

“Social Living”  
Burning Spear  
*Social Living aka Marcus’ Children* (1978)

# MIT 2155: Social Media, Virtual Gaming, and Networked Life

Week 1  
Introduction:  
What is Social Media?

# Today's Agenda

- Welcome to the course: Syllabus and other housekeeping items
- Readings and lecture format
- The main themes of MIT 2155: Critiquing Social Media, The Business of Networking, and Living Online
- Group Introductions
- A (Pre)history of Social Media
- A Crash course in Sociology and Critical Theory

# Welcome to MIT 2155

- Syllabus/Fact Sheet
- Course Expectations
- Grading Breakdown/  
Assignments
- The Fine Print:  
Resources, Plagiarism/  
Cheating, Appeals, etc.

The image shows the front cover of the MIT 2155 syllabus. The title "mit 2155: SOCIAL MEDIA, VIRTUAL GAMING + NETWORKED LIFE" is prominently displayed in large, bold, blue letters. Below the title, a photograph of a hand holding a smartphone that displays a meal of chicken and mushrooms on a plate. To the right of the phone, there's a small image of a bowl of soup. The syllabus cover includes contact information for the instructor, Dr. Luke Arnott, and details about office hours and email. It also features the Western University logo and the term "WINTER 2020". A table of contents is visible at the bottom right.

SYLLABUS CONTENTS:	
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**INSTRUCTOR:**  
Dr. Luke Arnott

Lecture:  
Wednesdays, 9:30-12:30  
FNB 1220

Office Hours:  
Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30  
FNB 4134

Email & Twitter:  
larnott@uwo.ca,  
@ArnottDoc

Western University  
Faculty of  
Information and Media  
Studies

WINTER 2020

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course explores social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, virtual worlds, online games, networked communities, new media and e-learning. It examines topics including on online identity, gender in cyberspace, videogame culture, Web 2.0, digital design, surveillance and privacy.

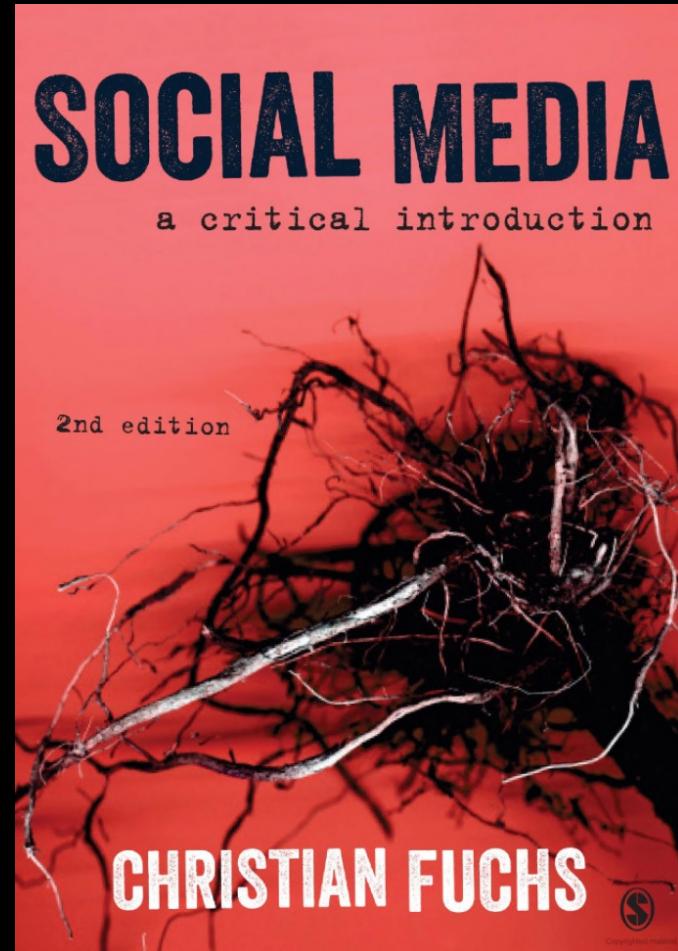
# Meet Your Professor



- Luke Arnott, PhD
- Background: History, Classics, Comparative Literature, Media Studies, Game Studies
- Office hours & email policy
- Social Media (FB and Twitter): @ArnottDoc

# Course Textbook and Readings

- Main Text: *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edition, by Christian Fuchs. Available in the UWO Bookstore.
- Supplementary articles, all available via course OWL site; see syllabus for schedule



# Class Format



- Lecture with break
- Questions/Class Participation/Group Presentations and activities, Special Guests
- PowerPoint Notes
- Electronic Devices, Pop quizzes

# What's MIT 2155 About?

## Course Objectives:

- Learn key concepts in political economy, sociology, and cultural studies and apply them to case studies of social media platforms and video games
- Critically analyze social media and video games based on their social, economic and cultural implications
- Expand our understanding of the relationship between networked media technologies and culture

# What's MIT 2155 About?

Three Units:

- Critiquing Social Media: Theoretical Background, Theories of Critique, Identity, etc.
- The Business of Networking: Political economy of social media giants like Facebook, Google, Twitter, etc.
- Living Online: Activism and issues of online communication, collaboration, and play

# *Nota Bene!* Best Practices for Study and Success

## Take notes in Class

- Practice active listening
- Think of relevant examples
- Be selective - don't transcribe!

## Do Readings BEFORE class and take notes

- Identify main points in each paragraph
- Show how main points are linked
- Read critically (what points do you disagree with?)

# Case Study and Preview: Wikis

- As we shall see, Fuchs sees wikis as embodying the best social potential of digital media
- Roth et al.: Assigning Wikipedia editing as educational tool
- Start making contributions ASAP as part of your weekly class prep!

The screenshot shows a web-based wiki interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with three tabs: 'Home' (selected), '★ MIT 3371G 001 FW19', and '★ MIT 2155B 001 FW19'. Below the navigation bar is a header with a pencil icon and the word 'Wiki'. A horizontal menu bar contains links for 'Home', 'View', 'Edit', 'Info', 'History', 'Watch', and 'Search'. The main content area is titled 'MIT 2155 Wiki Contents'. It features several sections with underlined titles: 'Lecture Notes', 'Notes on Readings', 'Notes on Group Presentations', 'Rules for Classroom Discussion', 'Midterm Cheat-sheet', and 'Final Exam Cheat-sheet'. Each section contains a brief description and a note about uploading or editing notes.

**MIT 2155 Wiki Contents**

Lecture Notes  
If you take good notes and feel like sharing, upload them here. Or add to/edit notes that are a

Notes on Readings  
If you take good notes and feel like sharing, upload them here. Or add to/edit notes that are a

Notes on Group Presentations  
If you take good notes and feel like sharing, upload them here. Or add to/edit notes that are a

Rules for Classroom Discussion  
Tips for helping classroom discussions go smoothly and productively.

Midterm Cheat-sheet  
Crowd-source the most important info you want to have with you during the midterm (must fit)

Final Exam Cheat-sheet  
Crowd-source the most important info you want to have with you during the final exam (must

# Presentation/Seminar Groups

Group 1	Grace Draznin, Sibeal Murphy, Samuel Rosen, Lauren Scott
Group 2	Michael Dillon, Kramer Knipe, Tianni Liu, Cassandra Marshall
Group 3	Ziyad Hussain, Matthew Policicchio, Yuri Terra-Turgeon, Yi Yin
Group 4	Laney Andersen, Connor Anyon, Molly Campbell, Alvin Su
Group 5	Justin Fung, Daniel Le, Kshitij Mathur, Cameron Norfolk
Group 6	Brandon Chau, Rachel Leung, Kaitlin Paterson, Joshua Swarath
Group 7	Flora Chen, Kirk Morris, Sydney Sturgess, Tianyue Xu
Group 8	Runze Bao, Rebeca Perdomo, Bryce Pendergast, Brett Petch
Group 9	Audrey Cofie, Shelby Noakes, Mengjia Yang, Nuoan Yu
Group 10	Yumna Ahmed, Avery Morton, Paige Sutton, Matthew Travis

# Group Introductions

In your presentation/seminar groups, discuss:

- 1) One interesting thing about each person
- 2) One thing you all have in common
- 3) A social media platform and/or video game that you think deserves further study
- 4) A Rule Everyone Should Follow in Classroom Discussions (then try adding to the course wiki)

# What's "Social" About Social Media?

According to Fuchs, we can think about it on various levels:

- Cognition (Information)
- Communication
- Community
- Collaboration and Cooperation

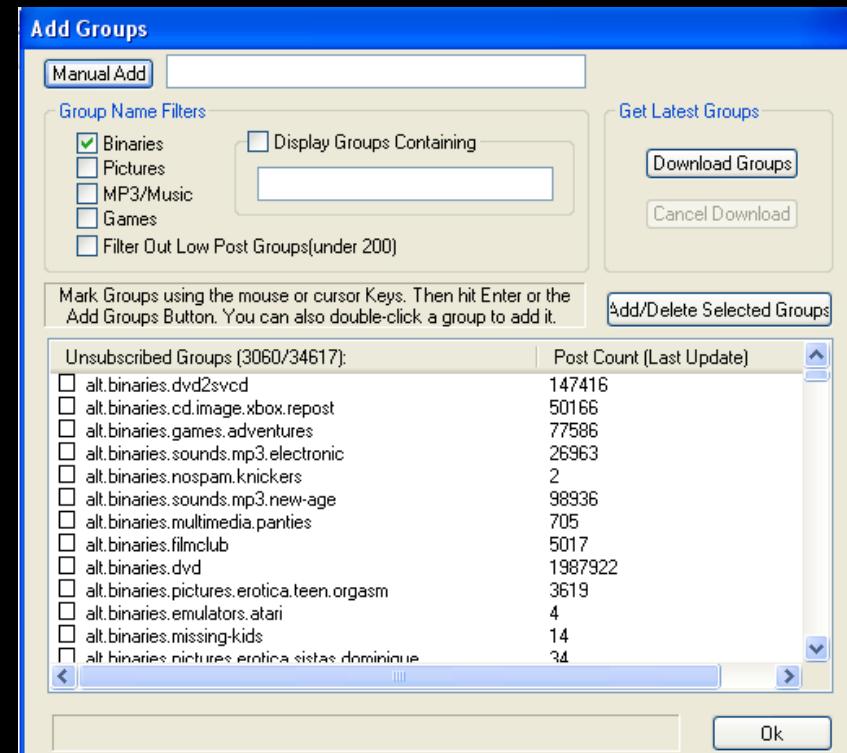
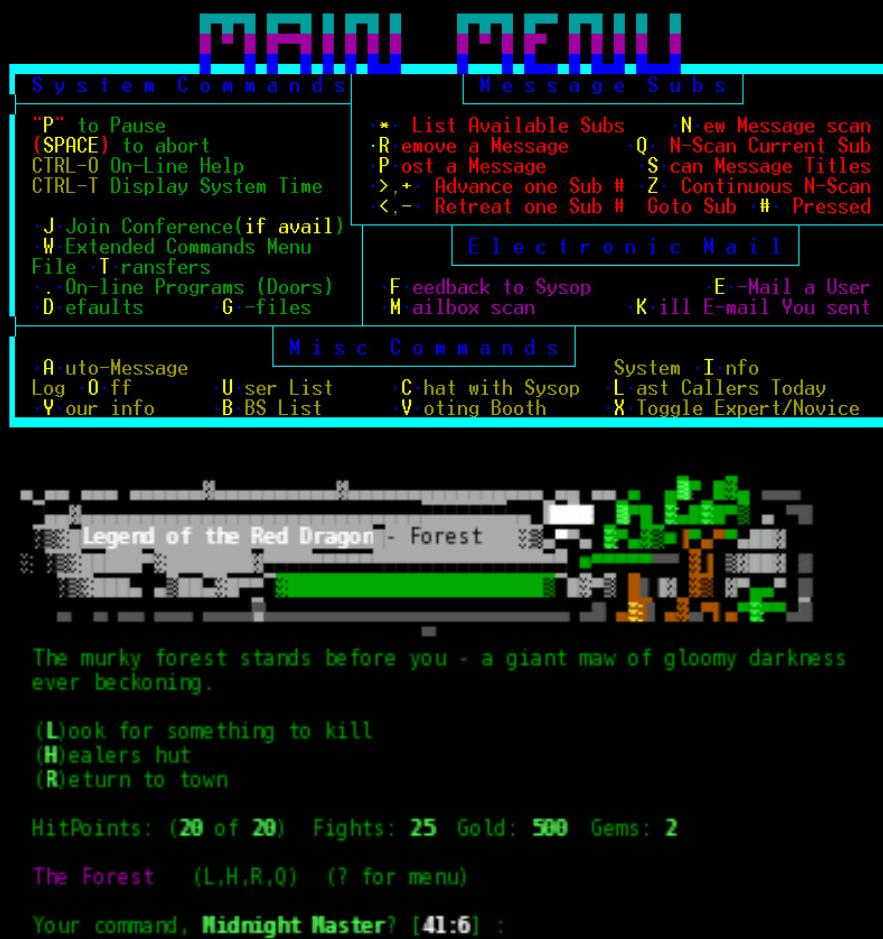


# A Brief (Pre)History of Social Media



- Email: 1971
- Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs): 1978
- Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs): 1978-80
- Usenet Newsgroups: 1980

# A Brief (Pre)History of Social Media



# A Brief (Pre)History of Social Media



**Justin's Home Page**

Welcome to my first attempt at Hypertext

Howdy, this is twenty-first century computing... (Is it worth our patience?) I'm publishing this, and I guess you're readin' this, in part to figure that out, huh?

**High Stylin' on the Wurld Wyde Webb**

This is a Hypertext server using [MacHTTP v1.2.3](#) running on a Powerbook 180 w/ 8 RAM and a 120 HD. It is currently being broadcast from the depths of Willets, a dorm nestled in the shrubbery here at [Swarthmore College](#) in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

I put this together with MacHTTP and the assistance of [NCSA's HTML Primer](#) that was invaluable. I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in creating their own statements out here in the waste vastland. More general information about [HyperText Mark-up Language](#) is also available. For information about the World Wide Web and Mosaic, here's a recording of someone's voice:  [here](#).

**Swarthmore College Shit**

**Swarthmore College**

Don't mind the dust, we're under construction

As of January 22, I am trying to construct my first HyperText page.

- ISP-based Services/portals (e.g., AmericaOnLine): 1991
- Blogs: c. 1994, Justin Hall
- Wikis: WikiWikiWeb, 1995, Ward Cunningham; Wikipedia, 2001

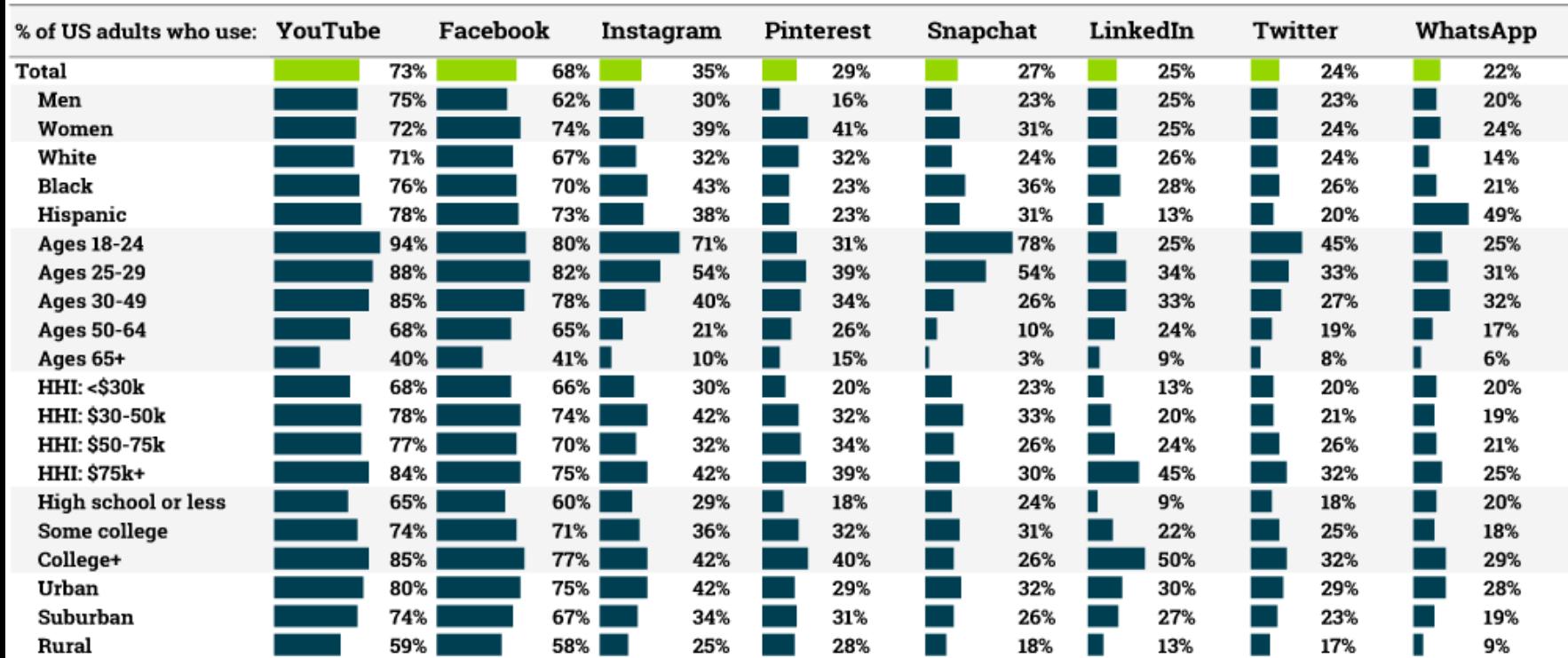
# Early Social Networking Sites

The screenshot shows a Friendster profile page for a user named "Wham-O!". The top navigation bar includes links for Home, Invites, Gallery, Messages, Events, Shopping, Help, and Log Out. A banner at the top right promotes a diet patch. The main content area is divided into sections: "Welcome Wham-O!", "My Profile", "Testimonials", and "My Friends". The "My Profile" section contains fields for Gender (Male), Interested in Meeting People for (Activity Partners), Status (Single), Age (46), Occupation (Flying Disc), Location (Emeryville, CA), Hometown (Emeryville, CA), and Interests (going for a spin, beaches, parks, getting caught by in their mouths). The "Testimonials" section shows a message: "No testimonials yet.". The "My Friends" section lists 11 friends with small profile pictures: Winston, Boggy, Le Caca, Trinity, Dr. Pupper, Deva, Cookie, Triumph, Tuxta, and Miss Bunny. At the bottom, there are links for About Us, Contact Us, Store, Help, Terms of Service, and Privacy Policy, along with a copyright notice for 2002-2003.

- Six Degrees: A networking “social experiment”, 1996-2001
- Friendster: 1<sup>st</sup> social networking site over 1M members, 2002-2016
- MySpace: Hugely successful Friendster clone, 2003-

# New Social Media Platforms

## US Adults' Social Platform Use, by Demographic Group



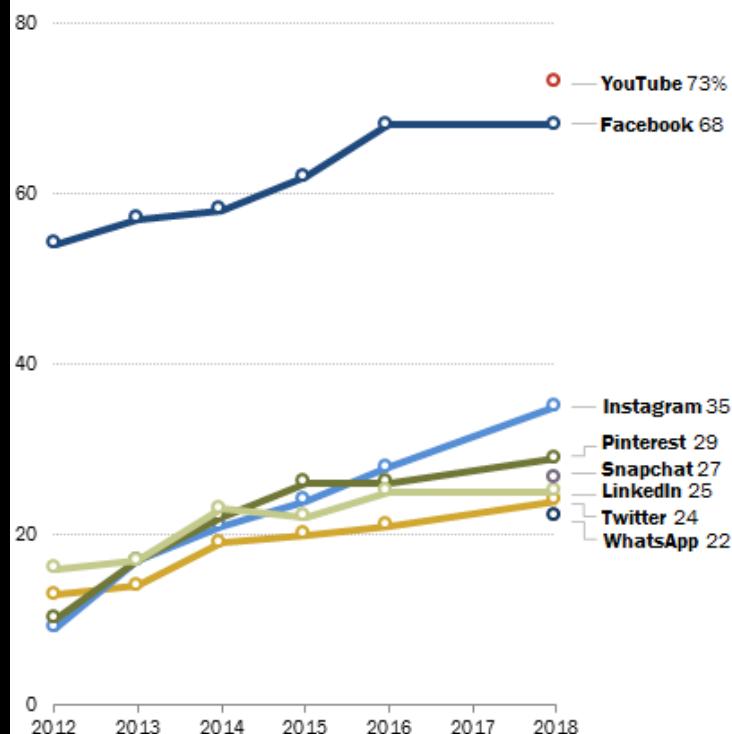
Published by MarketingCharts.com in March 2018 | Data Source: Pew Research Center

Based on telephone surveys conducted in January 2018 among a national sample of 2,002 adults (18+)

# New Social Media Platforms

## Majority of Americans now use Facebook, YouTube

*% of U.S. adults who say they use the following social media sites online or on their cellphone*



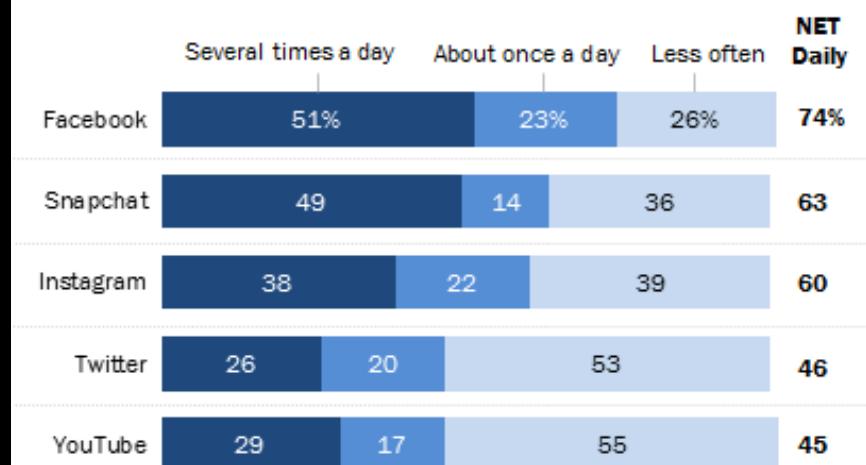
Note: Pre-2018 telephone poll data is not available for YouTube, Snapchat or WhatsApp.  
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018. Trend data from previous Pew Research Center surveys.

"Social Media Use in 2018"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## A majority of Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram users visit these platforms on a daily basis

*Among U.S. adults who say they use \_\_\_, the % who use each site ...*



Note: Respondents who did not give answer are not shown. "Less often" category includes users who visit these sites a few times a week, every few weeks or less often.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.

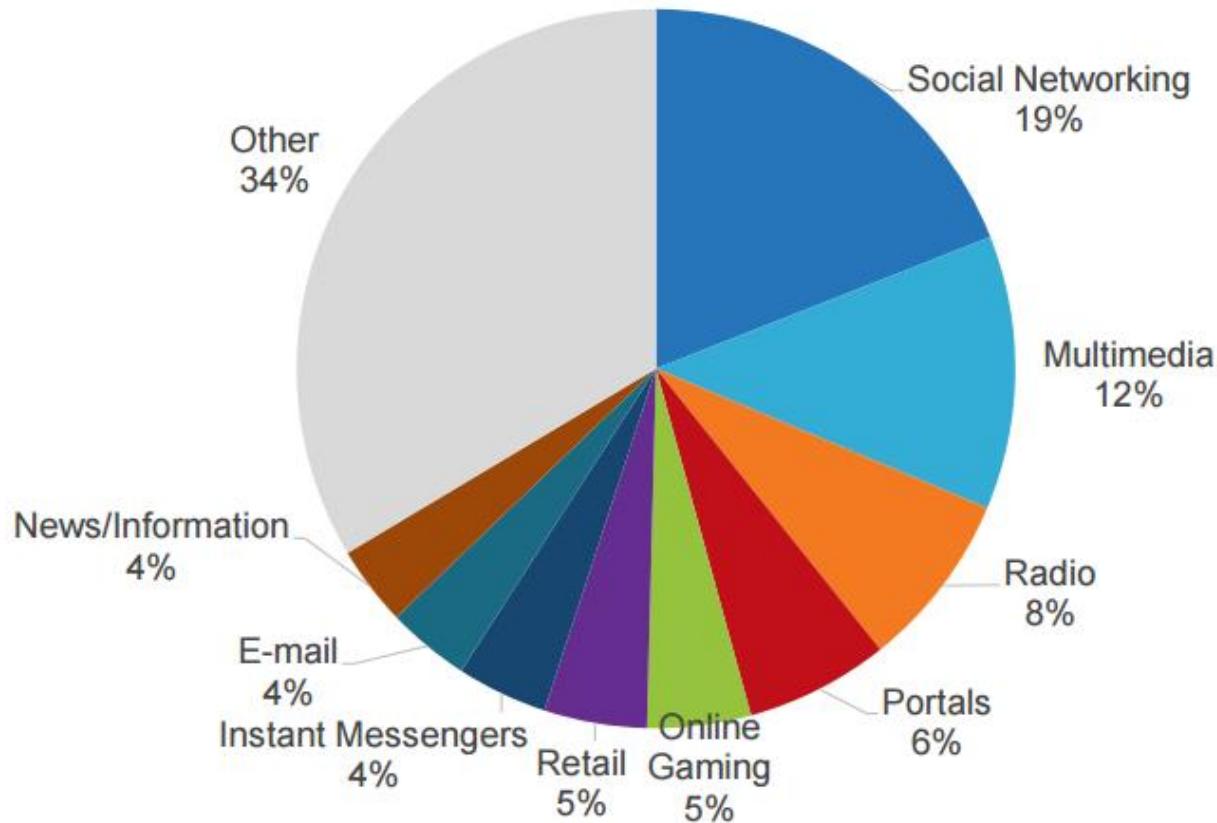
"Social Media Use in 2018"

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# New Social Media Platforms

**Share of Total Digital Time Spent by Content Category**

Source: comScore Media Metrix Multi-Platform, U.S., Total Audience, December 2015

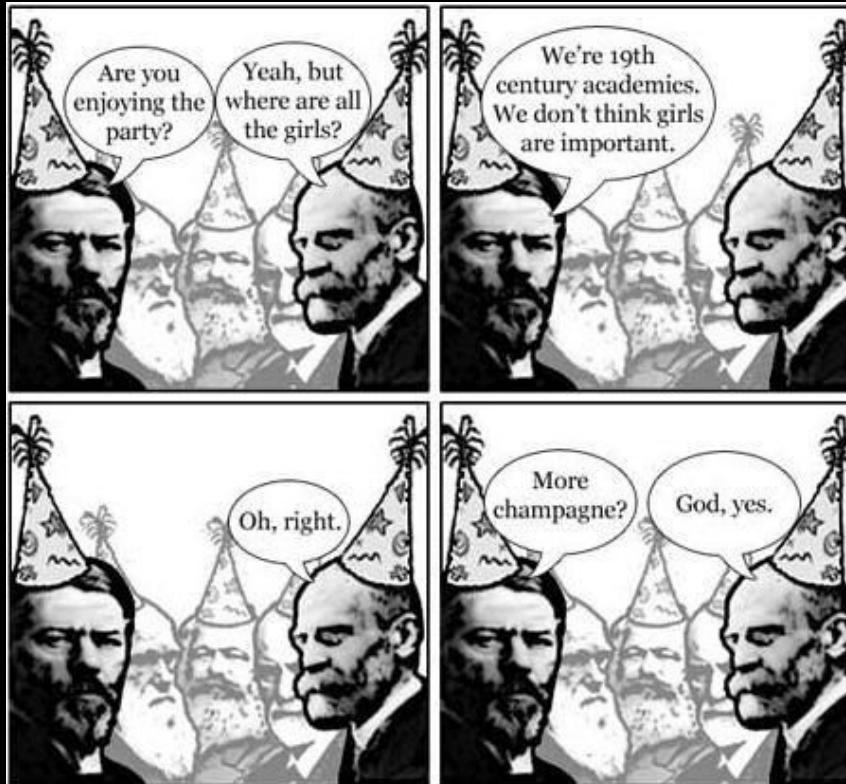


# Fuchs: How the Critical Sausage is Made



- In Ch. 1, Fuchs stresses the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory as necessary approaches
- Why “critical”?
- Overarching emphasis on power relations, politics, and ethics: goal is social improvement
- A kind of “toolkit”?

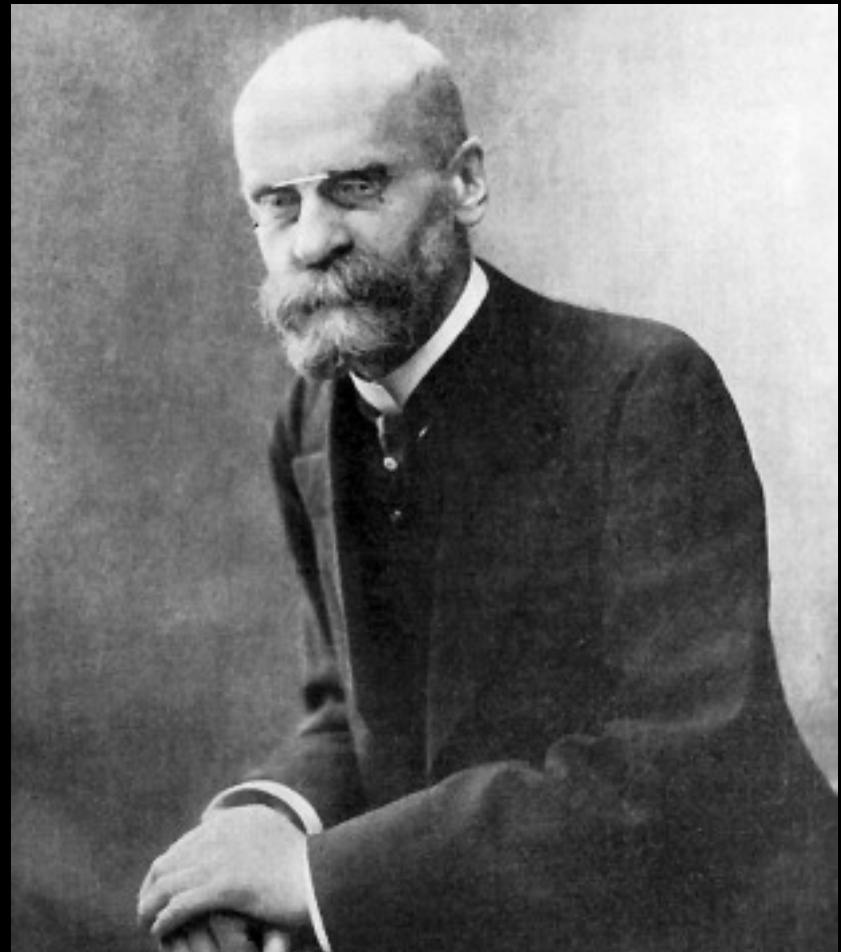
# Fuchs: A Sociology Crash Course



- In Ch. 2, Fuchs argues that we need social theory (i.e., sociology) to explain the “social” parts of social media
- Draws on the work of Durkheim, Weber, Tönnies, and Marx

# Émile Durkheim

- French sociologist
- 1858-1917
- Describes “social facts”  
in *The Rules of  
Sociological Method*  
(1895)
- Interested in tangible  
external explanations  
for social behaviour



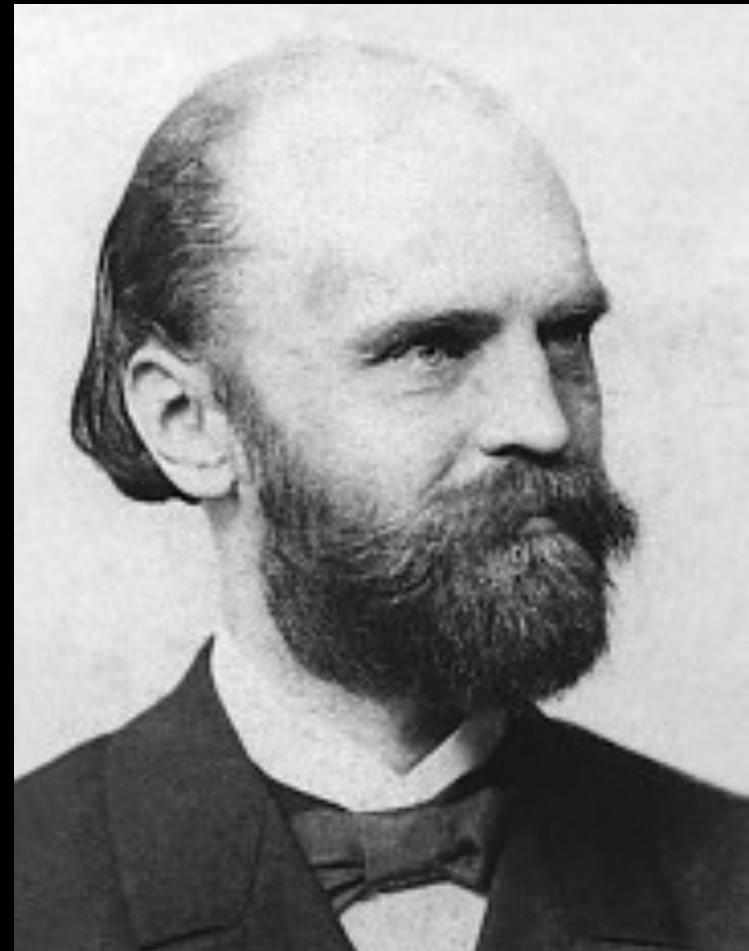
# Max Weber

- German sociologist and political economist
- 1864-1920
- Grappled with objectivity/subjectivity in social sciences
- Distinguished between “social action” and “social behaviour”



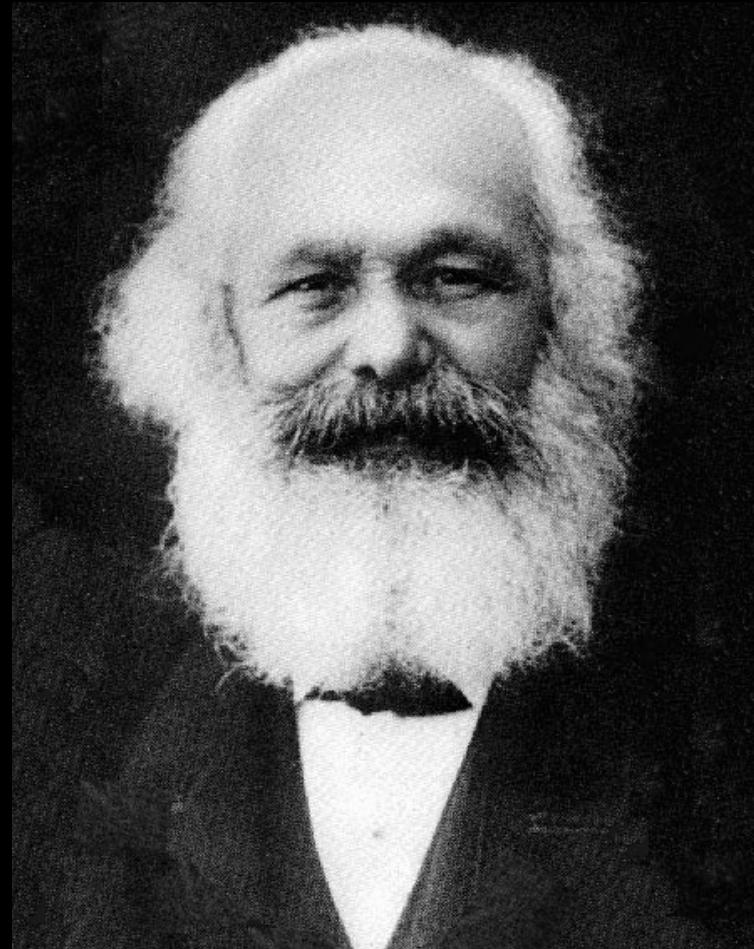
# Ferdinand Tönnies

- German sociologist
- 1855-1936
- Focus on types of communities as social units
- Gemeinschaft (“community”) vs. Gesellschaft (“society”)



# Karl Marx

- German philosopher and political economist
- 1818-1883
- Argued humans are fundamentally social because we work cooperatively
- Saw the organization of production as key to improving society



# So: What is Social Media?

- Cognition (Durkheim)
  - Social media as social fact
- Communication (Weber)
  - Social relations of social media
- Co-operation (Marx/Tönnies)
  - Online Communities: Gemeinschaft (e.g., fandom, activism) and Gesellschaft (data mining, advertising)
  - Online Collaboration (e.g., wikis, modding, open-source)

# In Conclusion...

- To understand what's new (or not) about social media, we need social theory
- The technologies of social media predate “web 2.0”, even as platforms have spread, stabilized
- Fuchs's concept of Critical Social Media Theory takes from classical 19<sup>th</sup>-century thinkers as well as 20<sup>th</sup>-century Frankfurt School and Critical Theory

Next week:

**LET'S BE (INTERNET) FRIENDS**