COSC 419F Social Computing Assignment 1

For this assignment, you are required to design an online social meeting space to serve a particular group (for example, your classmates, friends who enjoy a particular sport, friends who play the same games, hostel mates) for a particular purpose (for example, sharing ideas, scheduling games, discussing topics, or ridesharing) or to solve a problem using the AOF method. Your idea should be new and relevant to current trends. It should fill a need that you have identified. Within your submission, include a storyboard showing the dynamics of its use from beginning to end (i.e. how one logs in, how transitions occur, etc.) and a report that addresses the following requirements.

Grading:

* The problem or need being addressed is clearly stated
* The engagement strategies are clearly described and you stated why you think they will work. The strategies are relevant to the activities on the site.
* It is easy to see from the storyboard how one navigates the social site and how the main functionalities work. The storyboard is legible.
* The described idea is novel and related to current trends.
* Included all 3 components with a detailed description of each.

Brainstorming:

Idea 1: social webstore/thrift shopping where users can create a shopper and or clerk profile to shop for and sell used items. Users can interact with other users to make friends, wishlists, comment on item listings, review sellers, bargain and barter with sellers, and accept or make payments. Users can choose to shop regionally, nationally, or worldwide. Shipping etc is updated depending where the user is shopping.

Requirements:

1. Describe the motivation for creating this space and the problem it will likely solve or the void it will fill.

I was motivated to design this space by faults in existing similar social software (Facebook Marketplace or Instagram Shops). Problems with existing spaces:

They afford no functionality for users unless you have a Facebook or Instagram account. Why would you need the plethora of activities offered by these applications when all you want to do is buy or sell goods? It seems prudent to desire a similar application that focuses on the activity of buying and selling regional listings.

There are currently web-applications such as Kijiji, Craigslist, eBay, Castanet, etc. that offer the activity of creating and purchasing from local classifieds. However, the social features of these sites are quite restrictive. Further, it becomes tiresome and can be tedious to navigate *all* of these web applications for shopping or listing purposes. In other words, why go through the effort of listing your classified ad or searching through all of these web-applications when you could list and search in one place? It would be convenient to have a portal that affords users the ability to search within multiple virtual classified listing applications.

The current spaces that offer this service either offer it as a secondary activity with social features (Facebook and Instagram), or it is the primary activity and there are little to no social features (web-applications like eBay, Kijiji, Craigslist). In the case of Facebook, Instagram, and some of the web-applications, there is currently no means for a purchaser to send a direct payment to the seller. There ought to be a space that is dedicated to the activities of listing and/or searching for classified ads as well as interacting socially with other buyers and sellers that affords users the ability to send direct payments to sellers.

1. Describe the intended audience.

There are multiple intended audiences for this space. One of these is people who are interested in buying something from online classifieds versus perusing through local thrift stores. Another is people who are interested in listing or selling goods in an online setting so people can browse their stock more effectively. Both of these audiences are dissatisfied with the features of eBay-like web-applications. Finally, we have the group of people who do not wish to subscribe to Facebook or Instagram, but would like to engage in the activity of buying and selling goods regionally.

1. Based on the AOF method, what is the primary activity, what are the social objects, and what are the core features?
   1. Activity:

The main activity of this space is like that of a virtual thrift store where users can interact with each other to sell or purchase items.

* 1. Object(s):

The primary objects of this space are the user created classified listings. Other objects include, comments on listings, messages between users, user profiles, and user reviews. The listings are user generated and can be commented on and/or saved to a user’s wish list (total saves is displayed on each listing). Comments and direct messages are editable, and can be upvoted or downvoted. User profiles are either buyer only (signifying that the user has not gone through seller verification) or merchant verified (signifying that the user has been verified to sell).

* 1. Features:

Users have the ability to create accounts solely for purchasing with little to no verification required. Or they can create merchant accounts that allow them to sell items after completing a verification process. Users can view listings from other applications (Facebook marketplace, Instagram shops, eBay, Craigslist, Kijiji, etc.). For each listing, users can view the merchant profile of the person who created the listing. Additionally, users can interact with each other and listings to comment on a specific listing, send direct messages, add listings to a wish list, purchase an item, review a merchant, view verified and approved profiles and information, and select listings based on location within a selected radius. Unlike other existing platforms, this space will not allow users to promote their advertisements without a positive overall rating. Listings will be displayed based on an algorithm that prioritizes number of clicks by users other than its creator. When a listing is created users can tag the listing.

1. Describe the main engagement strategies you plan to apply and why you think they would work.

I would use reduction, tunneling, tailoring, self-monitoring, and conditioning as my primary engagement strategies. Reduction will be used to simplify the activity of interacting with listings. Users will only have buttons to either comment on a listing, save it, purchase it, or message its seller. Tunneling will be used to expedite the purchasing process. This will be carried out via a checkout process. Tailoring will be used to display listings to the user that are similarly tagged or labelled to those that are saved by the user. Additionally, users will not have to enter payment information during checkout if they have already entered it while creating their profile. Self-monitoring will be employed by allowing a user to view previous purchases and other users they have purchased items from. It will also be used to allow merchants to view the engagements on their listings. Conditioning will be achieved primarily based on reviews. A merchants average rating from reviews will be used to determine their eligibility for sponsoring listings. Users with verified merchant profiles will have a badge that signifies this.

1. In the storyboard, show the usage flow for each functionality from beginning to end. You can use pen and paper to draw the storyboard as long as it is clear and legible. You can also use any tool you have experience with.