ANTH 508: Anthropology of Internet
eUNH (J and Summer Terms)

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One day, my son came from school and said, "I am going home to my village;" he was going to his computer to play Minecraft (an online sandbox game which allows players to build constructions out of textured cubes in a 3D world). This was the day I realized my child is a cyborg. Further, when I heard his response, it became apparent to me that I am a cyborg too; in my hands I was holding a smart phone reading a text message from a friend after I strolling though my facebook page. I may not be a digital native (not born into the Internet Age), but I am surely a digital immigrant. When I wake up, before I get a cup of coffee, I talk to the world online: I read the news (local and global), check my email, and see what my friends are up to and so forth. And the morning is just a start of my daily online life, so much so that when I do not have an access to Internet, I feel like I am not a complete person. I lack a part of my self... my digital self. Do you know what I am talking about? Do you have such feelings? Many of us live in physical and cyber space at the same time, surrounded by the environment that is both off and online. And since our identities are delicate mechanisms developed though interaction with the environment, we should not only use cyberspace but also study its social and individual effects.

Course description: Digital technologies are a part of our daily life. Video-gaming, texting, the Web, iPads, e-Readers, smart phones, computers, and virtual reality provide us with new experiences. They challenge time and geographic boundaries and our understandings of what it means to be human. Broadly defined, anthropology is a discipline that studies human condition; hence, it is well-suited to study such emerging and entrenching challenges.

While adopting an anthropological lens in this course students explore how and in what ways the digital environment affects an individual, community, and the state, and how, in turn, individuals affect the digital landscape. Focusing on the dynamic interaction between digital environment and humans, students (1) tease out what is "new" about our contemporary moment, (2) clarify changes and continuity that characterize this digital age and its effects on our daily lives, (3) explore virtuality as a part of our daily experiences, and (4) learn how and in what ways cyberspace becomes a place of personal achievement, dwelling of community-like formations, and of social control and politics.

In cyberspace, like offline, humans are not just consumers. They are **prosumers** – producers of the content that they consume. In this class students not only consume but also actively produce knowledge.

The goal of the course is to help students to learn how to better approach, understand and interact with the off and online world. This course aims to enhance students' ability to find and sort through data, analyze information, share and discuss knowledge, and to critique and create it. This goal reflects **well-established anthropological principles** applicable in both on and offline environments: (1) human worldviews are socio-historical and not natural; (2) humans are not isolated but interconnected on local and global levels; thus, various aspects of their lives affect each other in meaningful ways; (3) human knowledge about the world is not finalized; it continues to evolve in different trajectories; (4) humans affect each other and their environment; they are not only adaptable but also creative; (5) existential vulnerability is a shared human condition both on and offline and calls for empathy; and (6) humans create and participate in the world; this "participation in the world is not a choice, only how we participate is our choice" (some of these are adopted from Michael Wasch' talk @ http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxKC-Michael-Wesch-From-Knowl;search:tedxkc [accessed April 3, 2013]).

The course includes five modules. The course content is organized by weeks. On BB, on the left side of the computer screen, there is a menu, which includes weeks and assignments' links. Each week includes a full module. The content for the following week's module (e.g., week 2/module 2 and so forth) becomes available at the end of each week on Friday's midnight.

The course assignments reflect students' ability to learn about Anthropology of Internet and create knowledge. For the duration of the course, the students become an on-line community. The assignments are meant to facilitate students' learning, social interactions and personal reflections on their experiences. The assignments are defined in terms of content and form. The content focuses on the substance of the assignments; the form refers to the format in which any one assignment ought to be executed.

In the course, students produce knowledge individually and as a group. Therefore, the course's assignments are divided into group and personal assignments, or "group work" and "individual-centered" assignments. These are to be completed throughout the course and/or at the end of each module. In the course menu, there is a tab that describes all the assignments in the course. The assignments' deliverables are due on specific dates. In the menu each assignment has its own tab; the students are reminded about the dates to post these assignments within our weekly modules and through the course's calendar.

Group assignments

Content: Cyber-literacy projects (news about cyberspace such as social control, economics, (cyber)war/terrorism, cyber-law, politics, associations), completed at the end of the fourth module. 200 points.
Form: online in-group collaboration (or multi-author blogs). The number of groups will depend on the number of students enrolled in the course.

UNH's BB offers various group collaboration tools. While using a blogging tool, each student will create posts and receive feedback from others. This assignment will have five stages: (1) choose the topic; (2) data collection over a period of four weeks, (3) comments on each of your classmate's entrees; (4) synthesis, in the form of a file-report; (5) comments on your classmates' final reports. During the first stage of the project – Week 1 (by Friday) – each student has to submit the topic of her/his choice (20 points). During the second stage – each student will post four consecutive data entrees (80 points = 20 points by 4). The students' comments on their classmates' blog posts will earn the total of 50 points (50 = 10 points for 5 responses to your classmates from Week 2 till the end of the class). Please provide constructive feedback! Then each student will write a summary of her/his findings in a form of a report (40 points). Finally each student will post a short response to two of their classmates' summaries (10 points = 5 points by 2 responses to 2 of your classmates' summaries).

Content: Summaries and Q/A on the readings. 150 points.
Form: discussion board. For each reading/film/lecture, every student writes a brief summary in the form of three bullet points and posts a question to the rest of the class. Summaries receive 50 points. Your question will be evaluated for (a) depth (not just factual), and (b) for your ability to inspire discussion and relate you point to the previous readings. The question receives 50 points. Each student will have to answer one question posted by another student. These answers should be substantive and not declarative, in hopes of generating further conversation. This answer is worth 50 points.

I will grade your answers based on this sample rubric (maximum of 50 points):
50 = Thoughtful and reflective comments that encourages others to respond and that makes specific references to the course content (e.g., text readings and online lectures)
40 = Thoughtful and reflective comments that encourages others to respond but that does not make specific references to the course content (e.g., text readings and online lectures)
30 = Some appropriate and reflective comments, but lacking thoughtfulness or includes unclear or vague comments
20 = Vague and unclear comments, does not encourage others to respond
10 = Response shows minimal effort ("I agree with what _____ says")
0 = Does not post a response

//Not offered this semester:
Content: Wikis about anthropology of Internet (completed at the end of each module) 100 points (i.e., ten wikis [two at the end of each module] 10 points each).
Form: on-line collaboration (Blackboard [BB] wikis). Wiki is a web page created collaboratively and a source of information. Through knowledge-sharing and revising existing information the students can add content to and edit wikis. Information can be organized and re-organized by adding information, tags, bookmarks, or categorizing. Working as a group the students will revise a wiki's content. Although the final goal is to create a collaborative product, BB provides the instructor with an ability to check the progress of each student.//

Individual assignments

Content: Personal introduction. 50 points
Form: youtube video, or a still photo and text (tell us a short story about yourself), your choice (could be a PPpresentation).

Content: E-ethnographic research. Ethnographic research combines an immersion and first hand research through participant-observation of and interviews about others' life online. This life is real, in a sense that virtuality is part of our daily reality. The students explore the meaning of online-life (online interactions) for the site's participants/inhabitants. The students are encouraged to consider topics not covered in the course, such as religion or art in cyberspace. The final product is presented at the end of the last module. Total 250 points
Form: Weekly notes about your web-observations and participation and interviewing should be posted by each student on their blog starting second week of classes. Each post is worth 50 points (4 posts = 200 points). The final presentation, at the end of the fifth week, is worth 50 points as well. The final product can be presented as an online video presentation, interactive essay, webpage, or a traditional paper; this should be submitted on the date specified in the syllabus after the last day of classes.

Content: My life online. Total 150 points (minimum five posts, 20 points each).
Form: Inasmuch as anthropologists learn about others, they learn about themselves. Over the period of five weeks, at the end of each week, while using individual journals or blogs on BB, each student has to post short reports tracking her/his life on-line beginning the first week of classes and ending at the end of the fifth's week. These reports should analyze your online life it in terms of time, social relations, relations between online and offline environments and importance of online environment in your life. While tracking their life online, the students should note what sorts of social software they use, document the ways they keep in touch with people, note other ways (in addition to cyberspace) they live their daily lives as digital natives/immigrants. Finally a one to two pages paper should summarize individual life online at the end of the course (50 points).

Content: Checking knowledge received in the class. Total 100 points (ten questions 10 points each).
Form: An online quiz conducted at the end of the course prior to the final reflection paper.

Content: Final reflection. Total 100 points.
Form: A short paper (one to five pages paper). This should be a narrative about your experiences in this class, focusing on what you have learned about Internet, anthropology and yourself. The students should consider the following questions: What is "new" about our contemporary moment? What are changes and continuity that characterize this digital age and its effects on our daily lives? In what ways is virtuality a part of our daily experiences? How and in what ways cyberspace becomes a place of personal achievement, dwelling of community-like formations, and of social control and politics? Must use a reference to at least two readings/films assigned in the course!

In the mid and end of the class, I will conduct brief assessments that manage progress towards students' learning outcomes (not graded). Additionally, one minute paper "I was surprised to learn that..." "I wish..." should be completed at the end of the first module.

Best practices for students

When approaching and completing each day of the module, please follow this order:

1. Watch and review the videotaped presentations for the day.
2. Complete the assigned reading/videos/films for the day. These are listed in the syllabus under the "course information" tab (see the course menu) and appear in the content folder for each day and either available online or can be found in the books required in this course.
3. Complete the day's discussion forum under the general discussion-board (also available in each day's content folder) and homework assignments (if applicable) for the day. The discussion-board must be completed by the end of the day. The assignments must be turned in (posted under appropriate forums on BB, blogs, and/or journals) by the dates identified in the syllabus (the dates are replicated in contend folders and on the course's calendar).
4. Post bullet point summaries of the assigned readings/films/lectures on daily forums, answer one question posted by your classmates, and write one question for them. (Daily forums can be found either under "Discussions" tab or in the daily content folders.)
5. Do your ethnographic research and online literacy project beginning the second week of classes (on May 28th) and continue until June 17th. Post e-notes or vlogs from your e-observation-participation or interviewing or surveying in the journal set up for you by the instructor. In order to receive full credit, all the work must be completed on time!

Grading scale (%)
A(93- 100) A- (90–92) B+(87–89) B(83–86) B-(80–82) C+(77–79) C(73–76) C-(70–72) D+(67–69) D(63–66) D-(60–62) F (Below 60)

Academic Integrity Statement: Academic integrity is a core University value which insures respect for the academic reputation of the University, its students, faculty and staff, and the degrees it confers. The University expects that students will conduct themselves in an honest and ethical manner and respect the intellectual work of others. Please be familiar with the UNH policy on Academic Integrity. Please ask about my expectations regarding permissible or encouraged forms of student collaboration if they are unclear. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see pp. 21-24 http://www.unh.edu/student/rights/srrr0910.pdf

If you violate integrity code you will be reported to the appropriate office, will receive F for that assignment, and may receive F in the course (depending on the level of your offence). The students have a right to appeal.

Disability Statement: Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, please see http://www.unh.edu/disabilityservices/

Your work: Works in all media produced by students as part of their course participation at UNH maybe used by the University for educational purposes. All personal references will be erased. A written permission from the author will be secured.

Non-sexist language: The university has a nonsexist language policy (e.g., instead of "man" use "human). All of your work for the course should reflect also sensitivity to other biases that might compromise the quality of your work.

Required readings:

De Zengotita, Thomas.
      2005. *Mediated: How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It*.
      New York: Bloomsbury.
Mardi, Bonnie, A.
      2010. *My life as a Night Elf Priest: An Anthropological Account of World of
      Warcraft.* The University of Michigan Press.

These books may be available through UNH library (in e-format). Other course readings/films/lectures are available online. They can be found under the Week# tabs. The readings and other assignments are organized by day and are assigned special content areas under each module/week.

Resources for students:

UNH Writing Center
862-3272
http://www.unh.edu/writing/
Counseling Center
862-2090
http://www.unhcc.unh.edu/
Health Services
862-1530
http://www.unh.edu/health-services/
Disability Services for Students

862-2607
http://www.unh.edu/disabilityservices/
Center for Academic Resources and Student Support Services
862-3698
http://www.cfar.unh.edu/tutoring.html
SHARPP: Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program
862-3494
http://www.unh.edu/sharpp/

Schedule

Week 1
//Cyberspace, prosumer, and anthropology

Q: what is anthropology? who is prosumer? what are cyberspace, www and virtual world? what does anthropology have to do with cyberspace? how to do ethnographic research in cyberspace? what is human communication and how does it change in cyberspace?

Man is God: The New Age http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfH8Lrq2QdM (a video vignette on prosumer)
AVATARA by 536 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4otpTZxJGKo (documentary on-line)
Review of AVATARA
http://www.intelligentagent.com/archive/Vol3_No2_VR_paul.html
Bell, M. 2008 "Toward a Definition of "Virtual Worlds"
http://journals.tdl.org/jvwr/article/view/283
Wesch, Michael, Ethnographic intro to youtube
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-lZ4_hU (video-lecture)
Wesch, Michael, http://ksuanth.wetpaint.com/page/Ethnography+of+the+Future
Hakken, David 1999 Cyborgs@Cyberspace (chapter on methods)
Cyber ethnography http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/282/619#g3
Boellstroff, Tom. 2008. Coming of Age in Second Life. Ch 3. (methods)
Notes on Boellstroff http://johnpostill.com/2009/07/07/notes-on-boellstorffs-2008-coming-of-age-in-second-life/

Week 2
//Society and cyber-knowledge
Q: what kinds of knowledge are available in online? who creates knowledge? how does online knowledge challenge our understandings and experiences of knowledge-production and dissemination?

Lainer, J. "Digital Maoism"
http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/lanier06/lanier06_index.html

Carr, N. "Amorality of the Web 2.0"
http://www.roughtype.com/?p=110
Baker, N. "The Charms of Wikipedia"
https://www.msu.edu/~jmonberg/415/Schedule_files/Baker%20on%20Charms%20of%2
0Wikipedia.pdf

Week 3
//Self/ identity and others:
Q: what does it mean to be human in cyberspace? how do relationships with others affect
the self? what are the challenges cyberspace posits to our understandings of
individual(ism) and of communities/social groups? how does online interaction affect our
understanding of friendship? to what degree is cyberspace liberating and/or controlling
our lives? to what extend does cyberspace add to human existential vulnerability?

Papacharissi, Zizi. *A Networked Self*. (2011. Selected chapters)
http://viralmedia.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/45052678/A%20Networked%20Self-
Identity,%20Community%20and%20Culture%20on%20Social%20Network%20Sites%2
0%5B2011%5D.pdf
Various virtual selves: technokinship http://technokinship.tumblr.com/archive
Adams, T. and Stephen Smith. *Electronic Tribes* (2008. Selected chapters)
De Zengotita, Thomas (chapters from the book)
An example of research on facebook
http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ant/hka/vol2/Chapter2_2008.pdf
Castells, Manuel. "Why Networks Matter"
http://dl.dropbox.com/u/82198/Castells_Why_Networks_Matter.pdf

Week 4
//Gender in transnational cyberspace
Q: how does gender manifest itself in cyberspace? how does cyberspace affect our
gendered identities? how do experiences in cyberspace challenge existing gender
stereotypes? what is transnational cyberspace?

Mardi, Bonnie, A. 2010. *My life as a Night Elf Priest: An Anthropological Account of
World of Warcraft*. The University of Michigan Press.

Week 5
//Social control, Politics and Dreams
Q: what are some examples of social control in cyberspace? is there social stratification
(e.g., class) online and is it effected and experienced? how does the state manifest itself
online? what is digital divide? what is the role of cyberspace in social mobilization and
social conflict? in what ways does cyberspace challenge existing political and legal
systems, leadership, authority, and power dynamics? what are the relationships between
cyberspace and violence? what are the relations between cyberspace and popular
culture? how does cyberspace affect our visions of human future?

Hal Abelson, Ken Ledeen, Harry Lewis. *Blown to bits*
(http://www.bitsbook.com/excerpts/) [2008. Selected chapters]
Papacharissi, Zizi. 2011. *A Networked Self*. Ch. 9
http://viralmedia.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/45052678/A%20Networked%20Self-
Identity,%20Community%20and%20Culture%20on%20Social%20Network%20Sites%2
0%5B2011%5D.pdf
Eltantawy, N and J. B. Wiest. 2011. "Social Media in the Egyptian revolution"
https://www.aswat.com/files/Social%20Media%20in%20the%20Egyptian%20Revolution
.pdf
Sutter, John. 2011. "The faces of Egypt's 'Revolution 2.0'" February 21, 2011 12:25 p.m.
EST
http://www.cnn.com/2011/TECH/innovation/02/21/egypt.internet.revolution/index.html
El-Nawawy, Mohammad, and Sahar Khamis
http://www.cyberorient.net/article.do?articleId=7439
Films (select one): The Matrix, Minority Report, Surrogates, Avatar, I Robot, and Sleep
Dealer
Sleep Dealer (reviews)
http://www.wired.com/entertainment/hollywood/news/2008/01/sleep_dealer
and http://flowtv.org/2011/12/race-labor-unplugged/