The Internet’s impact on modern society is so profound as to nearly defy comprehension. Virtually every aspect of our lives (i.e., the products we buy, the media we consume, and the people we date, to name a few) has been fundamentally and irrevocably altered by what is essentially little more than a collection of computers and servers connected by various satellites and undersea cables. Those who benefitted from this global transformation (see: Zuckerberg, Mark or Bezos, Jeff) doubtlessly see our current age as one of infinite progress and potential, while those who have been left behind (see: Blockbuster Video and/or almost everyone who used to work at a newspaper) are likely to be less enthusiastic about the trajectory on which we find ourselves. This course is designed to encourage students to critically evaluate the social, political, and economic changes wrought by the proliferation of digital technology by examining both its promise and pitfalls. Please note: this course does not focus on the history of the Internet or its development. If you show up expecting to discuss the ARPANET or the differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0, you’re going to be disappointed.

**Learning Objectives**

This course introduces students to a diverse set of readings about the Internet’s impact on social life and provides a set of activities, quizzes and exams designed to help them apply the conceptual frameworks and empirical findings discussed in the course to real-world events and contexts.

This course requires that students:

- Understand how research, data and theory work together to inform richer, deeper consideration of issues of technology and society
- Comprehend the ways in which human behavior is shaped—both overtly and covertly—by algorithms, filters, search engines and the like
- Identify the ways in which cultural practices, social norms, economic realities and the legal system have failed to keep pace with the online world as well as the consequences of this failure
- Evaluate the Internet’s role in facilitating (and impeding) social movements, from democratic reforms to hateful ideologies and everything in between

**Course Design**

First and foremost, you should be aware that this is a self-paced course. All work must be submitted prior to midnight on July 31, 2020. Other than that, any and all due dates are left entirely to your discretion. Be advised, however, that the amount of feedback you receive on your work will be inversely proportional to A) the amount of work you submit at a given time and B) the late hour at which you choose to submit it. In other words, if you choose to submit everything on July 31, you probably won’t receive voluminous commentary on your tone, diction, and organization.

To acquaint students with the multifaceted nature of Digital Society, this course is broken into five sections, each of which covers a single, if somewhat broadly defined topic, and contains readings from
both academic and non-academic sources. Each unit also features a reflection paper, a discussion component (to be completed either in-person or online depending on how this whole global pandemic mess shakes out), and an activity. Students will also be required to complete either a final paper.

Your final grades will be calculated as follows:
- Reflection Papers (5) = 40 percent
- Discussions/Activities (5) = 30 percent
- Final Paper = 30 percent

Readings

This syllabus has a number of article-length texts relating to class topics; these are required readings. To help minimize cost, there is no required text for this course.

Final Paper

In the event that the class chooses to complete a final paper instead of a comprehensive final exam, students will produce a six-page final paper on a topic of their choice. The paper should be organized as a more in-depth literature review of scholarly work on your topic. For example, if you choose to write on the social implications of big data collection, your task is to summarize research on the topic, its politics and how it has been used, as well as any changes in the norms, practices, and values of those affected. The strongest papers will advance an original argument. In the example above, what have scholars not asked about the social implications of big data collection? What holes have you found in the relevant research?

Grading Scale

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<thead>
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<th>Percent</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93 -100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90 - 92%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87 – 89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>83 – 86%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80 – 82%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77 – 79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>73 – 76%</td>
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<td>70 – 72%</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<td>60 – 69%</td>
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<td>0 – 59%</td>
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Expectations
In order to maintain a positive, civil environment for learning, students shall strive to meet the goals described in the University of Utah’s Student Code, which states “the mission of the University of Utah is to educate the individual and to discover, refine and disseminate knowledge. The University supports the intellectual, personal, social and ethical development of members of the University community. These goals can best be achieved in an open and supportive environment that encourages reasoned discourse, honesty, and respect for the rights of all individuals. Students at the University of Utah are encouraged to exercise personal responsibility and self-discipline and engage in the rigors of discovery and scholarship.”

It is assumed that all work submitted to the instructor is your own work. When you have used ideas of others, you must properly indicate that you have done so. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, failure in the course, and/or expulsion from the university. Academic misconduct, according to the University of Utah Student Code, “includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information...It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct.” For detailed definitions and possible academic sanctions please see: http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html

Put more simply, whenever you use someone else's words, ideas, arguments or logic, you need to clearly indicate that they are not your own and note where they came from. If you don't, I will fail you. Please note: copying text from other sources and then changing the odd word here and there (i.e., changing "speak their minds" to "talk their brains, which actually happened last summer) is still plagiarism, albeit plagiarism that makes you sound utterly ridiculous.

**Sexual Misconduct**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

**Additional Considerations**

Some of the readings, lectures, films, or presentations in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to see if the course is one that you are committed to taking.

**Communication**
All course-related communication should be done via Canvas using the direct message function (not by replying to announcements or discussion posts and the like–I don't get notified when you do that). I do my best to respond to messages from students within 24 hours, but messages sent on weekends and/or holidays may take longer.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

As a general rule, please discuss any concerns, absences, or difficulties with the professor before they impede your ability to meet any course requirements. The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

**The Fine Print**

Other policies of which you should be aware:
- I do not respond to emails within 24 hours of exam or assignment due dates. Any questions or requests for clarification should be made well in advance. In other words, you can be the kind of student who requires a lot of help from the instructor (and that's totally fine), or you can be the kind of student who leaves everything until the last minute (and that's also fine), but you cannot be both simultaneously.
- I do not accept late work without prior approval.
- All assignments and exams must be picked up within six weeks of the end of the semester. After six weeks, any student submissions that have not been claimed will be shredded and subsequently recycled.
- I reserve the right to amend this document at any time and for any reason.

**Course Schedule**

**Unit 1: Bad Behavior Online**

- Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Other Assorted Awfulness
  - Cyberbullying in Higher Education: A Literature Review (Watts et al, 2016)
  - Social Media Companies’ Cyberbullying Policies (Milosevic, 2018)
  - “Reddit and the Struggle to Detoxify the Internet”
  - “The Human Cost of Monitoring the Internet”
  - “He Cyberstalked Teen Girls for Years—Then They Fought Back”
  - Discussion: Mapping Trolls on Twitter

- Online Extremism
  - Fanaticism, Racism and Rage Online—Introduction by Adam Klein
  - “Cyber Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media” (Awan, 2017)
  - “How Facebook’s Rise Fueled Chaos and Confusion in Myanmar” (McLaughlin, 2018)
Unit 2: In Which We Welcome Our Corporate Overlords with Open Arms

- Algorithms—the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
  - “How Algorithms are Controlling your Life” (Illing, 2018)
  - Weapons of Math Destruction—Introduction by Cathy O’Neil
  - “Bias Detectives: The Researchers Trying to Make Algorithms Fair” (Courtland, 2018)
  - “The Beauty and Power of Algorithms” by Vishal Sikka
  - Discussion: The Perils of Collaborative Filtering

- Your Entire Life is For Sale
  - “The Secretive Company that Might End Privacy as We Know It” (Hill, 2019)
  - “How We Survive the Surveillance Apocalypse” (Fowler, 2019)
  - The Age of Surveillance Capitalism by Shoshana Zuboff
  - “The Beauty and Power of Algorithms” by Vishal Sikka

Unit 3: Social Media and Online Dating

- Social Media: Cultural Cancer? Time-Suck? Or Time-Sucking Cultural Cancer?
  - Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now by Jaron Lanier
  - “Meet the Digital Sleuth Exposing Fake News” (Lapowsky, 2018)
  - A Short Guide to the History of “Fake News” and Disinformation by the ICFJ
  - Discussion: Mapping Fake News Hotspots on Facebook

- Online Dating
  - “The War Vet, the Dating Site, and the Phone Call from Hell” (Beiser, 2019)
  - “The Sex Recession” (Julian, 2018)
  - “Tinder Lets Known Sex Offenders Use its App. It’s Not the Only One” (Flynn, 2019)

Day 4: Buying and Selling Online

- The Evil and Convenience of Amazon.com
  - “Is Amazon Unstoppable?” (Duhigg, 2019)
  - “I was a warehouse wage slave” (McClelland, 2012)
  - “Road Tripping with the Amazon Nomads” (Dzieza, 2019)
  - “The War of the Words” Gessen, 2014

- Unconventional Online Transactions
  - Readings (to be completed prior to coming to class):
    - “Digital Pimps or Fearless Publishers?” (Knibbs, 2017)
    - “I sabotaged my boss with ransomware from the Dark Web” (Bennett, 2020)
    - “The Big Bitcoin Heist” (Seal, 2019)
• “Bitcoin is Ridiculous. Blockchain is Dangerous” (Ford, 2018)

Unit 5: Wrapping Up

• “The Digital Ruins of a Forgotten Future” (Jamison, 2017)
• “The Man Who Broke the Music Business” (Witt, 2015)
• “America’s DIY Phone Farmers” (Cox, 2019)