New Jersey Institute of Technology

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Fall 2021

STS 359-H01: Cyberpsychology

Katherine Tyrol

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New Jersey Institute of Technology
Cyberpsychology
STS 359
Fall 2021

Prerequisites: HUM 102 with a grade of C or higher, and six credits at the 300-level History and Humanities GER with a grade of C or higher

Instructor: Dr. Kate Tyrol
Office: 310 Cullimore Hall
Contact: katherine.a.tyrol@njit.edu

Office Hours:
Tuesdays 12:30 – 1:30
Wednesdays 9 – 9:50
(Masks required)

Course Meeting Time and Location:
Mondays and Thursdays, 10 – 11:20 AM

Canvas: https://njit.instructure.com/courses/19128

Texts

Connolly, I., Palmer, M., Barton, H., & Kirwan, G. (Eds.). (2016). *An Introduction to Cyberpsychology*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Optional: Attrill-Smith, A., Fullwood, C., Keep, M., & Kuss, D.J. (Eds.). (2019). *The Oxford Handbook of Cyberpsychology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Other readings will be made available online.

Course Description

In this course, we will discuss how the basic tenets of psychology change (or don't) in online interactions and with exposure to online environments. We will use our knowledge of psychology along with qualitative social science research methods to analyze and understand actual online social groups and interactions. We will design a project in class to enable us to do so.

Course Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Develop a three-pronged understanding of Cyberpsychology, consisting of
  - How technology – in particular the internet – changes social interaction
  - How technology – in particular the internet – can best be shaped to meet the needs of human beings

- How technology – in particular the internet – affects our individual psyches and behavior
- Increase their understanding of the relationship between the social and technical worlds.
- Improve their ability to express their ideas in writing.
- Learn to identify examples of cyberpsychological concepts in their observations of online spaces.

Policies

University Policy on Academic Integrity

"Academic integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating (which includes plagiarism) is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:

http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf.

"Please note that it is the instructor's professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. **Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university.** If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu."

While this text was written by the university, I stand behind it whole-heartedly and fully expect you to adhere to these guidelines, as will I.

Accessibility

This class is intended to be fully available to students regardless of health or disability status (whether mental or physical). If you need reasonable accommodations to complete the course because of a disability, you can reach out to the course instructor or to the office of accessibility resources and services.

Course Environment

This course should be a safe space: in the classroom, in one-on-one discussions with the instructor, and on Canvas and other online spaces for this course. This means no hate speech (slurs or derogatory or demeaning comments) and no bullying. You are expected to treat your classmates respectfully and with kindness, generosity, and empathy.

Assignment Submission

All assignments are to be submitted through Canvas unless other arrangements are made with the instructor. Files must be of type .doc, .docx, .pdf, or .txt unless otherwise instructed. *Google Docs are NOT acceptable.*

Should you encounter technical problems, contact the NJIT helpdesk at 973-596-2900 (or simply extension 2900 from campus locations). In the event that it is impossible to submit through Canvas, you must submit a paper version of the assignment that includes an explanation of why online submission was not possible. If you cannot attend class, you may deliver paper submissions to the Humanities Department office in Cullimore Hall. *Emailed work is not an acceptable substitute.*

Late Submissions

All assignments are due at 11:59 PM on the assigned date. This rule is not flexible. I encourage you to complete and submit the assignment the night before to avoid encountering any problems with this deadline.

All late assignments will be docked 15% per class meeting. If the assignment is more than three class meetings late, it will not be accepted.

No work whatsoever will be accepted after December 10th, 2021 at 5 PM.

Technology

You are required to bring a device with you to class that will allow you to access Canvas. This likely means a tablet, laptop or smart phone. There is no makeup credit if you do not bring such a device and are unable as a result to complete course activities that day.

You are expected to use any technology in class appropriately. As described below, your class participation will be graded, but your use of technology does not inherently prevent class participation and may help it. Just take care to actually be participating in class and not becoming absorbed in another virtual environment.

Miscellaneous

All assignments should be completed individually unless permission granted by instructor ahead of time.

No grade changes will be made without a scheduled, in-person meeting. You can ask questions about your grade in any context you would like, but you need to also schedule an in-person meeting with me if you believe a grade deserves re-evaluation.

This syllabus is subject to change throughout the semester. All efforts will be made to adhere to the main deadlines listed here, but topics covered and readings assigned may change to meet the needs and interests of the class.

I do not read comments made on Canvas assignments after the assignment has been graded. If you have follow-up comments after reviewing your grade, please contact me through the regular channels.

Please ask questions as frequently as possible, both in the classroom, outside of it, and online. Attend office hours or make an appointment. There is no reason for you not to understand assignments or expectations, so please take an active role in obtaining the knowledge you want or need.

Assignment Descriptions

Reading

Readings will be assigned for most class meetings of the semester; you should complete these readings before coming to class. As a way of ascertaining whether you are doing your assigned readings and developing a reasonable understanding of them, you will be graded on several different tasks. You will take notes on a total of 8 assigned readings, submit approximately 8 discussion questions, and both conduct and observe small, student-led discussions. To repeat that in greater detail, you will be graded on:

- Informal Reading Notes (6)
  6 times per semester, at your own discretion, you will submit your notes on the assigned reading for one class meeting. These will be graded on three points: whether they are on topic, whether they include the major topics of the chapter, and whether they are at least *semi*-coherent. (Note that this is a less stringent requirement than the coherency requirement for other assignments.)

- "Spotlight" Socratic Seminars with Accompanying Formal Reading Notes (2)
  For two class meetings, you and your assigned group of 7 students (total) will take thorough, structured notes of the reading, submit these the night before class, and then independently conduct a discussion among yourselves in front of the instructor and the rest of the class. Your discussion will draw from the notes you previously submitted. Details about the structure of your notes and of your discussion will be decided on in class.

- Observed Socratic Seminars (6)
  You will be required to submit notes of your observations of *other* groups when they are in the Socratic seminar "spotlight". The exact requirements / grading criteria for these notes will be determined in class.

- Discussion Questions (~8)
  For every 4th class meeting (assigned on a group-by-group basis), on the night before class, you must submit one discussion question relating to the reading.

10 Mini-Drafts

Mini-drafts will allow you to write rough drafts of your final paper a section at a time. They should be 150 – 650 words long. I will not grade on spelling or grammar at all, unless it is so poor that I can't understand what you're saying.

You will write approximately one mini-draft per week detailing your ongoing progress and findings in the course project. We will discuss in class what each mini-draft will consist of.

Final Paper

For your final paper, you will be analyzing cyberpsychological phenomena in an online community. You will engage regularly with one or more subreddits in order to develop a general understanding of the community and to collect data in the form of

online interactions. In your paper, you will describe the phenomena you witnessed, why you found them interesting, and what the field of cyberpsychology can tell us about these phenomena. The goal of your paper is to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the content that has been covered in this course, your ability to apply that content analytically to real data, and your ability to synthesize that analysis meaningfully for a reader.

Papers will be 5 – 7 pages in length, in 12-point Times New Roman, and double-spaced. Papers must use APA style, including for works cited, unless other arrangements are made with the instructor. All resources used must be referenced.

Feedback

You and an assigned partner will exchange first drafts. Your writing is best improved through feedback from as many other readers as possible. To meet the requirements of this particular assignment, you will read your partner's first draft and provide feedback to them and to the instructor in writing. Your feedback should be *substantive*, that is, it should not focus on grammar, spelling, or superficial aspects of the writing (such as "nice font" or "good use of the adjective 'quickly'").

For full credit, your response must include:

- A summary of their paper.
- One *substantive* thing that is well done.
- Two *substantive* things that could be improved.

In order to further improve the quality of your finished draft, you and your partner may wish to provide additional substantive feedback or line editing (grammatical, spelling, and word choice advice) to one another. This is strongly encouraged. You can include such work in the feedback you submit to the instructor, but it is not required.

Final Draft

Your final draft will be graded on how well you've integrated course content into your paper (30%), how thoroughly you've analyzed your online community (30%), how clearly you've conveyed your ideas in writing (20%), and how clearly your conclusions and discussion follow from the rest of your work (20%).

Grading (& Rubrics)

Participation – 20%

Active participation in this course will enhance the quality and enjoyability of the course for both you and others. In-class discussion is the best tool you have for doing so. One-fourth of your course grade will be based on the instructor's assessment of your level of engagement with the course. Assessing participation is a largely qualitative process. The main factors that will be considered in assessing your level of participation are:

- Asking questions in class
- Responding in class to course content
- Responding in class to discussion

- Summarizing the assigned reading out loud at the beginning of class and sharing your reaction to it
- Engaging productively with classmates on the class Discord server
- Limited credit may be given for
    - Attending office hours
    - Helping classmates
    - Participating in study groups

In order to earn full credit for this portion of your grade, I may ask you to submit a self-assessment of your participation at the end of the semester.

Mini-drafts (9) – 25%

Each mini-draft will be graded on the following criteria:

- Is it coherent?
- Did you cover the agreed upon content?
- Is it at least 150 and no more than 650 words long?

Final Paper – 30%

- 1st Draft – 28.6%
- Feedback – 28.6%
- Final Draft – 42.8%

Reading – 25%

- Informal Reading Notes (6) – 25%
- "Spotlight" Socratic Seminars / Formal Reading Notes (2) – 35%
- Observed Socratic Seminars (6) – 20%
- Discussion Questions (~8) – 20%

Grading Scale

A	90 - 100
B+	$88 - 89.\overline{9}$
B	$80 - 87.\overline{9}$
C+	$78 - 79.\overline{9}$

C	$70 - 77.\overline{9}$
D	$60 - 69.\overline{9}$
F	$0 - 59.\overline{9}$

Readings and Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Due
9/2	**FIRST CLASS CANCELLED**		
9/7	Intro/Welcome/Syllabus		
9/9	~~Online Interaction~~ Research Methods	Chapter 2	
9/14	Online Interaction	Chapter 3	Mini-Draft #1
9/16	Self & Identity	Chapter 4	
9/21	Self & Identity (cont)	Attrill-Smith, Chapter 3	Mini-Draft #2
9/23	Online Harassment	Chapter 5	
9/28	Attention and Distraction Online	Chapter 7	Mini-Draft #3
9/30	The Dynamics of Groups Online	Chapter 8	
10/5	Persuasion & Compliance	Chapter 9	Mini-Draft #4
10/7	Persuasion & Compliance (cont)	Power and the Medicalization of Society, by Christopher Harper-Till and How We Understand Medicine, by Kate Tyrol and Medical Compliance as an Ideology, by James Trostle	
10/12	The Body Online	Self-Presence and the Effects of the Avatar on Health and Appearance, by Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz	Mini-Draft #5
10/14	Abnormal Cyberpsychology & Cybertherapy	Chapter 12	
10/19	Sport & Health Cyberpsychology	Chapter 13	Mini-Draft #6
10/21	Privacy & Trust	Chapter 10	Mini-Draft #7
10/26	The Online Workplace	Chapter 14	
10/28	Hacking	Why It Pays to Submit to Hackers, by Ryan Tate and Attack of the Hack Back, by Josephine Wolff and Optional: A Simple Design Flaw Makes It Astoundingly Easy To Hack Siri And Alexa, by Mark Wilson	Mini-Draft #8
11/2	The Online Classroom	Chapter 15	
11/4	Consumer Cyberpsychology	Chapter 16	Mini-Draft #9
11/9	Kids and the Internet	Chapter 17	
11/11	Kids and the Internet (cont)	Fiske article	Mini-Draft #10
11/16	Human-Computer Interaction	Chapter 18	First Draft
11/18	Gaming	Attrill-Smith, Chapter 26	
11/23	Gaming	Attrill-Smith, Chapter 28	Draft Feedback
11/25	**THANKSGIVING BREAK**		
11/30	Gaming (cont)	WoW and Everquest Articles	
12/2	The Psychology of Artificial Intelligence	Chapter 21	
12/7	Final Paper Workshop Day		
12/9	Imagining Cyberpsychological Futures		Final Paper