeMe, an Online Patient Community: What Can Happen When Patients Have Access to One Another's Data." <i>J Med Internet Res</i> 10(3): e15.
2/20/14	Concerns	Pariser, E. (2011) <i>The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You</i> . New York: Penguin Press. (Chapters 4 and 7)
	DUE: Google Yourself Participation Assignment	Sunstein, C. (2004). Democracy and Filtering. <i>Communications of the ACM</i> , Volume 4, Number 12.
2/25/14	Encouraging Contribution	Kraut, R. E. and Resnick, P. (2011). <i>Building Successful Online Communities: Evidence-Based Social Design</i> . Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. (Chapter 2)
2/27/14	The Dark Side of Online Communities: Offline Stigma	De Koster, W. and Houtman, D. (2008). Stormfront is like a second home to me. <i>Information, Communication & Society</i> . [Trigger warning]
	DUE: Contribution Paper (P3)	Brotsky, S.R. and Giles, D. (2007). Inside the "Pro-ana" Community: A Covert Online Participant Observation. <i>Eating Disorders</i> . [Trigger warning]
3/4/14	NO CLASS	
3/6/14	NO CLASS	
3/11/14	Commitment	Kraut, R. E. and Resnick, P. (2011). <i>Building Successful Online Communities: Evidence-Based Social Design</i> . Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. (Chapter 3)
3/13/14	Identity/ Self-presentation online	Ellison, N. B. (2013). What is, and will be, the impact of social media on identity? Report commissioned by the UK Government Office for Science for a Foresight project on The Future of Identity.
	DUE: Commitment Paper (P4)	Watch this video: "Sherry Turkle: Connected, but alone?" http://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together.html
		Recommended: Wired interview with Sherry Turkle: http://www.wired.com/wired/archive//4.01/turkle_pr.html

3/18/14	Learning Communities	Shirky, C. (2012). Napster, Udacity, and the Academy: http://www.shirky.com/weblog/2012/11/napster-udacity-and-the-academy/ Bustillos, M. (2013). Venture Capital's Massive, Terrible Idea For The Future Of College, The Awl: http://www.theawl.com/2013/01/venture-capitals-massive-terrible-idea-for-the-future-of-college Recommended: Sanchez, C. (2012). Online Courses Force Changes to Higher Education, NPR: http://www.npr.org/2012/12/04/166470215/online-courses-force-changes-to-higher-education
3/20/14	QA Communities	Adamic, L. A., Zhang, J., Bakshy, E., & Ackerman, M. S. (2008). Knowledge Sharing and Yahoo Answers: Everyone Knows Something. Paper presented at the AAAI World Wide Web (WWW), Beijing, China.
	DUE: Q&A Website Participation Assignment	Morris, M. R., Teevan, J., & Panovich, K. (2010). What do people ask their social networks, and why?: a survey study of status message q&a behavior. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 28th international conference on Human factors in computing systems, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.
3/25/14	Presentations	
3/27/14	Presentations	
4/1/14	Presentations	
4/3/14	Presentations	
4/8/14	Presentations	
4/10/14	Peer Production Communities	Choi, B., Alexander, K., Kraut, R.E., & Levine, J.M. (2010). Socialization tactics in Wikipedia and their effects. In Proceedings of the 2010 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work (CSCW '10). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 107-116. (SKIM but read discussion more closely) Cohen, N. (2012). Define Gender Gap? Look Up Wikipedia's Contributor List, I: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/business/media/31link.html Sampson, T. (2013). Nobody wants to edit Wikipedia anymore, Daily Dot: http://www.dailydot.com/business/wikipedia-editors-decline-wikimedia-fellows/
	DUE: Editing Wikipedia Participation Assignment	

4/15/14	Managing Conflict and Negative Behavior	Kraut, R. E. and Resnick, P. (2011). <i>Building Successful Online Communities: Evidence-Based Social Design</i> . Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. (Chapter 4)
		Dibbell, J. (1993, Dec 23). A rape in cyberspace: How an evil clown, a Haitian trickster spirit, two wizards, and a cast of dozens turned a database into a society. The Village Voice; http://www.juliandibbell.com/texts/bungle_vv.html [Trigger warning]
4/17/14	SNS communities	Ellison, N. B. and Boyd, D. (2013). Sociality through Social Network Sites. In Dutton, W. H. (Ed.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 151-172.
	DUE: Regulating Bad Behavior (P5)	Marwick, A. and Ellison, N. B. (2012). "There Isn't Wifi in Heaven!" Negotiating Visibility on Facebook Memorial Pages. <i>JOBEM</i> .
4/22/14	Catch-up	
	Due: Final Paper	