



Course Syllabus: The Internet & Society

Lamar D. Fain College of Fine Arts | D202

MCOM 2523 Section 201

Spring 2019 | MWF 9:00-9:50

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Mitzi Lewis

Office: Fain Fine Arts Center D203

Office hours: MW 2-4:30 | TH 9-9:30, 3:30-4:30 | F 2-4

Office phone: (940) 397-4375

Twitter: @mitzilewis

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. We will utilize the World Wide Web as a learning tool; thus, you will gain experience in furthering your knowledge by using a resource that will be available to you long after you complete this course.

This course will require your active participation. In the words of David Silver, we will read, write, and reflect. We will participate, contribute, and collaborate. And we will have fun - we learn better when we have fun, so it is all of our responsibilities to have fun in this class!

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: Computers are fairly elaborate machines, which means that there are many ways in which they can break down – so be prepared for many strange and wondrous things. We will be discussing basic troubleshooting techniques in class as issues arise. In many cases, however, you will need to be your own technological problem-solver – identifying problems and figuring out ways they can temporarily or permanently be solved. Techno-whining is not helpful.

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is 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 or contact your instructor.

Teaching and Learning Philosophy

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

Professor's (facilitator's) responsibility: Provide students with meaningful learning opportunities in the classroom and through assignments

Grading

Final grades will be based on the following.

| Assignments | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Online class discussion assignments | 30% |
| Activities and quizzes | 35% |
| Lead discussion | 15% |
| Book report | 15% |
| 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% |

Class Participation and Attendance

Because abundant lecturing tends to be counterproductive for both you and me, I try to include activities that are more interesting than straight lecture, such as discussions, student presentations, and guest presentations. The success of this format depends on your willingness to **actively participate** in class discussions and other activities.

Attendance and participation are critical to your success. Another way to describe this is professionalism. **Professionalism** means that you're here, ready to engage in new opportunities.

The college learning environment is a professional environment. It is similar in many ways to a professional work environment. You are expected to demonstrate professional attitudes and behaviors; including, but not limited to, arriving on time, being prepared, actively participating, communicating respectfully, and staying for the full class period. 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. A peer evaluation will be distributed toward the end of the semester.

If you miss class without an acceptable excuse you get a **zero** for that day's participation and class work and any work that is due.

If you must miss class, please let me know BEFORE the class period that you will miss. You may call my office and leave me a voice mail or you may notify me by e-mail. An absence may be excused at my discretion in accordance with university policy if you provide documentation of the reason for your absence. When you have an acceptable excuse, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and arranging to make it up with the instructor. Missed work must be made up within one week of when your return to class, or you will receive a zero.

Plan carefully regarding appointments and/or work schedules to avoid missing class. Any personal emergencies that arise will be dealt with on an individual basis. Do not assume you will be allowed to make up assignments missed during an unexcused absence. If you MISS CLASS, it is **YOUR** responsibility to find out what you missed. I DO NOT HAVE TIME TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL "MAKE-UPS" TO MISSED CLASS SESSIONS. THIS IS WHY WE HAVE CLASS MEETINGS.

In class assignments will help you immediately apply concepts covered in class. If you miss a class you get a "zero" for that day's in-class assignments. If you miss more than one class, or if you are habitually late or leave early, **your final grade may be lowered by 1/2 letter grade for each instance beyond one absence.** Two tardies = one absence. One minute to 19 minutes late = one tardy. Twenty minutes or more late = one absence. Leaving before class is dismissed = one absence. After three absences or tardies, you are subject to being dropped from the course with a grade of "F."

I reserve the right to determine what, exactly, constitutes an excused absence or when a late arrival is excusable.

Finally, it is unacceptable to skip another class to work on a project for this class. Do not ask me for an excused absence to work on another course. Plan accordingly and be organized.

Some additional guidelines:

- You are responsible for all material presented in every class period, whether present or not.
- If you miss a class period you should obtain the material presented from another classmate. (I will not repeat lecture material that was missed. Handouts are available from my office – it is your responsibility to come get them.)

Online Discussions

Throughout the semester we will have weekly online discussion/activity assignments. The discussion topics are meant to be a way of getting to know your classmates while exploring the issues and being exposed to a variety of different opinions. It is OK to disagree during our discussions.

Here are some concrete guidelines for our discussions.

- Justify and support your opinions with examples, facts, and reasoning. Include the why.

- There will be disagreement (and this is good, otherwise we will be bored). Disagreement can be very constructive because it encourages us to reconsider our own positions and either recommit, expand, or discard them. Please be respectful of others' opinions, even when you are disagreeing with them.
- Support your critical thinking and analysis, give good background, demonstrate that you understand the other side(s) of view. For this support, use articles that are well-researched themselves. A few sources that may be helpful include *The New York Times* (especially the Tech section), *The Wall Street Journal* (especially the Tech section), *The Washington Post* (especially the Tech section), *Wired*, *Ars Technica* (arstechnica.com), Krebs on Security (krebsonsecurity.com). This is not an exhaustive list; it is a "getting started" list.
- Each discussion assignment will have specific requirements and other guidelines appropriate to the assignment. *Be sure to read these and ask questions if you have them.*

To receive the full points for your postings, you need to clearly state and support your ideas. Some students have a hard time supporting their ideas. Look at the following two examples:

Example 1: What is my definition of hate speech? Well from what I learned in the Hate.com video, the National Alliance Web site and other resources, hate speech is any racist and/or anti-Semitic speech or text. It is usually a controversial topic with the intension of hurting, intimidating or inciting violence or prejudicial action against a person or group of people. Hate speech has been around for many years and can be based on one or more aspects of a person's identity. These include a person's or group's racial background, age, ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, language ability, moral or political views among others. According to our book, *Gift of Fire*, hate speech that does not specifically incite violence is subject to First Amendment protection. These issues can become more complex on the Internet. For example, technology companies are being called on to remove hate speech online ("Twitter Fails E.U. Standard on Removing Hate Speech Online," May 31, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/31/technology/twitter-facebook-google-europe-hate-speech.html>).

Example 2: I think hate speech is words intended to reflect negative views on religion, sexual orientation, occupation, gender, race, etc. Speech is protected under our First Amendment and is a freedom that people feel very strongly

about, but I feel that just like any other offensive or objectionable action that can lead to outrage and violence should have limitations.

Example 1 clearly states the student's ideas. It draws on the resources available to the student (the Hate.com video, hate websites, *Gift of Fire*, and *The New York Times*) to support the ideas. Example 2 also clearly states the student's ideas, but the ideas are not as complete. No support for the ideas is offered. If according to this assignment each post is worth up to 5 points, you would earn 5 points for example 1 and only 2 or 3 points for example 2.

Activities and Quizzes

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

Please note that the number of quizzes and activities 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 activity will be worth.

Lead Discussion

This assignment has three parts:

1. Preparation
2. Execution
3. Reflection

You will work in teams to prepare for and lead the class discussion for 20-30 minutes, then you will each complete a separate reflection.

Because teamwork is an essential skill in the workplace, you will practice your team skills with this assignment. Not only will you gain experience in working as a part of a team, you will have the opportunity to learn from your teammates and your teammates will have the opportunity to learn from you. Each of you is responsible for the success of your team. This means that each of you must contribute to the team effort – which is why we call it teamwork!

You will receive more information about this assignment in a separate handout.

Book Report

You will critically analyze a book by discussing its strengths, weaknesses, and what you agree/disagree with & why.

Your book report should be roughly 1000-1200 words.

Don't try to summarize the whole book. Give an overview of what it's about, then pick a few critical themes or issues and discuss how the author presents them. Analyze and comment; don't just summarize. Tell which points you think are valid and which you don't agree with, and why. Add your own examples, counterexamples, or arguments, if appropriate.

Some books present or argue for one particular point of view. Read critically. Think about and include counterarguments.

Turn in your book selection by the end of Week 4. Include the title, author, date of publication, and a sentence or two on what the book is about.

I will limit the number of people reading the same book, so if your first choice is a popular one, you may have to choose another. You have a better chance of acceptance of your first choice if your selection is on time (or early).

More about Grading

- In the professional world, if you can't show up on time and make your deadlines, you won't keep your job. Assignments must be completed on time in the format specified.
- Reading assignments are to be completed by the day they are assigned.
- Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date.
- Spelling and grammar count, in your assignments and your e-mails. Grades will be reduced for spelling and grammar errors.
- If you know you will be absent when an assignment is due, arrange to complete and hand in the assignment early.
- You are responsible for keeping all handouts and graded assignments.
- Remember that attendance is required and missing class can result in a grade reduction, a failing grade, or being dropped from class.

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!). Critiquing 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, students 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.
- "If you promise that you will not halt your class participation to read your email, text with a friend, post to your Facebook wall... I promise that I will not halt my class participation to read my email, text with a friend, or post to my Facebook wall." (from [oh_richard](#) on [chronicle.com](#))
- Eating and drinking are not allowed by the computers because we are working with expensive equipment that can very easily be damaged by food or drink. Food and drink may be left on the bookcase by the door. Any misuse or abuse of equipment will result in expulsion from the lab for the semester and/or assessment of replacement/repair costs.
- Students are expected to adhere to the Standards of Conduct as published in the [Student Handbook-2018-19](#). 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 F if he/she engages 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 in 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

Students 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 students 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.

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.

Writing Center

Begin drafting papers as early as possible and take advantage of the MSU Writing Center, located off the 2nd floor atrium of Prothro-Yeager! Writing tutors will not edit your papers for you, but they will provide support and feedback at every stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to drafting, revising to proofreading. Hours and more will be posted at the [Writing Center web page](#).

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](#).

Engagement at the Undergraduate and Creative Activity Forum: Extra Credit Opportunity

This extra credit opportunity will be available to all students in the course later in the semester. It involves attending the Spring 2019 Undergraduate Research and

Creative Activity Forum on April 25, 2019. Instructions will be available later in the semester. Stay tuned.

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 the [CUR web page](#) and sign up *at no cost* at the [new member web page](#).

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: Spring break

Week 11: Crime and security, cont'd

Week 12: Work

Week 13: Evaluating the Internet

Week 14: Errors, failures, and risks

Week 15: Professional ethics & responsibilities

Week 16: Book report discussion

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 Caveat: I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus for any reason. This includes changing or deleting assignments. Sufficient notice will be given to you if changes to the syllabus are necessary.

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 Eszter Hargittai and Howard Rheingold who generously allowed me to use and adapt portions of their work, to Jim Sernoe who allowed me to adapt portions of his work for policies, to Kimberly Sultze of Saint Michael's College for sharing her intellectual requirements, and to Timothy Henry for sharing assignments.