



# UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Winter 2020

FACULTY OF ARTS

Department of Sociology

Department of Sociology Website: <https://soci.ucalgary.ca/>

COURSE TITLE: Digitalization of Society			
Course Number	SOCI 401.60		
Pre/Co-Requisites	SOCI 313		
Instructor Name	Dr Dean Curran	Email	dcurran@ucalgary.ca
Instructor Email Policy	Feel free to contact me over email. Please put your course number and section in your email's subject line, and include a proper salutation, your full name, student ID, and a proper closing in the body of your email. Emails will be answered within two business days, though usually shorter than this – though I do not answer emails over the weekend. Please take that into account when emailing me questions pertaining assignments or exams. If you have a course-related question, please check the course outline first. E-mail is primarily for administrative purposes and does not fit well as a replacement for an office visit. Questions about the course content and readings, concerns about grades, or any other personal issues should be dealt with in person during my office hours.		
Office Location	SS918	Office Hours	Tuesday 10:55am-11:55am Thursday 12:50pm-1:50pm
Class Dates	Tuesday, Thursday		
Class Times	9:30am-10:45am		
Class Location	SH278		

## Course Description

From the rise of digital economy giants to the omnipresence of social media to the increasing utilization of digital surveillance, contemporary societies have experienced massive shifts related to the increasingly digitally networked nature of society. This course investigates some of the debates related to the shift away from print culture, the shift towards the increasing mediation of social practices by the internet, and how the changes associated with the increasing networked

digitalization of social and material life are affecting knowledge, politics, social relations, and the economy.

## Course Objectives

### Aims and Objectives

At the end of this course, students should have knowledge and understanding of:

- Some of the dominant approaches to the digitalization of social life.
- The debates regarding digitalization and politics and society and how these debates relate to democracy, political economy, and social interaction.
- How these debates over digitalization and media relate to key debates in contemporary sociological theory, political economy, and political theory.

This course should also enhance students' ability to:

- To theorize in a critical and analytical manner about how to conceive of the causes and consequences of digitalization.
- Write clearly and cogently about different approaches to digitalization.
- Potentially make a contribution to existing debates in the literature on digital media

### Course Content

In exploring theoretical approaches to environmental problems, this course is highly theoretical, as well as making extensive reference to empirical evidence to evaluate and apply these theories. While SOCI 331 and 333 are not formal prerequisites for this course, it is advised that students who do not have a basis in theoretical approaches to social life are likely to find the content in this course quite challenging.

### *Learning and Discussion*

While many truths that we hold may appear self-evident to ourselves, rather than remaining in our silos, a core part of the task of universities and of critical social theory is to critically engage with other viewpoints and to learn to further articulate the reasons for one's views. It is particularly important that we engage in respectful conversation in classroom discussions; likewise, it is important to emphasize that disagreement does not in itself automatically constitute disrespect of other viewpoints. In challenging dominant views in society and our own views, we can further our ability to better understand society as well better enable ourselves to engage in critical debates ongoing in contemporary society.

### Required Textbooks, Readings, Materials, Electronic Resources

- Christian Fuchs (2017) *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edition. Sage
- Eli Pariser (2012) *Filter Bubble*. Penguin
- Readings from D2L

## Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Wk	Date	Course Topic	Reading
1	Jan. 14 & 16	<b>Introduction to Course, Presentation discussion</b>	Fuchs (2017) 'What is Social About Social Media' & "Critical Thinking" <i>Social Media: A Critical Introduction</i> , 2nd edition [henceforth <i>Social Media</i> ], <b>pp. 1- 11</b>
			Zeynep Tufekci "It's the (Democracy-Poisoning) Golden Age of Free Speech" <i>Wired</i> 01.16.18 <a href="https://www.wired.com/story/free-speech-issue-tech-turmoil-new-censorship/">https://www.wired.com/story/free-speech-issue-tech-turmoil-new-censorship/</a>
2	Jan. 21 & 23	<b>Critical Theory</b>	Fuchs 'Critical Theory Approaches' <i>Social Media</i> , pp 11-30.
			Adorno' Culture Industry Reconsidered', pp. 98-106. [on D2L]
3	Jan. 28 & 30	<b>Social Media &amp; Big Data</b>	Fuchs 'What Are Social Media and Big Data?' <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 33-64
			<b>Arendt</b> "The Public and the Private Realm" in <i>The Portable Hannah Arendt</i> , pp. 191-218 [on D2L]
4	Feb. 4 & 6	<b>Participatory Culture</b>	Fuchs 'Social Media as Participatory Culture', <i>Social Media</i> pp. 65-84
			Eli Pariser (2012) <i>Filter Bubble</i> , Introduction, pp. 1-20.
5	Feb. 11 & 13	<b>Communication Power</b>	Fuchs 'Social Media and Communication Power' <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 85-118
			Pariser, <i>Filter bubble</i> , chapter 1, pp. 21-46
	<b>Feb. 16-22</b>	<b>Break</b>	
6	Feb. 25 & 27	<b>Political Economy of Social Media</b>	Fuchs (2017) ' The Power and Political Economy of Social Media' <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 121-152.
			Pariser <i>Filter Bubble</i> , chapter 2, pp. 47-76
7	Mar. 3 & 5	<b>Search Engines &amp; Google</b>	Fuchs (2017) 'Google: Good or Evil Search Engine' <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 153- 182
			Pariser <i>Filter Bubble</i> , chapter 3, pp. 77-108
8	Mar. 10 & 12	<b>Facebook</b>	Fuchs (2017) 'Facebook: Surveillance in the Age of Edward Snowden, <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 183- 216
			Pariser <i>Filter Bubble</i> , chapter 4, pp. 109-136
9	Mar. 17 & 19	<b>Twitter</b>	Fuchs (2017) 'Twitter and Democracy: A New Public Sphere' <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 217 - 250.
			Pariser <i>Filter Bubble</i> , chapter 5, pp. 137- 164
10	Mar. 24 & 26	<b>Global Smart Cities, IoT, and Social Media</b>	Fuchs (2017) 'Weibo: Power, Ideology and Social Struggles in Chinese Capitalism' <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 251-282

			Pariser Filter Bubble Chapter 6 pp. 165-188
11	Mar. 31 & Apr 2	<b>The 'Sharing' Economy</b>	Fuchs (2017) 'Airbnb and Uber: The Political Economy of Online Sharing Platforms' <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 283-316 Pariser <i>Filter Bubble</i> Chapter 7 pp. 189-216
12	Apr. 7 & 9	<b>Wikipedia</b>	Fuchs (2017) 'Wikipedia: A New Democratic Form of Collaborative Work and Practice' <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 317-338 Pariser <i>Filter Bubble</i> , Chapter 8, pp. 217-245
13	14-Apr	<b>Moving Forward</b>	Fuchs 'Conclusion: Social Media and its Alternatives' <i>Social Media</i> , pp. 341-356.

## Methods of Assessment and Grading Weights

### Course Assessment

Participation (and discussion facilitation): 25%

Presentation: 25%

Theory Paper: 50% (**Due April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019**). **Submission via D2L dropbox**

### Course Structure

From Weeks 10-13, a lecture will be placed on D2L prior to the course time of Tuesday

### Course Participation 25%

Students are expected to regularly attend the lectures and other presentations, and to have completed the readings prior to the Thursday class. It is important that each student be prepared to contribute to the discussion of the readings, both for their own learning and for the benefit of the class as a whole. Additionally, each student will twice during the term be assigned a week where they will, with 2-4 other students, help facilitate discussion of the readings of that week.

### Discussant role after March 16, 2020

Students whose role it is to be a discussant will submit via email to me their comments on the text/discussion comments/questions by 9:00am the day they are supposed to serve as a discussant. I will compile these comments and put them on the D2L discussion board as a basis for student discussion. They are also welcome to participate in the discussion board during class.

We will hold class discussions during the class time (Thursday 9:30am-10:45). Students can participate by submitting comments. They can also submit comments on the readings Thursday's class as well.

### **Presentation 25%**

Given that this is a 400 level course, with capped enrollment, more of an effort will be made to have student participation and contribution in the course. Each student will be expected to present once. The presentations will run from week 3 to week 13. Since the schedule of the presentations will depend on enrollment, more information will be provided on presentations in week two.

### **Presentation after March 16, 2020**

In lieu of the changes in course delivery, we will need to modify the course outline to enable alternative ways of completing the presentation part of course evaluation for those who have not presented yet. Students will have two options for submitting this assignment. Students can choose either option 1 or option 2

Option 1: to submit a 1000 word thematic analysis of the reading. This analysis should not simply be a summary of the reading, but an analysis that highlights and organizes the discussion by key themes in the reading. This analysis should include detailed references to the text (including to specific page numbers of the texts). If submitting a paper, please submit via the D2L dropbox

Option 2: The second option would be for students to submit a 7-10 minute video of their presentations. These presentations will not be posted on D2L and will only be used for the purposes of marking. They will be evaluated by the same criteria as presentations in class are. If students also prepare a ppt to go along with their presentation they can either submit this separately as a file or they can include a visual of these while they present. All presentations due on March 19, 2020, will be given an extension until Monday March 23, at 3pm. Presentations after this week will be due on their usual time (Thursday at 9:30am). Students will submit these presentations via the D2L dropbox. Please submit in MP4 or AVI readable files. If you have difficulties, please contact the instructor.

### **Research Paper 50%**

The theory paper is a core component of assessment for this course. The paper assignment is intended to enable students to develop a substantive paper and to further develop the skills associated with this task. Students are heavily encouraged to plan ahead and consult with the instructor regarding their proposed essay topics. The paper should be approximately 2750 words (10% allowance either way). More information on the paper will be provided in the course.

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### **Technology Use**

#### **Class Etiquette**

Use of cell phones or internet on laptops distracts other students and the instructor and hence is not permitted. Based on previous feedback from students, the policy for this class will be that laptops without the use of internet is permitted, but that if laptops are used for other than taking notes, permission to use a laptop will be withdrawn.

## Submission and Late Policy

The term paper is to be handed in as a hard copy in class to the course instructor the day of class that it is due. The paper will receive a late penalty of FIVE (5) MARKS PER FULL OR PART DAY (a weekend counts as two full days). Any paper more than one (1) week late without a valid extension will receive a mark of zero (0). Accommodations are unlikely to be allowed for late entry other than illness or another serious and documented situation – talk to me prior to the deadline. Take-home exams that are late will receive a mark of F.

## General Referencing Guidelines

Always include page numbers of the source you are referencing - just using a date is not enough. Harvard style (in text citations with date and page e.g. (Marx 1848: 139) is recommended)

**Office Hours:** During office hours you are free to drop by without an appointment at any time. If you are unable to make that time, please contact me in advance so that we can try to arrange an appointment. Office hours are a very effective and efficient way of providing help and I encourage all students to make use of my office hours. In lieu of face-to-face office hours, students can email in questions or connect via Zoom with the instructor during office hours.

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## Grading Scale

Letter grades will be assigned and submitted to the registrar based on the following scale:

Grade	Percent range	Grade Point Value	Description
A+	95 – 100%	4.0	Outstanding performance
A	90 – 94.99%	4.0	Excellent performance
A-	85 – 89.99%	3.7	Approaching excellent performance
B+	80 – 84.99%	3.3	Exceeding good performance
B	75 – 79.99%	3.0	Good performance
B-	70 – 74.99%	2.7	Approaching good performance
C+	67 – 69.99%	2.3	Exceeding satisfactory performance
C	63 – 66.99%	2.0	Satisfactory performance
C-	59 – 62.99%	1.7	Approaching satisfactory performance
D+	55 – 58.99%	1.3	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject
D	50 – 54.99%	1.0	Minimal Pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject.
F	<50%	0	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.

## Handing in Papers, Assignments

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. **Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they can provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

## Research Ethics

Students are advised that any research with human subjects – including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

## Copyright Legislation

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf>) and requirements of the Copyright Act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

## Instructor Intellectual Property

Course materials created by professor(s) (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the professor(s). These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the professor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

## Academic Misconduct

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

## Absences and Deferrals

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Evidence in the form of documentation must be provided. For statutory declarations, original notarized notes must be provided. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of documentation be provided. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up

tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

**Deferred Final Exam Form:** Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information can be found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred-exams>

**Deferred Term Work Form:** Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at:

[https://live-ucalgary.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/1/deferred\\_termwork15\\_0.pdf](https://live-ucalgary.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/1/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf)

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

### Academic Accommodation

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/). Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

### Wellness and Mental Health Resources

The University of Calgary recognizes the pivotal role that mental health plays in physical health, social connectedness and academic success, and aspires to create a caring and supportive campus community where individuals can freely talk about mental health and receive support when needed. We encourage you to explore the excellent mental health resources available throughout the university community, such as counselling, self-help resources, peer support or skills-building available through Student Wellness Services (Room 370 MacEwan Student Centre, <https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services/services/mental-health-services>) and the Campus Mental Health Strategy (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>).

### Student Success Centre

The Student Success Centre provides services and programs to ensure students can make the most of their time at the University of Calgary. Our advisors, learning support staff, and writing support staff assist students in enhancing their skills and achieving their academic goals. They provide tailored learning support and advising programs, as well as one-on-one services, free of charge to all undergraduate and graduate students. For more information visit:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success>

### Student Ombuds Office

The Student Ombuds Office supports and provides a safe, neutral space for students. For more information, please visit [www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/) or email [ombuds@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ombuds@ucalgary.ca).

## Student Union (SU) Information

The SU Vice-President Academic can be reached at (403) 220-3911 or [suvpaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suvpaca@ucalgary.ca); Information about the SU, including elected Faculty Representatives, can be found here: <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca>.

## Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points

Assembly points for emergencies have been identified across campus. Assembly points are designed to establish a location for information updates from the emergency responders to the evacuees; from the evacuated population to the emergency responders. For more information, see the University of Calgary's Emergency Management website:

<https://live-risk.ucalgary.ca/risk/emergency-management/evac-drills-assembly-points/assembly-points>

## Safewalk

Campus security will escort individuals, day or night, anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences Centre, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). Call 403-220-5333 or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths. Please ensure your personal safety

## **Criteria for Papers:**

This is a checklist to help evaluate a paper submitted in this course. The greater degree to which each question can be answered positively to a high level, the better the paper.

### **Thesis Statement**

Is it identifiable and clear?

Is it manageable rather than being too broad for a short paper?

Is it something substantive and does it provide the key argument(s) of the paper?

Does the paper actually then closely follow the thesis?

### **Theoretical Understandings**

Does the paper identify the key elements of the concepts that it is discussing?

Does it explain these concepts clearly and accurately and in sufficient depth?

Does its further discussion of the concepts demonstrate an overall understanding of the theorists involved in the paper, as well as integrating other literatures into the paper well?

Does it move beyond simply describing or summarizing the readings to analyze them and their underlying reasons and understandings?

Can it apply these concepts to new contexts and arguments in an insightful way?

Does the paper manifest a critical understanding of the subject matter of the paper?

Does the paper manifest a certain level of originality or creativity in understanding and critically analyzing the theorists discussed?

### **Writing Quality**

Is the grammar and spelling correct?

Is it clear what the meaning of the sentences and paragraphs is?

Does it follow a clear structure, and provide the reader with an understanding of where the argument is proceeding, rather than being disorganized or disjointed?

### **Evidence**

Does the paper provide reasons for the arguments and conclusions that it makes?

Are the reasons provided clear and persuasive?

In making claims about a certain thinker's ideas does it provide proper evidence of these claims through proper citation (book and page number) and argumentation?

### **Grade Level**

**A:** The paper will be very good in all these dimensions.

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**B:** The paper will be good on all of these dimensions, or adequate on some dimensions and very good on other dimensions.

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**C:** The paper will be satisfactory on all of these dimensions, or poor on some and good (or very good) on others.

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**D:** The paper is poor on some of these dimensions and satisfactory on some of these dimensions.

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**F:** The paper will be poor on these dimensions or inadequate on one or more of these dimensions.

## **Criteria for Presentations**

Presentation skills are extremely important to develop. Presenting in the context of a university amongst supportive peers can make an essential contribution to developing these skills. The following are some criteria for the marking of presentations. The greater degree to which each question can be answered positively to a high level, the better the presentation.

### **Presentation Style**

Is the presentation style engaging?

Is the language clear and can the presenter be heard clearly?

Does the presenter look at the audience and speak to the audience, rather than just reading his or her notes?

### **Organization**

Is the aim of the presentation clear?

Is the presentation well-organized and does it flow well, rather than feeling disjointed or confusing?

Is the presentation on time, rather than being too short or too long?

### **Understanding**

Does the presentation clearly display knowledge and understanding of the material involved?

Does it move beyond simply summarizing the reading to provide an analysis of the reading?

Is there a critical engagement with the key arguments of the material?

Does the presenter help the audience to better understand the reading or to better understand the issues related to the topic of the presentation?

Is the presenter's question engaging and clear?

Is the presenter able to integrate other knowledge into this specific reading or issue? (Note: this is not compulsory, but can be beneficial)

Does the presenter manifest a certain level of creativity in understanding and applying the content of the presentation?

### **Grade Level**

**A:** The presentation will be very good in all these dimensions.

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**B:** The presentation will be good on all of these dimensions, or satisfactory on some dimensions and very good on other dimensions.

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**C:** The presentation will be satisfactory on all of these dimensions, or poor on some and good (or very good) on others.

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**D:** The paper is poor on some of these dimensions and satisfactory on some of these dimensions.

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**F:** The paper will be poor on these dimensions or inadequate on one or more of these dimensions.