

CRD 703 | Communication in Networked Society

Winston 017 | Tues/Thurs 1:30-2:45

Instructor Information

Dr. Jason Swarts

Office: Tompkins 131-B

Hours: M/W 2:00-4:00 & T/R 10:00-11:00

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Overview

The advent of new network technologies is ushering in significant changes to institutions, cultures, economies, and practices of communication. Behind these changes, systems of ownership and governance are evolving, bringing questions of policy and regulation to the forefront of new technology considerations. In addition to exploring fundamental questions in the study of communication networks, this class will focus on societal, political, cultural, and technological forces. Overall, our purpose will be to understand how networks and network forces converge in the creation of networked places to support communicative and discursive activity.

Objectives

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

- articulate the role of communication technology in constructing and maintaining different types of communicative and discursive networks.
- demonstrate a broad interdisciplinary understanding of theories describing the social and cultural impact of different networks.
- identify gaps in our theoretical understanding of networks and address those gaps through careful study of the ways networks are created, used, and transformed to exercise power, reinforce or challenge existing social relations, and develop new social, cultural, and labor practices.
- understand and evaluate different methods and methodologies for studying networks, ranging from traditional social science approaches (e.g., experimental, survey, or ethnographic research) to other alternative approaches (e.g., mathematical modeling, mapping, visualization, and activity analysis).
- design and carry out a large-scale research project in consultation with me.

Required Reading

Latour, B. (1988). *The pasteurization of France*. (A. Sheridan and J. Law, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published in 1984).

Lessig, L. (2000). *Code and other laws of cyberspace*. New York: Basic Books.

Watts, D. (2003). *Six degrees: The science of a connected age*. New York: Norton

Articles and chapters available via electronic reserve, e-books, article databases. See the CRD 703 bibliography.

Recommended Purchases

We will be reading significant portions of the following books, but not more than half, the measure I used to determine if a book should be required. If you like to mark your books, however, I would strongly recommend that you track down used copies of the following:

Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society: The information age: Economy, society, and culture* (Vol. 1). Cambridge, MA: Blackstone Publishers.

Hutchins, E. (1995). *Cognition in the wild*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [on reserve]

Lessig, L. (2004). *Free culture: The nature and future of creativity*. New York: Penguin.

Spinuzzi, C. (2003). *Tracing genres through organizations: A sociocultural approach to information design*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [e-book]

Assignments and Grading

It is necessary to complete all of the assignments below in order to pass this class.

Reading Responses (4 x 50 pts/ea.): Reading responses are short position papers (**no more than 3 pages** – I mean it!) in which you respond, critically, to one or all of the readings for the day. For each paper I want you to tease out a concept or series of concepts that the author is developing. Explore the concept, talking about the author's use of it and its relationship to network issues. Show us how the concept connects with, expands, clarifies, and/or challenges our current work. You might also talk about the implications for your research or research agendas in communication studies more generally.

Reading responses are due to the class by 5 pm, two days before the class in which we will discuss them. For example, if your position paper is scheduled for discussion on Tuesday, it is due via email by 5:00 pm Sunday. If you are scheduled for Thursday, it is due by 5 pm Tuesday.

Leading Discussion (150 pts.): For one class period, you are responsible for leading class discussion. You should plan to lead discussion for a total of one hour. Please note that I

am asking you to lead discussion, not give a lecture. This assignments consists of the following parts:

- Open class with a 5-10 minute presentation of a theme or argument that you see connecting the readings to each other or to previous ones.
- Lead discussion for 60 minutes (ideas below).
- Open next class with a 5-minute summary of previous class discussion, including conclusions reached, problems uncovered, questions raised.

To lead discussion, I recommend that you come in with a list of 8-10 agenda items. These agenda items could include the following:

- concepts that you wish to explore and connect to ongoing discussions about networks,
- statements in position papers that you wish to compare or contrast with readings or each other,
- statements from the readings that you want us to challenge or support with examples,
- contradictions in the readings,
- small projects to help us explore a network phenomenon,
- analysis of a specific network activity, or
- something else

To prepare, study all of the readings for the day as well as any scheduled position papers. You may find it necessary to do additional research, but try to keep any to a minimum.

Proposal (100 pts.): The proposal is going to serve two purposes. The first is to inform me about your final project. Second, it will help you become more familiar with writing effective proposals for your future academic peers. To this end, please find a current request for proposals (RFP), either for a book chapter or for a special edition of an academic journal. Write the proposal for the audiences specified in the RFP and according to any guidelines specified in the RFP. If you cannot find a current RFP, you can use on that is recently expired (< 1 year).

In the proposal, you should outline a theoretical framework for your research and a conversation to which it will be a contribution. Explain your topic, its significance, and the method that you plan to use to study your topic. One important requirement is that this paper should involve some original research and should entail some data gathering and analysis.

Seminar Paper (350 pts.) – 20-25 page paper in which you conduct original research to study a mediated communication practice within networked space. As a general point of guidance, choose a topic that is of interest to a specific community of scholars. General themes that you can use as starting points include: the literacy effects of new

network technologies; new communication practices developing around network technologies; the effect of networking on existing communication practices; cultural/political/civic influences on networked communication; cultural/political/civic implications of networked practices. More specifically, you might explore a phenomenon like social bookmarking or a network phenomenon like wikis. Your analysis should touch on the relevant network components that contribute to the character of the phenomenon you are studying.

“A” papers will present topics of interest to scholars currently publishing and presenting in the field. “A” papers will clearly communicate the significance of their topics. “A” papers will present research that approaches publishable quality.

Conference Presentation (150 pts): During a 2-day “conference” each of you will give a 20 minute presentation of your final project, to be followed by 5-10 minutes of questions and answers. Presentation materials are required.

You can earn a total of 1000 points in this class. You will need 90% for an A, 80% for a B, 70% for a C and so on. I do grade on the +/- scale (e.g., 90%-92% = A-; 93%-97% =A; 98%-100% = A+).

Reading Responses	200 pts. (50 pts/ea.)
Leading Discussion	150 pts.
Proposal	100 pts.
Seminar Paper	350 pts.
Conference Presentation	150 pts.
Participation	50 pts.
Total	1000 pts.

Participation

Your participation in this class is expected on a consistent basis. You should prepare for class by finishing all of the readings, exercises, and paper assignments.

Attendance

Communication in Networked Society is a small, interactive seminar class, and interactive classes only work when there are students available and prepared to interact. For this reason, I will monitor attendance. Please make every effort to attend all class sessions. However, if you must miss for reasons that are beyond your control, please contact me. Repeated absences, will negatively affect your participation grade.

To determine if your absence is an excused absence, please consult the [Academic Policies and Regulations](#) web page.

Academic Integrity

Student-teacher relationships are built on trust. You must trust that I have made appropriate decisions about the structure and content of the course, and I must trust that you have turned in assignments that are your own. Acts that violate this trust undermine the educational goals of this university.

All work in this course should be original. Any material that you paraphrase or quote must be cited according to an accepted style format (APA, MLA). If you would like an explanation of the actions that constitute plagiarism, please review the [student code of conduct](#).

Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with [Disability Services for Students](#) at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the [Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation](#).

CRD 703 Bibliography & Locations

Augé, M. (1995). *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. London: Verso. [519 E-Reserve]

Bazerman, C. (2003). What is not institutionally visible does not count: The problem of making activity assessable, accountable, and plannable. In C. Bazerman and D. Russell (Eds.) *Writing selves / writing societies: Research from activity perspectives*. Retrieved December 5, 2005 from http://wac.colostate.edu/books/writing_selves/. [Web]

Beaufort, A. (2000). Learning the trade: A social apprenticeship model for gaining writing experience. *Written Communication*, 17, (2), 185-223. [E-Journal]

Bracewell, R. and Witte, S. (2003). Tasks, ensembles, and activity: The linkages between text production and situation of use in the workplace. *Written Communication*, 20, (4), 511-559. [E-Journal]

Brown, J. and Duguid, P. (2000). *The social life of information*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard. [703 E-Reserve]

Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society: The information age: Economy, society, and culture* (Vol. 1). Cambridge, MA: Blackstone Publishers. [703 E-Reserve]

Cole, M. and Engestrom, Y. (1993). A cultural-historical approach to distributed cognition. In G. Salomon (Ed.) *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations* (pp. 1-46). New York: Cambridge. [703 E-Reserve]

Dawkins, R. (1976). *The selfish gene*. New York: Oxford. [519 E-Reserve]

Geisler, C. (2001). Textual objects: Accounting for the role of texts in the everyday life of complex organizations. *Written Communication*, 18, 296-325. [E-Journal]

Haas, C. and Witte, S. (2005). Research in activity: An analysis of speed bumps as mediational means. *Written Communication*, 22, (2), 127-165. [E-Journal]

Heylighen, F. (1996). Evolution of memes on the network: From chain-letters to the global brain. Retrieved 1 January 2006: <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/papers/Memesis.html>. [Web]

Hollan, J., Hutchins, E., & Kirsh, D. (2000). Distributed cognition: Toward a new foundation for human-computer interaction research. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction*, 7, 174-196. [519 E-Reserve]

Hutchins, E. (1987). Mediation and automatization. In M. Cole, Y. Engeström, and O. Vasquez (Eds.). *Mind, Culture, and Activity* (pp.338-353). New York: Cambridge. [519 E-Reserve]

Hutchins, E. (1995). *Cognition in the wild*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [Reserve]

Johnson-Eilola, J. (2001). Datacloud: Expanding the roles and locations of information. In *SIG Doc 2001 Conference Proceedings*, 47-54. [E-Journal / ACM Database]

- Kaptelinin, V., Nardi, B., and Macaulay, C. (1999). The activity checklist: A tool for representing the "space" of context. *Interactions*, 6 (4), 27-39. [E-Journal / ACM Database]
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- Latour, B. (1995). Mixing humans and non-humans: The sociology of the door closer. In S.L. Starr (Ed.) *Ecologies of Knowledge: Work and Politics in Science and Technology*. (pp. 257-277). Albany, NY: SUNY. [519 E-Reserve]
- Lessig, L. (2000). *Code and other laws of cyberspace*. New York: Basic Books.
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- Mitchell, W.J. (1995). *City of bits: Space, place, and the Infobahn*. Cambridge, MA: MIT. [703 E-Reserve]
- Nardi, B. and O'Day, V. (1999). *Information ecologies: Using technology with heart*. Cambridge, MA: MIT. [E-Book]
- Poster, M. (2004). The information empire. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 41, (3), 317-334. [E-Journal / Project Muse Database]
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- Suchman, L. (1998). Constituting shared workspaces. In Y. Engestrom and D. Middleton (Eds.) *Cognition and communication at work*. (pp. 35-60). New York: Cambridge. [703 E-Reserve]
- Terranova, T. (2004). *Network culture: Politics for the information age*. London: Pluto Press. [703 E-Reserve]
- Virilio, P. (2004). The information bomb. In S. Redhead (Ed.) *The Paul Virilio Reader* (pp.197-208). New York: Columbia. [703 E-Reserve]
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- Winsor, D. A. (2001). Learning to do knowledge work in systems of distributed cognition. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 15, 5-28. [E-Journal]