Course Description

This course will examine “social media” from a cultural perspective, with a focus on how media technologies figure in practices of everyday life and in the construction of social relationships and identities. We will work from an expansive definition of what constitutes “social media,” considering social network sites, smartphone apps, and online games, among other technologies. Questions we will consider include: What tools can we use to study the place of social media in culture? How can social media enable the formation of community? How is identity performed in/with social media? How are constructions of youth, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality mediated through social media technologies? Can social media technologies be a vehicle for political activism? What are the commercial uses of social media? What are the ethical issues associated with social media technologies? Is it possible to refuse social media? The course itself will involve communication in social media channels in addition to the traditional seminar format, thus we will be actively participating in the phenomena under study as we go.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and critique instances of technological determinism in popular discourse on social media technologies
- Critically evaluate methodologies employed by studies of social media use
- Describe social media practices among various social groups, differentiated by age, gender, race, and sexual identity, among others
- Understand performances of identity in social media
- Critically evaluate the potential for social media technologies to facilitate the formation of identities, communities, activist movements, and consumer markets
- Articulate some of the ethical problems posed by emerging social media technologies
- Apply each of the above skills and concepts to their own real-life observations of social media use
Texts
All other required readings available on the course website.

Requirements

Blog Posts: There are three required blog posts, which will require you to make connections between course readings/theories and your own observations/experiences of social media. Your posts should be designed to provoke responses and discussion among your classmates.

Blog Responses: After each round of blog submissions, you should read/skim over your classmates’ posts and respond to at least one of them. Your response should be substantive and thought-provoking. For instance, you may want to pose a question back to the original poster. Extra credit may be awarded for particularly generative posts/responses.

Class twitter feed participation: We will hold an ongoing conversation about our observations of social media in contemporary culture in the form of a class Twitter feed. You may either use your current Twitter username or create one specifically for this course. Tweets should be personal thoughts/insights/questions, responses to readings or lectures, and/or links to relevant material on the web, and should include the course hashtag (#csmt12). You must post at least 2 course-relevant tweets per week; at least 1 of them should be explicitly related to the reading material for that week. Tweets will be counted on Fridays at 11am.

Midterm Exam: The midterm will be an in-class exam based on lectures and assigned readings from the first half of the course.

In-class Quizzes/Activities: From time to time we will have unannounced quizzes and activities based on the readings and lectures. Your scores on these will be averaged at the end of the semester. There will be no make-ups offered on these – you must be in class to complete them and receive credit. If you know ahead of time that you will not be in class, you should email me to find out if you can do the activity on your own to submit for credit (please allow plenty of time for me to get your email and respond to it – you'll have to turn the activity at the same time as everyone else, so if you wait until too close to class time, I may not be able to get it to you in time.)

Book Review: During the second half of the class you will be required to read a trade press book of your choice related to social media and marketing/business. The book review assignment will ask you to evaluate the book in light of and with reference to other course material you have read. This will serve as a final exam in that you will be assessed on your demonstration of understanding of material from across the course.

Attendance/Participation: All students are expected to actively participate in class sessions and group activities. This means coming to class prepared by having done all the readings, bringing assigned readings to class, paying attention during all lectures and screenings, asking thoughtful questions, and sharing personal insights when appropriate.
Course Grade Calculation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 blog posts</td>
<td>20 points ea. / 60 pts. total</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 blog responses</td>
<td>15 points ea. / 60 pts. total</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter participation</td>
<td>2 pts. per week / 30 pts. total</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class quizzes/activities</td>
<td>75 pts. total</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review blog post</td>
<td>25 pts.</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final book review</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>50 pts. total</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Final grades, based on total points earned, out of 500:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>320-334</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>335-349</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>350-369</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>370-384</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>385-399</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>400-419</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>420-434</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>450-469</td>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>470-500</td>
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</tbody>
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Course Policies

See above for grading policies related to attendance and participation.

Lateness: Lateness with assignments is generally unacceptable, as it places extra burden on us to keep track of your assignments above and beyond what we do for the other students in the class. It is also unfair to the other students, who are each making their own sacrifices and commitments in order to complete work on time. If you have a true hardship in completing an assignment on time, you must seek written approval from Prof. Portwood-Stacer, in advance of the due date, to extend the due date for a reduced grade. If you fail to turn in an assignment by the due date and time, and have not received approval from me, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

Missed activities: In-class activities cannot be made up due to absence. However, if you contact me at least 24 hours in advance of your absence and arrange to complete the activity on your own outside of class and submit it by class time, you can receive credit. This only applies to activities – quizzes cannot be made up in any case.

Email: We will make every attempt to answer emails promptly. Please allow 24 hours for us to get back to you. If you include “CSMT” in the subject line of your email that will alert me that you have a class-related issue. I encourage you to consult this syllabus and any documents distributed in class before posing redundant questions (particularly if you have been absent from class). You are much more likely to receive a response from faculty and staff when your correspondence is professional and courteous. I prefer to be addressed as Prof. or Dr. Portwood-Stacer (Prof. P-S is fine)!

Evaluation/grading: Requirements and expectations will be made available for each assignment ahead of its due date. This course is very easy to do well in if you are careful to meet each requirement (which includes completing every assignment and submitting it on time). Students who demonstrate that they have put considerable effort and thought into the assignments will earn good grades. The key word here is demonstrate: your work should indicate to the reader—
be it professor, grader, classmate, or public audience—that you have put both time and intellect into it. Grades will be posted in the course Blackboard site as promptly as possible. You should check them periodically to make sure there are no clerical errors – these will be easier to rectify the sooner you notify us.

**Attendance/Participation:** You are allowed 4 absences, no questions asked. This includes both excused and unexcused absences. After that, any absences will result in a one-percent reduction in your course grade per absence. Your participation grade is assessed above and beyond your attendance; just showing up to class will not earn you any participation points. Spending class time on your laptop or cell phone engaged in non-class activities will negatively affect your participation grade. You may think we don’t notice, but we do.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM**
I take academic integrity extremely seriously. When you turn in work that is not your own, you communicate to me that you are not serious about this course. It will also reflect badly on your online reputation, since much of the work in this course will be posted publicly. If I suspect that you have submitted dishonest work, you will receive a zero for the assignment. You may also fail the course and the case may be forwarded to department and university administrators. If you have any doubts as to whether work you plan to submit violates the standards of academic integrity, please ask me in advance. It is better to have an honest question cleared up before the fact than to risk failure and disciplinary action.

All students must be familiar with the NYU Steinhardt School definition of plagiarism and the policy on academic integrity. The NYU Steinhardt Statement on Academic Integrity is available at: [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity)

The Steinhardt School defines plagiarism as follows:

*Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated.*

*Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score and/or other materials, which are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following:*

*• Copy verbatim from a book, an article or other media;*
*• Download documents from the Internet;*
*• Purchase documents;*
*• Report from other's oral work;*
*• Paraphrase or restate someone else's facts, analysis and/or conclusions;*
*• Copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.*

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

Course Schedule

*The online schedule (csmt2012.wordpress.com/schedule) contains a list of the pdf files you will need to read each day, as well as the assignments due each week. Note that although tweets are not listed on the schedule below, they are always due by 11am on Fridays.

**Week 1: Introductions**  
9/5: Watch "An Anthropological Introduction to Youtube" (on Youtube)

**Week 2: Defining Social Media**  
9/10: Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, Chapter 1 & 2  
Donath, “Sociable Media”  
9/12: Boyd & Ellison, “Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship”  
Beer, “Social network(ing) sites… revisiting the story so far: A response to danah boyd and Nicole Ellison”  
**Blog Post 1 due at 11am on 9/14**

**Week 3: Studying Social Media**  
Slater, “Social Relationships and Identity Online and Offline”  
9/19: Focus only on the methods used in each of these readings:  
Nardi, excerpts from *My Life as a Night Elf Priest*  
Boyd, Golder, & Lotan, “Tweet, Tweet, Retweet: Conversational Aspects of Retweeting on Twitter”  
Hargittai, “Whose Space? Differences Among Users and Non-Users of Social Network Sites”  
Portwood-Stacer, "Media Refusal and Conspicuous Non-Consumption: The Performative and Political Dimensions of Facebook Abstention”  
**Blog Response 1 due at 11am on 9/21**

**Week 4: Forming Relationships and Community through Social Media**  
9/24: Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, Chapters 4-7  
9/26: Boyd, “Friends, Friendsters, and Myspace Top 8”  
Donath & boyd, “Public Displays of Connection”  
**Blog Post 2 due at 11am on 9/28**

**Week 5: Forming Relationships and Community, continued**  
10/1: Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, “The benefits of Facebook ‘friends’”  
Haythornthwaite, “Social Networks and Internet Connectivity Effects”  
10/3: Jones, et al., “Whose Space is MySpace?”  
Liu, “Social Network Profiles as Taste Performances”  
Marwick "I'm More Than Just a Friendster Profile: Identity, Authenticity, and Power in Social Networking Services"  
**Blog Response 2 due at 11am on 10/5**
Week 6: Performing Identity through Social Media
10/10: Midterm exam

Week 7: Performing Identity through Social Media, continued
10/15: No Class (Fall Recess)

Week 8: Youth & Discourse about Social Media
10/22: boyd “Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life”
boyd & Marwick, “Social Steganography: Privacy in Networked Publics” Willett, "'As Soon as You Get on Bebo You Just Go Mad': Young Consumers and the Discursive Construction of Teenagers Online"
10/24: Hasinoff, "Sexting as Media Production"
Mitchell, et al., "Prevalence and Characteristics of Youth Sexting"
Blog Post 3 due at 11am on 10/26

Week 9: Gender and Sexuality
10/29: Dobson, “The ‘Grotesque Body’ in Young Women’s Self Presentations on MySpace”
Banet-Weiser, “Branding the post-feminist self: Girls’ video production and Youtube”
10/31: Gross, “Somewhere There’s a Place for Us: Sexual Minorities and the Internet”
Gray, "Online Profiles: Remediating the Coming-Out Story"
Blog Response 3 due at 11am on 11/2

Week 10: Race, Ethnicity, Class
Hargittai, “Open Doors, Closed Spaces? Differentiated Adoption of Social Network Sites by User Background”
11/7: Thomas, “KPK, Inc.: Race, Nation, and Emergent Culture in Online Games”
Everett, “Have We Become Postracial Yet? Race and Media Technology in the Age of President Obama”

Week 11: Ethical Issues
11/12: Boyd & Hargittai, “Facebook Privacy Settings: Who Cares?”
Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Labor for the Digital Economy"
Andrejevic, “Surveillance and Alienation in the Online Economy”
11/14: Gandy, “Matrix Multiplication and the Digital Divide”
Cheney-Lippold, "A New Algorithmic Identity"
Marwick, “‘If You Don’t Like It, Don’t Use It. It’s That Simple’ ORLY?”
Week 12: Social Media Activism
11/19: Dibbell, “A Rape in Cyberspace”
       Hess, "Savannah Dietrich Outs Her Rapists on Twitter and Facebook"
       Phillips, "LOLing at Tragedy: Facebook Trolls, Memorial Pages and Resistance to Grief Online"
11/21: No readings
       **Blog Response 4 due at 11am**

Week 13: Social Media and Political Participation
11/26: Readings to be announced
11/28: Readings to be announced
       **Book review book must be selected by this date**

Week 14: Learning About and Reaching Consumers
12/3: Read book review book
12/5: Kozinets, “E-Tribalized Marketing?”
      Clemons, “The complex problem of monetizing virtual electronic social networks”
      Mangold & Faulds, “Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix”

Week 15:
12/10: **Book Review blog post due at 11am**
12/12: Course Wrap-up

**Final Book Review due 12/17, 11am**