

COMM/INFO 3200: Technology, Behavior & Society

Summer Session I: June 2 – June 20, 2025, asynchronous

Cornell University

Instructor: Rosie Nguyen

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 9-10:30am ET, and by appointment (all on Zoom)

Graduate Teaching Assistants:

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Course description:

We are immersed in a complex and pervasive digital culture, making it difficult to recognize the intricate relationship between technology, our lives, and society. Indeed, what we see, hear, read, and experience is largely a product of various social and societal forces shaped by particular political, economic, material, and cultural configurations. This relationship also shapes our understanding of ourselves, society, and the world around us. Yet, our lives and society are undergoing a profound series of transformations—as new forms of social interaction, new tools for collaboration, and new digital platforms for engagement emerge online.

This course aims to explore the current challenges that arise from the intersection of technology and society, and their implications on individuals and communities. To achieve this objective, we will closely examine the interplay of social, societal, and technological factors, analyzing how they interconnect in a complex web of influences, impacting our daily lives. We will develop critical resources to better understand the history of these technologies and emerging communicative forms, the economics and politics behind them, the sociocultural moments from which they have emerged, and the shifts they have engendered.

By critically examining commonly held assumptions regarding the use and effects of technologies and the societal and social fabrics in which they are embedded, we will develop a more nuanced and contextualized understanding of the impact of socio-technological shifts on individuals and communities.

Course goals: At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- analyze and critique the complex information society around us;
- describe how the socio-economic and cultural environment is changing with the emergence of different digital technologies;
- identify, describe, and speak about pressing contemporary controversies around new media (e.g., privacy, relationships, expertise, content moderation);
- articulate perspectives on these issues, in relevant digital media formats.

Course structure:

- The course is fully asynchronous, and primarily consists of prerecorded lectures and class readings. Per day, there will be multiple lectures each no longer than 30 minutes, as well as readings accessible for you to work through in your own time.
- I will be holding regular Zoom office hours for the duration of the course (beginning Tuesday, June 3), and by appointment, to answer any questions that might come up. If at any time you have questions or concerns regarding your ability to complete course requirements, feel free to contact me via email or come speak in the office hours.
- All course materials, including readings and lectures, can be found on Canvas and the Cornell library. You are expected to complete the required readings on your own time, and in advance of any assignments involving these. Comprehending these materials is crucial to your success and learning within this course. Leave yourself ample time to review them, ask questions in office hours or discussion posts should something be unclear and be prepared to discuss them. Recommended readings are not obligatory, but can provide additional viewpoints or depth.

Course policies:

1. *Email communication:* Please include both Ruiyao and me in all your email communications. Ruiyao is your first point of contact for matters such as grading, extensions, and related issues. You can expect an email response to me within 24 business hours unless otherwise noted. I do not respond to emails before 9 am ET or after 5 pm ET on weekdays, or at all on weekends. Please plan accordingly.

You're welcome to email me with quick questions or comments. If you have a longer or more complicated issue to discuss, please make an appointment to see me. If you think that answering your e-mail will take longer than about 2 minutes, you can assume that it's a "longer or more complicated issue."

2. *Disability resources:* I am fully committed to ensuring that each student is able to fully participate in this course. Students with documented disabilities are required to meet with me the first week of class, in private, to discuss accommodation needs. If you haven't already done so, I also highly encourage you to register with [Student Disability Services](#). Any information you provide is private and confidential.
3. *Mental health:* I am fully committed to your mental health and wellbeing. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. Here are [resources for 24/7 help at Cornell](#), for both crisis and non-crisis concerns. Other resources can be [found here](#).
4. *Academic integrity and plagiarism:* Please be familiar with [Cornell's policies on academic integrity](#). To plagiarize means to use or pass as one's own the ideas or writings of another. You may not present work and assignments that have been

prepared by other people or for other courses without fully acknowledging the source. You may use other people's words and ideas only if quoted properly and full credit is given. Plagiarism in any form will result in an F for the course.

Assignments and grading:

Assignment	Percentage of grade
Essays	35
Final exam	35
Short quizzes	9
Reflections	9
Discussions	9
Anonymous course evaluation	3
Extra credit	2.5
Total possible	102.5

Here is a brief introduction to the assignments; more information is available on Canvas.

1. *Essays:* There will be two short essays to complete. Papers should be approximately 800 – 1000 words, double-spaced, 12-point font, and all references must be cited appropriately using APA formatting. I assign a word limit on the essays to respect your time and the time of the TA who will be grading them. Consequently, essays under 800 words and over 1200 words will receive a 10% deduction.

The essays will be judged on how well they respond to the prompt, use evidence and appropriate examples to support their argumentation, and whether they offer in-depth and insightful analysis. Students should cite scholarly work throughout their essay, using sources from the course material or beyond. Slides and lectures are not permitted, citable material. Students are encouraged to critically reflect on the sources they employ, and are free to voice disagreement or make an opposing argument, using, again, appropriate examples or evidence.

Essays are expected to be written in a formal, academic style, and exhibit a central thesis or argument. Adherence to a rigid 5-paragraph-structure is not required, and students may choose creative or more narrative structures where appropriate (though I ask you discuss these plans or ideas with me in office hours or email so that we can ensure your submission, even if more creative, still appropriately fulfills the prompts and requirements).

2. *Final exam:* The final exam will be held on June 20, 2025, the last day of the course. It will be held online and asynchronous, and you are permitted to use your class materials in its completion. The exam is worth 35 percent of your final grade. SDS accommodations will be in place accordingly. The exam queries your understanding of the course material (including lectures and course readings). You will have 60 minutes to complete the exam at any time within a 6 hour time slot, to

accommodate for time differences. You must take the exam on the day. Make-up exams will only be scheduled in the event of a documented emergency.

3. *Short quizzes:* There will be two short quizzes, each amounting to 5 percent of your final grade. Quizzes are 10 questions long and designed to test your knowledge of the class materials and prepare you for the final quiz. These short quizzes will help keep you accountable and engaging with course materials in a timely manner. To accommodate any other commitments you might have, you will be able to attempt the quizzes at any time in a 24 hour period. You may, however, only attempt them once.

4. *Discussions:* You are required to contribute to 2 discussions on Canvas. Discussion posts are intended to get you into contact with your peers and fellow students, and to critically engage with and discuss topic relevant to the course.

Discussion posts will contain a prompt on a current event related to class materials, and ask you to comment a 100-150 word response to said prompt, as well as to comment on at least two of your peers' comment, engaging with their argument. You are of course free to engage more frequently. Your discussion participation is graded on the level of critical engagement with both the literature, your peers and the news event, and is to support the development of your own analysis and critical arguments. Each discussion is worth 5 percent. They will be posted in Week 1 and Week 2, and you may contribute any time until two days before the end of the course (June 18).

5. *Reflections:* You will submit two short reflections over the course of the class. These are intended to be no more than half a page and are a space for you to reflect on what you have learnt in the prior week, as well as to point to or ask any questions that you are either unclear about or that you are interested in exploring deeper.

To accommodate for students' varying strengths and preferences, these reflections may be in video or visual format should you so desire (videos between 3-5 minutes in length, visual submissions must include a short paragraph explaining/commenting your submission). Reflections are graded based on insightfulness, analytic thought displayed and engagement with course material.

Each reflection is worth 5 percent, with a final reflection offered as an extra credit opportunity due on June 20 (worth 2.5 percent).

6. *Anonymous course evaluation:* I take your feedback on the course and my teaching very seriously. You will be required to fill out a brief, anonymous Qualtrics survey evaluating your experience in the course, including feedback on assignments, the quality of my instruction, and the range of topics covered. This feedback helps me immensely to grow as an instructor, and on future job applications.

Grading: the following grading scale will apply to your final grades in the course. This course is not graded on a curve.

A: 100 – 92.5%	C+: 79 – 76.5%
A-: 92 – 89.5%	C: 76 – 72.5%
B+: 89 – 86.5%	C-: 72—69.5%
B: 86 – 82.5%	D: 69 – 59.5%
B-: 82 – 79.5%	F: 59% and below

Syllabus change:

As we experiment and implement different learning strategies, we may need to make adjustments to course activities, grading systems, or other course components. Furthermore, other events that transpire over the semester may require me to modify the administration of the course and, therefore, the syllabus. If I need to modify the syllabus, I will announce the modification both in class and on the course Canvas. Ultimately it is students' responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc.

Deadlines: all deadlines are given in Eastern Time (ET, Ithaca time), and must be handed in by the ET deadline in order to avoid late penalties.

Assignment	Due	Percent of grade
Reflection 1	Wed., June 4, 5p ET	4.5
Discussion 1	Fri., June 6, 5p ET	4.5
Essay 1	Mon., June 9, 5p ET	17.5
Short quiz 1 on Module I	Tues., June 10, 11:59p ET	4.5
Discussion 2	Wed., June 11, 5p ET	4.5
Reflection 2	Fri., June 12, 5p ET	4.5
Essay 2	Mon., June 16, 5p ET	17.5
Short quiz 2 on Module II	Tues., June 17, 11:59p ET	4.5
Final exam	Fri., June 20, 5p ET	35
Course evaluation	Fri., June 20, 5p ET	3
Optional extra credit: reflection 3	Fri., June 20, 5p ET	2.5
TOTAL POSSIBLE		102.5

Citing and referencing: Citing your sources is an integral part of academic writing and work. It is a way of showing credit to the authors of an idea, lends credibility to your statements and allows your readers to verify your evidence themselves.

This class uses current APA citation style and format. You will be expected to use these in any assignment and comment you submit as part of this course, and will face point deductions for inaccurate citations. You may find further information about it on the official APA website (<https://apastyle.apa.org>) and are free to use online tools which create

citations and references for you, however, be aware that these are not always faultless and therefore double-check the results yourself. Reference managers, such as Zotero or Mendeley, can be helpful to set up and will aid you throughout your college career.

Extensions: Due to the condensed nature of the course, it is crucial that you turn in your assignments on time. Extensions on unforeseen medical or personal emergencies or for those with SDS accommodations may be granted up to 24 hours prior to the deadline. Please contact Ruiyao and me via email if you have any concerns or foresee any issues with a deadline.

Late policy: Essays that are handed in late will receive a 10 percent deduction per day of lateness (0-2 hours late: grace period; 2 - 24 hours late: -10 percent, 24-48 hours late: -20 percent etc.). Assignments must be submitted by the deadline on Canvas. Should an unforeseen technical issue arrive, and to avoid a late penalty, please immediately notify me of this via email, attaching a PDF version of your essay.

Course timeline (more details in Canvas modules)

MODULE I: CONTEXT	
Introduction	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full syllabus & course guidelines
Orienting debates about technology and society	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baym (2015) • Gitelman & Pingree (2003)
Platforms and Affordances	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bucher & Helmond (2017) • Hautea et al., (2021) • Van Dijck and Poell (2013)
Economies of New Media	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Srnicek (2017) • Marvin (2013) • Dewey (2015)
Automation and Adaptive Algorithms	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matias & Wright (2022) • Chayka (2019) • Ovide (2022)
MODULE II: PLATFORM DYNAMICS & PUBLIC SPHERE	
New Media and the Public Sphere	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papacharissi (2016) • Lorenz (2023)
Misinformation and Disinformation	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marwick & Lewis (2017) • Hsu (2022) • Wardle (2023)
Activism and Social Movements	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tufekci (2017) • Hu (2020) • Lee & Lee (2023)
Privacy and Surveillance	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draper & Turow (2019) • Eubanks (2014) • Tolentino (2024)
Platform Governance	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gillespie (2018) • Gorwa et al. (2020) • McCluskey (2020)
MODULE III: DIGITAL LIVES & PERSONAL SPHERE	
Digital Connections and Communities	Required readings:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hall (2020) • Smith & Alheneidi (2023)
Relationships and Digital/AI Intimacy	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maeda & Quan-Haase (2024) • Hill (2025) • Turkle (2023)
Social Media and Identity	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee et al. (2022) • Wang (2022) • Whitmer (2019)
Wellbeing and Digital Safety	Required readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livingstone & Stoilova (2021) • Orben & Blakemore (2023)