

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

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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 through 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. In this class we adopt an anthropological lens to learn about such emerging and entrenching challenges. Broadly defined, anthropology is a discipline that studies the human condition; hence, it is well-suited for the task.

In the period of five weeks, students will 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 they will (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 in the physical world, humans are not just consumers. They are **prosumers** – producers of the content that they consume. In this class, while investigating what information others produce and consume, the students will not only consume knowledge but also actively produce it.

The goal of the course is to help students to learn how to better approach, understand and interact with the off and online world. In order to become versatile agents in contemporary society, this course aims to achieve the following **objectives**: (1) To enhance students’ ability to find and sort through data, (2) analyze information, (3) share and discuss knowledge, (4) critique and create knowledge, (5) learn more about themselves and others, and (6) to apply this knowledge.

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 and 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>).

The course content is organized by weeks: it includes **five modules corresponding to five weeks**. On the left side of the screen, in the main menu, you will see several tabs. The main menu includes tabs for each week – each week includes a full module – tabs for each assignment and discussions. Please explore the ones that are available. The content for the following week (e.g., week 2/module 2 and so forth) will become available at the end of each week on Friday at midnight. You will have time to explore it during the weekend.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

These aim to develop students’ ability to find, analyze, and create knowledge about cyberspace -- about social relations and individual uniqueness and diversity online. For the duration of the course, the students will become an on-line community. This will help us to replicate the kinds of social connections and interactions appropriate for cyberspace and imitate face-to-face interactions during a physical class meeting (e.g., discussions). In the course, you will produce knowledge individually and as (a) group(s). Therefore, the assignments are divided into individual and group assignments.

The assignments are meant to facilitate students’ learning and interactions and 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 will be executed. The group and individual assignments are completed throughout the course and/or at the end of each module. In the course menu, on the left of the screen you will find a tab that describes all course assignments (as a page in a book does). Some of these will be due on specific dates. There is a separate tab for each assignment in the main menu; for summaries and Q&A there is a link to Discussion Board at the end of each day’s content. I remind students of the dates to post these assignments within weekly modules as e-notes from the instructor, as well as through class announcements. These dates are also available in the class calendar, which can be found under a separate tab in the main menu (on the left of the screen).

WORKLOAD

This course is five weeks, so each day is roughly half a week to a week during a regular semester. You are expected to spend **2-4 hours/day** working on this course, in order to

complete all the assignments in the timely manner! Please consult the syllabus, and read and listen to all the instructions! I am here for you via virtual meetings, emails, or/and skype!

Every weekday you have something to read or watch (sometimes these are my presentations but not always). At the end of each weekday, you summarize the material as three bullet points and answer one question posted by your classmates and post one question for them. This is done to replicate the class environment where students interact with each other.

We have 5 weeks; the semester is usually 15 weeks. So, we are covering 3 weeks of a regular semester during each week of the online summer session; during each of the five weeks you would have had 6 in-class meetings (regular semester). Therefore, there are 5 weekdays each week of online work that match 6 meetings during a regular semester.

The point of an online class is not to loose the quality of in-person interaction, but accelerate the speed of learning. Since it is a class about cyberspace and social relations in it, we are trying to replicate an online community by a) Q &A and b) group work.

Just like during a regular semester you will have assignments. Therefore, in addition to daily summaries and Q&A, by the end of each week you will have (starting with week two), one post about your digital life online, one post for your e-ethnography project, and one post in your literacy (group) project. You can complete these three posts by the end of the weekend (i.e., by Sunday). When you post in your literacy project, make sure you read and respond to at least one other post by your group members.

At the end of Week 5, you will have a quiz (10 multiple choice questions). At the end of Week 4, you, as a group, will define 2 wikis on BB collaborate or wiki tool available under your group tools menu (BB collaborate requires training; the links were sent to you and available as announcements, as well as, under your group work assignment tab).

These four (counting quiz) assignments are what you would do during a regular semester.

After week 5, on the dates indicated, you will submit (1) a summary of your life online, (2) a report on your ethnographic research, and (3) a group report on your literacy project and a brief response to two other groups' reports. You will also write a brief paper – a final reflection paper about what you have learned in the class.

A reminder: I have BB collaborate office hours from 10-11 am each weekday and will be happy to explain again everything in detail to you. If you cannot make my office hours, we can set up an appointment at a time convenient for you.

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)

POLICIES

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/>. Works in all media produced by students as part of their course participation at UNH may be 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: UNH 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.

Late work: Your work will be downgraded 5% each day it is late.

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

REQUIRED READINGS

Dave Eggers. 2014. The Circle. Vintage. Available at Durham Exchange, through online

vendors, interlibrary loan, kindle, etc. (under 15 dollars).

Mardi, Bonnie, A. 2010. My life as a Night Elf Priest: An Anthropological Account of World of Warcraft. The University of Michigan Press (under 20 dollars).

Also accessible from UNH library:

(<http://libproxy.unh.edu/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/unh/Top?id=10395616>)
or ebrary (create an account and you can borrow it for all your devices for 14 days).

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/>

OFFICE HOURS

Email me (s.peshkova@unh.edu) or BB collaborate with me during weekdays (M, T, W, Th, F) from 10-11 am during my virtual office hours or by appointment on BB collaborate. Make sure you have gone through appropriate training and know how to use BB collaborate. The session is called Office Hours.

ASSIGNMENTS

Group assignments:

1.) Cyber-literacy

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. In line with the course objectives, this assignment will help students to learn how to gather and critically evaluate information online.

Total: 200 points

Form: online in-group collaboration. You will be broken into groups with a discussion board to post your news and the final summary of your news research project. Each

student is expected to create posts and receive feedback from others. Please read the following carefully!

This assignment will have five stages: (1) you, as a group, choose the topic. For example: Research the news on Twitter and a history of Twitter; (2) collect data (news) over a period of four weeks, (3) comment on other classmates' entries/news; (4) your group together will create a synthesis of all in-group findings, in the form of a report, and post the report for others to read on the discussion board under the appropriate forum; (5) comment on your classmates' (from other groups) final reports. On BB, each group will have email exchange and a discussion board.

During the first stage of the project – Week 1 (by Friday) each group will agree on the topic, via email exchanges, and submit the topic of to the instructor via email. Starting with Week 2 – during the second stage – each student will post four consecutive data entries (60 points, i.e. 15 points each). The in-group students will comment on each other's posts (40 = 10 points for 4 responses to your in-group classmates from Week 2 till the end of the class). In other words, each student is to post four comments to other students' findings **within the group: one comment per week**. Please provide constructive feedback! Then, each group will write a summary of their findings, a report (60 points). Finally, each student will post a short response to the other groups' (**outside your group**) summaries of their findings (40 points = 20 points per responses to 2 of your classmates' summaries). Please let me know if I can clarify this assignment for you! Thank you! The final summary is due the 23th of June and comments on other groups' summaries is due the 27th of June.

2.) Summaries and Q&A on the readings/films/presentations

Content: Summaries and Q/A on the readings.

Total: 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 your 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 encourage others to respond and that make specific references to the course content (e.g., text readings and online lectures)

40 = Thoughtful and reflective comments that encourage 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 include 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

3.) Wikis

Content: Wikis* about anthropology of Internet.

Total: 50 points (two wikis 25 points each).

Form: you will do an on-line collaboration within the same group as you did the news literacy project. 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. I repeat, you will have the same groups/partners from the news literacy project. You will work together on coming up with a definition and an explanation of a term/concept pertinent to the course: "Anthropology of Internet." If two groups happen to share terms/concept - it is OK! I will be able to see your personal work. **Do not plagiarize - do not copy and paste!** Use Wikipedia **ONLY** *as a conceptual inspiration!* **A significant interaction and wikis' content is due 13th of June**; wikis final is due on the same day as the online literacy summary.

Individual assignments:

1.) Introductions

Content: Personal introduction posted by the end of the first day of classes.

Total: 50 points.

Form: A digital story about yourself. Some questions to get you started: Who are you? What do you think we should know about you? Do you have a hobby? Is there an adjective you can use to describe yourself? What are three of the most important things about you? Please post your introduction (e.g., a short story and a picture, or a video, youtube video, power point, prezi) on the forum on BB! **Due May 19, 2014**

2.) E-ethnographic research

Content: Since one of the course objectives is to investigate social relations online, the students will conduct a short e-ethnographic project. Ethnographic research combines an immersion (you ought to become a part of the community you are learning about) 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 and that humans create relations with one another online inasmuch as they do offline. In this

assignment, students will aim to understand the meaning of online life/interactions of a site for its participants/inhabitants of this site and investigate social relations among them. First, the students will choose a question that they would like to investigate (you are encouraged to consider topics not covered in the course such as religion on-line or art in cyberspace): how do personal religious beliefs affect social interactions in Second Life? You will present the final product - your ethnography – after the end of the last module.

Total: 250 points

Form: You will post weekly notes (web-servation and participation and interviewing and so forth) on their blog starting second week of classes. Each post will earn the student 50 points (4 posts = 200 points). The final presentation after the fifth week of classes (27th of June) will earn the student 50 points. The final product can be presented as an online video presentation, an interactive essay, or a webpage, or a traditional paper at the end of the course. Whichever form of presentation you will choose, you need to be sure to describe: 1. your question or thesis, 2. your methods (at least two, e.g., participation and interviewing), 3. references to at least two in-class readings, 4. evidences to substantiate your argument or answer to your initial question, 5. problems with research and what can be improved. I will be happy to tell you more about the content of your final presentation.

3.) My life online

Content: Gather information about your life online.

Total: 100 points (four posts at a minimum, 20 points each + summary after the end of week 5 (20 points)).

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 a discussion board on BB, each student will post short reports tracking her/his life on-line during the week, that analyses this life in terms of (1) time, (2) social relations that are established, maintained or terminated, (3) relations between your online and offline life, and (4) importance of your life online. While tracking their life online, the students will note what sort of social software they use, (and the hardware), document the ways they keep in touch with people, and note other ways (in addition to cyberspace) they live their daily lives as digital natives/immigrants. Then, a one-two page paper should summarize individual life online at the end of the course (20 points). The final paper is to be posted in the Assignments' folder under the "My life online tab". Due June 25, 2014

4.) Quiz

Content: A test to check knowledge received in the class by answering questions.

Total: 100 points (ten questions 10 points each)

Form: An online quiz conducted prior to the final reflection paper.

5.) Final reflection

Content: Final reflection paper (a short, one to five pages paper), an assessment of learning objectives for the class.

Total: 100 points.

Form: This will be a narrative about your experiences from the class, focusing on what you have learned about cyberspace, differences and similarities between online and offline in terms of social relations. The students should consider two of 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 does cyberspace become a place of personal achievement, dwelling of community-like formations, and of social control and politics? Must use a reference to at least two in class readings/films!

Due the 24th of June.

Assessments: At the end of each week, I will conduct brief assessments that manage progress towards students’ learning outcomes (not graded). These will take a form of a one-minute paper “I was surprised to learn that...” “I wish...” completed at the end of the each module.

Additionally: I always reply to or comment on some of your questions and answers. Some of these comments will be worded as questions. Please make sure you respond to these: make sure you READ my and other students' posts in response to your question or summary or assignment! Thank you!

Cyberspace is immense! All we can do is to warm your taste buds! There is so much more to explore and learn about! Please contribute to this knowledge by suggesting ways of improving the course content and share your thoughts and links with other students in the class! Engage and reach out!

BEST PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS

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

1. Watch and review the enotes for the day.
2. Complete the assigned reading/viewing for the day. Readings are listed in the syllabus and under the “course information” tab (see the course menu) and appear in the content

folder for each day. They are either available online or are found in the books required in this course.

3. Complete the forum for the day under the general discussion board (also available in the 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, journals) by the dates identified in the syllabus and on the course's calendar.

4. Post bullet point summaries of the readings/films/lectures on daily forums and answer one question posted by your classmates, and write one question for them. Daily forum can be found either under the "Discussions" tab or in the daily content folders.

5. Do your ethnographic research or literacy project that will begin on the second week of classes and continue until Thursday of the last week. Post e-notes or blogs from you e-observation-participation or interviewing or surveying in the forum set up by the instructor. In order to receive full credit, all the work must be completed on time by the date identified in the syllabus and on the course calendar.

SCHEDULE

Week 1/Module 1//Cyberspace, prosumer, and anthropology

Some questions that will be explored in the module: What is anthropology? What is prosumer? What are cyberspace and virtual worlds? 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?

Important things to complete this week: (1) introduce yourself and get to know others and your in-group members; (2) choose your e-research site (e.g., reddit, facebook, minecraft) for your online ethnography project; (3) choose your topic for the cyber-literacy project (e.g., internet governance) and try to "google it" - collect news about it; (4) start documenting (keeping notes about) your life online for your "my life online" project. Read the rest, please!

The readings are available online.

Week 2/Module 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?

The readings are available online.

Week 3/Module 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 extent does cyberspace add to human existential vulnerability?

The readings are available online and in:

Dave Eggers. 2014. The Circle. Vintage. Available at Durham Exchange, through online vendors, interlibrary loan, kindle, etc. (under 15 dollars).

Week 4/ Module 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?

The readings are available online and in:

Mardi, Bonnie, A. 2010. My life as a Night Elf Priest: An Anthropological Account of World of Warcraft. The University of Michigan Press (under 20 dollars). You might want to check UNH library for an ecopy.

Week 5/ Module 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?

The readings and the film are available online.

At the end of each day of every module:

There will be a discussion board forum at the end of each day. This is a part of the "Summaries and Q/A on the readings" assignment.

Please post a brief summary in the form of three bullet points for each reading/film/lecture 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 **must** 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.

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- 40 = Thoughtful and reflective comments that encourage 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 include 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

SAMPLE RUBRIC

The grades are based on substance and participation! Assuming the total one can get for a post is 10 points, I will combine substance, quality, and participation in the grade.

Feedback guidelines and rubric

Clarity and Relevance	Your contributions should be free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors.
	If you use quotes to support your comments, make sure to provide reference where these quote are coming from.
	Avoid off-topic posts. Substantive development of a different but related line of discussion is not the same as being off- topic (see below).
The quality of your comments	Your contributions should be substantive: important, meaningful, or worth considering. Clearly support a position; add to the discussion by critically reflecting on what has been discussed; develop the topic; or, move the discussion in a new direction; etc.
	Simple “I agree/disagree/don’t know/me too” comments, regardless of length, are valid but not substantive. To earn credit they should also include substantive justification.
	Here are examples of ways to add discussion value: post an original answer to a question; agree or disagree substantively; ask a substantive question about the material, case, or topic; share relevant experiences, especially where they are insightful or expand understanding of a concept; relate a recent, relevant news event, article or similar item you have read, with explanation of how or why it is relevant and a link to the source; come up with a scenario or example of how you might apply the concepts or ideas...
The timeliness and consistency of your involvement	Earlier substantive comments move the course discussion forward. As a rule, post early and (reasonably) often (however many is expected from you and more!!!) We welcome more! Engage in a discussion, do not just write it off.
	The higher quality the discussion, the more you and the class will benefit. Aim to devote 40 minutes a day reading and responding.
	Comments have to be posted weekly; if all of them are posted during the last two weeks of classes, they will not be counted.
	Be proactive! Lead others in a discussion.
DISCUSSION GRADING RUBRIC	
10 POINTS	Substantive. Shows thoughtful analysis of assigned materials and other appropriate sources. Citations or links provided where appropriate. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are correct.
5	Less substantive. Fairly complete but not well-articulated. Grammar, spelling or punctuation errors evident. Tends to summarize or repeat what others have already posted w/out additional meaningful contribution.
0	Incomplete. Superficial. Markedly unclear due to errors
	<i>Participation Descriptions</i>
10 POINTS	First-post deadlines met. Subsequent contributions/responses to peers timely and regular.
5	First-post late. Subsequent contributions/responses to peers limited to

	beginning/end of the summer term
0	Minimal or no response. Late.