SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING  
Spring 2012  
Laura Portwood-Stacer, PhD  
MCC-UE 1032

Email: laura.ps@nyu.edu  
Office: 239 Greene Street, 7th Floor  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3pm, and by appointment  
Course Twitter Hashtag: #csmt12  
Course Blog: posterous.com/csmt2012

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. 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.

Learning Outcomes  
By the end of this course, students will:
- Identify the tools by which one can study the effects of social media in our culture  
- Describe how social media enables the formation of community in our society  
- Analyze how identity is performed and shaped in/with/through social media  
- Critically examine how social media technologies affect constructions of youth, gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality  
- Assess the commercial uses of social media  
- Engage in debates on whether social media technologies can be a vehicle for political activism  
- Critique contemporary debates about whether it is possible to refuse social media in the digital age

Required Texts  
Most of the readings will be posted as PDFs or links on the course website. You should also purchase the following book:

Assignments  
Class twitter feed participation (5%)  
Blog Posts (20%)  
Midterm Exam (20%)  
Final Exam (25%)  
Book Review (15%)  
Attendance (5%)  
Participation (10%)
**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 (#csmt11). You will be required to post at least 20 tweets throughout the semester (a maximum of 10 of these may be links). Tallies will be taken at regular intervals to ensure regular participation.

**Blog Posts:** There are four required blog posts, which will require you to make connections between course readings/theories and your own observations/experiences of social media. You are also encouraged to post responses to other students’ blog posts. You will be required to post a total of 4 posts (a minimum of 2 of these must be original posts versus responses to other students’ posts). A portfolio of permalinks to all of your blog posts/comments will be due at the end of the term.

**Midterm Exam:** The midterm will be a take-home essay exam based on lectures and assigned readings from the first half of the course.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be a take-home essay exam. It will be focused on lectures and assigned readings from the second half of the course, but will also require you to make connections across material from the entire term.

**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. The book review assignment will ask you to evaluate the book in light of and with reference to other course material you have read. A prompt will be distributed in class two weeks in advance of the due date.

**Attendance:** Five percent of your grade will be based on simple attendance of class. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences, no questions asked. After that, any absences without prior written approval will result in a one-percent reduction in your attendance grade per absence.

**Participation:** All students are expected to actively participate in class sessions. 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. 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 I don’t notice, but I do. You are encouraged to check in with me throughout the semester to find out how you are doing on participation, so that you are not surprised when your final grade comes.
Course Policies
Lateness is generally unacceptable, as it places extra burden on me to keep track of your assignments above and beyond what I 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 me to extend the due date for a reduced grade. If you fail to turn in an assignment on the due date, and have not communicated with me in advance (this means you must receive a reply from me acknowledging that I have received your communication), you will receive a zero on the assignment.

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.

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 and I will adjust your grade to reflect that. 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
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.

EVALUATION CRITERIA
A = Excellent
This work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights, and well-reasoned analysis. “A” work includes skillful use of source materials and illuminating examples and illustrations. “A” work is fluent, thorough and shows some creative flair.

B = Good
This work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of course material, presenting a reasonable degree of insight and broad level of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source material, along with examples and illustrations, are used appropriately. “B” work is reasonable, clear, appropriate and complete.

C = Adequate/Fair
This work demonstrates a basic understanding of course material but remains incomplete, superficial or expresses some important errors or weaknesses. Source material may be used inadequately or somewhat inappropriately. The work may lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations and may be hard to follow or vague.

D = Unsatisfactory
This work demonstrates a serious lack of understanding and fails to demonstrate the most rudimentary elements of the course assignment. Sources may be used inappropriately or not at all. The work may be inarticulate or extremely difficult to read.

A = 94-100
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 67-69
D = 64-66
F = 63 and below

OTHER RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS
The Writing Center
http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html
411 Lafayette, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10003
212 998-8866
mailto:writingcenter@nyu.edu

Hours: Monday to Thursday, 10 am to 8 pm; Friday, 11 am to 4 pm

The Writing Center is a place where any NYU student can get help with his or her writing. The Writing Center is a part of NYU’s Expository Writing Program in the College of Arts and Science. It is a place where one-on-one teaching and learning occur,
as students work closely with professional consultants at every stage of the writing process and on any piece of writing except for exams.

**NYU Wellness Exchange**
[http://www.nyu.edu/999](http://www.nyu.edu/999)
212-443-9999

The Wellness Exchange is the constellation of the University's expanded and enhanced programs and services designed to address the overall health and mental health needs of our students.

Students can access this service through a private hotline, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which will put them in touch with professionals who can help them address both day-to-day challenges as well as any other crises they may encounter, including depression, sexual assault, anxiety, alcohol and drug dependence, sexually transmitted infections, and eating disorders. The Wellness Exchange is also available for students who just need to talk or to call about a friend.
Course Schedule

Week 1: Introductions
1/23: No readings – introductions
1/25: Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, Chapter 1

Week 2: Defining Social Media
1/30: Baym, Chapter 2
    Donath, “Sociable Media”
2/1: Lull, “The Social Uses of Television”
    Boyd & Ellison, “Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship”
    **Blog Post 1 due at 8pm the day before class**

Week 3: Studying Social Media
2/6: Beer, “Social network(ing) sites… revisiting the story so far: A response to danah boyd and Nicole Ellison”
    Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, Chapter 3
    Slater, “Social Relationships and Identity Online and Offline”
2/8: Nardi, excerpts from *My Life as a Night Elf Priest*
    Boelstorff, excerpts from *Coming of Age in Second Life*
    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”

Week 4: Forming Relationships and Community through Social Media
2/13: Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, Chapter 4
2/15: Baym, Chapters 5-7
    Boyd, “Friends, Friendsters, and Myspace Top 8”
    Donath & boyd, “Public Displays of Connection”
    **Blog Post 2 due at 8pm the day before class**

Week 5: Forming Relationships and Community, continued
2/20: No Class
    Haythornthwaite, “Social Networks and Internet Connectivity Effects”

Week 6: Performing Identity through Social Media
    Liu, “Social Network Profiles as Taste Performances”
3/1: Marwick "I'm More Than Just a Friendster Profile: Identity, Authenticity, and Power in Social Networking Services"
    Weber & Mitchell “Imaging, keyboarding, and posting identities: Young people and new media technologies”
Midterm Exam distributed in class, DUE MARCH 8 at start of class

Week 7: Midterm Week
Make sure to order/check out a book for Week 13 in advance. Plan ahead!
3/6: Individual meetings during class time and office hours
3/8: Midterm due at start of class

Spring Recess 3/12-3/17

Week 8: Youth
3/19: Midterms returned
Stald, “Mobile identity: Youth, identity, and mobile communication media”
Lenhart & Madden, “Social networking websites and teens: An Overview”
boyd “Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life”
Willett, “As Soon as You Get on Bebo You Just Go Mad”: Young Consumers and the Discursive Construction of Teenagers Online
Blog Post 3 due at 8pm the day before class

Week 9: Race, Ethnicity, Class
Boyd, “The Not-So-Hidden Politics of Class Online” (read talk or watch video on youtube)
3/28: Thomas, “KPK, Inc.: Race, Nation, and Emergent Culture in Online Games”
Kolko “Erasing @race: Going White in the (Inter)Face”

Week 10: Gender and Sexuality
4/2: Zacharias, et al., “Commentary and Criticism (Social Networking Sites and Genders)”
Dobson, “The ‘Grotesque Body’ in Young Women’s Self Presentations on MySpace”
Banet-Weiser, “Branding the post-feminist self: Girls’ video production and youtube”
4/4: Dobson, “The Representation of Female Friendships on Young Women’s MySpace Profiles”
Gross, “Somewhere There’s a Place for Us: Sexual Minorities and the Internet”

Week 11: Politics and Activism
Costanza-Chock, “New Social Movements in the Network Society”
Costanza-Chock, “The Immigrant Rights Movement on the Net”
4/11: Beetham & Valenti, eds., Blogging Feminism: (Web)sites of Resistance
Blog Post 4 due at 8pm the day before class
Week 12: Politics and Activism, continued
4/16: Murthy, “Twitter: Microphone for the Masses?”
        Mirani, “Sorry, Malcolm Gladwell, the Revolution May Well Be Tweeted”
4/18: Kozinets, “How online communities are growing in power”

Week 13: Learning About and Reaching Consumers
        Mangold & Faulds, “Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix”
4/25: Prepare to present on the book you reviewed for your paper
        Book Review due at the start of class

Week 14: Ethical issues: Privacy, Labor, Identity Regulation
        Andrejevic, “The Work of Watching One Another”
        Albrechtslund, “Online Social Networking as Participatory Surveillance”
5/2: Andrejevic, “Watching Television Without Pity: The Productivity of Online Fans”
        Dibbell, “A Rape in Cyberspace”

Week 15 (11/22): Refusing Social Media
        Jones, excerpts from Against Technology
        Final Exam distributed in class

Final Exam Due Date TBA