

Virtually Real: Myths and Realities of Online Identities
EDUC U212 Section 33403

Class time and location: Mondays and Wednesdays from 5:00 until 6:15 in Foster SH021

Instructor: Kevin R. Guidry (kguidry@indiana.edu) (Please add "U212" to the subject line of your e-mail)

Office Hours: By appointment (my hours are generally very flexible and I'm happy to meet you where it's mutually convenient)

Course goal

Recognize, understand, and describe some reasons and motivations, particularly those related to self-identity, useful for understanding behavior common in online environments, particularly social network services.

This course is intended to give you a basic introduction to identity-development and mediated communication so you can better understand what people, particularly youths, do online. More importantly, you will be introduced to some ideas about *why* people do what they do online. You are not expected to become an expert in any of these topics as this course is designed to help you become better informed as a student and citizen.

Course overview

Introduction

In the first class session we will introduce the major themes of the course and briefly explore them. No assignments will be due in Week 1.

Identity

Beginning in Week 1 and lasting through the first half of Week 3, we will briefly explore the idea of identity. Students will begin by reading one of two assigned articles introducing the social construction of identity. Following that reading, we will briefly explore Erving Goffman's idea of dramaturgy with a reading from his classic sociology book *Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* and an excerpt from a sociology textbook further describing Goffman's ideas. We will end our brief exploration of identity with a chapter from *Born Digital* exploring how identity development is changing for persons growing up with ubiquitous Internet access. **The first assignment will relate directly to Goffman's ideas and it will be due midway through Week 3 on November 10.**

Mediated Communication

Our exploration of mediated communication begins in the second half of Week 3 with another chapter from *Born Digital* and articles assigned to groups of students (you are not expected to read every article listed for November 12 but only those for your assigned topic). We then move to explore properties of mediated communication that impact how we communicate using different media as described by psychologist John Suler. **On November 19, the second assignment will be due wherein groups of students will describe, illustrate, or enact one of Suler's properties.** We transition from this topic to the next topic with danah boyd's seminal article describing youths' use of MySpace.

Social Network Services

The final topic of exploration is Social Network Services (SNSes). We begin with boyd and Ellison's influential article defining SNSes and outlining their history. **Midway through this topic – on December 1 (the first class after Thanksgiving) the third assignment briefly analyzing media coverage of SNSes is due.** We close out this topic exploring how employers and other decision makers are using SNSes. **Afterwards, on December 8 (the first day of Free Week), your final assignment proposing a policy outlining the use of social networking services in hiring or admission is due.**

Assignments

Additional details about each assignment, including a brief grading rubric, will be passed along separately in advance of each assignment.

1. Present and describe four examples of how people present themselves online. For each example, explicitly reference Goffman and how that example reflects his ideas.
Due November 10.
2. Working in a small group, illustrate or demonstrate for the class one of the properties of Suler's online disinhibition. Both your group and the property will be assigned one week before this assignment is due.
Due November 19.
3. Locate and critically analyze three examples of media descriptions of youths' and young adults' use of the Internet to communicate with others or construct their identity.
Due December 1.
4. Using the readings, resources, and knowledge gained from this class, write a proposed policy for either (a) a fictional company (for which you work) describing the acceptable and recommended uses of social networking sites during the hiring process or (b) a college or university describing the acceptable and recommended uses of social networking sites during the admissions process. You may work in small groups of 2-3.
Due December 8.

Absences and Grading

Absences

Given the short duration of this course and the amount of material to be covered in it, each unexcused absence beyond the first will result in a 5% reduction in your final grade.

Grading

Each assignment will count for 20% of the total grade. Attendance and participation will count for the final 20%. You are expected to actively participate in class, asking questions and offering insights as appropriate. Assignments that are completed in groups will be graded in part by each group member to ensure equal participation of each group member.

The final grade for this course will follow the standard IU 4-point grading scale:

A+	4.0 (counts same as A in GPA)
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1.0
D-	0.7
F	0.0

Plagiarism

Plagiarism – the “use of others’ ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source” (IU Writing Tutorial Services) – is unacceptable and will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly further sanctions. To become familiar with plagiarism and how to avoid it, you are encouraged to utilize resources such as those hosted by (a) Writing Tutorial Services (<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>) and (b) the School of Education (<http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>).

Readings

- Allan, K. D. (2006). *Contemporary social and sociological theory: Visualizing social worlds*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- boyd, d. (2007). Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life. *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media* (David Buckingham, ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- boyd, d. m., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1). Retrieved October 20, 2008, from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>
- Kaplan. (2008, September 18). *At top schools, one in ten college admissions officers visits applicants' social networking sites* [press release]. Retrieved October 20, 2008, from <http://www.kaplan.com/aboutkaplan/pressreleases/KaplanCAOSurveyResults.htm>
- McNulty, S. E., & Swann, W. B. (1994). Identity negotiation in roommate relationships: The self as architect and consequence of social reality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(6): 1012-1023.
- Musgrave, M. (2007, September 30). Into Facebook and old friends. *Washington Post*. Retrieved October 23, 2008, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/29/AR2007092900082.html>
- Newitz, A. (2006, August 15). Fun with the AOL data leak. *AlterNet*. Retrieved October 15, 2008, from <http://www.alternet.org/story/40376/>
- Snopes. (2008). *The party's over*. Retrieved October 24, 2008, from <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/partysover.asp>
- Solove, D. J. (2007). *The future of reputation: Gossip, rumor, and privacy on the Internet*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

- Stoner, M. (2008, October 6). *Do inappropriate Facebook postings have admission consequences for teens?* [blog entry]. Retrieved October 20, 2008, from http://www.mstonerblog.com/index.php/blog/comments/do_inappropriate_facebook_postings_have_admission_consequences_for_teens
- Suler, J. (2004). The online disinhibition effect. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 7(3).
- Taylor, C. (2008, September 24). Employers use Facebook to catch out staff, survey finds. *Irish Times*. Retrieved October 24, 2008, from <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2008/0924/breaking48.htm>
- Thompson, C. (2008, September 7). Brave new world of digital intimacy. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved October 10, 2008, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/07/magazine/07awareness-t.html?ex=1378440000&en=b87f67f56fa2fbe2&ei=5124&partner=permalink&exprod=permalink>
- Wesch, M. (2008). *Context collapse* [blog entry]. Retrieved October 24, 2008, from <http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/?p=183>
- Williams, A. (2006, February 19). Here I am taking my own picture. *New York Times*. Retrieved October 24, 2008, from http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/19/fashion/sundaystyles/19SELF.html?_r=1&oref=slogin
- Yueng, K., & Martin, J. L. (2003). The looking glass self: An empirical test and elaboration. *Social Forces*, 81(3): 843-879.

Course Outline

		Topic	Readings	Assignment due
Week 1	October 27	Introduction	None	None
	October 29	Identity	Yeung & Martin or McNulty & Swann	None
Week 2	November 3	Identity	Goffman	None
	November 5	Identity	Allan	None
Week 3	November 10	Identity	Palfrey & Gasser, Chapter 1: Identities	Goffman applied to Internet
	November 12	Mediated communication	Palfrey & Gasser, Chapter 2: Dossiers	None
Week 4	November 17	Mediated communication	Persistence: Solove (pp. 17-30); Searchability: Newitz; Musgrave Replicability: Snopes; Solove (pp. 35-49) Invisible audiences: Wesch; Williams	None
	November 19	Mediated communication	Suler boyd	Disinhibition illustrations
Week 5	November 24	Social Network Services	boyd & Ellison	None
	November 26	Thanksgiving – no class	None	None
Week 6	December 1	Social Network Services	Nussbaum Thompson	Media analysis
	December 3	Social Network Services	Kaplan Stoner Taylor	None
Week 7	December 8	Free Week – no class	None	SNS hiring policy
	December 10	Free Week – no class	None	None