

Spring 2024

COM 325-006: New Media Technologies

Eugene Snyder

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COM 325 Syllabus

COM 325-006: New Media Technologies (Spring 24)
Tue & Thr 1:00 PM – 2:20 PM | Central King Building 207

Instructor: Eugene Cho Snyder (Ph.D. of Mass Communications)

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Office hours (both in-person and virtual) are by appointment. Please email me to set up a time in advance (for virtual meetings, I will send out an online invite after we set a time).

PART I: COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description: This course introduces students to discussions of various new media and emerging communication technologies including, but not limited to, social media platforms, algorithmic recommendation systems (RecSys), artificial agents, and smart environments. In particular, students will discuss the socio-psychological effects of utilizing those new media technologies. In doing so, students will identify the perceptual, attitudinal, and behavioral impact of these cutting-edge media technologies in various communication contexts from personal to professional.

Course Objectives:

- Understand new media concepts, theories, and findings from case studies and empirical research conducted in the fields of communications and psychology;
- Apply conceptual and empirical knowledge to current everyday media situations;
- Ideate and propose research questions for industry and academic professions;
- Design and conduct a pilot study mimicking how researchers empirically investigate the effects of new media adoption and utilization in the fields; and
- Offer theoretical and practical implications from existing research as well as their own group-based research project developed and completed during this course.

Readings: There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, all readings (in the form of research articles and press releases) will be uploaded on Canvas (see Part IV for the list of assigned readings). I strongly advise students to read all the material before class.

Course Evaluation Breakdown:

Individual Contributions (75%)

- 1) Attendance (10%, 6 unexcused) & Involvement (10%): 20%
- 2) Discussion Questions (10 DQs required x 3 points): 30%
- 3) In-class Quizzes (10 Quizzes required X 2 points): 20%
- 4) Article Presentation: 5%

Group Contributions (25%)

- 5) Final Group Presentations 10%
- 6) Final Group Report 10%
- 7) Peer Evaluation 5%

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Grading scale:

- *Normal participation* ranked into three groups: A, B+, B
- *Any abnormal participation* (including, but not limited to, 6+ unexcused absences, less than 10 DQs and Quizzes submitted, missing article/group presentations, and significant lack of class/group participation) results in a lowering of a letter grade, or more based on the student's severity in lack of involvement: C+, C, D+, D
- *No participation*: F

PART II: COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**1) Attendance (10%, 6 unexcused) & Involvement (10%): 20%**

Attendance is the first step toward participating in this class. Simply by attending, students will be able to naturally meet normal participation requirements. 6 unexcused absences are permitted (from 1/18, for those who registered late after 1/22 only 5 unexcused absences are permitted). Unless there is justifiable official proof (e.g., doctor's note) for your (excused) absence, attendance will not count (*Note*: at the school level, you can request absence verification at <https://www.njit.edu/dos/student-absence-verification>).

Active involvement in class meetings, as indicated by each student's participation during lectures and responses to discussion facilitation, will be counted toward involvement points. Please note that those who do not attend (including excused absences) are assumed no involvement on the day of absence. Not only the amount of participation, but also the quality of individual responses (e.g., the ability to integrate assigned readings and personally relevant examples into discussion) will be taken into consideration.

2) Discussion Questions (10 DQs required x 3 points): 30%

Students are asked to submit one DQ for each of the 13 days with assigned reading. Only the highest scores of 10 required DQs, out of the 13 DQs requested, are counted. Any extra DQs submitted beyond 10, are counted toward involvement points. DQs should be relevant to the assigned reading(s) and will be graded for their level of profound curiosity. Insightful and thought-provoking DQs will be used for in-class discussions.

A DQ consists of 3~5 sentences with three parts: 1) Bring up and summarize one aspect of the study in 1~2 sentences that interested you from the assigned reading (e.g., specific theory, concepts or variables examined, method, findings, interpretation); 2) add your personal thought, impression or question about the prior sentence(s) in 1~2 sentences (e.g., social implications and real-life applications, study extension/revision ideas); 3) final comment in a sentence explaining why your question is meaningful (e.g., to whom, when, where, and for what kinds of occasions).

DQs should be submitted on Canvas by 5 PM the day BEFORE each class (0 = no submission, 1 = irrelevant/generic answer, 2 = relevant/acceptable answer, 3 = creative/thoughtful answer). Any late submissions can be awarded up to 2 points (1 = relevant/acceptable answer, 2 = creative/thoughtful answer). I will handpick creative/thoughtful answers (10%~30% of submissions). In case of tardiness or absence, please submit the MDQ by the end of class time and day to receive any points. There will be NO make-up opportunities after that day.

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3) In-class Quizzes (10 Quizzes required X 2 points): 20%

For the 13 days DQs are requested with assigned readings, there will be an in-class quiz at the beginning of the class to remind students of the assigned readings. The quiz will have 2~4 multiple-choice and/or mix-and-match questions making up to 2 points. This is an open-book quiz, so you are allowed to read the articles and talk to your colleagues in class to find the answers.

Similar to DQs, only the highest scores of 10 out of 13 quizzes will be counted toward points. Any extra quiz submissions beyond 10, are counted toward involvement points. In case of tardiness or absence, please submit the quiz by the end of class day to receive any points. There will be NO make-up opportunities after that day.

4) Article Presentations: 5%

As we wrap up each of the four major topics (i.e., Social media, RecSys, Virtual/Smart things, and AI), there will be a day fully dedicated to Article Presentations. On those days, 7~8 students will take turns presenting a summary of a news article from an acceptable source related to one of the assigned readings for each topic.

The student presenters are expected to make a 5-minute presentation of the article in the class, followed by a Q&A session with the instructor and fellow students. Presenters should cover 5 elements with (a minimum of 5) slides, and share them with the instructor the day BEFORE presenting: a) article link and summary, b) a brief reminder of the reading, and the specific aspect related to the article, c) relevance between article and reading (specify how the two relate, in which way), d) your thoughts, and e) what you want to ask your fellow students about this matter (leading to Q&A session).

5) Final Group Presentations: 10%

A team of 5 students will design an experimental or survey-based pilot study that will ask new media users how some technological elements in media shape their psychological perceptions, attitudes, or user behaviors. The studies will involve quantitative data collection and statistical analysis, which the instructor will guide and engage in hands-on implementation with students.

As an outcome of the Final Group Project, student teams will take turn presenting their a) study background and supporting literature, b) research questions, c) methods, d) data findings, and e) interpretation of findings and discussion during the last two class sessions. Here, the evaluative focus is on clear, concise, and effective communication of the study structure, major findings and implications of the study.

6) Final Group Report: 10%

Once the presentations are completed, each team will submit a written document of their study, within about a week after the presentations. Here, the evaluative focus is on the completeness and comprehensive reporting of details in the study presented.

7) Peer Evaluation 5%

As the final step of the Final Group Project (and this course), everyone is required to submit a peer evaluation form, which operates based on a penalty (vs. award) system to catch freeloaders. Details not stated above regarding the general conduct of individual and group assignments will be spelled out as the semester progresses.

PART III: CLASS SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

The tentative course outline is listed below. If changes in the schedule are necessary, they will be announced in class and Canvas and you will be held responsible for such changes.

WK	Date	Topic	Assignments
Part I: Conceptual Learning & Discussion			
1	1/16 (Tue)	Introduction to Course	
	1/18 (Thr)	1. New media effects	DQ1
2	1/23 (Tue)	2. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) vs. Human-computer interaction (HCI)	DQ2
	1/25 (Thr)	3. Social media, self-presentation & expression	DQ3
3	1/30 (Tue)	4. Social media, isolation or connection?	DQ4
	2/01 (Thr)	5. Social media, beyond text	DQ5
4	2/06 (Tue)	Article presentations on Social media (3~5)	7~8 individual PTs
	2/08 (Thr)	6. RecSys of movies, who gets to choose?	DQ6
5	2/13 (Tue)	7. RecSys of news, news finds me	DQ7
	2/15 (Thr)	8. RecSys of other than content	DQ8
6	2/20 (Tue)	Article presentations on RecSys (6~8)	7~8 individual PTs
	2/22 (Thr)	9. Virtual agents, how human are they?	DQ9
7	2/27 (Tue)	10. Smart cars and home, how smart are they?	DQ10
	2/29 (Thr)	11. VR & AR, how real are they?	DQ11
8	3/05 (Tue)	Article presentations on Virtual things (9-12)	7~8 individual PTs
	3/07 (Thr)	12. AI, where is the risk at?	DQ12
9	3/12 (Tue)	No class (Spring break)	
	3/14 (Thr)	No class (Spring break)	
10	3/19 (Tue)	13. AI, what should we do about it?	DQ13
	3/21 (Thr)	Article presentations on AI (12-13)	7~8 individual PTs
Part II: Application through Pilot Study			
11	3/26 (Tue)	Group project introduction & ideation	Group formation
	3/28 (Thr)	Intro to Experimental design	
12	4/02 (Tue)	Practice t-test of experimental data	Stat exercise
	4/04 (Thr)	Intro to Survey design	
13	4/09 (Tue)	Practice linear regression of survey data	Stat exercise
	4/11 (Thr)	Group project finalization of ideas and data	
14	4/16 (Tue)	Data Analysis Workshop I (2 teams)	Alternate Attendance
	4/18 (Thr)	Data Analysis Workshop II (2 teams)	Alternate Attendance
15	4/23 (Tue)	Data Analysis Workshop III (2 teams)	Alternate Attendance
	4/25 (Thr)	Final Group Presentations I (3 teams)	Group 1~3 PTs
16	4/30 (Tue)	Final Group Presentations II (3 teams; Last Day of Classes for NJIT)	Group 4~6 PTs; Report in a week
	5/11 (Sat)	Final Grades Due	

PART IV: ASSIGNED READINGS (TENTATIVE)

1. New media effects:

Eveland, W. P. (2003). A “Mix of Attributes” approach to the study of media effects and new communication technologies. *Journal of Communication*, 53(4), 395–410.

2. Computer-mediated communication vs. Human-computer interaction:

Sundar, S. S., & Nass, C. (2000). Source orientation in human-computer interaction: Programmer, networker, or independent social actor? *Communication Research*, 27(6), 683–703.

3. Social media, self-presentation & expression

Lee, E-J., & Cho, E. (2018). When using Facebook to avoid isolation reduces perceived social support. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 21(1), 32–39.

4. Social media, isolation or connection?

Hunt, M. G., Marx, R., Lipson, C., & Young, J. (2018). No more FOMO: Limiting social media decreases loneliness and depression. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 37(10), 751-768.

5. Social Media, beyond text

Qiyang, Z., & Jung, H. (2019). Learning and sharing creative skills with short videos: A case study of user behavior in TikTok and Bilibili. *In Proceedings of International Association of Societies of Design Research Conference*.

6. RecSys of movies, who gets to choose?

Zhang, B., & Sundar, S. S. (2019). Proactive vs. reactive personalization: Can customization of privacy enhance user experience? *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 128, 86–99.

7. RecSys of news, news finds me

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Weeks, B., & Ardèvol-Abreu, D. (2017). Effects of the News-Finds-Me perception in communication: Social media use implications for news seeking and learning about politics, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22(3), 105–123.

8. RecSys of other than content

Cho, E., & Sundar, S. S. (2022). How do we like our online dates—customized or personalized? The differential effects of user vs. system tailoring on date preferences. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 127, Paper No. 107037.

9. Virtual agents: how human are they?

Cho, E., Molina, M. D., & Wang, J. (2019). The effects of modality, device, and task differences on perceived human likeness of voice-activated virtual assistants. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 22(8), 515–520.

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10. Smart cars and home: how smart are they?

Braun, M., Mainz, A., Chadowitz, R., Pfleging, B., & Alt, F. (2019). At your service: Designing voice assistant personalities to improve automotive user interfaces. In *Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '19)*. Paper No. 40.

11. VR & AR, how real are they? ***Pick one article for DQ***

Slater, M., Pertaub, D. P., & Steed, A. (1999). Public speaking in virtual reality: Facing an audience of avatars. *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications*, 19(2), 6-9.

Smink, A. R., Van Reijmersdal, E. A., Van Noort, G., & Neijens, P. C. (2020). Shopping in augmented reality: The effects of spatial presence, personalization and intrusiveness on app and brand responses. *Journal of Business Research*, 118, 474–485.

12. AI: where is the risk at?

Elyoseph, Z., & Levkovich, I. (2023). Beyond human expertise: the promise and limitations of ChatGPT in suicide risk assessment. *Front Psychiatry*, 14, Paper No. 1213141.

13. AI: What should we do about it?

Ehsan, U., Liao, Q. V., Muller, M., Riedl, M. O., & Weisz, J. D. (2021). Expanding explainability: Towards social transparency in AI systems. In *Proceedings of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-19).

PART IV: GENERAL POLICIES

Late & Make-up Policy

Late work is accepted with prior permission only, based on justifiable reasons with official documentation. No credit will be given for unexcused late work. “Permitted” means that a student has successfully contacted me and received a response confirming the granting of an extension or a make-up. Participation points cannot be made up regardless of the reasoning behind missing the class period.

General Class Conduct

I expect students to arrive in class on time and to stay for the entire class. Random arrivals and exits only serve to distract other students and the instructor. Making conversations irrelevant to class also disrupts other classmates and impedes their learning experience. Those engaging in distracting behavior may be asked to leave the classroom.

Mobile phones, computers, and other technological distractions: All students are expected to put their mobile phones and other interactive devices on silent mode at the beginning of class. It is inconsiderate to classmates to allow a mobile device to ring during lecture. While students can make notes using electronic devices such as laptops during class, personal use of any electronic devices (e.g., watching Netflix) are not permitted. Those distracting others by doing so will be asked to leave the classroom.

Diversity, equality, inclusion, belonging, and general respect: In this class, I will work to promote an anti-discriminatory environment where everyone feels safe and welcome. I recognize that discrimination can be direct or indirect and take place at both institutional and personal levels. I am committed to providing equality of opportunity for all by eliminating any and all discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimization. Success of this policy relies on the support, understanding, and respect of everyone in class.

CANVAS will be used in the administration of this course. Any changes to the course schedule, in addition to other announcements, will be posted on CANVAS, so students are encouraged to check in often. I routinely communicate with the class through CANVAS’ mail function – please make sure your CANVAS mail account is forwarded to your preferred email account if you do not check CANVAS often.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating 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 [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](https://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/NJIT-University-Policy-on-Academic-Integrity.pdf):
<https://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/NJIT-University-Policy-on-Academic-Integrity.pdf>

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Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code 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 (dos@njit.edu).

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

Students with learning disabilities who may require accommodations should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (<https://www.njit.edu/accessibility/>). As another resource, students in distress or experiencing challenging life circumstances may contact the NJIT CARE Team (<https://www.njit.edu/care/>). Accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis according to each student's individual needs and documentation. Please come speak with me if you have any accommodations or leniency that you require so we can work out a plan together.

Email Etiquette

When you are initiating or responding to communication with your instructor, please follow some common courtesies:

1. Our NJIT accounts should be used for any email correspondence. If you send email from a non-NJIT account, it will likely go to the junk mail folder.
2. Include the subject of your message, and in the body of your message, clearly state your question using complete sentences and proper grammar.
3. Please allow 48 hours for a response. If you have not received a response in this time period, please email again.