COMM 321: Advanced Digital Media (Fall 2017)
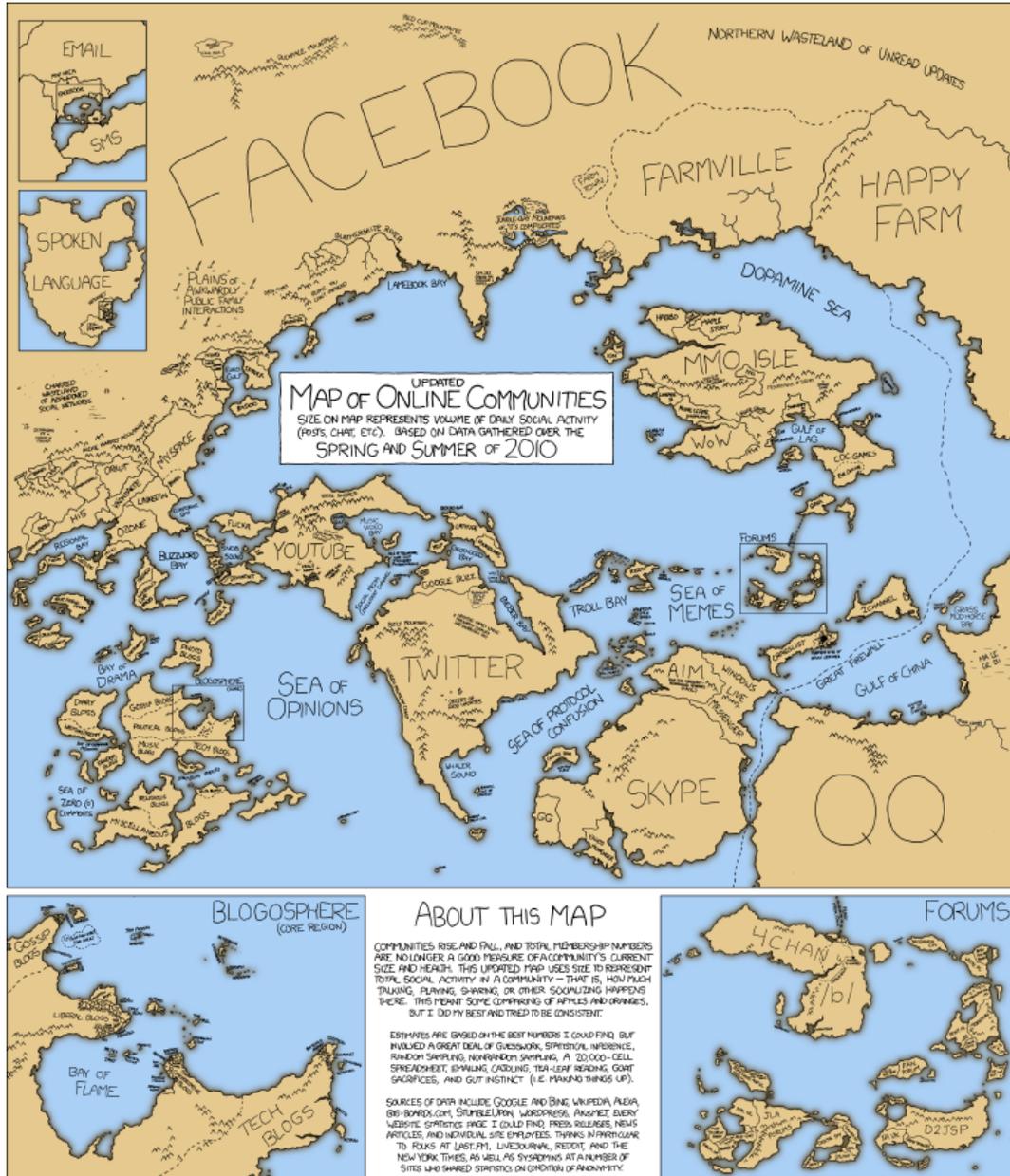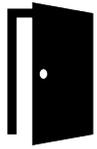

**photo from XKCD

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CONTACT: How do you contact me?

Walk-In Office Hours: T/TR, 11:15am-1pm
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A note about my social media accounts: Both my Twitter and LinkedIn accounts are part of my professional identity. There I share my own research, news related to digital media, fandom, and rhetoric, and discuss and critique current events. My twitter account reflects my own identity as a scholar-teacher, which means that the views expressed there are my own—not Xavier University's. If you're interested in learning more about digital media beyond what we learn here in class, you are more than welcome to follow me on Twitter and on LinkedIn.

A note about what office hours are for: Office hours are a great opportunity to get specific questions answered, to talk about the concepts and readings, and to get help with projects/papers. However, bringing a project/paper to office hours does not mean I can "pre-grade" your project/paper. It would be far too time-consuming to do that for every student. Rather, think about office hours as a chance to talk through your project/paper. Tell me about what you think is really strong, what you're unsure about, and what you're struggling with. We can talk through these issues together, helping you identify revisions you might want to make before you turn in your final copy on the due date. I strongly urge students to take advantage of office hours for this purpose.

A note about email: I will try to respond to emails within 48 hours. But, like everyone, I get a lot of emails, and that means it can be easy to miss one. If I don't respond to you within 48 hours, feel free to send me a reminder email. =)

DESCRIPTION: What is this course all about?

This course is all about **online communities**—defined broadly. We will explore online communities that are really different from each other (trolls! reddit! pinterest! Online fandom!). We will think about the dynamics of online communities (how do we form community online? What makes communities strong? How do they implode? When do they fade? Can communities exist alongside advertisers?). And we will examine the implications of particular online communities (Can trolling be ethical? How can we make our communities more inclusive?). This means we will learn a lot about the current layout of digital culture—what communities exist, in what ways, with what norms.

YOU will help shape this class. You and your classmates will set our priorities: Which communities should we read about? Which dynamics are most interesting or important to you? I'll bring some books for you all to choose from. This class gives you the opportunity to **shape your own learning** and set your own learning priorities.

Students who complete this course will be able to:

1. Describe the **characteristics and dynamics** of online communities.
2. Read and understand **original academic research**.
3. **Research** a topic using academic sources and popular sources.
4. **Write** an academic paper/literature review.

DM: The Digital Media Major and Minor:

While the course objectives and course questions above help you understand what this course in particular is all about, the description below helps you understand what the Digital Media Major/Minor are all about (what it includes, what it doesn't include, its goals, and its justification). This course is part of the Digital Media Major/Minor and as such helps achieve the goals set out below.

Description of the Digital Media Major/Minor:

The digital native discourse shows up in newspapers, on television, at the dinner table, and in our schools. This discourse positions young people as digital media experts, asserting that because the Millennial generation (born between the 1980s and 2000s) grew up with digital technologies, they automatically know how to use technology. Employers expect Millenial job candidates to have the digital media skills that schools assume they don't need to teach. Yet, scholars like danah boyd assert, "Many of today's teens are indeed deeply engaged with social media and are active participants in networked publics, but this does not mean that they inherently have the knowledge or skills to make the most of their online experiences."[i] Indeed, the majority of Xavier students will not have the media literacy necessary to understand how Google determines search results or the technical expertise to create their own YouTube video without coursework in digital media. Xavier students recognize this need too, and increasingly tell faculty that they want to acquire those skills while at Xavier. The Digital Media Major and Minor gives students those skills.
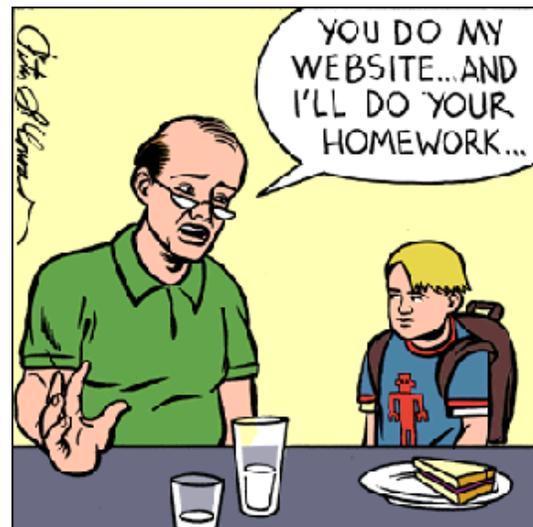
We define digital media as more than just social media like Twitter or Facebook. While analog media (like cassette tapes, records, and landline telephones) work by fully translating the wave created by the original sound or image, digital media work by sampling the wave and turning it into 1's and 0's (or on's and off's) to be reproduced later by a CD player or a DVD player. The shift from analog to digital media has made networked technologies like the internet possible— allowing us to communicate across great geographic distance and opening up digital media production to the everyday person. Thus, the Digital Media Major/Minor examines **social media** (like Facebook),

digital cultures (like online communities and vlogging culture), and **online politics** (like Gamergate). The Digital Media Major and Minor seek to provide students with skills and expertise in **digital media production, online communication, and digital culture.**

Expertise in digital media is crucial for our students in two ways. First, an understanding of digital media is critical to being **a full and active citizen** in today's networked and digital world. Scholars like Lance Bennett, Alexandra Sergerberg, Michael Xenos, and Sarah Florini demonstrate that social justice, activism, and citizenship are networked and digital.[ii] At stake is whether students have the literacy, experience, and contextual knowledge to be full citizens and powerful agents in today's world. If we want students to be able to create social change as "men and women for and with others," our students must be able to deploy digital media.[iii]

Second, expertise in digital media is an important requirement for **today's jobs**. The National Association of Colleges and Employers isn't yet tracking digital media as a distinct discipline or job field. Thus, national and regional statistics aren't available. But there have been increasing reports about the need for digital media skills in new hires. Vivian Giang in *Fortune Magazine* identifies a growing trend in job advertisements to list digital media skills as required.[iv] A columnist for *Forbes Magazine* said, "Almost every single job out there involves being online in some capacity. That means that, at some point in your career—this year or 30 years from now—you'll likely have to access the back end of a company site, a blog or an email marketing service."[v] Apple CEO Tim Cook asserts that learning to code is as important as learning to speak a foreign language. Ultimately, students who have digital media expertise will have an advantage in the job market. The Digital Media Major and Minor aim to give students these skills.

GRADES: What will you have to do in this class?
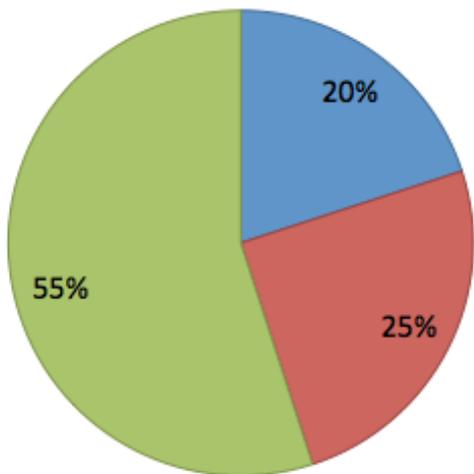
Reading Preparation (20%):
Warm Ups   20 points

Participation and Reflection (25%):
Part. Reflection #1   3 points
Participation #1   3 points
Part. Reflection #2   3 points
Participation #2   3 points
Part. Reflection #3   3 points
Participation #3   3 points
Part. Reflection #4   3 points
Participation #4   3 points

Project: 55%
Briefing Paper, Podcast, or Project

Total possible: 100 points

Attendance: You cannot participate meaningfully in class if you were not present in class. What we do in class is not easily replaced by reading the textbook or reading another student's notes. Students learn from in-class activities, from other students' contributions during class discussions, from other questions they hear, and from engaging the material for during class each day. Make every possible arrangement to attend all class periods. There will be a **sign-in sheet** for every class period. If you come to class late, it is your responsibility to make sure you sign your name on the sign-in sheet. Otherwise, you will be counted as absent.

The Grading Scale:

94%-100%	A
90%-93%	A-
87%-89%	B+
84%-86%	B
80%-83%	B-
77%-79%	C+
75%-76%	C
70%-74%	C-
67%-69%	D+
65%-66%	D
60%-64%	D-
0%-59%	F

Points: Each student gets **three "freebie" days** to miss class for being sick, funerals, personal reasons, etc. For every class that you miss beyond your freebie, **you lose 3 points** (or the equivalent of 3%) from your total grade. You do not need to email me to let me know you are using one of your freebie days.

<u>Extra Credit:</u> There may be opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester. The number and types of opportunities will vary depending on the semester and class. The **maximum** amount of extra credit any single student may earn is **2%.**

POLICIES: How will we go about learning in this class?

Assignments due: All assignments are due before class begins.

No late work is accepted: No late work is accepted in this class. **You will receive a zero for any assignment not turned in before the deadline.** There are two reasons for this policy. 1) I simply cannot accommodate rolling submissions. Having students turn in work on time means that I can grade more effectively and I avoid wasting my time on logistical issues. 2) If you miss project deadlines at work, you won't have a job for long. Deadlines are important whether you are collaborating with colleagues informally, working at a professional job, or in school.

Feedback: As an instructor, I work hard to give students useful feedback on their assignments. I want students to fully understand the feedback I give them. Therefore, I hope you will come talk to me about the feedback you receive on papers, projects, and other assignments. Receiving your grade shouldn't be a signal that our conversation is over. I encourage you to bring any questions to me during office hours—**I love talking with students about their work.**

Grade Disputes: If you would like to dispute a grade, you must do two things. 1) **Meet with me** face-to-face during office-hours. Email is a time-consuming and difficult way to engage in a dialogue about student projects. 2) **Ask questions first.** Try to understand the feedback you received and why it warranted a particular grade. After we talk for a bit, if you still feel like your grade doesn't accurately reflect your project, you may explain your argument. But you must ask questions first.

Readings due: Readings come from our textbooks, pdfs, and links online. Readings are listed on the day we will discuss them. Be sure to read them before class that day.

Types of Readings: In this class, we will engage a wide variety of "readings." Almost none of these will be chapters from traditional undergraduate textbooks. Part of that is because there simply isn't an undergraduate textbook written yet about digital communication that meets our needs. Instead, many of our readings will be academic documents: **book chapters and journal articles**.

This means that the writing level will be more challenging. But by working through the readings together in class, I think we'll be able to understand the main points quite well. This also means that the articles you're reading are part of larger conversations (the articles will likely cite other articles that you haven't read) and the book chapters you're

reading are part of a larger book. I'll make sure to give you all of the background information you need to understand what any particular author is saying. But if you feel like you're entering a challenging conversation mid-way, that's OK. In fact, that's to be expected. Our discussions in class will work through these challenges.

While some of our readings will be original academic research, not all will. We also have readings that are **blog posts, videos, and comics**. These come from academics as well as leaders and activists working on the ground. I expect you to watch the videos from YouTube with the same care and attention that you read chapters from academic books.

Final Exams: All students must take the Final Exam during the designated time. This is required of all faculty members by the Dean's Office. **No exceptions can be made for travel or any other reasons.**

Academic Dishonesty: Like any course at Xavier, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. I expect you to cite your sources completely and appropriately. Penalties for academic dishonesty **range from a zero for the assignment to an F for the course**. You can find more information about Xavier's Academic Honesty policy here: http://www.xavier.edu/handbook/standards/Academic-Honesty.cfm.

VALUES: How will this class value inclusion and respect?

Respect:

Learning about communication involves risks. Our classroom needs to be a safe place to explore communication contexts and an open place to reconsider our preconceptions of communication, its power, and its use in our everyday lives.

Gender-Inclusive Language:

Everyone should be referred to by the name they prefer, the correct pronunciation of their name, and the **pronoun they prefer** (like she, ze, he, or they). Please be respectful throughout the course. If you feel uncomfortable, do not hesitate to talk to me privately during office hours.

Title IX and Gender-Based Violence:

Xavier (and my classroom specifically) should be a **safe place for you to be and for you to learn**. That's why Xavier takes gender-based violence (including sexual violence, intimate partner violence, stalking, and sexual harassment) seriously.

There are lots of gender-based violence prevention and response resources on campus, including Xavier's Title IX director, Kate Lawson. She can help you find the right resources and information (including your rights and legal options). You can contact Kate Lawson at lawsonk1@xavier.edu or 745-3046. There are also confidential services you can access if you are not yet ready to report any gender-based violence you may be experiencing. Confidential resources include: the Advocate Program, Women Helping Women, counselors, physicians, and nurses at McGrath Health and Wellness and Psychological Services, clergy, and private mental health counselors. You can find more information here: http://www.xavier.edu/titleix/index.cfm

Disability:

I work to make sure that my classroom and my course are not ableist—making sure that **everyone can easily access my course**. Xavier takes that goal seriously as well, and Disability Services provides resources for both Xavier students and faculty.

If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please see Disability Services to obtain a letter specifying the particular accommodations you require. Then, bring that letter to me at the beginning of the course so that I can prepare your accommodations. If you have any questions at any point throughout the semester, please feel free to talk with me and/or Disability Services. You can find more information here: http://www.xavier.edu/learning-assistance-center/Disability-Services.cfm

SCHEDULE: When are readings and assignments due?

Date	Date	Topic	Readings
1	T 8/22	Syllabus	
2	R 8/24	Learning and Pedagogy	Freire Palczewski
3	T 8/29	Defining community	Baym
4	R 8/31	Defining community	Howard
5	T 9/5	Community #1	Trolls, Introduction
6	R 9/7	Community #1	Trolls, Chapter 1
7	T 9/12	Community #3	Trolls, Chapter 4 **Participation Reflection #1 due*
8	R 9/14	Community #4	Trolls, Chapter 9
9	T 9/19	Community #5	Memes, Intro
10	R 9/21	Community #6	Memes, Chapter 3
11	T 9/26	Community #7	Memes, Chapter 4
12	R 9/28	Community #8	Memes, Chapter 5
13	T 10/3	Community #9	Memes, Chapter 6 **Participation Reflection #2 due*
	R 10/5	Fall Break	[no class]
14	T 10/10	Community #10	Pinterest, Chapter 12
15	R 10/12	Community #11	Fashion Blogging, Chapter 6
16	T 10/17	Community #12	Military, Chapter 2
17	R 10/19	Community #13	Military, Chapter 3
18	T 10/24	Community #14	Reddit, Intro
19	R 10/26	Community #15	Reddit, Chapter 7
20	T 10/31	Community #16	[something on Twitch: TBD] **Project Proposal due
21	R 11/2	What are podcasts?	-Read: [something on podcasts: TBD] -Listen to: Episode 1 of Serial: https://serialpodcast.org/season-one/1/the-alibi
22	T 11/7	Microphone Demo Interviewing Ethically	-Listen to at least 30 minutes of another podcast of your choice (explore the iTunes store, http://thirdcoastfestival.org/, http://transom.org,). -Read small selection from Roberts-Breslin (pdf)
23	R 11/9	The Podcast Genre	**Participation Reflection #3 -Listen to at least 30 minutes of another podcast of your choice (explore the iTunes store, http://thirdcoastfestival.org/, http://transom.org,)

			-Start conducting interviews
24	T 11/14	Adobe Audition Demo	-Keep conducting interviews
	R 11/16	No class [Hinck at NCA]	**Audio Interviews due -Start editing podcast
25	T 11/21	Project	-Keep editing podcast
	R 11/22	Thanksgiving	[no class]
24	T 11/28	Project	-Keep editing podcast
25	R 11/30	Project	-Keep editing podcast
26	T 12/5	Project Peer Review	**Full Draft of Podcast due
27	R 12/7	Project	Project Work Time ***Participation Reflection #4 due*
	T 12/12	Showcase: Final Exam: 4-5:50pm	***In class screening of podcasts*

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Where did our course readings come from?

Baym, Nancy. *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2010.

Howard, Robert Glenn. "Electronic Hybridity: The Persistent Processes of the Vernacular Web." *Journal of American Folklore* 121, no. 480 (2008): 192–218. doi:10.1353/jaf.0.0012.

Lange, Patricia G. *Kids on Youtube: Technical Identities and Digital Literacies*. Walnut Creek,CA: Left Coast Press, 2014.

Levine, Elana, ed. *Cupcakes, Pinterest, and Ladyporn: Feminized Popular Culture in the Early Twenty-First Century*. Feminist Media Studies. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Massanari, Adrienne Lynne. *Participatory Culture, Community, and Play: Learning from Reddit*. Digital Formations, vol. 75. New York: Peter Lang, 2015.

Phillips, Whitney. "Don't Feed the Trolls? It's Not That Simple." *The Daily Dot*. Accessed July 20, 2014. http://www.dailydot.com/opinion/phillips-dont-feed-trolls-antisocial-web/.

Endnotes.

[i] boyd, *It's Complicated*, 176.

[ii] Bennett and Segerberg, *The Logic of Connective Action*; Bennett, "Changing Citizenship in the Digital Age"; Xenos and Foot, "Not Your Father's Internet: The Generation Gap in Online Politics"; Earl and Kimport, *Digitally Enabled Social Change*; Banaji and Buckingham, *The Civic Web*; Pfister, *Networked Media, Networked Rhetorics*; Xenos, "New Mediated Deliberation"; Florini, "This Week in Blackness, the George Zimmerman Acquittal, and the Production of a Networked Collective Identity."

[iii] "Center for Mission and Identity - Mission Statement."

[iv] Giang, "Recruiting for 'Digital Natives' Is Age Discrimination, Lawyers Say."

[v] The Muse, "Five Tech Skills That Will Help Your Career (No Matter What You Do)," 1.

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Pie chart was made by Ashley Hinck.