

*Boston University College of Communication*

*Division of Emerging Media Studies*

Syllabus

**EM797: Connecting Humans: Networks, History and Social Media**

Instructor:

Jacob Groshek, Ph.D.

1. Practical Information

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| **Course Name** | Connecting Humans: Networks, History and Social Media |
| **Course Code** | EM797 |
| **Credits**  **Term** | 4  Summer 2015 |
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| **Instructor** | Dr. Jacob Groshek |
|  | 704 Commonwealth Ave.  Office 302D |
|  | [email@bu.edu](mailto:email@bu.edu) |
|  | 617-353-6421 |
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| **Office Hours** | 11:00am – 1:00pm & 4:00pm-5:00pm Tuesday/Thursday  Also by appointment |
|  |  |
| **Location** | 640 Commonwealth Ave.  B25 |
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| **Timetable** | Section A1 – 1:00pm until 4:00pm Tuesday/Thursday |
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| **Course Website** | TBD; Please see link to shared Dropbox folder sent via email |
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| **Recommended Literature** | *Networked: The New Social Operating System*  By Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman (2012)  *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*  By Jose van Dijck (2013)  For purposes of this class, it is highly recommended that electronic versions of these books are purchased, for example Kindle editions at Amazon are available for approximately $10 each.  <http://www.amazon.com/Networked-New-Social-Operating-System/dp/0262017199>  <http://www.amazon.com/Culture-Connectivity-Critical-History-Social-ebook/dp/B00AWOTA96/> |
| **Additional Literature** | *Additional readings are available on Dropbox or via the BU library.* |
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1. Course Overview

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| **Wk.** | **Date/ Module** | **Topic** | **Literature** | **In Class** | **Exercise/Outcome** |
| **1a** | **Lecture 5/19** | **Introduction** | **Chapter 1, van Dijck**  **Chapter 1, Rainie & Wellman**  **Hauben (1994)** [**http://bit.ly/1IygY0o**](http://bit.ly/1IygY0o) | * **Introduction to class, (re)introduction to networks** | **Wiki search: Find the best wiki service available for EMS** |
| **1b** | **Workshop 5/21 (ONLINE)** | **Primer in broadcast and social networks as agents of change** | **Groshek (2011)**  [**http://socialmediacollective.org/**](http://socialmediacollective.org/)  **Denny (1941)** | * **Sign up for presentations** * **Hangout group discussion: Digital futures & dilemmas** | **Assignment 1: The pencil revolution – create and comment** |
| **2a** | **Lecture 5/26 (ONLINE)** | **Wikis, and networks as social structures** | **Chapter 2 + 7, van Dijck**  **Chapter 2 + 8, Rainie & Wellman** | * **Lecture and discussion on readings** |  |
| **2b** | **Workshop 5/28** |  | **Barbour (2015)** [**http://bit.ly/1Fl57SY**](http://bit.ly/1Fl57SY)  **Messner et al. (2014)**  **Wagner (2003)** | * **Discussion and presentations: What do we know about knowledge and wikis** | **Assignment 2: Build EMS wiki** |
| **3a** | **Lecture 6/2** | **Twitter, and the impact of social trends** | **Chapter 4, van Dijck**  **Chapter 4 + 9, Rainie & Wellman** | * **Lecture and discussion on readings** |  |
| **3b** | **Workshop 6/4** |  | **Pew / Himelboim (2014)**  [**http://www.pewinternet.org /author/ihimelboim/**](http://www.pewinternet.org/author/ihimelboim/)  **Groshek & Clough Groshek (2013)**  **Meraz & Papacharissi (2013)** | * **Discussion and presentations: Twitter, social networks and information flows** | **Assignment 3: Develop EMS Twitter**  **Midterm: Timed essay** |
| **4a** | **Lecture 6/9** | **Facebook, and user-group phenomena** | **Chapter 3, van Dijck**  **Chapter 3 + 5, Rainie & Wellman** | * **Lecture and discussion on readings** |  |
| **4b** | **Workshop 6/11 (GUEST SPEAKER)** |  | **Goel & Somaiya (2015)** [**http://nyti.ms/1cSEQ1P**](http://nyti.ms/1cSEQ1P)  **Valenzuela, Arriagada, & Scherman (2012)**  **Himmelboim, Gleave, & Smith (2009)**  **Meraz (2011)** | * **Discussion and presentations: Facebook and shifts in power and control** | **Assignment 4: Network EMS on Facebook** |
| **5a** | **Lecture 6/16** | **YouTube and transforming television** | **Chapter 6, van Dijck**  **Chapter 6 + 7, Rainie & Wellman** | * **Lecture and discussion on readings** |  |
| **5b** | **Workshop 6/18** |  | **Nielsen (2015)** [**http://bit.ly/1PHcEuE**](http://bit.ly/1PHcEuE)  **de Boer, Suetfeld, & Groshek (2012)**  **Gentzkow (2006)**  **Matrix (2014)** | * **Discussion and presentations: Video in living networks** | **Assignment 5: YouTubing EMS as student journalists** |
| **6a** | **Lecture 6/23** | **Networks as ecosystem and in the future** | **Chapter 8, van Dijck**  **Interludes + Chapters 10 + 11, Rainie & Wellman**  **Wagner (2014)**  **Zhang et al. (2010)** | * **Lecture and discussion on readings** |  |
| **6b** | **Workshop 6/25 (#SCREEN -TIME)** |  | **Student-identified readings** | * **No class, present at #screentime conference** | **Assignment 6: Promote #screentime conference across platforms** |
| **FP** |  | **Final project** | **All relevant material** | * **No class** | **All things EMS connecting humans** |

1. Course Introduction

This course offers a critical survey of the cultural, social, and political impacts of emerging communication technologies, as those have advanced over time to contemporarily include online, mobile and social media. Special attention will be paid to networks and their relationship to the ways individuals, groups and organizations communicate within society.

Our work here situates the changing nature of networks in media from broadcast network models to social network ones. As such, it is both historically informed and theoretically inclusive. An important component of study also incorporates an immersive social network experiences as part of this class, which is to say that the class becomes its own online social network and students are peer collaborators.

Ultimately, this course requires a final project that proceeds from readings and related course experiences to produce networked content that has observable positive effects for the Division of Emerging Media Studies (DEMS) at Boston University.

Teaching methods involve a combination of lectures and workshops. The lectures provide a guide to the subject matter and set out foundations on which students can build, while the workshops stress active participation by the students and provide the opportunity for in-depth discussion of key issues and related work in building social media content and networks.

1. General Course Objectives

*Students have the knowledge and understanding of:*

* The historical development of media and communication technologies;
* The main theoretical perspectives and approaches to the study of the societal aspects of new media and communication technologies;
* The social, political, cultural and economic impacts of new media and communication technologies and the forces shaping their development and use in different times and places.

*After successfully completing this course, students will:*

* Be able to critically produce and reflect on theoretical and practical issues related to societal aspects of emerging media and communication technologies;
* Formulate effective strategies for engaging social networks using relevant theoretical insights, concepts and research findings;
* Demonstrate competence in major works in the field, specifically in terms of methodological and practical approaches such that;
* The DEMS online presence benefits in terms of content, scope, and audience that may or may not be contribute to original social scientific study.

1. Organization & Working Method

General

It is necessary to attend class sessions because without them there is no course (and time is of the essence). Lecture content is an integral part of the workshop activities for each session and both are important assessment components. Also, because the class meets only twice per week missing class sessions is seriously problematic.

It is therefore compulsory to attend all class meetings, arrive on time, and to participate actively in the discussions and other activities. This obligation includes the preparation and submission of all assignments. Attendance will be taken, and students are not permitted absences without penalty. Any work missed will need to be submitted in due course with an appropriate late penalty assessed. Travel plans will not excuse anyone from the deadline for submitting assignment(s).

Lectures

The lectures focus on the text *Networked: The New Social Operating System* by Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman and also incorporates *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* written by Jose van Dijck. Each week will center on a particular theme and students are expected to read the assigned literature prior to the lecture.

Broadly speaking, these discussions elaborate on the readings for each particular week. Lectures offer explorations into key issues regarding research methodologies in communication and are meant to deepen the understanding of these issues, supply more detailed ways of using the methods and provide in-depth examples from real world research. In addition, lecture prepares students for the in-class workshops by discussing practical issues and providing general assignment feedback.

Students are advised to prepare for the lecture by studying the readings. Powerpoint slides (if any) will be available on Blackboard afterwards. In certain weeks, handouts of example articles will be distributed.

Workshops

These are a key didactic tool to engage students in deep processing of the course material. Therefore, active participation is compulsory. It requires a thorough preparation of the readings discussed in the lectures outside of class. In many cases, students will have to use additional resources to solve problems and complete assignments.

The workshops are meant to (a) give the opportunity for questions on the literature as well as the lectures, (b) help students in working on the assignments, and (c) provide specific feedback on assignments.

Use of Blackboard

Blackboard is horrible. We will never use it. Ever.

Web-based Readings

The majority of readings will be made available in online format, including the textbook that is available as an e-book through Amazon or the publisher. It is worth noting that this class regularly relies on exercises based online. Additional readings from journals or elsewhere will be accessible through URLs or through dropbox.

Rules about absence

Students who have a serious reason for missing a meeting should notify the instructor in advance by email or telephone if they so choose. No extra credit will be (probably be) offered, and there are no additional make-up assignments.

1. Assessment and Grading

Students will complete 6 weekly assignments in total, all of which are to be completed individually. Students are, however, welcomed to collaborate in solving problems, but each must work independently with unique data for each assignment. The deadline for all assignments will be prior to the next class session. Assignments will not be accepted beyond the deadline, and submissions will not be accepted in improper format (i.e., no hardcopies).

**Description of assessment**

The assessments (assignments, presentation, midterm, final project, and participation) are all a combination of some empirical and practical research considerations where students must seek to answer substantive questions. Each assessment requires students to apply the discussed readings and demonstrate competence toward the end of advancing knowledge in the field.

Each assignment will be laid out in full during the weekly class session, and additional details will be provided for the presentation and final project.

**Criteria and grading**

*Criteria used to evaluate assessments*

Each of these items will be evaluated based on accuracy, appropriateness, clarity, and quality of their work. Although students are not evaluated explicitly for their English writing abilities, they are expected to check upon their language before handing in assignments. This means: (1) during the writing process students should consult a dictionary when they are not sure if a word or phrase is correct and (2) after the writing process they should use spell-check before handing in their work.

*Criteria for grading of participation*

Each student’s active participation is vital to the success of this course.  As such, the participation grade is measured with a combination of contributions to in-class discussions in relation to the readings and the lectures as well as contributing fully and equally to the assignments.  Attendance, punctuality, and effective cooperation within class sessions are considered part of the participation grade. There will be an opportunity for self-evaluation as necessary before the end of the term.

*Grading*

Every assignment will be evaluated on a 100 scale. Your final score will be calculated based on the above percentages, which will then be translated to your final letter grade using the following formula:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 93-100 A  90-92.99 A-  87-89.99 B+  83-86.99 B  80-82.99 B-  77-79.99 C+ | 73-76.99 C  70-72.99 C-  67-69.99 D+  63-66.99 D  60-62.99 D-  0-59.99 F |

*Weight of assessments*

The final project accounts for 35% of the final grade, the research presentation comprises 15%, assignments account for 5% each (30% total), quizzes are 2.5% each (for 15% total), and participation comprises 5% of the final letter grade assigned (see Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of different elements for grading

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Types of assignment | Points possible | Team/Individual | Percent of final grade |
| Final Project | 70 | Team | 35.0% |
| Presentation | 30 | Individual | 15.0% |
| Assignments (x 6) | 10 (x6 = 60) | Individual | 5.0% (x6 = 30%) |
| Midterm | 30 | Individual | 15% |
| Participation | 10 | Individual | 5.0% |
| Total | 200 |  | 100% |

**Intellectual Integrity**

In accordance with the high standards of excellence set forth by, and for, all members of the Boston University community, the College of Communication finds it imperative that each student understand that the responsibilities associated with high standards of excellence include ensuring that all class work undertaken in this program is performed in an environment that promotes serious scholarship and moral rectitude. Though only summarized here, this class herein delineates a zero-tolerance policy for acts of academic dishonesty. All acts of suspected academic dishonesty will be thoroughly investigated in a manner that is fair, timely, and efficient and done so in a manner that protects the rights of both faculty member and student, in meeting and following Boston University standards and protocols. Any individual who is found to have committed an act of academic dishonesty may receive a penalty, up to and including expulsion from Boston University.

The official Boston University code of conduct as well as its statement on academic dishonesty is available in its entirety online at <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>.

Students are expected to be fully aware not only of all expectations but also consequences for violations. Additional questions about appropriate academic conduct should be brought by students to their course instructor, primary advisor or the Program Director *before*, not after, work is submitted.

*Plagiarism*

The assignments and final project produced in the class are team products. It is not allowed to use work from other teams. It is permitted, though, to discuss each other's work. Self-plagiarizing is not allowed in any circumstance, which means that students are not permitted to submit their own work that was already submitted in any other coursework. All assignments must refer carefully to the sources used. Copying the ideas and results of other authors (either word for word, or as a paraphrase) without explicit reference to the source is considered to be plagiarism.

The submission of electronic versions of the assignments in Blackboard’s SafeAssign is necessary to facilitate (automatic) checks on plagiarism. It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself thoroughly with the faculty’s policy on unfair practices, fraud and plagiarism.

*Feedback*

Feedback will be given regularly in class, on weekly assignments, and by appointment.