# Course Syllabus: The Internet & Society

Lamar D. Fain College of Fine Arts
MCOM 2523 Section 101
Fall 2020 | T/Th 11:00-12:20

## Contact Information

**Instructor**: Dr. Mitzi Lewis

**Office**: msutexas-edu.zoom.us/my/mitzilewis

**Office hours:** W 10:30-1:00 | F 11:30-2:00 | by appointment

**Office phone:** (940) 228-3864 (this is my remote work phone)

**Campus phone**: (940) 397-4375 (this is the phone number for my campus office, which I will not be using this semester; if you leave a message at this number, I will receive the message as an audio file via email)

**E-mail**: mitzi.lewis@msutexas.edu

NOTE: For all e-mail correspondence, please make the subject line look like this: INTERNET & SOCIETY: SUBJECT OF MESSAGE

If you send an email to me, treat it as a professional means of communication. This means it should include a salutation, correct punctuation, and a proper closing.

## Course Description

This course examines the personal, academic, media, and business uses of the Internet. Applying practical and theoretical concepts, students will study the mutual interaction of computers and other new technologies, the Internet, society, and the struggles for control/ownership of the World Wide Web and its content.

## Course Objectives

The Internet is profoundly affecting how we live our lives. It has changed the way we work, play, and interact with other people. In this course, we will examine the personal, academic, media, and business uses of the Internet. We will also look at the mutual interaction of computers and other new technologies, the Internet, society, and the struggles for control/ownership of the World Wide Web and its content. There are (at least) two sides to almost all of the questions

we will consider in this course. We will spend much of our class time discussing the issues and exploring different points of view.

No previous technical knowledge is presumed other than your personal experience with computers, the Internet, and mobile phones.

After successfully completing this course, you should be able to:
- understand some social, legal, philosophical, political, constitutional, and economical issues related to the Internet and the historical background of these issues
- discuss the benefits offered by the Internet in many different areas as well as the risks and problems associated with it
- explore the arguments on all sides of a controversial issue, and argue convincingly for the position you select
- understand and value multiple sides of an issue—look for common ground
- have an increased awareness of current social and legal developments related to the Internet
- understand how the Internet gives rise to social issues and ethical dilemmas
- evaluate accuracy of information on the Internet
- explain the uses and gratifications theory
- apply the uses and gratifications theory to evaluation of people's behaviors when using the Internet
- identify communication tools available on the Internet
- utilize communication tools available on the Internet
- compare communication tools available on the Internet
- create, craft, and enhance your personal brand/digital identify on the Internet

The knowledge, attitudes, and skills you gain by successfully completing this course can help you in almost any career. However, they have particular relevance in the rapidly-changing field of mass communication. Becoming a life-long learner and analyzing information you receive will be essential to your success as a professional and can also greatly impact your personal life and your life as a citizen of the world.

### Textbook & Instructional Materials
- Baase, Sara (2018). *A Gift of Fire: Social, Legal, and Ethical Issues for Computing and the Internet* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall. (note: this book covers many Internet issues and also some

non-internet issues; for this class, we will focus on the internet-specific issues)
- Persistence, patience, optimism, and an active mind.

## Technology

- Use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. You are expected to be familiar with this program. You can log into D2L through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program.
- The instruction mode for our course is completely online. We will not have any "in-person" meetings.
- We will use D2L for syllabi, course communication, course schedule, attendance, gradebook, and course materials. You should regularly check D2L and the email hosted via D2L for important course information.
- We will meet during our assigned times via Zoom.
- You will need
  - a computer that can accommodate Zoom and D2L
  - access to reliable WiFi
  - related: we have been told that Chromebooks are NOT recommended because they do not work with D2L
- **If these requirements present problems for you, please contact me immediately.** I will work with you in the hope that you do not have to drop the class as a result of these requirements.

## Teaching and Learning Philosophy

*Your responsibility*: Take responsibility for your own learning and take advantage of in- and out-of-classroom opportunities

*My responsibility*: Provide you with meaningful learning opportunities in the classroom and through assignments

## Grading

Final grades will be based on the following.

| Assignments | Percent |
|---|---|
| Discussions | 35% |
| Activities | 35% |
| Quizzes | 15% |
| Final reflection | 10% |
| Professionalism | 5% |
| Total Percent | 100% |

Total percent for final grade.

| Grade | Percent |
|---|---|
| A | 90-100% |
| B | 80-89% |
| C | 70-79% |
| D | 60-69% |
| F | Less than 60% |

A note on grading: Critics from both within and outside of higher education have accused faculty of engaging in "grade inflation," the idea that grades don't truly reflect quality and instead have been devalued to the point that an A means very good, a B means average, and anything less than a B is failing. Here is the system as I understand it: an A means outstanding, a B means above average, and a C means average. Please remember these interpretations as the semester progresses.

## Class Participation and Attendance

Our class meetings will include activities; they will not be straight lecture. The activities are designed to be interesting and to help you learn. These activities will often have a credit/grade component to them. Therefore, your active participation will affect how much you learn and how well you do in the course.

If emergencies arise or your circumstances change, **please communicate with me**. This will help us work together to try to find a solution for your situation.

The same principles apply to online courses as to on-campus class meetings. Please:
- behave professionally
- arrive on time
- be prepared
- pay attention
- actively participate
- stay for the full class
- treat others with courtesy and respect
- use language thoughtfully
- wear appropriate clothing (and avoid inappropriate surroundings)

Please make every effort to join class from a suitable, quiet location, with a device that permits full participation in the class activities.

You should NOT join a class while driving a car.

If you miss class, you miss the chance to participate in your education and the education of others in class. Your peers are counting on you to be in class and to participate.

You are responsible for all material presented in every class period, whether present or not. Our class sessions may be recorded and available to you, however, watching the recording is not the same as attending the class and participating; recordings are supplemental and not replacements for attending at the assigned times. Please make arrangements to attend every session.

**Recording Devices:** Recording the class in any way is prohibited, unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA, or by obtaining written consent by me.

## Assignments and Quizzes

You will be asked to complete assignments and quizzes to reinforce concepts you are learning in class.

Please note that the number of quizzes and assignments is not set in stone. This means that it is impossible at the outset of the semester to determine how much each individual quiz or assignment will be worth.

## Critiques

Critiques are a vital part of learning. You can learn a lot from reviewing the work of others and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses. Critiques also provide the opportunity to put concepts to words, and to help you learn how to speak intelligently and knowledgeably (a necessary skill for survival in the workplace!). We will critique published work. This will provide you with fresh insights and perspectives.

## Portfolio Requirement

Please note that all mass communication majors are required to submit a portfolio as part of their Internship course (Internship is a prerequisite to Senior Production). This requirement is a part of MSU's reaccreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and is non-negotiable. Through the portfolio, you are required to demonstrate communication competence through the written word and visual communication; two examples of each competency are required.

As you go through this and other classes, you are responsible for saving course work that could be included in your portfolio.

Please see me, your adviser, the department chair or any mass communication faculty member for handouts with more information ("Mass Communication Portfolio Competencies" and "Mass Communication Portfolio FAQ"). These handouts are also available on our department web page.

### Policies: Classroom/Conduct/Academic Dishonesty

- Classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to benefit from the instruction will result in the instructor's removing the disruptive student(s) from the class.
- Students are expected to adhere to the Standards of Conduct as published in the Student Handbook. Students should refer to the current MSU student handbook and activities calendar for University policies and Student Honor Creed on academic dishonesty, class attendance, student's rights, and activities.
    a. The main statement from the MSU Student Honor Creed should be a guiding principal for you: "As an MSU student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else to do so."
    b. I reserve the right to drop any student with an E if they engage in any form of academic dishonesty. I further reserve the right to recommend other sanctions as may be appropriate. Students are also encouraged to consult the following sources for additional discussion of students' rights and responsibilities regarding cheating, attendance and general conduct:
        i. The MSU Student Honor Creed
        ii. *MSU Undergraduate Catalog*
        iii. *MSU Student Handbook*
    c. In addition, the university requires faculty to provide this statement to all students: "By enrolling in this course, the student expressly grants MSU a "limited right" in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The "limited right" shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student's work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and educational purposes."
- On the Internet, plagiarism is especially easy. DO NOT give in to the temptation to copy-and-paste other people's work! YOUR WORK MUST BE YOUR OWN. If you plagiarize as a professional and get found out, you will damage if not destroy your own reputation and do great harm to the

reputation of any organization you work for. In this class, plagiarism will have dire consequences.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism comes from the Latin word plagiarius, which means kidnapper. Webster's Dictionary defines plagiarize as to take (ideas, writings, etc.,) from (another) and pass them off as one's own-plagiarizer. Plagiarism includes the deliberate as well as inadvertent failure to properly attribute. All of the work you do in this class should be the work of you. **Violation of this policy will result in the student and/or group receiving a failing grade for this course. IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE...IF IN DOUBT-ASK! Students in this course should adhere to the MSU Student Honor Code.**

Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found at   the Office of Student Conduct.

## Privacy

Federal privacy law prohibits me from releasing information about students to certain parties outside of the university without the signed consent of the student. Thus, in almost all cases I will not discuss your academic progress or other matters with your parents. Please do not have them call me. Regardless of these important legal considerations, it is my general policy to communicate with the students, not their parents, even when a student has signed a consent form. College students are adults and are expected to behave accordingly.

## Social Justice

Social justice is one of Midwestern State University's stated core values, and I consider the classroom to be a place where students will be treated with respect as human beings, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Moreover, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided the students can agree to disagree. It is my expectation that ALL students be able to consider the classroom a safe environment.

## Managing Stress

You may experience situations or challenges that can interfere with learning and interpersonal functioning including stress, anxiety, depression, alcohol and/or other drug use, concern for a friend or family member, loss, sleep difficulties, feeling hopeless or relationship problems. There are numerous campus resources available to you including:
- MSU Counseling Center (940-397-4618),
- Vinson Health Center (940-397-4231), and

- Bruce and Graciela Redwine Student Wellness Center (940-397-4206).

If you are experiencing an emergency, call 911 or the MSU Police Department at 940-397-4239. If you or someone you know is in a domestic violence or sexual assault crisis situation and wants information on what to do, call the 24 Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-800-621-8504.

Additional mental-health resources are available at https://mwsu.edu/student-life/counseling/mental-health-resources.

Furthermore, if you have outside circumstances that may affect your performance in this class – including but not limited to difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, inadequate housing, family issues – please contact me if you are comfortable in doing so. I may be able to refer you to on-campus resources that will help you address the situation.

Please note that all information provided to me remains confidential.

## Special Accommodations

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information that needs sharing, or if you need special accommodations in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. Please also contact Disability Support Services at 940-397-4140 in Clark Student Center, room 168, to document and coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities if you have not already done so.

## Research and Creative Activity Opportunities at MSU

Enhancing Undergraduate Research Endeavors and Creative Activities (EURECA) is a program that provides opportunities for undergraduates to engage in high-quality research and creative activities with faculty. EURECA provides incentives and funding through a system that supports faculty and students engaged in collaborative research and creative works. For more information contact the Office of Undergraduate Research at (940) 397-6274 or by email at eureca@mwsu.edu or better yet, stop by the UGR office located in the atrium of the Clark Student Center, room 161. Information and resources are also available at the EURECA web page.

## Undergraduate Research Opportunities and Summer Workshop (UGROW)

Like EURECA, UGROW provides opportunities for students to conduct research with faculty. However, the research occurs in the summer. For five weeks

UGROW students experience the authenticity of scientific research as well as research and creative activities in art, music, theater education, business, health and social sciences, English, history, etc. in a highly interdisciplinary environment. Students work on projects of their choice and present their findings at the end of program and the MSU Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Forum. Faculty members will introduce their research ideas February 13th, 2019, at 5:00 p.m., Comanche Suites, Clark Student Center. A break-out session with individual faculty members will follow. If you have any questions, contact the Office of Undergraduate Research at (940) 397-6274 or by email at eureca@mwsu.edu. More information and resources are available at the UGROW web page.

## Council on Undergraduate Research

To support undergraduate research and creative activities, Midwestern State University holds an enhanced institutional membership with the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR). This institutional membership includes unlimited memberships for any interested faculty, staff, and students. Students find information on benefits and resources at
http://www.cur.org/resources/for_students
and sign up *at no cost* at
http://www.members.cur.org/members_online/members/newmember.asp.

CUR Undergraduate Resources Webpage contains:
- Research Opportunities;
- Presentation Opportunities;
- Undergraduate Research Journals;
- CUR-Sponsored Student Events;
- The Registry of Undergraduate Researchers;
- And more!

## Topics/Schedule

Course topics support achieving our course objectives. Course topics include:
> Week 1: Getting started
> Week 2: Change, themes, and ethics
> Week 3: Guest speaker
> Week 4: Privacy—business and social sectors
> Week 5: Privacy—government systems
> Week 6: Freedom of speech—First Amendment, controlling speech in cyberspace
> Week 7: Freedom of speech—anonymity, global issues
> Week 8: Intellectual property

Week 9: Crime and security
Week 10: Crime and security, cont'd
Week 11: Work
Week 12: Evaluating the Internet
Week 13: Errors, failures, and risks
Week 14: Professional ethics & responsibilities
Week 15: TBA
Week 16: Wrap-up

Please note this is a TENTATIVE schedule. This schedule is likely to change. I reserve the right to change the class schedule if circumstances make it necessary.

## Suggestions

- Attend class regularly.
- Remember I am available to help you. Ask for help immediately if you don't understand something. Waiting to "get it later" doesn't always work and could get you into trouble.
- Back up your work. Have two backups.
- Consider saving your work under different names literally each time you work on a project. It just takes one click and could save you lots of time and frustration.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Try to do work for this class ahead of time. This will give you some cushion in case you have problems.
- Sometimes things will go smoothly, other times they won't – the important thing is to have fun and practice thinking and working with both sides of our brains.
- This is **your** class; we can do (or try) almost anything you want; be creative!

**Final Caveats:**
**I reserve the right to drop any student with an F̲ or lower their grade, up to an F, if they have excessive absences, engage in disruptive behavior, have a poor attitude, or in any other way are clearly not taking the class seriously. At the same time, I will work with all students to my fullest ability to ensure a worthwhile educational experience.**

**Given the unprecedented times we are experiencing, everything in this course could change with very little notice. That means deadlines, projects, even weighted percentages for each component of the course could change. If this happens, I will consult with you and use your input**

**to the extent practicable in making decisions about how to proceed. Do not hesitate to contact me with questions, concerns and, even better, great suggestions. I go out of my way to be fair to all.**

**By accepting this syllabus and staying enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand and accept the terms of this syllabus.**

*Thanks to Jim Sernoe for sharing his work, some of which is included here.*