CS 4803doc: Design of Online Communities

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Location:	College of Computing 102
Time:	Tuesday, Thursday 3:00-4:30
Class Schedule:	Calendar

Learning Objectives

Online communities are becoming an increasing part of how we work, play, and learn. But how are they designed? What are they really good for? Why are some communities more successful than others? What are the key issues in this field of research?

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand important features of online interactions,
- Analyze online interactions critically,
- Design an online community, and
- Understand the research issues in this field.

This class counts as an HCI class for the purpose of specializations (pre-Threads curriculum). It has not been officially added to a Thread, but if you would like it to be counted as an elective in the People Thread, email me and I will see if we can get that approved.

Texts

Required:

- *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, by Erving Goffman

- *Cyberville*, by Stacy Horn (out of print; on electronic reserve, with permission.)
- *The Great Good Place*, by Ray Oldenburg
- *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, by I.E. Seidman
- *Life on the Screen*, by Sherry Turkle
- Second Life (software, free subscription required)

Recommended:

- *Community Building on the Web*, by Amy Jo Kim.
  Paper edition is out of print. Available for purchase as pdf. Two chapters on electronic reserve with permission, but the whole book is valuable to have.
- *Online Communities*, by Jennifer Preece

Assignments and Grading

Your grade is based on one short paper, two longer papers, two presentations, a final exam, and class participation:

- Short paper (2-6 pages): What are your best and worst experiences in an online community? (individual, 10%)

- Homeworks (individual, 15%)

- Midterm (15%)

- Final paper (20-30 pages):
  Participate in a virtual community for a significant amount of time (at least 10 hours) and observe it. Each team member will interview at least three community members. Analyze how the community is designed and in what ways it is successful. (groups of approx. three, 25%)

- In-class presentation of final paper (group, 5%)

- Final exam. (25%)
  (Sample exams from the graduate version of this class: 2001 final exam; 2005 final exam with sample answers)

- Class participation. (5%)

- Examples of previous classwork

Homeworks will be graded on a list of criteria (specified on the assignment) such as quality of writing, completeness, insight into design issues, insight into social issues, etc. For each criterion, you will receive either a check plus, check, or check minus. Most criterion will receive a check. A plus means "you impressed me." A minus means the assignment is incomplete, incorrect, or sloppy in some fashion with respect to that criterion. Pluses and minues are combined to give your grade for the assignment. For most assignments, you start out half way between a B+ and A-. One plus makes it an A-; one minus makes it a B+. These are general guidelines to let you know what to expect. Grading on specific assignments may differ.

Late Policy

Assignments are due at the start of class on the day they are due. Over the course of the term, you have three "late days" where work may be late with no explanation needed.

Once you have used up your late days, late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 3 pts (one grade step: A becomes A-) per day. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted. Presentations may not be late.

English as a Second Language

If Engish is not your first language, you may request to not be graded on your writing for a particular individual assignment. This means you won't be penalized for bad writing, but you also won't get credit for good writing. To take advantage of this option, you must mark "ESL" (English as a Second Language) on the first page of your assignment/paper. This option is not available for group assignments. We still of course expect you to try to write in correct English, and will do our best to offer useful feedback on your writing.

Honor Code

This class abides by the Georgia Tech Honor Code. All assigned work is expected to be individual, except where explicitly written otherwise. You are encouraged to discuss the assignments with your classmates; however, what you hand in should be your own work.

Related Classes

- Designing Online Communities taught by Amy Jo Kim at Stanford University.
- The Psychology of Cyberspace taught by John Suler at Rider University
- The Sociology of Cyberspace taught by Peter Kollock at UCLA
- The Virtual Society: Identity, Interaction and Interface Design taught by Judith Donath at The MIT Media Lab
- Online Communities taught by Jennifer Preece at University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- Information in Society taught by Barry Wellman when he was visiting UC Berkeley