Virtually Real: Myths and Realities of Online Identities
EDUC U212 Section 32419

Class time and location: Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:00 until 5:30 in Teter Quad (TE) F256

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 goals
1. 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.

2. Evaluate media reports, writings, and discussions of online communication for rudimentary levels of accuracy, bias, and overall quality.

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 resources and readings
There is no required textbook for this class. All materials will be provided via OnCourse as scanned documents or links to resources available on the Web. You will be expected to read assigned materials prior to each class and bring electronic or physical copies of those materials to class to reference during discussions and activities.

Course overview
Introduction
In the first class session we will introduce the major themes of the course and briefly explore them. **The first assignment will be a 2-page reflection on your own ideas about identity and how you understand your own identity and it will be due on March 11.**

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 Chapter 1 of *Contemporary Social and Sociological Theory: Visualizing Social Worlds* for a brief introduction to symbolic interactionism, a foundational sociological idea that we'll build on throughout the rest of the semester. 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 Chapter 4 of *Contemporary Social and Sociological Theory: Visualizing Social Worlds* that further describes 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 second assignment will be a 2-page report based on observations of people engaged in presenting their identities in public spaces and it will be due at the beginning of Week 3 on March 30.**

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 April 1 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 April 8, the third 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 April 22 the fourth assignment briefly analyzing media coverage of SNSes is due.** We close out this topic exploring how employers and other decision makers are using SNSes. **Your fifth assignment, a short reflective and analytical paper linking Goffman's ideas of presentation of the self with online activities, is due on April 29.**

      Your final assignment proposing a policy outlining the use of social networking services in undergraduate admissions is due by 5:00 p.m. on May 6, the Wednesday during Finals week.

<div align="center">Assignments</div>

      Additional details about each assignment, including a brief grading rubric, will be passed along in advance of each assignment. All written assignments will be collected, graded, and returned via OnCourse.

1. Describe your own ideas about identity and how you understand your own identity in a 2-page reflection paper.
   Due March 11.

2. For at least one hour, unobtrusively observe people interacting in a public space. Using the ideas of Erving Goffman, write a 2-page report describing how those people were engaged in presenting their identities.
   Due March 30.

3. 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 at least one week before this assignment is due.
   Due April 8.

4. 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 April 22.

5. 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 April 29.

6. Using the readings, resources, and knowledge gained from this class, write a proposed policy for a college or university describing the acceptable and recommended uses of social networking sites during the undergraduate admissions process. You may work in small groups of 2-3.
Due May 6.

Absences and Grading

Absences
Given the short duration of this course and the amount of material to be covered in it, each unexcused absence will result in a reduction in your final grade.
Grading
Each assignment will count for 15% of the total grade. Attendance and participation will count for the final 10%. 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

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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.

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none previously existed*. Retrieved March 2, 2009, from

http://www.zephoria.org/thoughts/archives/2009/03/02/when_research_i.html

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Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*(1). Retrieved October 20, 2008, from

http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html

Bumgarner, B. A. (2007). You have been poked: Exploring the uses and gratifications of Facebook

among emerging adults. *First Monday, 12*(11). Retrieved March 3, 2009, from

http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2026/1897

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor

Books.

Hargittai, E. (2007). Whose space? Differences among users and non-users of social network sites.

Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, *13*(1). Retrieved March 2, 2009, from

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Facebook.* Paper presented at CHI 2008, Florence, Italy.

Jones, S., Millermaier, S., Goya-Martinez, M., & Schuler, J. (2008). Whose space is MySpace? A content

analysis of MySpace profiles. *First Monday, 13*(9). Retrieved March 2, 2009, from

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    Facebook profiles. *NASPA Journal, 45*(1).

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.

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    http://www.alternet.org/story/40376/

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Palfrey, J., & Gasser, U. (2008). *Born digital.* New York: Basic Books.

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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

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Thompson, C. (2008, September 7). Brave new world of digital intimacy. *The New York Times Magazine*.

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Tufekci, Z. (2008) Grooming, gossip, Facebook and MySpace. *Information, Communication & Society,*

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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	March 9	Introduction	None	None
	March 11	Identity	Allan, Chapter 1 (Introduction)	Identity reflection paper
Spring Break – No assignments due				
Week 2	March 23	Identity	Goffman	None
	March 25	Identity	Allan, Chapter 4 (Goffman)	None
Week 3	March 30	Identity	Palfrey & Gasser, Chapter 1: Identities	Observation paper
	April 1	Mediated communication	Palfrey & Gasser, Chapter 2: Dossiers	None
Week 4	April 6	Mediated communication	Persistence: Solove (pp. 17-30) or Searchability: Newitz; Musgrove or Replicability: Snopes; Solove (pp. 35-49) or Invisible audiences: Wesch; Williams	None
	April 8	Mediated communication	Suler	Disinhibition illustrations
Week 5	April 13	Social Network Services	boyd & Ellison; Bumgarner or boyd & Ellison; Joinson	None
	April 15	No class	None	None
Week 6	April 20	Social Network Services	Hargittai or Tufeckci	None
	April 22	Social Network Services	boyd (2007) boyd (2008) Nussbaum Thompson	Media analysis
Week 7	April 27	Social Network Services	Kaplan Stoner Taylor	None
	April 29	Social Network Services	Jones, Millermaier, Goya-Martinez, & Schuler or Kolek & Saunders	Goffman synthesis
Finals Week – Final assignment due Wednesday, May 6, by 5:00 pm				

Topic: Social Network
            Services
Weeks: 5 - 8
Sources: Communications
            Computer Science
            Education
            Library Science

Topic: Mediated
            Communication
Weeks: 3 & 4
Sources: Psychology

Topic: Identity
Weeks: 1-3
Sources: Sociology

Final assignment:
Admissions SNS Policy

Goffman
synthesis

Facebook
MySpace

Media analysis

Disinhibition illustrations

Properties
of mediated
communication

Observation paper

Presentation of Self

Identity reflection paper

Symbolic Interactionism