

**COMS 660 Definitions and Futures of Media Technology/
COMS 893 Special Topics: Digital Culture and Digital Research Methods**

Concordia University
Department of Communication Studies
Dr. Stefanie Duguay
Winter 2020
Thursday 4:15-7:00pm, CJ 2.409

Office Location: CJ 4.425

Office Hours: 11:30am-12:30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment - **please email in advance** to let me know you'll be dropping by

Email: stefanie.duguay@concordia.ca

Include COMS 660/893 in subject line; responses generally sent within 24 business hours.

Calendar Description (COMS 660)

This seminar explores the social, cultural, and psychological aspects of media and technology. Media are considered as both containers and expressions of culture. In addition, this seminar focuses on the impacts of new technologies and media. Topics may include the interaction of media and culture, the role of technology in the development of human consciousness and values, and the future of media in the light of emergent technologies and practices.

Note: Students who have received credit for COMS 643 or COMS 658 may not take this course for credit.

Course Description

Within the realm of media and technology, this course will focus on **digital culture** and **digital research methods**. Raymond Williams (1961) defined culture as “a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values” (p. 57). Contemporary ways of life are thoroughly enmeshed with digital technology and digital media, to the extent that it goes without stating that one’s computer or phone is “digital.” In turn, cultural values and meanings are imported into, as well as influenced by, digital technology. This course takes the view that a foundational knowledge of digital culture – including its historical, social, and technological elements – is essential to asking questions about what is yet unknown in this constantly changing landscape. Classes will take you through a journey of discovering interdisciplinary fields of digital research and their contributions to understandings of web history, platformed sociality, user practices of adoption and appropriation, critical data studies, and algorithmic culture. Along the way, you will learn key approaches, techniques, tools, and ethical principles of digital research methods. Several classes will intertwine discussion of digital culture with a hands-on methods workshop, enabling you to try out these approaches in a collaborative, exploratory environment. Preparation, a sense of curiosity, and persistence will be pivotal as we move from understanding the foundations of digital culture to processes of knowledge creation.

Course objectives/learning outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Critically analyze digital culture within the context of historical, social, cultural, and technological factors;
- Demonstrate awareness of a range of tools, techniques, and approaches to digital research methods;
- Apply at least one digital research method in response to a research question about digital culture;

- Exercise ethical conduct in the context of digital research;
- Demonstrate fortified skills related to research design, analysis, presentation and writing.

Course materials

All readings and related materials will be available through Concordia Course Reserves or through the URLs provided. **Required readings** are listed first for each week and must be completed before class; additional readings are provided for further exploration and for application to course assignments. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus during the semester as necessary, with the goal of fully addressing class needs and improving your learning experience.

Assignments and Grading

Assignment	Weighting (%)	Due Date
Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading reflections • In-class 	15	Ongoing
Discussion Leader	15	Sign up
Digital Research Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research proposal • Partial journal article • Research presentation • Final paper 	10 15 15 30	January 31 March 4 April 2 and 9 April 13

Course Participation – 15%

This is an interactive class that focuses on active learning through participation, which will require you to discuss topics with other students, contribute to group discussions, and apply techniques in a workshop format. Your participation grade will be split between two components:

- **Reading Reflections – 10%**
For (at least) five weeks of your choosing, you will need to post a short reflection (approx. 150-300 words) in Moodle about the required readings for that week. Include discussion of the readings, their connections with other course materials or discussions, and any critiques or questions raised. These responses mainly serve to ensure that you are consistently keeping up with the readings and course preparation, and help me to identify important questions or areas of confusion before class. Each reflection should end with at least one question to contribute to our class discussion. To receive full marks, it must be clear that you have done the readings and paid attention – you can make this clear by referring to page numbers, quoting the text, discussing specific ideas, and defining all concepts included in your reflection. If it is not clear that you have done the reading, or if either part of the reflection is missing, you will receive partial marks. Reflections must be submitted **by 8:00am** on the day of the class to which they relate.
- **In-Class Participation – 5%**
By participating in class, you enhance your learning experience and share your knowledge with others. Many classes will have a workshop component asking you to try out tools and techniques, requiring participation in order to attain new skills. See the Attendance and Participation guidelines below for further details.

Discussion Leader – 15%

Once during the semester, you will co-lead the discussion for that week's topic (see Moodle for sign-up sheet). This **does not** involve a summary of the required readings, since everyone will have read them, but instead builds a discussion of the topic drawing from both the required and additional readings. This entails:

1. Each discussion leader for that week picking one additional reading to read and summarize for the class. This summary should provide a brief background of the article and highlight its key concepts;
2. A higher-level analysis (the big picture!) that connects required and additional readings to the week's overarching topic by drawing links among concepts and approaches while bringing in vibrant examples to highlight the relevance of these ideas;
3. Discussion questions inspired by the topic and the readings, as well as sustained engagement with classmates about this topic.

Discussion leaders should seek to accomplish this over 30-40 minutes, which requires coordinating with each other and managing discussion to ensure it moves forward. Discussion leaders are also encouraged to bring in other readings, tools, resources, and links that are not on the syllabus in order to provide the class with further avenues to explore. If using slides, these should be emailed to me **by 9:00pm the night before class** (ensure these are in the format for your presentation as I will queue them on the computer before class) along with any other readings or resources for sharing. They will be added to Moodle following the class.

Note: If you miss your assigned discussion leader day, no make-up assignment is available.

Digital Research Project

Over the course of the semester, you will implement at least one of the methods covered and apply it to a topic of your choosing relating to digital culture. This project will be accomplished through multiple phases that resemble the actual progression of a research project, from submitting a preliminary proposal to developing your research question based on literature, conducting research methods, analyzing findings, presenting and discussion conclusions for feedback, and the composition of a draft journal article. The following assignments will provide incremental steps toward this goal:

1. Research proposal – 10%

Peruse the syllabus to gain a sense of the different methods and topics we'll be covering throughout the semester. Then select a research topic that is within the broad area of digital culture and at least one method from the syllabus that you will use in order to investigate this topic. Compose a research proposal of no more than **2 pages** single-spaced (note – this is different from the other written assignment guidelines) that includes the following:

- Project title
- Topic background - reference at least 2 sources to provide information about your topic
- Proposed methods and rationale – identify at least one method and state your rationale for why it would be a feasible approach for investigating your topic; if you are trying to decide among multiple methods, include these and reasons why they would work but identify what you think seems like the most appropriate method
- A timeline for completing the research and associated assignments (below)
- A mitigation strategy for addressing unanticipated issues or setbacks

Note: If you wish to use a research method that is not covered in the syllabus (or is only tangentially covered), speak with me about this before submitting your proposal.

2. Partial journal article – 15%

This is a written paper that extends your initial research proposal into the beginnings of a journal article. It should follow a standard research article format that includes the following sections:

- Introduction – introduces the topic; communicates its importance; summarizes the research aim and methods
- Literature review/Background – provides further background on the topic from different perspectives; examines other ways the topic has been studied; provides a rationale for why and how you are studying it
- Methods – Explains your chosen method by drawing on methods literature; describes the research design (sample, tools, procedures) and approach to analysis

The paper can contain subsections and different headers (rarely do research papers include a section titled “Literature Review”) but must cover these three components. Since it is unlikely you will have completed the research at this point, you can write in the future tense. Don't forget to include a working title for your paper.

Approximately 2,500 words (maximum 3,000) not including reference list.

3. Research Presentation – 15%

This is a chance for you to present your research project, sharing your findings for constructive feedback from peers. This should resemble a conference presentation – but not the kind where you read from a finished paper, since the objective is to refine your analysis and conclusions through the presentation process and by integrating feedback. You should aim to present your work in a logical format: introduce the topic, provide background literature, explain methods, share findings, analysis, and conclusions. Imagine that you are at a conference and you want the audience to take interest in your work – infuse your presentation with a balance of creativity and professionalism necessary to achieve this. The presentation will be followed by a question period where you will be evaluated for your preparedness, engagement with classmates, and openness to feedback. If you choose to use slides or other supporting materials, please submit these in Moodle by **1:00pm on the day of your presentation** and I will queue them on the computer.

4. Final Paper – 30%

This written assignment is a draft of a complete journal article. It involves refining the partial paper written earlier in the semester and building upon it. A final article should include the following:

- Introduction – In addition to the components included earlier, re-write your summary paragraph to include mention of findings and overall conclusion
- Literature review/Background – add new sources that you have discovered over the semester; remove literature that is not relevant to your findings/conclusion
- Methods – Refine and clarify to match how you actually conducted the research
- Findings and Discussion – some papers include these sections together while others have separate sections; use the most logical format to report your findings, which are the direct outcomes of your research (e.g. data trends, interview quotes and themes), and your discussion, comprised of the analysis that links your findings to broader literature and conceptual frameworks
- Conclusion – generally includes a short summary of the research, re-iteration of its main contribution to knowledge and the importance of this contribution, and avenues for future research

- Abstract – Generally includes approximately one sentence for each of the following: introduce your topic, nod to the literature, state your method, share your findings, highlight your main contribution to the field

The project's limitations can appear either in the methods or conclusion section. Since your research has now been completed, the paper should be written in the past-tense. Identify a journal that you think your research would fit best with and follow its guidelines for referencing and formatting (except word count). If you are stumped with article layout, skim relevant journals (e.g. New Media & Society, Social Media + Society) to see how others compose their papers. If you would like to fashion your paper in accordance with a more creative outlet (e.g. a journal featuring research-based narrative essays, etc), please discuss this with me.

Maximum 6,000 words, not including reference list.

Guidelines for all written assignments:

- Unless otherwise specified, all written work must follow APA formatting and referencing (<https://library.concordia.ca/help/citing/apa.php>)
- Respect the word limit; word counts exceeding +/- 10% of the word limit will affect your grade
- All written work should be in 12-point font, Times New Roman (Arial, Calibri, and Cambria are also acceptable) and double-spaced with regular (MS Word default) page margins
- Include page numbers at the bottom of each page
- Electronic submissions **must** be Microsoft Word documents (**not PDF** or other formats)
- File names should follow the format lastname_assignment title_course code (e.g. Duguay_Project Proposal_COMS 660)

Attendance and participation – Classes rely on active learning through participation, which will require you to discuss topics with other students and contribute to group work. There will also be some in-class time dedicated to skills application, peer learning, and presentations – participating during this time will help you to manage the workload for the course and should help to enhance the quality of your assignments. Participation is also generally correlated with greater learning success. However, I understand that sometimes it is not possible to attend every class – you may be absent **one time** during the semester without notifying me. If you will miss any further classes, you will need to **notify me in advance** and we may need to discuss how you can prioritize your participation in the course. You will be responsible for catching up on the lesson by contacting classmates, doing the readings and reviewing the slides. Coming late to class or leaving halfway through will be considered an absence unless you provide a substantial reason for these disruptions.

Late assignments – All assignments are due on the date specified and must be submitted by the deadline. There will be no make-up date for your Discussion Leader day or for the research presentations. Assignment extensions may be granted only in rare and unavoidable circumstances. If you will require an extension, you must bring this to my attention (in person or by email) **in advance** of the deadline and generally **one week or more in advance**. If I have not granted an extension, the following late policy will apply: 1 grade point will be deducted from the total assignment grade for every 24 hours that an assignment is late for up to 72 hours (accumulating a maximum 3-point deduction). Assignments more than three days late will receive a **zero** grade. Late assignments may not receive written comments or feedback.

Questions, emails, and grade reassessment – If you have a question about any aspect of the course, assignments, readings, or concepts, please ask it in class so that others can also benefit from hearing the response. If you do not wish to ask your question during the class, please discuss it with me immediately following the class or during my office hours. I will stay for 5-10 minutes after class or until I have addressed all questions. Discussing questions in person is the easiest and quickest way to ensure that we are on the same page. If you must send a question by email, you may have to wait up to 24 business hours for a response and you may not receive a response from me outside of business hours. I will not discuss grades over email. If you wish for an assignment to be reassessed, you will need to send me a written explanation for why the piece should be reassessed and then arrange an appointment to discuss the assignment face-to-face during office hours or after class.

Scent-free classroom – Please refrain from wearing perfume, cologne or other strong scents to class, as these can trigger negative health reactions. The use of regular soap, deodorant, etc, is completely fine.

[Official university policies removed from this version – if you are a student in this course, please use the version distributed to you]

Digital Research Resources

- a) AI Now Institute: <https://ainowinstitute.org/>
- b) Algorithmic Justice League: <https://www.ajlunited.org/>
- c) *Association of Internet Researchers (join listserv for the latest news/discussions/jobs): <https://aoir.org/>
- d) Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society: <https://cyber.harvard.edu/>
- e) Culture Digitally: <http://culturedigitally.org/>
- f) Dataactive: <https://data-activism.net/>
- g) Data Justice Lab: <https://datajusticelab.org/>
- h) Data & Society Institute: <https://datasociety.net/>
- i) Mapping Online Publics: <http://mappingonlinepublics.net/>
- j) Microsoft Research Social Media Collective: <https://socialmediacollecive.org/>
- k) Oxford Internet Institute: <https://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/>
- l) *Ryerson University's Social Media Lab: <https://socialmedialab.ca/>
- m) *University of Amsterdam's Digital Methods Initiative: <https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/DmiAbout>
- n) VosonSML (R package for collecting social media data): <https://github.com/vosonlab/vosonSML>

MAXQDA - Qualitative Data Analysis Software

I have arranged for you to have access to a trial version of MAXQDA 2020 Analytics Pro qualitative data analysis software throughout the semester. This kind of software can be useful for organizing and analyzing your research, providing a centralized space for examining documents, recording field notes and memos, qualitatively coding data, and generating reports. The instructions for downloading and installing the software are posted in Moodle.

You will need to install the software and have it ready to use, as we will be accessing its social media data collection tools later in the semester. Other use of MAXQDA is completely **optional**, as the software is provided as a tool and resource but we will not spend much class time discussing how to use it. However, use of the software and coding techniques can be easily self-taught through MAXQDA's help resources and tutorial videos as well as the following books about qualitative data analysis:

Miles, M., Huberman, A., Saldaña, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Richards, L., & Morse, J. (2013). Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schedule

Classes begin January 6, 2020

WEEK 1: JANUARY 9 – Culture, methods; digital culture, digital methods

We will begin by discussing the meaning of culture and methods, and what it means to put them together with understandings of the digital.

Required reading:

- a) Striphas, T. (2016). Culture. In B. Peters (Ed), *Digital keywords: A vocabulary of information society & culture*, pp. 70-80. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- b) Peters, B. (2016). Digital. In B. Peters (Ed), *Digital keywords: A vocabulary of information society & culture*, pp. 93-108. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- c) Vonderau, P. (2019). Expert or idiot? On false dilemmas in digital media research. *Synoptique*, 8(2), 14-18.

WEEK 2: JANUARY 16 – Intro to digital research methods and ethics

This week we will look more closely at what it means to research digital culture. We will investigate how digital research has evolved across various disciplines and discuss who claims stakes to digital research approaches, as well as why and how they do it. We will then move into a broad discussion of ethical conduct for digital research, which will extend across the weeks as we focus on particular methods and associated ethical best practices.

Required reading:

- a) franzke, a.s., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C. & the Association of Internet Researchers. (2020). Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0. Retrieved from <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>
- b) Rogers, R. (2013). *Digital Methods*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Available online through Concordia library: <https://clues.concordia.ca/record=b3085467>
 - Ch. 1 The end of the virtual: Digital methods, pp.19-38.
- c) Berry, D. (2019). Critical digital humanities. *Conditionhumana.io*. Retrieved from <https://conditionhumana.io/critical-digital-humanities/>

Additional readings:

- a) Markham, A. N., Herman, A., & Tiidenberg, K. (Eds.). (2018). Special Issue: Ethics as Method. *Social Media + Society*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/page/sms/collections/ethics-as-method>
- b) Zimmer, M. (2010). "But the data is already public": On the ethics of research in Facebook. *Ethics of Information Technology*, 12, 313-325.
- c) Savage, M. & Burrows, R. (2007). The coming crisis of empirical sociology. *Sociology*, 41(5), 885-899.
- d) Lupton, D. (2015). Chapter 1 - Introduction: Life is digital, pp. 1-19. *Digital Sociology*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- e) Cifor, M. et al. (2019). Feminist data manifest-no. Retrieved from <https://www.manifestno.com/>
- f) Berry, D. (2012). Introduction: Understanding the digital humanities. In D. Berry (Ed.), *Understanding digital humanities*, pp. 1-20. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- d) Rogers, R. (2019). *Doing digital methods*. Routledge.
 - Ch. 1 Positioning digital methods, pp. 3-20.

Add/Drop deadline January 20

WEEK 3: JANUARY 23 – Guest Lecture: Dr. Susanna Paasonen @McGill University

We have been invited to join Professor of Media Studies, Dr. Susanna Paasonen for a special talk at McGill University. Dr. Paasonen is a leading scholar across the fields of feminist media studies, digital research, and pornography studies. Visit her faculty page for her full bio:

<https://www.utu.fi/en/people/susanna-paasonen>

Exact location and required reading to be announced. The talk may commence at 4:00pm; please make any necessary arrangements to be there on time.

WEEK 4: JANUARY 30 – Early digital culture and tracing internet history

We will discuss discourses and economic impetuses driving early digital cultures and shaping the web's overarching design. Then we will consider the use of web archives in digital research and delve into the Internet Archive's Wayback machine to compare websites across time.

Required readings

- a) Ankerson, M. S. (2018). *Dot-com design: The rise of a usable, social, commercial web*. New York: NYU Press.
 - Introduction: Web histories and imagined futures, pp. 1-24
- b) Rogers, R. (2019). *Doing digital methods*. London: Sage.
 - Ch. 5 Website history: Screencast documentaries with the Internet Archive, pp. 87-106
- c) Explore the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine: <https://archive.org/web/>

Additional readings

- a) Turner, F. (2005). Where the counterculture met the new economy: The WELL and the origins of virtual community. *Technology and Culture*, 46(3), 485-512.
- b) Schroeder, R., Brügger, N., & Cowsls, J. (2018). Historical web as a tool for analyzing social change. In J. Hunsinger, M. M. Allen, L. Klastrup (Eds.), *Second international handbook of Internet research* (pp. 1-16). Springer.
- c) Barlow, J. P. (1996). A declaration of the independence of cyberspace. *Electronic Frontier Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence>
- d) Geocities Archives: <https://www.geocitiesarchive.org/>

*****Research Proposal due in Moodle on January, 31 by 9:00pm*****

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 6 – Networked publics and digital ethnography

This discussion will focus on networked publics, arising from the affordances of social media, as a key focus for digital ethnographic research. We will consider definitions of networked publics and shifting approaches to researching social media discussions, communities and actors, identifying how networked and algorithmically driven platforms pose challenges for digital ethnography. Then you will have a chance to conduct an observation in a networked public with these sensitizing concepts guiding you.

Required reading:

- a) boyd, d. (2011). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites*, pp. 39-58. New York and London: Routledge.

- b) Hine, C. (2017). Ethnography and the Internet: Taking account of emerging technological landscapes. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 10(3), 315-329.

Additional reading:

- a) Markham, A. (2017). Ethnography in the digital internet era: From fields to flows, descriptions to interventions. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 650-668. Sage.
- b) Gehl, R. W. (2016). Power/freedom on the dark web: A digital ethnography of the Dark Web Social Network. *New Media & Society*, 18(7), 1219-1235. (See also Gehl's book "Weaving the dark web")
- c) Renninger, B. (2015). "Where I can be myself...where I can speak my mind": Networked counterpublics in a polymedia environment. *New Media & Society*, 17(9), 1513-1529.
- d) boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 13 – Interrogating apps and platforms

Platforms and mobile apps bring together many elements for analysis, including their discursive positioning, business models, governance policies, and technical design. We will consider how these elements combine to shape user engagement with these technologies. Then we will conduct the walkthrough method to analyze how they come into play with regard to a particular app.

Required reading:

- a) van Dijck, J. (2013). *Culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chapter 2: Disassembling platforms, reassembling sociality, pp. 24-44.
- b) Light, B., Burgess, J., Duguay, S. (2018). The walkthrough method: An approach to the study of apps. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 881-900.

Additional readings:

- a) Plantin, C-J., Lagoze, C., Edwards, P. N., & Sandvig, C. (2018). Infrastructure studies meets platform studies in the age of Google and Facebook. *New Media & Society*, 20(1), 293-310.
- b) Dieter, M., Gerlitz, C., Helmond, A., Tkacz, N., van der Vlist, F. N., & Weltevrede, E. (2019). Multi-situated app studies: Methods and propositions. *Social Media + Society*, 5(2), 1-15.
- c) Bucher, T., & Helmond, A. (2017). The affordances of social media platforms. In J. Burgess, T. Poell, & A. Marwick (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of social media*, pp. 233-253. London and New York: Sage.
- d) Nieborg, D. & Poell, T. (2018). The platformization of cultural production: Theorizing the contingent cultural commodity. *New Media & Society*, 20(11), 4275-4292.

WEEK 7: FEBRUARY 20 – Speaker: Meredith Whittaker of the AI Now Institute

McGill University's Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies is hosting Meredith Whittaker, co-founder and co-director of the AI Now Institute at New York University. We will meet beforehand as a class to discuss the AI Now Institute's work and how it relates to concepts of digital culture that we are covering in this course. In preparation, you will review AI

Now's latest annual report, which showcases how digital research can be compiled into strategic recommendations for policy-makers.

Meet at McGill University at 4:45pm, location TBD, group discussion until 5:45pm
Speaker talk from 6:00-8:00pm (you may leave early if this is unavoidable)
Facebook event page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/436398613864236/>

Required Reading:

- a) Crawford, K., et al. (2019). AI Now 2019 Report. *AI Now Institute*. Retrieved from [https://ainowinstitute.org/AI Now 2019 Report.html](https://ainowinstitute.org/AI_Now_2019_Report.html)

Mid-Semester Break February 24-28; no class on February 27

WEEK 8: MARCH 5 – Digital cultural imaginations, experiences, and interviewing

Users form particular perceptions of and approaches to digital technologies, often based on their experiences and interactions with others. Interviews provide one way of accessing a user's point of view but asking them to reflect on their platform experiences, app use, and the data produced in their digital activities can require specific techniques. We'll discuss some of these and put them into action in mini-interviews.

Required reading:

- a) Bucher, T. (2017). The algorithmic imaginary: Exploring the ordinary affects of Facebook algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(1), 30-44. (See also Bucher's book "If...then: Algorithmic Power and Politics")
- b) Jørgensen, K. (2016). The media go-along: Researching mobilities with media at hand. *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 60, 32-49.

Additional reading:

- a) Carlson, B. (2019). Love and hate at the cultural interface: Indigenous Australians and dating apps. *Journal of Sociology*. doi.10.1177/1440783319833181
- b) Robards, B. & Lincoln, S. (2017). Uncovering longitudinal life narratives: Scrolling back on Facebook. *Qualitative Research*, 17(6), 715-730.
- c) Dubois, E. & Ford, H. (2015). Trace interviews: An actor-centered approach. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 2067-2091.
- d) O'Connor, H., & Madge, C. (2017). Online interviewing. In N.G. Fielding, R.M. Lee, & G. Blank (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of online research methods* [2nd edition], pp. 416-434. London: Sage.

*****Partial Journal Article due in Moodle on Wednesday, March 4 by 9:00pm*****

WEEK 9: MARCH 12 – Critiques, limitations, and opportunities of “Big data” and out-of-the-box tools

Early suspicions of the promises of Big Data have now fully expanded into the field of Critical Data Studies. We'll take a step back to look at some key questions about big data and its associated assumptions that still shape this field and how researchers approach big datasets and social media data sets in general. Then we'll use some preconfigured tools for gathering social media data, discussing what can be gleaned from the datasets they produce and cautions we should take in drawing conclusions from these approaches.

Required reading:

- a) boyd, d., & Crawford, K. (2012). Critical questions for Big Data. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 662-679.
- b) MIT Technology Review. (2013). Kate Crawford: Big Data gets personal [YouTube video]: <https://youtu.be/JltwkXiBBTU> [17:34]
- c) Rieder, B., & Röhle, T. (2012). Digital methods: Five challenges. In D.M. Berry (Ed.), *Understanding digital humanities*, pp. 67-84. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Explore digital media research tool databases:

- DMI Tools database: <https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolDatabase>
- Social Media Lab Tools & Apps: <https://socialmedialab.ca/apps/>

Skim MAXQDA's instructions for collecting social media data (we will be doing this in class):

- <https://www.maxqda.com/how-to-analyze-twitter-data>
- <https://www.maxqda.com/youtube-analysis-with-maxqda-2018-1>

Additional reading:

- a) Kitchin, R. (2014). Big data, new epistemologies and paradigm shifts. *Big Data & Society*, 1(1), 1-12.
- b) Burgess, J. & Bruns, A. (2015). Easy data, hard data: The politics and pragmatics of Twitter research after the computational turn. In G. Langlois, J., Redden, & Elmer, G. (Eds.), *Compromised data: From social media to big data*, pp. 93-111. New York: Bloomsbury.
- c) Iliadis, A., & Russo, F. (2016). Critical data studies: An introduction. *Big Data & Society*, 3(2), 1-7. See also the entire special issue: <https://journals.sagepub.com/page/bds/collections/critical-data-studies>
- d) Bruns, A. (2018). Facebook shuts the gate after the horse has bolted, and hurts real research in the process. *Internet Policy Review*. Retrieved from: <https://policyreview.info/articles/news/facebook-shuts-gate-after-horse-has-bolted-and-hurts-real-research-process/786>

WEEK 10: MARCH 19 – Distant and close readings of social media data

Having access to social media data sets allows for a broad view of activity as well as the ability to drill down into distinct data points (e.g. posts, comments) to make sense of an event, phenomenon, trend, or collective expression. We will consider some studies that use this approach as well as the need to understand the broader social and cultural context of such data. We will try out the Twitter Archiving Google Sheet (TAGS) for gathering and analyzing Twitter data.

Required reading:

- a) Brock, A. (2012). From the Blackhand side: Twitter as a cultural conversation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(4), 529-549.
- b) Brock, A. (2015). Deeper data: A response to boyd and Crawford. *Media, Culture & Society*, 37(7), 1084-1088.
- c) Shaw, F., Burgess, J., Crawford, K., & Bruns, A. (2013). Sharing news, making sense, saying thanks: Patterns of talk on Twitter during the Queensland floods. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 40(1), 23-39.
- d) Set up a Twitter account and read about TAGS, which we will be using in class: <https://tags.hawksey.info/>

Additional reading:

- a) Rieder, B., Abdulla, R., Poell, T., Woltering, R., & Zack, L. (2015). Data critique and analytical opportunities for very large Facebook Pages: Lessons learned from exploring "We are all Khaled Said." *Big Data & Society*, 2(2), 1-22.
- b) Croeser, S., & Highfield, T. (2018). Blended data: Critiquing and complementing social media datasets, big and small. In J. Hunsinger, M. M. Allen, L. Klastrup (Eds.), *Second international handbook of Internet research* (pp. 1-19). Springer.
- c) Highfield, T., Harrington, S., Bruns, A. (2013). Twitter as a technology for audiencing and fandom. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(3), 315-339.
- d) Weller, K., Bruns, A., Burgess, J., Mahrt, M., & Puschmann (Eds). (2014). *Twitter and society*. New York: Peter Lang.

WEEK 11 MARCH 26 – Algorithmic culture and tracing networks

Digital technologies are also understood as networked technologies: they rely on networked infrastructures and they generate networked connections among actors (modems, websites, people). We will consider algorithmic recommendation networks and how they influence the visibility of social media content. Then we will use the YouTube Data Tools to examine video rankings and recommendation networks, visualizing them through Gephi.

Required reading:

- a) Gillespie, T. (2012). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. Boczkowski, & K. Foot (Eds.), *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society*, pp. 167-194. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- e) Hogan, B. (2017). Online social networks: Concepts for data collection and analysis. In N.G. Fielding, R.M. Lee, & G. Blank (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of online research methods* [2nd edition], pp. 241-257. London: Sage.
- b) Install the social network visualization software Gephi: <https://gephi.org/>
- c) Check out the YouTube Data Tools we will be using in class: <https://tools.digitalmethods.net/netvizz/youtube/>

Additional reading:

- a) Lewis, R. (2018). Alternative influence: Broadcasting the reactionary right on YouTube. *Data & Society*. Retrieved from: https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/DS_Alternative_Influence.pdf
- b) Ackland, R., & Zu, J. (2015). Social network analysis. In P. Halfpenny & R. Procter (Eds.), *Innovations in digital research methods*, pp. 221-244. London: Sage.
- c) Rieder, B., Matamoros-Fernandez, A., Coromina, Ò. (2018). From ranking algorithms to 'ranking cultures': Investigating the modulation of visibility in YouTube search results. *Convergence*, 24(1), 50-68.

Optional – March 27, 1:00-3:00pm: Troubleshooting and Project Discussion Workshop

This will be an optional drop-in workshop for troubleshooting methods, discussing your preliminary analyses, and clarifying any concepts, ideas, and approaches covered throughout the course. Bring your problems, glitches, findings, and questions!

The workshop will take place at Loyola campus, classroom TBD.

WEEK 12: APRIL 2 – Presentations (submit slides in Moodle by 1:00pm)

WEEK 13: APRIL 9 – Presentations and Course wrap-up

Last day of classes April 9, 2020

*****Final Paper due in Moodle on Monday, April 13 by 8:00am*****