

INSTRUCTOR: ANDRÉ BROCK

Room: 171 Skiles

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3pm by appt.

Office: 326 Skiles

Course Level: Undergraduate/Graduate:

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This syllabus subject to change at the discretion of the instructor^{2*}

COURSE OVERVIEW

Introduction to Social Informatics

Social informatics is the study of the social and cultural use of information and communication technologies within institutional contexts. Institutions, for this course, are defined as structures of social order and behavior. Institutions can be formal, informal, or any combination of the two, so this course will veer wildly between institutions such as “marriage”, “home”, and “policing”.

This course will explore social informatics through readings, discussion, and written work. Students will gain an understanding of informatics in various contexts and disciplines through the review and reflection on theoretical and historical texts, examination of available examples, and the application of a culturally-aware structural framework for observation and analysis

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, students will

- Develop an understanding of key theoretical, empirical, and methodological texts examining cultural and social influences of computerization in society
- Become familiar with key concepts and case studies in social informatics
- Explore issues surrounding computerization and the digital in formal and informal social and cultural institutions.
- Increase awareness of the multiple ways that the digital impacts, extends, and hinders society and culture
- Engage with research from a range of disciplines, and will see how different fields address these themes in order to develop an interdisciplinary approach.
- Understand how social informatics concepts are developed through and used in social science research on science and technology
- Analyze how power, identity, and politics shapes the development of social structures, individual representations, and technical artifacts
- Gain experience writing short papers that incorporate STS concepts, cases, and real-world evidence.

TEXTS AND TOOLS

All readings can be found on the course Canvas site in PDF, ePub, or via Google Scholar. Feel free to buy physical copies to support the authors. The readings below are not exhaustive; other supplemental readings will be suggested by myself or your classmates.

Reading assignments (see [page 3](#)) should be completed before class on the day assigned so the student is prepared to participate in class discussion. If you are a student with a disability and would like to discuss special academic accommodations, please contact the instructors during their office hours or via email at the beginning of the semester. Students are expected to bring the assigned readings to class the day they are being discussed. You may print them out or have them on an electronic device.

We'll be using a pair of (new to me) tools this semester: Piazza and Perusall.

PIAZZA/READING DISCUSSIONS

Piazza will be used to post reading discussions, original posts, and questions for me. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates and myself. Rather than emailing me questions I encourage you to post your questions on Piazza. If you have any problems or feedback for the developers, email team@piazza.com.

Find our class Piazza page on the Canvas course site

Annotations

<http://www.Perusall.com>: course code Brock-PR97K

This semester, we'll be using **Perusall** to annotate each assigned reading as a class. Perusall is an annotation layer for any online content; this tool is intended to allow y'all to collaborate on your reading, synthesis, and understanding of the reading selections across the semester. I'll send out the invitation link and explain how we'll use this tool during class.

In addition to highlighting snippets of text that you find interesting (or confusing), Perusall also allows the use of images and other multimedia content within your annotations. I am inclined to offer extra credit for those whose annotations include compelling, relevant multimedia content illustrating difficult or interesting concepts in the reading.

Your annotations will count as 25% of your participation grade. To get full participation credit, you must annotate every reading with at least ONE note.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course grade will be based on the following elements:

	Points
Reading Reflections (page 7)	90
Weekly Discussion/Annotations (page 2)	50
Attendance	10
Final Paper	50
Total	200

READING SCHEDULE

WK	DATE	READING
1	T 1/7	Syllabus
1	Th 1/9	Perolle, J.A. (1998). "Computers and Social Change" Available from: http://www.ccs.neu.edu/home/perrolle/book/chapter1.html Halavais, A. (2005), Social informatics: Beyond emergence. <i>Bul. Am. Soc. Info. Sci. Tech.</i> , 31: 13-16. doi:10.1002/bult.2005.1720310505
2	T 1/14	Kling, R., (1999) "What is social informatics and why does it matter?" <i>D- Lib Magazine</i> 5, 1 (January). Available from: http://www.dlib.org/dlib/january99/kling/01kling.html Sawyer, S., and Eschenfelder, K (2005) "Social Informatics, Perspectives, Examples, and Trends". <i>Annual Review of Information Science and Technology</i> 36, 1. 427-465
	Th 1/16	Day, R.E. (2007) "Kling and the 'critical': Social informatics and critical informatics" <i>JASIST</i> 58, 4. 575
3	T 1/21	Taylor, C. (2004) Ch. 2 "What is a Social Imaginary". in <i>Modern Social Imaginaries</i> . Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press. [CANVAS]

WK	DATE	READING
	Th 1/23	NO CLASS, BUT... Levin, S. (2015, Oct 7) Racial profiling via nextdoor.com https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/racial-profiling-via-nextdoorcom/Content?oid=4526919&showFullText=true Dellinger, AJ (2016, Aug 28) Nextdoor has a racism problem, and here's how it's trying to fix it. https://dailydot.relaymedia.com/amp/debug/nextdoor-racial-profiling-product/
4	T 1/28	Bostrom, R. and Heinen, J.S. (1977) "MIS problems & failures: a socio- technical perspective, Part II: The application of sociotechnical theory." <i>MIS Quarterly</i> , 1,4, 11-28 [GSCHOLAR]
	Th 1/30	Orlikowski, W. (2000) Using Technology and Constituting Structures:A Practice Lens for Studying Technology in Organizations. <i>Organization Science</i> 11, 4. pp. 404-428 [GSCHOLAR]
5	T 2/4	Bourdieu, P. (1989) "Social space and symbolic power" <i>Sociological Theory</i> 7,1 (Spring) 14-25
	Th 2/6	Omi, M. and Winant, H. (2014). <i>The Theory of Racial Formation</i> . in <i>Racial formation in the United States</i> . NY: Routledge. [CANVAS]
6	T 2/11	Lemke, T. (2002) Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique, <i>Rethinking Marxism</i> , 14:3, 49-64, DOI: 10.1080/089356902101242288
	Th 2/13	Betts, RD (2018, June 22) How the surveillance state destroys the lives of poor whites and people of color. https://prospect.org/article/how-surveillance-state-destroys-lives-poor-whites-and-people-color Lohr, S. (2018, Feb 9) Facial Recognition Is Accurate, if You're a White Guy https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/09/technology/facial-recognition-race-artificial-intelligence.html?referer=android-app://m.facebook.com
7	T 2/18	Dinerstein J (2006) Technology and its discontents: on the verge of the posthuman. <i>American Quarterly</i> 58,3. Pp569 [GSCHOLAR]
	Th 2/20	Winner, L. (1980) Do Artefacts Have Politics? [CANVAS] Berg, A. J., & Lie, M. (1995). Feminism and constructivism: do artifacts have gender?. <i>Science, Technology, & Human Values</i> , 20(3), 332-351.

WK	DATE	READING
8	T 2/25	Fields, B. J. (1990). Slavery, race and ideology in the United States of America. <i>New Left Review</i> , 181(1), 95-118.
	Th 2/27	Gilliard, C. (2016, November 8). Situating Innovation. Retrieved January 3, 2020, from https://hypervisible.com/post/situating-innovation/ .
9	T 3/3	Scannell, RJ (2019) This is not <i>Minority Report</i> : Predictive policing and population racism. in R Benjamin (ed), <i>Captivating Technology: race, carceral technoscience, and liberatory imagination in everyday life</i> . Durham NC: Duke University Press. 107-131
	Th 3/5	Guerrini, C. J., Robinson, J. O., Petersen, D., & McGuire, A. L. (2018). Should police have access to genetic genealogy databases? Capturing the Golden State Killer and other criminals using a controversial new forensic technique. <i>PLoS biology</i> , 16(10), e2006906. [GSCHOLAR] Harmon, A. (2018, Oct) Why White Supremacists Are Chugging Milk (and Why Geneticists Are Alarmed) https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/17/us/white-supremacists-science-dna.html
10	T 3/10	Brock, A. (2020) Ayo Technology! Texts, Identities, and Blackness. in <i>Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures</i> . New York: NYU Press. 17-37 [CANVAS]
	Th 3/12	Brock, A. (2018). Critical technocultural discourse analysis. <i>New Media & Society</i> , 20(3), 1012-1030. [GSCHOLAR]
11	T 3/17	Spring Break
	Th 3/19	Spring Break
12	T 3/24	Haddon, L. and Silverstone, R. (1995). "The domestication of ICTs: households, families, and technical change." In Robin Mansell and Roger Silverstone, eds. <i>Communication by Design: The Politics of Information and Communication Technologies</i> . New York. Oxford University Press. 44-74. [CANVAS]
	Th 3/26	No Class

WK	DATE	READING
13	T 3/31	Kirkpatrick, G. (2004) "The aesthetics of Personal computing". <i>Critical Technology: A Social Theory of Personal Computing</i> . 47-68 [CANVAS]
	Th 4/2	Vaidyanathan, S. (2006). <i>Critical Information Studies: A Manifesto</i> . <i>Cultural Studies</i> , 20, 2/3, March/May 2006, pp. 292-315 [GSCHOLAR]
14	T 4/7	Pacey, A. (1983) "Technology, practice and culture" in <i>The Culture of Technology</i> . Boston: MIT Press. 1-12. [CANVAS]
	Th 4/9	Ava Kofman – Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science [https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher-science.html]
15	T 4/14	Kirschenbaum, M. (2014) What is 'Digital Humanities' and why are they saying such terrible things about it. <i>differences</i> 25.1 Available from https://mkirschenbaum.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/dhterriblethingskirschenbaum.pdf
	Th 4/16	Earhart, A. (2012). Can information be unfettered? Race and the new digital humanities canon. <i>Debates in the Digital Humanities</i> , 309-318. [GSCHOLAR]
	T 4/21	Reflections

ASSIGNMENTS

DISCUSSION LEADER

You are required to lead a discussion on a reading of your choice. There are multiple aspects to this assignment:

1. You must provide an analysis of the arguments made in your assigned reading.
2. You must also provide at least ONE discussion question (see below) with your analysis
 - a. Post your analysis and discussion questions to the Canvas/Piazza “Reading Summaries and Discussion” for the appropriate reading.
3. In class, lead the discussion by—if possible--offering a (brief) media example that highlights an element or argument found in the reading

Your discussion question can/should be based on current (or recently completed) readings. You must also ANSWER your question using your experiences, knowledge of, or reactions to the subject matter of the reading.

Suggestions for Discussion questions:

- What social or cultural theories about science and technology were presented in these readings?
- What ideas did you find the most challenging or provocative? Why?
- Can you map any of the ideas from the readings into your own life, work, or research experiences?
- How comfortable or difficult did you find reading and discussing these topics? Why do you think this is?

Tuesday reading responses must be posted by Friday at 11PM. Comments to these posts should ideally be made by Sunday at 12 midnight.

Thursday reading responses must be posted by Tuesday at 11pm. Comments to these posts should ideally be made by Wednesday at 12 midnight.

DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION

If you're not the discussion leader, you must follow, post, and contribute to the Canvas/ Piazza “Reading Summaries and Discussion” for the course. You should post a MINIMUM of five (5) comments on your classmates' posts during the semester.

Participation online can include:

- Posting questions or responding to other students' forum postings
- Providing examples and counter-examples
- Performing scholarly, constructive criticism of the assigned reading
- Proposing additional literature, websites or resources
- Sharing current news items and media reports that are relevant to class topics

The best comments will respond actively to the topic of discussion, or extend discussions from section or even lecture. Thread-jacking or trolling will not be tolerated and will result in a grade reduction. Your discussion posts and comments will count as 75% of your participation grade.

READING REFLECTIONS

READING REFLECTION 1

DUE: FEB 1

Goal: This assignment gives the student an opportunity to reflect on challenging class readings and topics.

Deliverable: 1500-word reflection, single spaced

Reflect on the readings assigned for the month of January. Write a 1500-word response to these readings that engages with the following questions:

1. What ideas presented in these readings did you find the most helpful for building a foundation for discussing computers and society? Why?
2. What ideas did you find the most challenging or provocative? Why?
3. Can you map any of the ideas from the readings into your own life, work, or research experiences?
4. How comfortable or difficult did you find reading and discussing these topics? Why do you think this is?

Though this is a personal reflection, please observe formal writing practices: use evidence from the texts as you refer back, cite page numbers when referring to direct quotes in the readings, re-read your work before submitting, and edit for grammar and clarity. Write up your reflection and upload it to the designated assignment section on the Blackboard course page (.doc, .docx, .pdf are acceptable).

Grading:

This assignment will be graded for organization, clarity; as well as demonstrated scholarly engagement with, and comprehension of, the course material.

READING REFLECTION 2

DUE: MARCH 1

Deliverable: 1500-word reflection, single spaced

Reflect on the readings assigned for February. Write a 1500-word response to these readings that engages with the following questions:

1. What ideas presented in these readings did you find the most helpful for building understandings of computers and society? Why?
2. What ideas did you find the most challenging or provocative? Why?
3. What kinds of links can you make with these readings back to earlier readings and discussions from class?
4. Can you map any of the ideas from the readings into your own life, work, or research experiences?
5. How comfortable or difficult did you find reading and discussing these topics? Why do you think this is?

Though this is a personal reflection, please observe formal writing practices: use evidence from the texts as you refer back, cite page numbers when referring to direct quotes in the readings, re-read your work before submitting, and edit for grammar and clarity. Write up

your reflection and upload it to the designated assignment section on the Blackboard course page (.doc, .docx, .pdf are acceptable).

Grading:

This assignment will be graded for organization, clarity; as well as demonstrated scholarly engagement with, and comprehension of, the course material.

READING REFLECTION 3

DUE: MARCH 29

Deliverable: 1500-word reflection, single spaced

Reflect on the readings assigned for March. Write a 1500-word response to these readings that engages with the following questions:

1. What ideas presented in these readings did you find the most helpful for building understandings of computers and society? Why?
2. What ideas did you find the most challenging or provocative? Why?
3. What kinds of links can you make with these readings back to earlier readings and discussions from class?
4. Can you map any of the ideas from the readings into your own life, work, or research experiences?
5. How comfortable or difficult did you find reading and discussing these topics? Why do you think this is?

Though this is a personal reflection, please observe formal writing practices: use evidence from the texts as you refer back, cite page numbers when referring to direct quotes in the readings, re-read your work before submitting, and edit for grammar and clarity. Write up your reflection and upload it to the designated assignment section on the Blackboard course page (.doc, .docx, .pdf are acceptable).

Grading:

This assignment will be graded for organization, clarity; as well as demonstrated scholarly engagement with, and comprehension of, the course material.

EXPECTATIONS FROM STUDENTS

Attend class: attendance is not optional. Keep up on all readings. Bring reading materials to class. Turn in all assignments. Participate in discussions. Be familiar with email and check it regularly. Check the class web site regularly for assignments and updates. Be thoughtful and civil to classmates and the instructor. Please do not eat in class. Turn off phones. Use of electronic devices (including computers) during class must be approved by the instructor.

GENERAL POLICIES

GRADE POLICIES

A good grade requires thoughtful, informed participation in class and online, well executed arguments in writing, and an outstanding portfolio. Readings will be DISCUSSED on the day marked on the syllabus. Assignments are due as scheduled.

EMAIL POLICY

E-mail is not a substitute for meeting with me during office hours. E-mail should be used to schedule an appointment outside of office hours or for short questions clarifying class assignments or specific

items from the lecture. In-depth questions about course readings or an entire day's lecture, etc. are not appropriate for e-mail.

ABSENCE POLICIES

I will expect you to attend class regularly. If you **MUST** miss class, please let me know in advance; if you had to miss class unexpectedly, please let me know by email.

It is the policy of the Institute to make every reasonable effort to allow members of the Institute community to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss classes as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to make-up missed academic work. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates on which they will be absent. When the absence coincides with an exam or other assignment due date, the options to make up that missed work may be limited and will be determined by the instructor within the boundaries of the respective class.

For GT athletes and others traveling to represent the Institute, your team staff will give you paperwork to provide to your instructors. Notify me within the first two weeks of class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

For any student needing an accommodation for any sort of disability: please visit the Office of Disability Services to obtain an accommodation letter. Once you have that, make an appointment to see me during my office hours; you must bring your accommodation letter. The Office of Disability Services for Students offers a variety of resources for students with disabilities. Learn more about the ADAPTS program here: <http://adapts.gatech.edu>.

HONOR CODE

The penalties for plagiarism (submitting other people's words or ideas as your own) are severe. I will report all cases of academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Integrity. Please adhere to the Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code. You may review that code at www.honor.gatech.edu.

STUDENT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage anyone dealing with sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need. Confidential support and academic advocacy can be reported to the Institute's VOICE advocates, located in the Office of Health Initiatives (<http://healthinitiatives.gatech.edu/contact-voice>) General information is collected for campus safety statistics without revealing information that would identify the victim.

If information is provided that would identify the Respondent, the Institute will endeavor to use that information to conduct appropriate follow-up.

Alleged violations can be **non-confidentially** reported to the Title IX Coordinator/Deputy Coordinator (<http://titleix.gatech.edu/>) or to ANY other Responsible Employee of the Institute, as defined in this Policy. Upon the report of an alleged violation, the Responsible Employee will inform the victim of:

- the Responsible Employee's obligation to report the alleged violation to the Title IX Coordinator; and
- the victim's option to discuss available resources, including counseling, support and investigation, with the Title IX Coordinator or a confidential VOICE Advocate; and
- the victim's right to file a complaint with the Institute and to report a crime to Georgia Tech and/or local police.

A victim may file a report with Georgia Tech Police Department or local police for a criminal investigation, which may be sought in addition to a Georgia Tech investigation. The Office of the Dean of Students (including the Women's Resource Center) can provide to a student victim a VOICE Advocate in the Office of Health Initiatives who can assist students with reporting to Georgia Tech Police Department or local police. Advocates are confidential and available 24 hours per day.

¹ This syllabus would not be possible without the brilliance of Dr. Miriam Sweeney (Univ. of Alabama) or Dr. Jamie Moshin (University of Michigan)

² With as much advance notice as possible. There may be typos. I reserve the right to make any changes to accommodate class progress.