I 320S / I 320U: Topics in Social Informatics and User Experience Design: Online Communities

Author
Affiliation

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I 320S I 320U Fall Semester

Class Meets: 3:30pm-5:00pm Tuesday and Thursdays in PAR 306

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course description

Online communities range from groups on social media such as Facebook and Reddit and private messaging groups to large-scale collaborative projects like Wikipedia and open source software. They are an important 21st-century form of technology and sociality that increasingly shape our cultural, social, technological, and economic lives and especially how we find and share information. Yet they also threaten our well-being and may undermine critical social institutions as well as the integrity of public discourse. Therefore, understanding online communities — how to build, design, study, organize, and engage in them — is valuable to information professionals from UX designers and data scientists to librarians and researchers.

This course is an interdisciplinary inquiry that covers the social, psychological, and human-computer interaction research that both explains the practical challenges to building an online community and motivates technical and organizational designs that aim to overcome them. We’ll also learn about the history of online communities from their origins in the pre-Internet to the rise of social media platforms and contemporary challenges related to information quality and artificial intelligence.

The course has a “flipped classroom” format where students prepare for class by studying video lectures and assigned readings. In class, we’ll work together to apply course material to real-world cases, hear from guests with expertise in designing, organizing, and researching online communities, and work on projects where we’ll get hands-on experience participating in and critically analyzing online communities.

pre-requisites for the course

I 310S Introduction to Social Informatics or *I 310U Introduction to User Experience Design*

learning outcomes

This course is designed to enable students to achieve the following goals:

1. Understand and critically engage central theories, historical examples, and contemporary problems important to the growth and success of online communities.
2. Write and speak fluently about the rules and norms of the Wikipedia community and demonstrate this fluency through successful contributions to Wikipedia.
3. Acquire fluency in the Wikipedia community’s rules and norms and demonstrate this by making successful contributions to Wikipedia.
4. Generate original insights by extending the course material to analysis of a real online community of your choice.
5. Communicate the above through in-class discussion, compelling writing, and oral presentation.

acknowledgments

I have developed this syllabus for the programs in social informatics and user experience design at the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin. In doing so, I built upon a course I previously taught at the University of Washington department of Communication under the supervision of Dr. Benjamin Mako Hill. I have imported some improvements to this material created by Professor Hill and Kaylea Champion at the University of Washington. I have also drawn on a similar course in Communication Studies at Northwestern University taught by Professor Aaron Shaw.

how will you learn?

teaching modality information

The course will be conducted in-person. There is no substitute for in-person attendance. See the policy on absences below.

The format for the course is a flipped classroom. Students are expected to prepare for each class by viewing video lectures and reading the required material. In-person sessions will support learning goals through discussion, analysis of cases, in-class assignments and activities, as well as workshop time for projects. Video lectures will be posted in canvas at least 48 hours before each class session. Near the end of the semester, lovely guests with expertise in researching, participating in, or building online communities will present during class sessions.

communication

The course Canvas site can be found at utexas.instructure.com. email me through Canvas. You are responsible for ensuring that the primary email address you have recorded with the university is the one you will check for course communications because that is the email address that Canvas uses.

I will send out weekly announcements via Canvas that will summarize our plans for the week, including assigned readings and deliverables and any changes to the course schedule. This syllabus is published as a wiki page at communitydata.science, where updates to the schedule will be reflected. **This online syllabus is the canonical and official version** to which students and instructors are accountable. Any changes will be announced via Canvas and reflected in the online syllabus at least 1 week in advance.

asking for help

The best way to ask for help about non-urgent questions is via Canvas messages. The TA and I will check canvas regularly throughout the week. You can also email me directly at nathante@utexas.edu or the TA at TKTKTK. If you email me outside of canvas please include “I 320S” in your email’s subject line.

There will also opportunities in each class session for questions about the syllabus and assignments. Students will have ample access to the instructor and TA for advice and feedback on the midterm and final projects.

My office hour weekly is on TKTK at TKTK and students are most welcome and encouraged to drop by for any reason. If this time does not work for you send me a message via Canvas or email and we can arrange a meeting.

The TA’s office hour is on TKTK at TKTK.

university policies and resources

For a list of important university policies and helpful resources that you may need as you engage with and navigate your courses and the university, see the University Policies and Resources Students Canvas page. The page includes the language of the University Honor Code, Title IX legal requirements for Texas employees, and information about how to receive support through the office of Disability & Access.

course requirements and grading

required materials

You do not need to purchase any materials for this class. All required readings for this course are available electronically via UT libraries or will be shared via Canvas.

That said, you may wish to obtain either via purchase or the library the following books which I think are great and serve as the main texts for the course. In the course schedule below, which lists the assigned readings and their deadlines, I will refer to these books using the abbreviations “BSOC”, “SYBW”, “TMW”, and “WTR”.

	Citation	Photo	Abbreviation
1.	Kraut, Robert E, Paul Resnick. Building Successful Online Communities : Evidence-Based Social Design / Robert E. Kraut and Paul Resnick ; with Sara Kiesler [and Others]. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011. Print		BSOC
2.	Bruckman AS. Should You Believe Wikipedia?: Online Communities and the Construction of Knowledge. Cambridge University Press; 2022.		SYBW
3.	Driscoll, Kevin. The Modem World: A Prehistory of Social Media, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022.		TMW
4.	Ford, Heather. Writing the Revolution: Wikipedia and the Survival of Facts in the Digital Age, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2022		WTR

sharing of course material is prohibited

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without my

explicit, my written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials may facilitate cheating. The University is aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in initiation of the student conduct process and include charge(s) for academic misconduct, potentially resulting in sanctions, including a grade impact.

required devices

Access to a *computer* with an Internet connection is required for success in the course. A phone is not enough due to the complexity of Wikipedia's user interfaces for editing. If you need help accessing a computer research, see getting help with technology below.

confidentiality of class recordings

I will not record in-person classes, but you may record *class audio, but not video* for your personal use. Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

getting help with technology

Students needing help with technology in this course should contact the ITS Service Desk or [insert contact information for your local support unit(s) and for course materials, software, hardware, or other technology used in your course].

classroom expectations

Class attendance: Students are expected to attend every class in order to participate in discussions, case analyses, complete in-class assignments, and other activities that will advance our learning goals and class projects. That said, there will not be direct consequences for absences beyond lost points from case discussions and reading quizzes. See the absences policy below.

Class participation is encouraged and is likely to increase your learning and ability to create excellent work in the interest of your grade, but is not formally graded outside of the reading quizzes and case analyses.

Behavior expectations: Students are accountable to the institutional rules governing student conduct and academic integrity. In addition to these policies, I expect you to adhere to the Wikimedia foundation's universal code of conduct in the context of your participation in Wikipedia as well as the codes of conduct that apply to any other online communities you may participate in as part of your course activities. In addition, we will collectively develop a code of conduct to which we will hold ourselves throughout the term.

content warning

Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and orderly exchange of ideas through discussion. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics and comments that some students may find offensive and/or traumatizing. I'll aim to forewarn students about potentially disturbing content and I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.

artificial intelligence

The creation of artificial intelligence tools for widespread use is an exciting innovation. These tools have both appropriate and inappropriate uses in classwork. The use of artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT) in this class *is permitted* for students who wish to use them, provided the content generated by AI is *properly cited*. This means that if you use GPT to generate text as a part of writing an assignment, and you include that text unedited, you should quote the text and cite GPT (include the model you used and the date you used it). If you substantially edit or paraphrase the generated text, you do not need to quote it, but you should still cite it. Also keep in mind that written material generated by AI may be assess poorly according to the writing rubric without considerable revision. This policy applied to any computer-generated content including images.

If you are considering the use of AI writing tools but are unsure if you are allowed or the extent to which they may be utilized appropriately, please ask me or the TA.

For more information about AI in education, see the Center for Teaching and Learning's "5 Things to Know about ChatGPT" webpage that includes additional suggested syllabi statements for your consideration.

assignments

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so.

Assignments	Points Possible	Percent of Total Grade
Weekly reading quiz	120	%12
Weekly case discussion	120	%12
Wikipedia tasks	160	%16
Wikipedia project reflection essay	200	%20

Assignments	Points Possible	Percent of Total Grade
Final project assignments	150	%15
Final project presentation	50	%5
Final project essay	250	%25

The course is designed around two major projects following a project-based learning approach. In the first project, the "Wikipedia project", students will embark on an adventure into perhaps the most complex, fascinating, and inspiring online community that exists. By making original contributions to Wikipedia on an article of their choice, students will gain hands-on, real-world experience navigating a complex digitally mediated organization. In a reflection essay, students will critically analyze Wikipedia in light of this experience and course material. A total of 36% of points available in the course are earned through the Wikipedia assignment.

The second project is an original investigation into a student's chosen online community. Students will select an online community related to their personal interests or career goals, collect and analyze data (either qualitatively or qualitatively) in light of concepts and themes drawn from course material. The final product is a short essay that discusses the purpose of this community, analyzes how its design and organization service of this purpose as well as any problems it faces, makes design recommendations to improve the community, and reflects on how course material was (or was not) helpful in understanding or proposing improvements for the community. A total of 45% of available points are earned through the final project.

The remaining 24% of points are earned through participation in weekly case analyses and reading quizzes. These points should easy to earn for students who keep up with the readings and video lectures and also attend class.

Additional details on these assignments are below.

late work and making up missed work

Late work will be accepted and penalized as follows:

- All late work will immediately lose 10% of available points for that assignment.
- Each day work is late beyond the first will incur an additional 5% penalty.
- Work not submitted by December 15th will not be graded.
- Deadline extensions are possible in exceptional circumstances (e.g., hospitalization, a death in the family).
- Makeup assignments for missed work are not possible, with the exception of the two optional take-home writing assignments.

absences

Attendance in class is essential to achieving our learning goals. You are therefore expected to attend all class sessions. Class sessions will be participatory, discussion-based, and will support you in developing excellent class projects. That said, I will not award points directly for attendance nor will I take attendance. Instead, most class session will create opportunities for you to earn points for participation via case analysis discussions and reading quizzes.

equitable accommodation

I recognize that this class is not students' only priority and that we all need flexibility sometimes. Therefore, I will drop each student's worst reading quiz and the bottom 10% of case analyses questions. In addition, you may recover up to 16 points for reading quizzes or case analyses by completing up to two take-home make-up assignments in which you will write short answers to an additional case analysis.

religious holy days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence for a religious holy day as far in advance as possible of the date of observance. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

extra credit

There are no opportunities for extra credit in this class.

+/- grading policy

Final class grades will use +/- grades.

grade breaks

This course uses the default UT Austin grade scale. The chart below shows the number of points required to earn each letter grade.

Grade cutoffs

Grade Cutoff	Points Required

Grade	Cutoff	Points Required
A	94%	940
A-	90%	900
B+	87%	870
B	84%	840
B-	80%	800
C+	77%	770
C	74%	740
C-	70%	700
D+	67%	670
D	64%	640
D-	60%	600
F	<60%	—

academic integrity expectations

Students who violate University rules on academic misconduct are subject to the student conduct process. A student found responsible for academic misconduct may be assigned both a status sanction and a grade impact for the course. The grade impact could range from a zero on the assignment in question up to a failing grade in the course. A status sanction can include a written warning, probation, deferred suspension or dismissal from the University. To learn more about academic integrity standards, tips for avoiding a potential academic misconduct violation, and the overall conduct process, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website.

diversity and inclusion

I am committed to advancing diversity and inclusion, in the broadest sense, through my teaching and other professional activities because I believe this leads to better knowledge and stronger educations. In my teaching, I therefore strive to welcome diverse intellectual perspectives and include learners from a wide range of personal backgrounds and social identities. This means that I have intended to select content that is respectful of diversity long lines of gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religion, and culture. This also means acknowledging and accounting for differences in the sorts of experiences and advantage that learners bring into the course. One way I aim to accommodate such differences is through creating ample opportunities for students to obtain support in readings and assignments during class, office hours, and email.

In addition, in the interest of creating an inclusive space, I encourage you to:

- Please inform me if you prefer that I refer to you using different names or pronouns than those that appear in your official records.
- If I or others use the wrong names or pronouns, please correct us or let me know.
- If experiences outside of class are negatively impacting your performance in the class. Please communicate this to me and/or your academic advisor. The university's Counseling and Mental Health Center is available to assist students in "coping effectively with aspects of personal, social, and psychological well-being and growth, so they may realize their full academic potential."
- Respect the dignity of others and of their cultures.
- Discuss concerns related to injustice, inequity, and inclusivity that may pertain to this class, institution, or the broader society with openness and honesty. Listen generously to the same.

Please contact me or the TA right away if you feel that the class has undermines these values or compromises the dignity of a member of the class in any way.

course outline

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics and essential information will be on the Canvas website. Check Canvas regularly. **Changes** to the schedule may be made at my discretion if circumstances require. I will announce any such changes in class and will also communicate them via announcements. I will send a weekly "reading note" to you via canvas to introduce the week's content and any syllabus changes. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and I will do my best to ensure that you are notified of changes with as much advance notice as possible. The following table summarizes the planned course schedule, and details on the readings and assignments follow in the schedule below. Note that **all assignments are due by 11:59 PM Central Time on Fridays** unless specified otherwise.

Course schedule

Week	Date	Day	Class Topic	Out of Class Activities	Assignments Due
1.	8/27	Tue	Introduction to the course and online communities	Video lecture 1 (link tk)	
1.	8/29	Thur	Motivation I	Join wikieducation class, Video lecture,	Wikipedia task 1; **Case: Yelp**
2.	9/3	Tue	Motivation II	Video lecture 3	**Reading quiz: motivation**
2.	9/5	Thur	Commitment I	Video lecture 4	Wikipedia task 2; **Case: Reddit**
3.	9/10	Tue	Commitment II	Video lecture 5	**Case: Facebook**; **Reading quiz:commitment**

Week	Date	Day	Class Topic	Out of Class Activities	Assignments Due
3.	9/12	Thur	Norms and Regulation I: Codes of Conduct and Toxicity	Video lecture 6	Wikipedia task 3 **Reading quiz: norms & regulation**
4.	9/17	Tue	Norms and Regulation II: Spammers, Trolls, and Newcomers	Video lecture 7	**Case: Codes of conduct**
4.	9/19	Thur	Creating information goods I: Peer Production	Video lecture 8;	Wikipedia task 4; **Reading quiz: peer production**
5.	9/24	Tue	Creating information goods II: Wikipedia	Video lecture 9; prepare for case	**Case: Wikipedia's distortion of the Holocaust**
5.	9/26	Thur	Creating information goods III, Open Source Software	Video lecture 10; week 5 assigned reading	Wikipedia task 5 **Reading quiz: Wikipedia and open source**
6.	10/1	Tue	Newcomers I	Video lecture 11; week 6 assigned reading	**Reading Quiz**
6.	10/3	Thur	Newcomers II	Video lecture 12; prepare for case	**Case:Explosive growth and going viral**
7.	10/8	Tue	Wikipedia Assignment Debrief I	Complete wikipedia assignments and reflection essay	Wikipedia contributions and reflection essay
7.	10/10	Thur	Wikipedia Assignment Debrief II	Prepare for case case	**Case: Designing for Wikipedia newcomers**
8.	10/15	Tue	Creating New Communities I	Video lecture 13; week 8 assigned reading;	**Reading Quiz**
8.	10/17	Thur	Creating New Communities II	Video lecture 14; prepare for case; Community identification	**Case: StackExchange and Reddit**
9.	10/22	Tue	Identity and Anonymity I	Video lecture 15; week 9 assigned reading	**Reading Quiz**
9.	10/24	Thur	Identity and Anonymity II	Video lecture 16; prepare for case; Final project proposal	**Case:Meta's real-name policies**
10.	10/29	Tue	Fall break. No class.	Enjoy your break!	
10.	10/31	Thurs	Fall break. No class.	Enjoy your break!	
11.	11/5	Tue	Origins and history of online communities I	Video lecture 17; week 11 assigned reading;	**Reading Quiz**
11.	11/7	Thur	Hacking and modding communities	Video lecture 18; prepare for case	**Case: CHDK and Nexus Mods**
12.	11/12	Tue	Artificial Intelligence I	Video lecture 19; week 12 assigned reading	**Reading Quiz**
12.	11/14	Thur	Artificial Intelligence II	Video lecture 20; prepare for case	**Case: Wikipedia, Stack Exchange, and AI**
13.	11/19	Tue	Ecosystems of online communities	Week 13 assigned reading	**Reading Quiz**
13.	11/21	Thur	Alternative social media. Guest lecture: TBD	Prepare for case	**Case: alternative social media**
14.	11/26	Tue	Thanksgiving. No class.	Enjoy the Holiday!	
14.	11/28	Thur	Thanksgiving. No class.	Enjoy the Holiday!	
15.	12/3	Tue	Information Quality; Guest lecture TBD	Work on final projects	
15.	12/5	Thur	Topic TBD; Guest lecture TBD	Work on final projects	
16.	12/10	Tue	Study day, No class		
16	12/12	Thur	Finals week. No class		
16.	12/13	Fri	Final project presentations		Final paper due at 11:59pm CST

The class is roughly divided into 3 phases. The first phase, comprised of weeks 1-7 of the semester will have the greatest workload in terms of reading material and assignments. In this part we will ask fundamental questions about how online communities work: What motivates sustained participation in an online space? How are can online spaces be made orderly and safe for participants? How do online communities create value to their participants and the public through high-quality information goods as exemplified by open source software and encyclopedias such as Wikipedia?

In this initial period students will embark on their adventures into Wikipedia with help from the Wikieducation foundation. The first main project is to complete the Wikieducation training, make substantive contributions to Wikipedia, and to write a short essay reflecting on the experience and critically analyzing Wikipedia in terms of the course material covered through this point.

The second phase of the course roughly corresponds to weeks 8-11. The workload will lighten during this period as we conclude studying ideas about how to build successful online communities in weeks 8-9. Week 10 is fall break. In week 11 we will take a deep dive into the early history of online communities and then in week 12 we will explore how online communities use technologies under the "artificial intelligence" and anticipate how advances in such technologies may shape online communities in the near future. In this phase students will plan and begin work on final projects.

In the final phase of the course we will no longer follow a "flipped classroom format". Students are expected to put considerable effort into their final projects during this phase, and so the work required to prepare for class will correspondingly decrease. Class sessions during this phase will cover special topics by myself or guest speakers.

reading quizzes

In about half of our class sections, as indicated in the schedule, students will receive a reading quiz via Canvas at the beginning of class. The reading quiz will consist of a small number of multiple-choice questions, which will be graded out of 15 points. The quiz will start when class starts and end 5 minutes later. The quizzes are designed to check that students have grasped the most important ideas from the last week's reading, not to trick, puzzle, or stump with trivia. Students who pay reasonable attention to the reading and come to class should easily earn these points.

case analysis discussions

Often, we will use our class time to have a discussion where we analyze a "case". Analyzing these cases develops our skills in applying the course material to practical real-world decisions that actors in real-world situations face. This style of case-based assessment is common in business schools, but less common in other fields.

See the section on assessment for details on how cases are run and evaluated.

schedule

tuesday, august 27th: welcome to class

Goals for the day:

- Introduce ourselves
- Orientation to the course, learning goals, plan for the quarter
- Draft our code of conduct
- Enroll in the wikieducation class by clicking the following [this link] (https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/courses/University_of_Texas_at_Austin_-*School_of_Information/Online_Communities*(Fall_2024)?enroll=yehrjwzl and following the instructions.

Lectures: (watch *before* class)

- Video lecture 1
- Slides

Required Reading SYBW Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-31

Optional Readings

- BSOC Chapter 1, pp. 1-20
- Bruckman, Amy. 2006. A new perspective on 'community' and its implications for computer-mediated communication systems. In *Extended Abstracts of the ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, pp. 616-621.
- Oldenburg, Ray. 1989. ''The great good place: Cafés, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts, and how they get you through the day.'' Paragon House Publishers. [Chapter 1 ("The Problem of Place in America") and Chapter 2 ("The Character of Third Places")].

thursday, august 29th: motivation i

Goals for the day

- Understand the distinction between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivations and its significance to designing and building online communities.
- Discuss the Yelp Case.
- Ensure everyone is prepared to complete the Wikipedia assignment.

Assigned Reading

- BSOC, Chapter 2, pg 21-69
- [Case] Parikh, Anish A., Carl Behnke, Doug Nelson, Mihaela Vorvoreanu, and Barbara Almanza. 2015. "A Qualitative Assessment of Yelp.Com Users' Motivations to Submit and Read Restaurant Reviews." Journal of Culinary Science & Technology 13 (1): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/15428052.2014.952474.
- [Case] Stone, Madeline. 2014. "Elite Yelpers Hold Immense Power, and They Get Treated like Kings by Bars and Restaurants Trying to Curry Favor." Business Insider. August 22, 2014. https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-become-yelp-elite-2014-8.
- [Case] Ha, Anthony. 2017. "Yelp Launches New Feature for Asking and Answering Questions about Any Business." TechCrunch (blog). February 14, 2017. http://social.techcrunch.com/2017/02/14/yelp-q-and-a/.

Optional Reading

- Kerr, Steven. 1975. "On the Folly of Rewarding A, While Hoping for B", The Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec., 1975), pp. 769-783 (15 pages)
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaming_the_system
- Greezy, Uri, and Rustichini, Aldo. (2000) "A Fine is a Price" The Journal of Legal Studies. Vol. 29, No. 1 (January 2000), pp. 1-17 (18 pages)
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation_crowding_theory
- Willer, Robb (2009) "Groups Reward Individual Sacrifice: The Status Solution to the Collective Action Problem" American Sociological Review Volume 74, Issue 1

Lectures: (watch *before* class)

friday, august 30th

Assignments Due

- Wikipedia task 1

tuesday, september 3rd: motivation ii

Goals for the day

- Understand that people have *diverse and evolving motivations* for participating in an online community.
- See how this heterogeneity makes it possible for online communities to accomplish complex projects by dividing labor among different types of contributors.
- Motivation reading quiz
- Debrief Wikipedia assignment
- Finalize our code of conduct

Assigned Reading

- SYBW, “What can Online Collaboration Accomblish?” Chapter 2, pg 32-36
- Susan L. Bryant, Andrea Forte, and Amy Bruckman. 2005. Becoming Wikipedian: transformation of participation in a collaborative online encyclopedia. In Proceedings of the 2005 ACM International Conference on Supporting Group Work (GROUP ’05). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1145/1099203.1099205
- Ofer Arazy, Hila Liifshitz-Assaf, Oded Nov, Johannes Daxenberger, Martina Balestra, and Coye Cheshire. 2017. On the “How” and “Why” of Emergent Role Behaviors in Wikipedia. In Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW ’17). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 2039–2051. https://doi.org/10.1145/2998181.2998317

Optional Reading

- Benkler, Y. (2002). Coase’s Penguin, or, Linux and “The Nature of the Firm.” The Yale Law Journal, 112(3), 369–446. https://doi.org/10.2307/1562247
- Buechley, L. and Hill, B. M. 2010. LilyPad in the wild: How hardware's long tail is supporting new engineering and design communities. Proceedings of the ACM Designing Interactive Systems (DIS) Conference.
- Champion, K., & Hill, B. M. (2024). Countering underproduction of peer produced goods. New Media & Society, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241248139

thursday, september 5th: commitment i

Goals for class

- Learn that building *commitment* to an online community is important to sustaining it.
- Identify strategies for building commitment based on *identity*, *social ties*, and *framing*.
- Ensure everyone knows the guidlines for choosing a Wikipedia article.

Assigned Reading - BSOC Chapter 3, pg 77-102 (Section 1)

In this case, we're going to be looking at five different "subreddit" communities within Reddit. In some of these cases, there is an enormous amount of material on the pages and subpages. Poke around for 10 minutes or so (please don't feel obligates to look longer than that, and don't read materials you find upsetting!) until you get a sense for who is participating and how and why people build commitment to the site such that you will be comfortable answering the questions in the reading note. Please *do not* post on the sites or disrupt them in any way. We're guests in their communities and you only need to look:

- [Case] /r/aww — "Things that make you go AWW! -- like puppies, bunnies, babies, and so on..."
- [Case] /r/utaustin — "the unofficial subreddit of the University of Washington"
- [Case] /r/Austin — "the active Reddit community for Seattle, Washington and the Puget Sound area"
- [Case] /r/AmITheAsshole aka /r/AITA — "a catharsis for the frustrated moral philosopher in all of us"
- [Case] r/DemonSlayerAnime -- "A community dedicated to Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba..."

Optional Reading - Qunfang Wu, Louisa Kayah Williams, Ellen Simpson, and Bryan Semaan. 2022. Conversations About Crime: Re-Enforcing and Fighting Against Platformed Racism on Reddit. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 6, CSCW1, Article 54 (April 2022), 38 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3512901 - Zhang, J., Hamilton, W., Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, C., Jurafsky, D., & Leskovec, J. (2017). Community Identity and User Engagement in a Multi-Community Landscape. Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, 11(1), 377-386. https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v11i1.14904

friday, september 6th

Assignments Due

- Wikipedia task 2

tuesday, september 10th: commitment ii

Goals for the day

- Recognize “dark pattern” designs that platforms use to “lock in” users.
- Facebook case (this one is short)
- Commitment reading quiz

Assigned Reading

- BSOC Chapter 3, pg 102-115 (Section 2-4)
- [Case] Ravenscraft, Eric. 2020. "How to Spot--and Avoid--Dark Patterns on the Web" Wired. July 29, 2020.
- [Case] Romano, Aja. 2018. “How Facebook Made It Impossible to Delete Facebook.” Vox. March 22, 2018.
- [Case] Feiner, Lauren. 2021. "Facebook Expands the Types of Data Users Can Transfer to Other Services." CNBC. April 19, 2021.
- [Case] Choudary, Sangeet Paul. 2014. “Reverse Network Effects: Why Today’s Social Networks Can Fail as They Grow Larger.” Wired, March 13, 2014.
- [Case] Peters, Jay. 2022. "Twitter is blocking links to Mastodon" The Verge. December 15, 2022.

thursday, september 12th

Goals for the day

- Understand the design tools and social structures online communities use to create and enforce behavioral standards or norms.
- Regulation reading quiz.
- Ensure everyone is prepared to choose a Wikipedia article.

Assigned reading

Warning

The first paragraph of these chapters from BSOC and SYBW both contain a (brief!) description of sexual misconduct. It’s good to skip the first paragraph in both chapters if you don’t want to read this.

- BSOC Chapter 4, pp 125-170.- [BSOC]
- SYBW Chapter 6, pp160-192

Optional reading

- Mike Masnick, 2019 Masnick’s Impossibility Theorem: Content Moderation At Scale Is Impossible To Do Well
- Gillespie, Tarleton. 2018. Governance of and by platforms. In Sage Handbook of Social Media, Jean Burgess,Thomas Poell, and Alice Marwick (eds).
- Manoel Horta Ribeiro, Shagun Jhaver, Savvas Zannettou, Jeremy Blackburn, Gianluca Stringhini, Emiliano De Cristofaro, and Robert West. 2021. Do Platform Migrations Compromise Content Moderation? Evidence from r/The_Donald and r/Incels. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 5, CSCW2, Article 316 (October 2021), 24 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3476057
- Massa, F. G., & O’Mahony, S. 2021. Order from Chaos: How Networked Activists Self-Organize by Creating a Participation Architecture. Administrative Science Quarterly. doi:10.1177/00018392211008880.
- Schneider, Nathan. 2021. Admins, Mods, and Benevolent Dictators for Life: The Implicit Feudalism of Online Communities. New Media & Society.
- Aurora, Valerie and Gardiner, Mary. 2019. How to respond to code of conduct reports. Frameshift Consulting.
- Hampton, Rachelle. 2019. The black feminists who saw the alt-right coming. Slate.
- Ilori, Tomiwa. 2020. Content moderation is particularly hard in African countries. Slate.
- Massachi, Saher. 2021. How to save our social media by treating it like a city. MIT Technology Review.

friday, september 13th

Assignments due - Wikipedia task 3

tuesday, september 17th: regulation ii

Goals for the class

- Case on codes of conduct in free and open source software.

Assigned reading

- [Case] Tourani, Parastou, Bram Adams, and Alexander Serebrenik. 2017. “Code of Conduct in Open Source Projects.” In 2017 IEEE 24th International Conference on Software Analysis, Evolution and Reengineering (SANER), 24–33. https://doi.org/10.1109/SANER.2017.7884606

- The reading assignment for Thursday is longer than normal, but I think it will be worth it. Consider reading ahead.

If you'd like to look at what some of these codes of conduct include, check out:

- [Case] Ruby Code of Conduct (For context, you can read more about Ruby on the Ruby Wikipedia article if you are curious.)
- [Case] Ubuntu Code of Conduct (For context, you can read more about Ubuntu on the Ubuntu Wikipedia article if you are curious.)
- [Case] GNOME Code of Conduct. The code also references and, in a sense, includes the following sub-pages:
    - Procedure for reporting Code of Conduct incidents
    - GNOME Code of Conduct moderator procedures (less important but worth skimming)
    - GNOME Code of Conduct committee procedures (less important but worth skimming)
    - Debian project Code of Conduct.

thursday, september 19th: creating information goods i

Goals for the class

- Define *peer production* as a non-market, non-hierarchical mode of cooperative that online communities can organize.
- Recognize *adversarial collaboration* as a factor in peer production that enables quality information production on Wikipedia.
- Reading quiz
- Peer review Wikipedia contributions.

Assigned Reading

- Yochai Benkler, The Wealth of Networks Chapters 2-3. pp. 35-91

- Ethan Zuckerman, “Forward” in Writing the Revolution, 2022. pp. ix-xii.

- Heather Ford, Writing the Revolution, 2022. Chapter 1-2, 4 pp. 1-42,65-86

- SYBW Chapter 3, pp64-90 **Optional Reading**

- Kreiss, D., Finn, M., & Turner, F. (2011). The limits of peer production: Some reminders from Max Weber for the network society. New Media & Society, 13(2), 243-259. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810370951

- Benkler, Y. (2002). Coase’s Penguin, or, Linux and “The Nature of the Firm.” The Yale Law Journal, 112(3), 369–446. https://doi.org/10.2307/1562247

- Shi, F., Teplitskiy, M., Duede, E. et al. The wisdom of polarized crowds. Nat Hum Behav 3, 329–336 (2019). https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/10.1038/s41562-019-0541-6

- Steinsson S. Rule Ambiguity, Institutional Clashes, and Population Loss: How Wikipedia Became the Last Good Place on the Internet. American Political Science Review. 2024;118(1):235-251. doi:10.1017/S0003055423000138

friday, september 20th

- Wikipedia task 4

tuesday, september 24th: creating information goods ii

Goals for the class

- Make progress on Wikipedia project.
- Case: Quality issues and controversy on Wikipedia

Assigned Reading

Warning

We're going to talk about the Holocaust today. This material is troubling, sensitive, and can be controversial. I think it is important enough that it deserves your attention, but it may also be upsetting. Please contact me if you find it difficult to engage this in a thoughtful and scholarly way.

For today's case we are going to take a look at Wikipedia's messy side and look deeply at a case that I think about often. You'll find an enourmous amount of material in today's assigned readings. Start with the article in Slate by Stephen Harrison. His reporting summarizes the circumstances and the stakes of the case. Next, read the paper by Grabowski and Klein. It is a long and detailed historical research article, so I don't expect you to closely read the entirely thing. Read the Introduction, quickly skim the next two sections which document a large number of errors in Wikipedia's coverage and how those errors were introduced and maintained by a rough group of editors. Read closely again in the section titled "Confronting Distortionists", which argues that Wikipedia's approaches to regulating behavior fell short in this case.

Finally, take a look at the 2 links to pages about the arbitration case on which Stephen reported. You can think of this as an entire legal case taking place in writing on a Wiki. There's an extremely vast amount of writing on these pages, and even more on other pages related to the case: I'm having you look at the *Evidence summary*, but the entire *Evidence* page has much more. I certainly don't expect you to read all this, but I do want you to grasp what a Wikipedia arbitration case involves. I want you to spend about 10 minutes each scanning the two pages until you have thought of answers to the case questions included in this week's reading not.

- [Case] Stephen Harrison. (2023) Wikipedia's "Supreme Court" to Review Polish-Jewish History During WWII. Slate
- [Case] Grabowski, J., & Klein, S. (2023). Wikipedia's Intentional Distortion of the History of the Holocaust. The Journal of Holocaust Research, 37(2), 133–190. https://doi.org/10.1080/25785648.2023.2168939
- [Case] Wikipedia's arbitration committee main case page for World War II and the history of Jews in Poland: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Case/World_War_II_and_the_history_of_Jews_in_Poland
- [Case] Wikipedia's arbitration committee evidence summary page for World War II and the history of Jews in Poland: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Case/World_War_II_and_the_history_of_Jews_in_Poland/Evidence/Summary

Optional Reading

- Stephen Harrison. (2022) How the Russian Invasion of Ukraine Is Playing Out on English, Ukrainian, and Russian Wikipedia. Slate
- Stephen Harrison. (2020) How Wikipedia Became a Battleground for Racial Justice Slate
- Zarine Kharazian, Kate Starbird, and Benjamin Mako Hill. 2024. Governance Capture in a Self-Governing Community: A Qualitative Comparison of the Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Serbo-Croatian Wikipedias. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 8, CSCW1, Article 61 (April 2024), 26 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3637338
- Kate Starbird, Ahmer Arif, and Tom Wilson. 2019. Disinformation as Collaborative Work: Surfacing the Participatory Nature of Strategic Information Operations. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 3, CSCW, Article 127 (November) https://doi.org/10.1145/3359229

thursday, september 26th: creating information goods iii

Goals for the class

- Understand the role of collaborative technologies and social organizations in online communities that produce economically important software projects
- Reading quiz

Assigned Reading

- Nadia Eghbal, 2020. Working in public: the making and maintenance of open source software. Chapters 1-2. pp. 20-68
- E. Gabriella Coleman, 2013. Coding freedom: the ethics and aesthetics of hacking. Chapter 4. pp 123-161

Optional Reading

- Kevin Crowston and James Howison. 2005. The Social Structure of Free and Open Source Software Development. First Monday. https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/download/1207/1127
- Francesco Bolici, James Howison, Kevin Crowston. 2016 Stigmergic coordination in FLOSS development teams: Integrating explicit and implicit mechanisms. Cognitive Systems Research. Pages 14-22, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogsys.2015.12.003.
- K. Champion and B. M. Hill, "Underproduction: An Approach for Measuring Risk in Open Source Software," 2021 IEEE International Conference on Software Analysis, Evolution and Reengineering (SANER), Honolulu, HI, USA, 2021, pp. 388-399, doi:10.1109/SANER50967.2021.00043.
- Stallman, R. (1984). The GNU manifesto.
- Stallman, R. (1989). The GNU general public license, version 1.

friday, september 27th

Assignments Due

- Wikipedia task 5

tuesday, october 1st: newcomers i

Goals for class

- Understand design principles for attracting newcomers to a community while protecting the community from damage newcomers may cause.

Assigned Reading:

- BSOC, Chapter 5, pg 179-230

Optional Readings:

- Huang, Shih-Wen, Minhyang (Mia) Suh, Benjamin Mako Hill, and Gary Hsieh. 2015. "How Activists Are Both Born and Made: An Analysis of Users on Change.Org." In Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '15), 211–220. New York, New York: ACM Press. https://doi.org/10.1145/2702123.2702559. *https://doi.org/10.1145/2702123.2702559Available through UW libraries*
- Shaw, Aaron, and Benjamin Mako Hill. 2014. "Laboratories of Oligarchy? How the Iron Law Extends to Peer Production." Journal of Communication 64 (2): 215–38. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12082. *https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12082 Available through UW libraries*

thursday, october 3rd: newcomers ii

Goals for class

- Case on newcomer surges on Reddit.
- Last chance for help on Wikipedia assignments.

Assigned Reading

- Baker-White, Emily (2022) TikTok's Secret 'Heating' Button Can Make Anyone Go Viral
- [Case] Lin, Zhiyuan, Niloufar Salehi, Bowen Yao, Yiqi Chen, and Michael S. Bernstein. 2017. "Better When It Was Smaller? Community Content and Behavior After Massive Growth." In Eleventh International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media. Palo, Alto, CA: AAAI Press. https://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM17/paper/view/15628. *https://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM17/paper/view/15628 Available through UW libraries* **Be sure to read the 10-page PDF, not just the abstract**
- [Case] "This Is Damn Slick!" Estimating the Impact of Tweets on Open Source Project Popularity and New Contributors. Fang, H., Lamba, H., Herbsleb, J., and Vasilescu, B. International Conference on Software Engineering, ICSE, ACM (2022). https://doi.org/10.1145/3510003.3510121 *https://doi.org/10.1145/3510003.3510121 Available through UW libraries*
- [Case] You might also reference the article we already read about default subreddits and /r/NoSleep: Kiene, Charles, Andrés Monroy-Hernández, and Benjamin Mako Hill. 2016. "Surviving an 'Eternal September': How an Online Community Managed a Surge of Newcomers." In Proceedings of the 2016 ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '16), 1152–1156. New York, NY: ACM Press. https://doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858356. *https://doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858356 Available through UW libraries*

Optional Reading - Corey Brian Jackson, Carsten Østerlund, Kevin Crowston, Mahboobeh Harandi, and Laura Trouille. 2020. Shifting forms of Engagement: Volunteer Learning in Online Citizen Science. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 4, CSCW1, Article 036, 19 pages. - Aaron Halfaker, Aniket Kittur, and John Riedl. 2011. Don't bite the newbies: How reverts affect the quantity and quality of Wikipedia work. In Proceedings of the 7th International Symposium on Wikis and Open Collaboration (WikiSym '11). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 163--172. - Aaron Shaw, Eszter Hargittai, The Pipeline of Online Participation Inequalities: The Case of Wikipedia Editing, Journal of Communication, Volume 68, Issue 1, February 2018, Pages 143–168, https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqx003

friday, october 4th

Assignments Due

- Wikipedia Task #6 Finish (for the purposes of this class) making contributions to Wikipedia.

monday, october 7th

Assignments Due

- Wikipedia reflection essay is due at 11:59pm.

tuesday, october 8th: wikipedia assignment debrief i

Goals for class

- Share our experiences and reflections editing Wikipedia with our guest Wikipedians.

thursday, october 10th: wikipedia assignment debrief ii

Goals for class

- Debrief the Wikipedia assignment without any Wikipedians in the room.
- Case on design research to improve Wikipedia's newcomer experience.
- [Case] Morten Warncke-Wang, Rita Ho, Marshall Miller, and Isaac Johnson. 2023. Increasing Participation in Peer Production Communities with the Newcomer Homepage. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 7, CSCW2, Article 280 (October 2023), 26 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3610071
- [Case] Morgan, Jonathan T., Siko Bouterse, Heather Walls, and Sarah Stierch. 2013. "Tea and Sympathy: Crafting Positive New User Experiences on Wikipedia." In Proceedings of the 2013 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, 839–848. CSCW '13. New York, NY: ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2441776.2441871.
- [Case] Narayan, Sneha, Jake Orlowitz, Jonathan Morgan, Benjamin Mako Hill, and Aaron Shaw. 2017. "The Wikipedia Adventure: Field Evaluation of an Interactive Tutorial for New Users." In Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing, 1785–1799. CSCW '17. New York, NY: ACM. https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/2998181.2998307.

Optional Readings:

- Halfaker, Aaron, et al. "The rise and decline of an open collaboration system: How Wikipedia's reaction to popularity is causing its decline." American behavioral scientist 57.5 (2013): 664-688. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0002764212469365
- TeBlunthuis, Nathan, Aaron Shaw, and Benjamin Mako Hill. "Revisiting" The rise and decline" in a population of peer production projects." Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. 2018.https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3173574.3173929
- Ang Li, Zheng Yao, Diyi Yang, Chinmay Kulkarni, Rosta Farzan, and Robert E. Kraut. 2020. Successful Online Socialization: Lessons from the Wikipedia Education Program. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 4, CSCW1, Article 50 (May 2020), 24 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3392857
- Halfaker, Aaron, R. Stuart Geiger, and Loren G. Terveen. 2014. "Snuggle: Designing for Efficient Socialization and Ideological Critique." In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 311–320. CHI '14. New York, NY: ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2556288.2557313.
- Morgan, Jonathan T., and Aaron Halfaker. 2018. "Evaluating the Impact of the Wikipedia Teahouse on Newcomer Socialization and Retention." In Proceedings of the 14th International Symposium on Open Collaboration, 20:1–20:7. OpenSym '18. New York, NY: ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3233391.3233544.

tuesday, october 15th: creating new communities i

Goals for class

- Understand design considerations for starting a new online community.
- Reading quiz

Reading Assignment

- BSOC, Chapter 6, pg 231-276

Optional Readings

- Sanjay R Kairam and Jeremy Foote. 2024. How Founder Motivations, Goals, and Actions Influence Early Trajectories of Online Communities. In Proceedings of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '24). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 732, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1145/3613904.3642269
- Hill, Benjamin Mako. Almost Wikipedia, 2013.

thursday, october 17th: creating new communities ii

Goals for class

- Explore how a range of online community platforms design for online community creation.
- Discuss the case.

Reading Assignment

- [Case] Stack Exchange article on Wikipedia and list of sites
- [Case] Area 51 (Click through and explore 5-6 proposals at different stages)
- [Case] Area 51 FAQ
- [Case] How to Create a Subreddit
- [Case] Articles for Creation

Optional Readings - Bilton, Nick. "All Is Fair in Love and Twitter." The New York Times, October 9, 2013, sec. Magazine.

friday, october 18th

Assignments Due

- Community Identification

tuesday, october 22nd: identity and anonymity i

Goals for class

- Understand the role of affordances for identity and anonymity in online spacces.
- Reading quiz

Assigned Reading

- SYBW Chapter 5. pp. 118-159
- Kishonna L. Gray. 2012. Intersecting oppressions and online communities. Information, Communication & Society, 15:3, 411-428, DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2011.642401

Optional Readings

- Judith Donath. 1998. Identity and deception in the virtual community. In Kollock, P. and Smith, M. (eds). *Communities in Cyberspace*. London: Routledge. pp. 37-68.
- Acquisti, Alessandro, Laura Brandimarte, and George Loewenstein. Privacy and human behavior in the age of information. Science 347.6221 (2015): 509-514.
- Hill, Benjamin Mako, and Aaron Shaw. The Hidden Costs of Requiring Accounts: Quasi-Experimental Evidence From Peer Production. Communication Research (2020): 0093650220910345.
- Nazanin Andalibi, Margaret E. Morris, and Andrea Forte. 2018. Testing Waters, Sending Clues: Indirect Disclosures of Socially Stigmatized Experiences on Social Media. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 2, CSCW, Article 19 (November 2018), 23 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3274288
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.*
- K. L. Gray. 2012. Deviant bodies, stigmatized identities, and racist acts: examining the experiences of African-American gamers in Xbox Live, New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia, 18:4, 261-276, https://10.1080/13614568.2012.746740

Optional Reading

thursday, october 24th: identity and anonymity ii

Goals for class

- Discuss case: Meta's real name policies

Assigned Reading

- [Case] Wikipedia. 2024. Facebook's real-name policy controversy. Accessed 06/27/2024 https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Facebook_real-name_policy_controversy
- [Case] Haimson, O. L., & Hoffmann, A. L. (2016). Constructing and enforcing "authentic" identity online: Facebook, real names, and non-normative identities. First Monday, 21(6). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v21i6.6791
- [Case] Justin Osofsky and Todd Gage. (2015). Community Support FYI: Improving the Names Process on Facebook.https://about.fb.com/news/2015/12/community-support-fyi-improving-the-names-process-on-facebook/
- [Case] Anna Iovine (2023). Who shouldn't get verified on instagram https://mashable.com/article/meta-verified-instragam-real-name-requirement

Optional Readings

- Andrea Forte, Nazanin Andalibi, and Rachel Greenstadt. 2017. Privacy, Anonymity, and Perceived Risk in Open Collaboration: A Study of Tor Users and Wikipedians. In Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW '17). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 1800–1811. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1145/2998181.2998273
- Hill, B. M., & Shaw, A. (2021). The Hidden Costs of Requiring Accounts: Quasi-Experimental Evidence From Peer Production. Communication Research, 48(6), 771–795. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650220910345
- Anonymous, To Reveal or Not to Reveal: A Theoretical Model of Anonymous Communication, Communication Theory, Volume 8, Issue 4, 1 November 1998, Pages 381–407, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.1998.tb00226.x
- TED Talk: Will Cathcart and Whatsapp [18m44s]
- Nouran Soliman, Hyeonsu B Kang, Matthew Latzke, Jonathan Bragg, Joseph Chee Chang, Amy Xian Zhang, and David R Karger. 2024. Mitigating Barriers to Public Social Interaction with Meronymous Communication. In Proceedings of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '24). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 151, 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1145/3613904.3642241

friday, october 25th

Assignments Due

- Final project proposal

tuesday, november 5th: origins and history i

Goals for the class

- Learn about the origins of online community in the self-organizing bulletin board services beginning in the late 1970s.
- Reading quiz.

Assigned Readings

- Book Review: Kevin Driscoll, The Modem World: A Prehistory of Social Media, New Haven, CT: Yale University. By Aaron Shaw. 2023. International Journal of Communication. University of Southern California. https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/21215/4162
- Kevin Driscoll. 2022. The Modem World: A Prehistory of Social Media, New Haven, CT: Yale University. Chapters 1,2, 5 pp. 1-57, 132-168

Optional Readings

- John Perry Barlow. 1996. A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace.
- Katie Hafner. 1997. The epic saga of The WELL. Wired Magazine. (Long magazine article!)
- The BBS Documentary (watch at least 15-20 minutes of the first video/part. Feel free to watch more if you get into it).
- Turner, Fred. 2005. Where the counterculture met the new economy: The WELL and the origins of virtual community. *Technology and Culture.*

thursday, november 7th: hacking and modding communities

Goals for the class

- Connect the way that online communities were invented to hacking and modding online communities by the common thread of "user innovation".
- Case on hacking and modding communities.

Assigned Readings

- [Case] Eric von Hippel, interviewed by Martha E. Mangelsdorf. 2011. The User Innovation Revolution. MIT Sloan Management Review. https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-user-innovation-revolution/
- [Case] CHDK description in Wikipedia
- [Case] Wayner, Peter. 2010. "Tweaking a Camera to Suit a Hobby." The New York Times, May 26, 2010, sec. Technology / Personal Tech. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/27/technology/personaltech/27basics.html.
- [Case] C.H.D.K. Wiki Take a look at the CHDK home page and explore the Wiki to get a good idea of what this community is about, what they do, and how it works.
- [Case] Nexus Mods Wikipedia Page
- [Case] Nexus Mods. Take a look at the home page of Nexus Mods and get a sense of what this community is about.
- [Case] Analysis of Nexus Mods -- Lee, D., Lin, D., Bezemer, CP. et al. Building the perfect game – an empirical study of game modifications. Empir Software Eng 25, 2485–2518 (2020). Free download

Optional Readings

- Rosenbaum, Ron. 1971. "Secrets of the Little Blue Box." Esquire Magazine, October, 116. https://classic.esquire.com/article/1971/10/1/secrets-of-the-blue-box.
- Mollick, Ethan. "Tapping into the Underground." MIT Sloan Management Review 46, no. 4 (2005): 21. http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/tapping-into-the-underground/ Available through UW Libraries
- Mollick, Ethan. "The Engine of the Underground: The Elite-Kiddie Divide." SIGGROUP Bull. 25, no. 2 (2005): 23–27. http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1067721.1067726 Available through UW Libraries
- Scacchi, Walt. "Computer Game Mods, Modders, Modding, and the Mod Scene." First Monday 15, no. 5 (2010). free download
- von Hippel, E. (2012). The Paradigm Shift from Producer to User Innovation (video lecture).
- von Hippel, E. (2012). Users Working Together in Communities are Powerful Innovators (video lecture).
- von Hippel, E. (2005). Democratizing innovation. MIT Press.

friday, november 8th

Assignments Due

- Final project proposal

tuesday, november 12th: artificial intelligence i {ai-i}

Goals for Class

- Examine the promises and pitfalls of algorithmic recommendation and filtering systems.
- Reading Quiz

Assigned Reading

- Massanari, Adrienne. "#Gamergate and The Fappening: How Reddit's algorithm, governance, and culture support toxic technocultures." New media & society 19, no. 3 (2017): 329-346.
- Simpson, Ellen and Bryan Semaan. 2021. For You, or For"You"? Everyday LGBTQ+ Encounters with TikTok. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 4, CSCW3, Article 252 (December 2020), 34 pages. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1145/3432951

Optional Reading

- Annie Y. Chen et al. Subscriptions and external links help drive resentful users to alternative and extremist YouTube channels.Sci. Adv.9, eadd8080 (2023). DOI:10.1126/sciadv.add8080
- Michael Ann DeVito. 2021. Adaptive Folk Theorization as a Path to Algorithmic Literacy on Changing Platforms. In Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction, Vol. 5, CSCW2, Article 339 (October 2021), 35 pages, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3476080>.
- Geiger, R. Stuart (2014). Bots, bespoke, code and the materiality of software platforms. Information, Communication & Society. DOI:10.1080/1369118X.2013.873069 (preprint version)

thursday, november 14th: artificial intelligence ii {ai-ii}

Goals for class

- Case discussion on Wikipedia, StackExchange, and AI

Assigned Reading

- [Case] Essay in the Wikipedia Newsletter about ChatGPT
- [Case] [The main Wikipedia essay / proposed policy on large language models] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Large_language_models
- [Case] Controversial question on stack exchange
- [Case] SE thread announcing strike
- [Case] [SE thread announcing results of negotiations]

Optional Reading

- Ross, Sage (2023). ChatGPT, Wikipedia, and student writing assignments WikiEdu Blog Post
- Another Wikipedia essay on using large language models for Wikiwork
- Li, H., Hecht, B., & Chancellor, S. (2022). Measuring the Monetary Value of Online Volunteer Work. Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, 16(1), 596-606. https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v16i1.19318
- J. Nathan Matias. 2016. Going Dark: Social Factors in Collective Action Against Platform Operators in the Reddit Blackout. In Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '16). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 1138–1151. https://doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858391

tuesday, november 19th: ecosystems

Goals for class

- Conceptualize online communities as situated in "ecosystems" where they relate each other and to the platforms that may host them.
- Reading quiz

Assigned Reading

- [SYBW] Chapter 7. pp 194-212

We'll read exerpts from the following two articles:

- Casey Fiesler and Brianna Dym. 2020. Moving Across Lands: Online Platform Migration in Fandom Communities. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 4, CSCW1, Article 042 (May 2020), 25 pages. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1145/3392847
- Nathan TeBlunthuis, Charles Kiene, Isabella Brown, Laura (Alia) Levi, Nicole McGinnis, and Benjamin Mako Hill. 2022. No Community Can Do Everything: Why People Participate in Similar Online Communities. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 6, CSCW1, Article 61 (April 2022), 25 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3512908

Optional Reading

- Waller, I., Anderson, A. Quantifying social organization and political polarization in online platforms. Nature 600, 264–268 (2021). https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/10.1038/s41586-021-04167-x
- Nathan TeBlunthuis and Benjamin Mako Hill. 2022. Identifying Competition and Mutualism Between Online Groups International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/19352/19124

- Tan, C. (2018). Tracing Community Genealogy: How New Communities Emerge from the Old. Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, 12(1). https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v12i1.15003

thursday, november 21st: alternative social media

Goals for class

- Hear from guest speaker (TBD) (possible guests: Brian Newbold (Bluesky protocol developer), Christine Lemmer-Webber (Mastodon ActivityPub Protocol Co-author, Spritely Project founder), Manoel Horta Ribeiro (Asst. Prof Princeton CS, author of works on right-wing fringe platforms),
- Discuss case where we'll apply our knowledge to emerging alternative social media projects.

Assigned Reading

- [Case] Visit the about pages of the different networks we're talking about: https://nostr.com, https://bsky.social/about/, https://about.instagram.com/threads, https://joinmastodon.org/
- [Case] Justin Pot. 2022. How to Get Started on Mastodon. Wired. https://www.wired.com/story/how-to-get-started-use-mastodon/
- [Case] Mike Masnick. 2024. Bluesky Begins to Make Its Decentralized Vision Real. Techdirt. https://www.techdirt.com/2024/02/26/bluesky-begins-to-make-its-decentralized-vision-real/
- [Case] Gregory Barber. 2023. Meta's Threads Could Make—or Break—the Fediverse. Wired. https://www.wired.com/story/metas-threads-could-make-or-break-the-fediverse/
- [Case] Michael Stewart. 2024 Nostr Series — Part 1: A Gentle Introduction to Nostr. Medium https://medium.com/@michael.leigh.stewart/nostr-series-part-1-a-gentle-introduction-to-nostr-4ad6da8c923b

Optional Reading

- Carl Colglazier, Nathan TeBlunthuis, and Aaron Shaw. 2024. The Effects of Group Sanctions on Participation and Toxicity: Quasi-experimental Evidence from the Fediverse. https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/download/31316/33476L
- Zulli, D., Liu, M., & Gehl, R. (2020). Rethinking the "social" in "social media": Insights into topology, abstraction, and scale on the Mastodon social network. New Media & Society, 22(7), 1188-1205. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820912533
- Martin Kleppmann et al. 2024. Bluesky and the AT Protocol: Usable Decentralized Social Media. arXiv preprint. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2402.03239
- Manoel Horta Ribeiro, Homa Hosseinmardi, Robert West, Duncan J Watts, Deplatforming did not decrease Parler users' activity on fringe social media, PNAS Nexus, Volume 2, Issue 3, March 2023, pgad035, https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgad035
- Jhaver, S., Frey, S., & Zhang, A. X. (2023). Decentralizing Platform Power: A Design Space of Multi-Level Governance in Online Social Platforms. Social Media + Society, 9(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231207857

tuesday, december 3rd: information quality

Goals for class

- Hear from our guest speaker TBD (possible guests: Samuel Woolley, Jo Lukito, Ahmer Arif, Zarine Kharazian, Heather Ford)

Assigned Reading

- [SYBW] Chapter 4, 8. pp 91-116, 213-227

Optional Readings

- Starbird, K., Maddock, J., Orand, M., Achterman, P., & Mason, R. M. (2014). Rumors, False Flags, and Digital Vigilantes: Misinformation on Twitter after the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing. In iConference 2014 Proceedings (p. 654–662). doi:10.9776/14308
- Dana McKay, Stephann Makri, and George Buchanan. 2024. [Citation needed]: An Examination of Types and Purpose of Evidence Provided in Three Online Discussions on Reddit. In Proceedings of the 2024 Conference on Human Information Interaction and Retrieval (CHIIR '24). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 219–230. https://doi.org/10.1145/3627508.3638321
- King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. (2017). How the Chinese government fabricates social media posts for strategic distraction, not engaged argument. American Political Science Review 111, no. 3: 484-501.

thursday, december 5th: TBD {guest-iii}

For the last class, we'll have a guest visitor on a topic TBD. Possible guests / topics

Guest	Topic
Kaylea Champion	Underproduction in peer production
Charles Kiene / Hanlin Li	Moderation work
Tziano Piccardi	Wikipedian audiences
Morton Wang	Wikipedia newcomer experiences
Sohyeon Hwang	Bots
Anna Gibson	Health communities and moderation

Guest	Topic
Galen Weld	Community values
Estelle Smith	Sense of virtual community; spirituality and online community

friday, december 13th: final project presentations

Assignments Due

- Final paper due at 11:59pm Central.

Goals for class

- Share short presentations about each other's final projects

project 1: contributing to wikipedia

In the first project, you will be asked to learn about Wikipedia, its norms, rules, and processes. With this knowledge, you will all be asked to research and substantially extend an article on Wikipedia (you might also write a new article IF it meets Wikipedia criteria for new articles) and to publish this article in the encyclopedia. As part of this process, you will interact with other community members who are not part of the class. Afterward, you will be asked to write a short essay piece to reflect on this process and to connect your experience to the conceptual course material where appropriate.

I will use material from the Wiki Education Foundation (WikiEdu) to help you learn how to participate in Wikipedia. Every Friday during this first component of this class, there will be a assignment due that corresponds to one step in the process of getting involved in Wikipedia. Most weeks this will involve completing learning modules and assignments in a website put together by WikiEdu. These Wikipedia participation assignments won't be synced up with the theory, but they will provide with you lots of opportunity to reflect on the theoretical work we are covering.

You will need to participate in Wikipedia each week. I will be able to see this activity and we will help you. I will take time each week to discuss our progress and experience with Wikipedia and to connect it explicitly to the theoretical concepts we are covering.

wikipedia task #1

Task: Create an account and start orientation

Due: Friday August 30

Deliverables: Following the instructions in the training, make contributions in Wikipedia and the class WikiEdu dashboard

- Complete the WikiEdu training.
- During this training, you will create an account, make edits in a sandbox, and learn the basic rules of the Wikipedia community.
- Once you have created an account, you **must** enroll in the course so that your account on Wikipedia is associated with the course and so that I can track your activity on Wikipedia. click this link and then click "Join" to enroll in the course. If you are asked for a passcode, you can enter **yehrjwzl**.
- Once you are enrolled in the course, you should begin the training modules and complete the first two, *Wikipedia policies* and *Sandboxes, talk pages, and watchlists*.

Tips: The biggest pitfall in the past has been failing to enroll in the course. Make sure that you have created an account on https://en.wikipedia.org/ and are logged in. Then follow this link and click "Join".

wikipedia task #2

Tasks: (1) complete Wikipedia orientation; (2) introduce yourself to me and a classmate to practice communication with other editors on Wikipedia using talk pages; (3) choose article topic; (4) evaluate article

Due Date: Friday September 6

Deliverables: Make contributions in Wikipedia and the class WikiEdu dashboard

(1) First, complete the online training topics for week 2 in the the class WikiEdu dashboard.

(2) Second, to practice editing and communicating on Wikipedia, introduce yourself to my and at least one classmate on Wikipedia (it can be anybody) using their talk page (not your own talk page!). My username is Groceryheist and you can find a list of all of your classmates on the WikiEdu class page.

(3) Third, decide on an article in Wikipedia that you would like to significantly expand and improve.

Please choose an article that is as short and simple as possible and I *strongly* recommend that you choose a "stub" article on Wikipedia. Because some people are going to start with articles that are better than others, we're going to assess you on the amount to which you can improve the

article—not on the final state of the article.

You can find a list of Stub articles arranged by topic here (there are literally *millions*):

- List of Stubs — This is an extremely long list of articles that are currently stubs and which is also sorted into categories and then subcategories. It might be a little bit out of date so be sure to click through before you decide on an article.

If there is a topic you know you are interested in writing about that doesn't have an article, that is also possible but will be more difficult so we're recommending *against* that relatively strongly. If you're committed to doing that in any case, there are a few resources you might find helpful:

- Requested Articles — This is a list of articles that others have asked to be created. It is sorted into categories and sub-categories. When you're looking at the list, remember that it's possible that somebody else has "gotten" to them first and forgot to remove it. Remember that a red link indicates that there is no page with that name.

When you're done selecting an article, you'll see that there is a "**Choose your article**" exercise on the WikiEdu dashboard that will end with you being prompted to fill out a page on Wikipedia with a list of articles you want to work on. You only need to fill out the top option but it might be nice to list a few options in order of preferences. The page will ask for "Evaluation" and "Sources" but we're going to get to this in the next step so you can just leave this blank and just list the articles.

You should also enter the article such that is assigned to you in the WikiEd dashboard.

(4) Fourth, you should evaluate an article. I *strongly* recommend that you evaluate the article you plan to improve! After following the tutorial material on WikiEd about how to do an evaluation, you'll see that there is a corresponding exercise called "**Evaluate Wikipedia**" in the WikiEdu dashboard that you should complete.

If you run into any trouble, message me on Canvas, or ask in class well in advance of the deadline!

wikipedia task #3

Task: Compile research and write draft
Due Date: Friday September 13
Deliverables: Make contributions in Wikipedia and the class WikiEdu dashboard

1. Complete online trainings for week 3
2. Gather notes and links into an informal bibliography of relevant research.
3. Write a draft of your article—with citations—in your Wikipedia sandbox. Aim for 2-3 paragraphs.

In order to do these, you will need to make sure you have assigned your article to yourself in the dashboard. Most of you have already done this. If you have not, you'll have to do it before you can proceed. You can do so by (a) going to the WikiEdu course homepage, (b) finding the section entitled *My Articles*, (c) clicking on *Assign myself an article*, and (d) entering the article title as shown in Wikipedia and click *Assign*.

Once you have selected an article to work on, the "My Articles" section will show you a number of steps and links. The two links to focus on right now are collecting your bibliography notes and editing your article in your sandbox, which correspond to the two key tasks above. You will need to:

1. Add the sources that you've found to the bibliography page which will be created when you click on the "bibliography" link. These are your notes about sources. As a reminder, while academic sources are the "gold standard", match your citations with the content. If your article is about a movie star, you will likely be citing interviews that were published in magazines or on the radio. Try to vary the types of sources and select the more notable ones. Additionally, if you are having difficulty finding sources, reach out to a reference librarian. they are a great resource!
2. Create a copy of the current page in your sandbox through the following steps:
    1. open the article sandbox and the article itself in two separate tabs
    2. in the article tab click *Edit*
    3. change to *Source editing* mode by clicking the pencil icon in the top right
    4. select all of the "wikimarkup" (Article content code) and copy it
    5. click the *Create* tab on the article sandbox
    6. paste the cloned/copied content over
    7. click "Publish page"
3. Begin editing, drafting, and generally improving the article sandbox page!

In past versions of the course, every student would work on an article in their sandbox. This time, Wikiedu can support students making edits to “live” articles. I wanted to experiment with this, since this editors more typically work this way, but it will increase the chances that you encounter a (possibly confrontational!) other Wikipedia editor. So, feel free to use a sandbox if that makes you feel more comfortable.

In general, you should refer to the WikiEd Foundation's guide to editing which I've found extremely useful.

Because the nuts-and-bolts of completing this is complicated, I'm sharing a short screencast made by a prior instructor when he taught this class:

- Screencast of Wikipedia Task #3 (Requires Canvas access)

- Note: Rules about copyright and plagiarism still apply in your sandbox -- and your sandbox is not private. Some images (like logos) are not approved for use in the sandboxes, even though they are allowed in the main Wikipedia page! To check your sandbox for this issue, and BEFORE you copy-paste in the article, click each image in the article you're planning to improve. If the image is marked "Fair use" in the media viewer (see an example of what that looks like), you will need to delete the link from your sandbox, and make a plan to re-add it by hand when your article goes live.

wikipedia task #4

Task: Peer review other students' articles
Due Date: Friday September 20
Deliverables: Make contributions in Wikipedia and the class WikiEdu dashboard

- Select **two** classmates' articles that you will peer review and copy-edit. To sign up, you can mark this in the dashboard by using the **Assign a review** button. Try to pick articles that other students are not yet reviewing.
- Peer review two of your classmates' articles and produce a written peer review. If you click on the "Peer review" link next to the assigned review article on your student page in the WikiEd dashboard, you'll see that it pops up a template that will create a sub-page on your classmate's sandbox and prompts you with a bunch of questions. If you do fill out that template, be sure to leave a message on the users talk page so that they know you created the sub-page with your peer review! Using that template will probably be useful but it's not required. What's important is that you engage in the peer review and get your classmate useful feedback. I don't care too much about how you do it.
- Improve and copy-edit the two reviewed articles by editing them directly to help fix issues, improve sourcing, create a more neutral or encyclopedic tone, etc. Where you see an opportunity to help out, be bold!

wikipedia task #5

Task: Incorporate peer feedback
Due Date: Friday September 27
Deliverables: Make contributions in Wikipedia and the class WikiEdu dashboard

- Respond to your peer review. Consider their suggestions and decide whether they makes your work more accurate and complete.
- Continue improving your article. Refine your text, do more research, make sure things are well organized, think about adding images, infoboxes, and templates. If you add images be sure to complete the WikiEd material on images and media.

wikipedia task #6

Task: Finish contributing to Wikipedia Due Date: Friday October 4
Deliverables: Make contributions in Wikipedia

- Polish your article. If you are creating a new article, it should be ready for public consumption. Here are some general suggestions on polishing your article.
- Move sandbox articles into the "(Article)" name space by following the instruction in this video and at this link.

wikipedia task #7

Task: Turn in your report — an evaluative essay Due Date: Monday September 7
Deliverables:

- Turn in report as subpage of your Wikipedia userpage and turn in the URL in Canvas
- Maximum length for report: 1000 words (~4 pages double spaced)

Turn your report -- an evaluative essay -- as a subpage of your userpage. For example, I would create mine with http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Groceryheist/Report as the URL. Of course, you should replace "Groceryheist" with your Wikipedia username. You can also just go to your userpage by clicking on your username on Wikipedia and then adding "/Report" at the end of the URL.

When you go that page, it will say **Wikipedia does not have a user page with this exact name.**

You can create the new page by just clicking the "Create" tab on that page. When you're done, you can paste the URL into Canvas.

assessment: wikipedia assignment

I will use the following criteria as a rubric for assessing your work on the contributions made to Wikipedia:

1. Substantial new article text shows fluency in Wikipedia norms — A student fluent in Wikipedia norms will have created a substantial article or brought an existing article at least one quality class to a higher one in the eyes of most Wikipedia members by adding new encyclopedic text, adhering to policies on tone, adding references for statements from reliable third party sources, and so on.
2. Peer reviews of other student were thoughtful, critical, and constructive.
3. Deadlines for tasks #1-7 were met in a way that allowed for the interactive and collaborative aspects of the class (e.g., draft was published to allow for reviews, peer reviews were made on time, article was published live on time, and so on).

assessment: wikipedia evaluation essay

In addition to finishing up your Wikipedia article, everybody should turn in a report reflecting on your experience contributing to Wikipedia in light of your experience and the course material and, most importantly, offering advice to the Wikimedia Foundation and the Wikipedia Community on how to improve their community. I want you all to treat this as a dress rehearsal for your final projects.

Your report will be evaluated, first and foremost, on the degree to which it provides useful, informed, and actionable advice to the Wikipedia community and the Wikimedia Foundation. It will also be evaluated on the degree to which you engage with the course material. See the writing rubric for details on my expectations in terms of the content of the papers. A successful essay will do the following things:

1. Provide detailed, concrete, and actionable advice to the Wikipedia community and the Wikimedia Foundation. What should Wikipedia think about doing? What should they think about changing?
2. Comment directly on your experience in Wikipedia. This is not general musing: the details you include should be evidence to serve your argument.
3. Connect your experience in Wikipedia explicitly to the concepts in the course material we have covered. Justify your recommendations in terms of the theories and principles we've covered. Why should your recommendations be taken more seriously than just random advice from one new user?
4. If possible, reflect on what parts of the theories or concepts we covered applied or didn't. You don't have to take everything taught in the course for granted. What would you change or add based on your experience? What is unique or different about Wikipedia?

I will give everybody in the course feedback on their assignment. The basic structure is shorter, but extremely similar, to what you will be doing in the final project. As a result, you can treat this as a "mid-term" and make adjustments based on feedback.

There's no minimum word count, but I'd suggest you take advantage of the space you're given. Generally speaking, you can say more, be more insightful, demonstrate more fluency (all the things we are assessing) if you use more space.

Your audience is Wikipiedians who may read your report. You don't need to define things to prove to us that you've done the reading. You should define terms if you think that an audience of Wikipedians (who have not taken the class) will be lost/confused otherwise. Use your judgment to make a compelling, well reasoned, and well supported argument.

The intro, body, conclusion format is pretty reliable and useful. But if you feel it's better or more useful to deviate from that as well, that's fine. Don't use the numbered questions as your format, but do demonstrate consideration of each point somewhere in your essay.

Make an argument for why, based on your experience in Wikipedia and what you've learned in the class, things could/should be better and how that might happen. "A description of your experience" is part of that but we're not asking for a trip report. Your experience is important, but the details you share should always be in service to the argument and suggestions you are making.

project 2: critical analysis of an online community

For the final assignment, I want you to take what you've learned in the class and apply it to a community you have observed or participated in. This project will involve two written assignments and a presentation.

Community Identification

Maximum Length: 300 words (~1 page double spaced)
Deliverables: Turn in through Canvas Due Date: Friday September 18

In this assignment, you should identify a community you are interested in — and that you hope to analyze critically in your final project. In this assignment, I am asking you to write 1-2 paragraphs explaining what community you want to study, why you care about it, and why you think it would be a rich site for reflection. If relevant or possible, it might be useful to also provide a link.

I am hoping that each of you will pick a community that you are intellectually committed to and invested in your personal or work life. You should also keep in mind that you will be presenting this publicly to the class.

You will be successful in this assignment if you identify a community and clearly explain why you think it would be a useful community to study using the concepts we have covered in the class.

I will give you feedback on these write-ups and will let you each know if I think you have identified a project that might be too ambitious, too trivial, too broad, too narrow, etc.

final project proposal

Maximum Length: 600 words (~2 page double spaced)
Deliverables: Turn in through Canvas
Due Date: Friday September 25th

In this assignment, you should build upon your community identify assignment to flesh out *what questions* you want to ask your online community and *how* you are going to answer them. What sort of information or data are you going to collect? How will you analyze this information help you answer your question? You are encouraged to include examples of this type of information and analysis in your submission.

The range of information you might collect or ways of analyzing it are very broad and may include quantitative approaches (e.g., you might collect data from an API and analyze it statistically), qualitative ones (e.g., you might collect content or community discussions and closely read it to generate insights), or design approaches (e.g., you might make a mockup or prototype of a design intervention and solicit feedback from users).

This is not a research methods class, and I will not teach on research methods. However, I also want to create an opportunity for you to apply and further develop and *research skills you already have*, and the TA and myself are available and enthusiastic to advise you on effective data collection and analysis strategies.

I will give you feedback on these proposals and, as with the community identification assignment, I will help ensure that your proposal has an appropriate scope that is achievable within the month remaining in the term and meets my expectations for the final project.

final projects: critical analysis of online community

Final Presentation Date: Friday December 13
Paper Due Date: Friday December 13 @ 11:59pm
Maximum paper length: 2,000 words (~8 pages double spaced)

For your final project, I expect students to build on the community identification and project proposal assignments to describe what they have done and what they have found. I'll expect every student to give both:

- A final presentation (see below)
- A final report that is not more than 2,000 words (~8 pages double spaced)

Each project should include: (a) the description of the community you have identified (you are welcome to borrow from your Community Identification assignment), (b) a description of how you would use the course concepts to change and improve the community.

You will be evaluated on the degree to which you have demonstrated that you understand and have engaged with the course material and not on specifics of your community. I want you to reflect on what parts of theory we covered apply or do not. What does the community do right according to what you've learned? What might it do differently in the future based on what you've read? What did the course and readings not teach that they should have?

Your audience is people who are interested in the community as well as the general public. A successful project will tell a compelling story and will engage with, and improve upon, the course material to teach all of us -- that is, an audience that includes me, your classmates, and students taking this class in future years, how to take advantage of online communities more effectively. The very best papers will give us all a new understanding of some aspect of course material and change the way I teach some portion of this course in the future.

Presentation

- Prepare a short (5-7min) presentation to share your final project with the class. The contents should summarize your final paper.
- I am not expecting anything fancy from these presentations. Slides may be helpful, but are optional. This is an open-ended opportunity to practice and enjoy communicating about your work.
- I will bring feedback slips to the presentation day to facilitate everyone getting peer feedback on their presentations.
- Turn in copy of paper in Canvas

optional take-home writing assignments

You have two opportunities to recover points you may have lost from reading quizzes or case discussions. Each of these assignments are worth 8 points. At many points during the semester (about every other week), we will have covered material that is relevant to a case that I have prepared, but that we will not be working together in class. When this happens, I will announce the opportunity for a take-home writing assignment and describe the case. At that point, students can elect to use this case for one of these two take-home writing assignment opportunities. I will send such students the approximately 6 questions for the case and they can submit answers to each question in about 300 words or less. The deadline for take-home writing assignments will be the following Friday at 11:59pm Central time. The assignments will be assessed according to the writing rubric.

assessment

In assessment, my goal is to provide very clear goals and paths for achieving them. I do not "grade on a curve" and I will not compare students to each other. If every student fulfills the requirements I lay out in my syllabus and in this rubric, I would be thrilled to give every student in a course a 4.0.

comprehensive rubric

This "Rubric" offers a description of prototypical students in terms of the attitudes and behaviors that are important for successful learning. It does **not** represent any specific criteria for evaluation or assigning grades.

the 4.0 student - an outstanding student

- Participation: 4.0 students are reliable and engaged participants. Their commitment to the class resembles that of the teacher.
- Preparation: 4.0 students are prepared for class. They always read assignments fully. Their attention to detail is such that they occasionally catch the teacher in a mistake. They always participate in class.
- Curiosity: 4.0 students show interest in the class and in the subject. They look up or dig out what they don't understand. They often ask interesting questions or make thoughtful comments.
- Retention: 4.0 students have retentive minds. They are able to connect past learning with the present. They bring a background with them to class.
- Attitude: 4.0 students have a winning attitude. They have both the determination and the self-discipline necessary for success. They show initiative. They do things they have not been told to do.
- Results: 4.0 students make high grades on work in courses. Their work is a pleasure to grade.

the 3.0 student - a good student

- Participation: 3.0 students participate most of the time. Academics sometimes compete with other priorities.
- Preparation: 3.0 students are usually prepared for class. They try to participate in class discussion.
- Curiosity: 3.0 students have some interest in the subject and ask questions when they do not understand.
- Retention: 3.0 students will frequently make connections among different ideas in the course and occasionally with other ideas from outside.
- Attitude: 3.0 students desire to master the course material. They are active participants. They occasionally show initiative and seek out additional topics related to the course.
- Results: 3.0 students usually improve over the duration of the course with increasing grades on course work as they master the material and become more efficient in their work.

the 2.0 student - a fair student

- Participation: 2.0 students often fail to participate effectively. Too often they put other priorities ahead of academic work.
- Curiosity: 2.0 students ask few questions and show little interest in course readings and class discussion.
- Preparation: 2.0 students prepare their assignments consistently but in perfunctory manner. Their work may be sloppy or careless. At times, it is incomplete or late.
- Attitude: 2.0 students are not visibly committed to the class. They participate without enthusiasm. Their body language often expresses boredom.
- Results: 2.0 students obtain mediocre or inconsistent results on tests. They have some concept of what is going on but clearly have not mastered the material.

the 1.0 student - a student in difficulty

- Participation: 1.0 students frequently fail to participate, sometimes a majority of the time. When they miss class, they often fail to find out what was covered in class or even what work was assigned.
- Curiosity: 1.0 students rarely ask questions and often hope not to be noticed during class discussion.
- Preparation: 1.0 students prepare their work in a slipshod fashion. Sometimes they miss assignments and fail to follow directions on others. Work is submitted late.
- Attitude: 1.0 students are uncommitted to the class. They may be in the course only because it is required or because the other alternatives are worse. They are frequently bored by the class and show it. They have poor study habits and try to minimize their study time in the course.
- Results: 1.0 students demonstrate little understanding of course material on papers, class work, and exams. They fail to complete many assignments and rarely participate in class discussions unless forced to do so.

writing rubric

In formal papers, I will always ask you to connect something you have experience or knowledge about to the material and concepts we have covered in the course. Although specific details or prompts might vary, all writing assignments in my class are structured in this way.

A successful paper will both present your topic of interest and demonstrate that you understand and have read, learned, and engaged with the course material deeply. A "4.0" paper will tell a compelling story and will engage with, and improve upon, the course material to teach an audience that includes me, and your classmates, and other students taking this class in future years, how to take advantage of course material. The very best papers will give us all a new understanding of some aspect of course material and change the way I teach some portion of this course in the future.

- **4.0—Excellent:** Writing demonstrates impressive understanding of readings, discussions, themes and ideas. Written work is fluid, clear, analytical, well-organized and grammatically polished. Reasoning and logic are well-grounded and examples precise.
- **3.0—Good:** Work demonstrates a thorough and solid understanding of readings, discussions, themes and ideas. Written work is clear and competent, but is somewhat general, a bit vague, or otherwise lacking in precision. While analytical, writing presents more description than analysis. Arguments are solid but not thoroughly original or polished.
- **2.0—Fair:** Work demonstrates a somewhat fragmented understanding of readings, discussions, themes and ideas. Shows acquaintance with readings and ideas, but not intellectual engagement. Written work is choppy and argument somewhat difficult to follow, examples are

vague or irrelevant, and ideas are imprecise. Work veers toward underdeveloped ideas, off-topic sources or examples, personal anecdotes, creative writing, memoir, etc.
- **1.0—Unsatisfactory:** Work demonstrates little understanding or even acquaintance with readings, discussions, themes and ideas. Written work is choppy, fractured and unclear. Argument follows little logical development, or work presents little discernible argument whatsoever.
- **0.0—Failure / Unacceptable:** Work does not demonstrate understanding of topics, ideas and readings. This is also the grade for work not submitted and plagiarized work.

If you need help improving your writing, the [University Writing Center] (https://uwc.utexas.edu/) has many resources that can help.

case discussion

Many of my courses rely heavily on the case study method. In these courses, your primary form of homework will be **preparation for case discussion** each day of class.

In a case analysis discussion, students prepare by studying readings on an examle—perhaps up to 35 pages—about a community or organization and a challenging decision it faces. Pay close attention to readings marked as "[Case]" in the syllabus in order to prepare for the case. **I will not cover case material in class or lecture.** We will dive right into the case discussion at the beginning of class and I expect you to be prepared to participate in a critical discusion.

Cases ask students to put themselves in the positions of individuals facing difficult situations to tease out the tensions and forces at play in the case and to construct — through group discussion — the broader lessons and takeaways. Cases are a wonderful way to connect the sometimes abstract concepts taught in many academic courses to real examples of the type of ambiguous situations that you will likely encounter in your career. Generally speaking, there are not right and wrong answers in cases.

cold calling in cases

During the case analysis portion of class, I will lead a structured discussion in which we will systematically break down the problem situation and construct recommendations for the actors using the socratic method. Some students are always more open and confident in speaking during open-ended class discussions than others. Therefore, in the interest of fairness, I will use a randomized system for choosing which student to call on when I ask these questions. This system is designed to ensure that every student is called on about the same number of times over the semester, and to avoid calling on the same student too frequently.

Because I understand that cold calling can be terrifying for some students, I will be circulating a list of questions we will alongside the weekly announcements (i.e., at least 6 days in advance). I will only cold call to ask students for which you have time to prepare your answers. Although it is a very good idea to write out answers to these questions in advance, I will not collect these answers. You are welcome to work with other students to brainstorm possible answers. Although I may also ask questions that I do not distribute ahead of time, I will never cold call when asking these questions.

I have written a computer program that will generate a random list of students each day and I will use this list to **randomly** cold call students in the class. To try to maintain balance in discussions, the program will try to ensure that everybody is cold called a similar number of times during the quarter by *weighting* in favor of people who have been called upon fewer times in the past. Although there is there always some chance that you will called upon next, you will become less likely to be called upon relative to your classmates each time you are called upon.

rubric for case discussion answers

Each time you are called upon randomly, I will assess your preparedness based on how you answer. I tend to do these assessments generously but I don't treat this as a "gimme" either. The rubic I will use for evaluating each answer you give is:

- **Engagement:** Do you respond in a way that makes it clear that you have been following and engaged with the case discussion?
- **Preparedness:** Does your answer demonstrate that you have prepared for the case? Have you clearly done the reading?
- **Fluency:** Are you able to refer to relevant course concepts from lecture and the non-case material in framing your answers or opinions. Can you engage in synthesis using material we've covered?

For every question answered during the year, I will assess readiness and participation as "GOOD", "SATISFACTORY", or "POOR", "NO MEANINGFUL ANSWER". These correspond to an A, B, C, or D on the undergraduate grade scale. I am generous and, in the past, the large majority of answers (~90%) have been assessed as GOOD.

absence from class

Although no part of your grade will be determined by attendance, attendance is important. Of course, if you do not attend class, it will be difficult for you to engage in case discussion at the same level of your classmates, and you will miss any reading quizzes. My cold calling algorithm will do everything it can to balance the number of questions asked of each students even if some folks are in class more often than others by calling on folks more when they are present. In the past, every students who attended the large majority of classes were able to participate on the same level of their classmates and had full credit for their case discussion assessment.

overall case discussion grade

Final grades for are computed at the end of the final case using the following algorithm:

1. I compute the median number of questions that students were asked. Because the distribution is rather narrow, a majority of students in the class in the past were asked at least this many questions (typically around 2/3 of the class).
2. I will take everybody who has been answered the median number of questions or more and assess their grade to be the mean question assessment of the questions they were asked minus 0.2 points for every day they were absent from class when called upon (i.e., because they didn't answer when called upon despite being presenting the chat channel for remote classes or because they did not record themselves as absent for a face-to-face class).
3. Next, I identify the subset of remaining students who were asked fewer than the median number of questions and identify those that were simply "unlucky" (i.e., were they asked fewer questions *not* because they absent more often than their classmates). For all these students, we compute their grade in the same as described in (2) so that these students are in no way penalized.
4. For any remaining students, I compute average scores for as per (2) for any questions but assess students with no credit (0 points) for each question below the median. For example, if the class median were 3 questions and a student asked only 2 questions despite being "luckier" than their classmates (i.e., they missed so much class and even the weighting algorithm couldn't adjust things), I would assess students as a zero for 1/3 of their case participation grade and provide them with the assessment as per (2) for the two questions they did answer. In the past, the only students in this category have missed an extremely large number of class sessions.

In the past, I have needed to modify the design of case discussions. For example, I have had to move synchronous case discussions into asynchronous conversations conducted online. In these cases, I will communicate an alternate system for discussion and assessment and use it to apply a proportional amount of individuals case discussion grade in the course.

participation rubric

Some of my smaller classes, mostly graduate courses, grade on participation. Participation is one of the most subjective activities to assess. Hence, you should ask yourself: am I consistently making a positive contribution and impression on the instructor and other students? If the answer to this question is "yes", you are probably doing just fine.

As a rubric, an excellent student satisfies all of these criteria:

1. **Participation:** *Are you an active participant in class?* Although I will not penalize for absence, it is simply a fact that if you aren't present, you can't participate—even if you are absent for a good reason.
2. **Preparation:** *Do you read the assignments fully with attention to detail? Do you note relevant ideas, questions, or current events in class and online?* For example, you might forward a news story to the class with a question for discussion.
3. **Engagement:** *Do you make at least one excellent contribution (e.g., insight or question) to each class without monopolizing discussion?* (see section on participation balance below). *Do you give active nonverbal and verbal feedback? Do you refer to other students by name and react to their contributions?*
4. **Activity:** *Do you fully engage in group exercises? Do you follow up on open questions and share your findings with the class?*

maintaining participation balance

I do not assess participation in terms of how much you speak in class. Indeed, I will assess students as lower if they routinely dominate conversation to the detriment of conversation. A useful rule of thumb is to *be wary of speaking three times before everyone has had a chance and make sure you make at least one good contribution.*

In any group there will be those who speak more and those who speak less; this might be because of differences in personality, language fluency, or culture. For instance, some people like to carefully think before they speak and some believe that interaction should be rapid and assertive. I want everyone to participate and I believe it's worthwhile to achieve balance in classroom discussion.

When I was a student, I tended to dominate conversation. Here are two strategies that I've found helpful:

1. In classes where I was excited about the topic, I tried to be mindful of how much I spoke when I realized others had interesting things to say but were not as quick to speak. We are often uncomfortable with a little silence, including teachers, and speak to fill the void. However, teaching and facilitation guides recommend that we be open to such spaces: take a couple of breaths, or even say “take two minutes to think about this.” So I began a practice of pacing myself, limiting myself to three really good responses in class, and then make sure others have had time before jumping in — if at all — to contribute.
2. In classes where I was less motivated, I found that if I could still usually come up with one good comment or question that nobody else raised. In thi way, I could still make a contribution to class — and lessen my chance of being cold called.

Joseph Reagle calls these two techniques the *rule of three and one for balanced discussion*.

Additionally, you can be a skillful communicator by encouraging balanced discussion. For instance, notice if a person or group is hasn't said much. Without putting anyone on the spot, ask them a question or respond to something they said. (Use people's names!) Or, say you'd like to hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet, or ask the group to pause so as to collect their thoughts.

Credit for these rubrics

Much of this is borrowed or adapted from Joseph Reagle from these pages:

- Achieving Balance in Group Discussion

- Participation
- Writing: Rubric Dimensions
- Assessment: Comprehensive Rubric

important safety information

carrying of handguns on campus

Students in this class should be aware of the following university policies related to Texas's Open Carry Law:

- Students in this class who hold a license to carry are asked to review the university policy regarding campus carry.
- Individuals who hold a license to carry are eligible to carry a concealed handgun on campus, including in most outdoor areas, buildings and spaces that are accessible to the public, and in classrooms.
- It is the responsibility of concealed-carry license holders to carry their handguns on or about their person at all times while on campus. Open carry is NOT permitted, meaning that a license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area.