

# Social Computing Capstone

## Day 9: Quantification and Monetization

CSE 481p | Winter 2022

Amy X. Zhang

Assistant Professor | University of Washington, Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering

# Schedule for today's class

- Quantification and Monetization:
  - Short lecture, discussion of reading (10 min)
  - Black Mirror Episode (10 min)
- Prep for Thursday prototype feedback session (2 min)
- Group work time (58 min)

# Summary from Mid-quarter check-in

- Some concerns about being in person and COVID. Please talk to us about any concerns you may have and we will try our best to accommodate you.
- Some concerns about impending deadlines for the capstone project. Let us help you scope your project so that the programming part is doable in ~3 weeks. You should pick a form of implementation that you are comfortable working with in a team.
- Some interest in covering ethics more in the class. I feel like we talk about ethical issues every week :D but we WILL talk about strategies to reason about the ethics of your system designs in an upcoming week. More broadly, let me know if there's something you want me to cover in one of these mini lectures or in a reading!
- You'd like more time in class for group work. Will do!

# Quantification and Monetization

# today's social media is full of **numbers**

followers

subscribers

click-through rate

likes

5-star ratings

number of  
comments

views

We don't count things in offline social interactions. So  
why so prevalent online?

The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is OK as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't be easily measured or to give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily really isn't important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide.

— Daniel Yankelovich

**But what are the consequences of quantifying and monetizing our social experiences?**



# Nosedive video (from Black Mirror)



# Discussion

What are the consequences of quantifying and monetizing our social experiences?

- “The Anxiety of Influencers”
- “Inside the Macedonian Fake News Complex”
- “Nosedive”

Can you also think of benefits of quantification and monetization?

Relate the experiences of the people in your readings to your own. Do you recognize any of their motivations, worries, or aspirations?

How do these incentive structures at the individual level remake culture or society as a whole?

Nosedive is eerie precisely because it feels entirely plausible (a “near-future dystopia”). Is the direction we’re headed inevitable? How could you change it?



## **Hide like count?** Instagram ran a 2 year experiment with mixed results.

After more than two years of testing, today Instagram announced what it found: removing likes doesn't seem to meaningfully depressurize Instagram, for young people or anyone else, and so likes will remain publicly viewable by default. But all users will now get the ability to switch them off if they like, either for their whole feed or on a per-post basis.

"What we heard from people and experts was that not seeing like counts was beneficial for some, and annoying to others, particularly because people use like counts to get a sense for what's trending or popular, so we're giving you the choice," the company said in [a blog post](#).

Would you want to hide your like count?

# Thursday's Prototype Feedback Session

# This Thursday

There are two short readings due Thursday - one on content creator burnout (ft. Kat Lo) and one on harassment in the Metaverse.

We'll start out with a guest visit from Kat Lo from Meedan (nonprofit)! Come with your questions about creator culture, gaming and streaming, and content moderation.

After that, we'll dive into the prototype feedback session.

Reminder that G3 (low-fidelity prototype) is due. The prototype(s) needs to be done and ready to go BEFORE class so that in class, each group can be paired with another group to actually playtest the prototype and give feedback. Then turn in your G3 report by EOD (it will say late on Canvas - that's fine).

# Tips for Prototype Feedback Session

As mentioned in last class, you can make more than one “prototype”, including one fully faked implementation via an existing social system to answer social questions, and one that’s a paper prototype/Figma drawing to get feedback on any UI/user flow you intend to build.

You will have around 20-30 min for another team to playtest your prototype(s). **Make a plan for how it will go.** As part of the plan, you can **draft a script** for what you will say to your testers. You should also **write up questions** you want to ask the other team.

During the feedback session, **observe and take notes** on what people do, and also take notes on what people say (**ask people to speak aloud their thoughts!**).