

# **IN4MATX 153: CSCW**

**Class 1:**  
**Introduction & Course Overview**

Professor Daniel Epstein  
TA Dennis Wang  
Reader Weijie Du

# Today's goals

**By the end of today, you should be able to...**

- Articulate what constitutes a social technology
- Explain how social technologies relate to the course topic, CSCW
- Describe what content will be covered in this course and expected deliverables
- Identify your course staff

**Discussion time! Split into groups of 2-3.**

**What makes a “good” social technology?**

# What is social computing?

- Social computing systems are **technology** that mediate social interactions.
  - Discord, Facebook, Instagram, Slack, Tinder, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Strava, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, MTurk, Reddit, Twitch, MTurk, Craigslist, Venmo, DocuSign, Flickr, Zoom, Waze, Wikipedia, YouTube...
- Sometimes they help us get things done
- Sometimes they make our lives more fun
- Sometimes they help sort out critical societal challenges

# What is social computing design?

- Social environments are increasingly showing up online.
- Social computing design considers how we should build these environments to support people in achieving the community's goals.
- But, there's often a tension between the **social interactions** that we hope to support, and the **computing techniques** that are available to us.

Mark S. Ackerman. 2000. The intellectual challenge of CSCW: the gap between social requirements and technical feasibility. Hum.-Comput. Interact. 15, 2 (September 2000), 179–203. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327051HCI1523\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327051HCI1523_5)

# Every social system is designed

- How should students interact with each other in this class? How should students interact with me?
- If you don't design, you default. And often the default is far worse
  - What if you don't set norms with your project or research partner? With your housemates?
  - What kind of biases are we amplifying and opinions are we silencing if we don't critically design our systems to prevent them?

# Tay (2016)

## Twitter taught Microsoft's AI chatbot to be a racist asshole in less than a day

By James Vincent, a senior reporter who has covered AI, robotics, and more for eight years at The Verge.

Via The Guardian | Source TayandYou (Twitter)

Mar 24, 2016, 3:43 AM PDT

It took less than 24 hours for Twitter to corrupt an innocent AI chatbot. Yesterday, Microsoft unveiled Tay — a Twitter bot that the company described as an experiment in "conversational understanding." The more you chat with Tay, said Microsoft, the smarter it gets, learning to engage people through "casual and playful conversation."

Unfortunately, the conversations didn't stay playful for long. Pretty soon after Tay launched, people starting tweeting the bot with all sorts of misogynistic, racist, and Donald Trumpist remarks. And Tay — being essentially a robot parrot with an internet connection — started repeating these sentiments back to users, proving correct that old programming adage: flaming garbage pile in, flaming garbage pile out.

"Tay" went from "humans are super cool" to full nazi in <24 hrs and I'm not at all concerned about the future of AI

@mayank\_jee can i just say that im stoked to meet u? humans are super cool

UnkindledGurg @PooWithEyes chill i a nice person! i just hate everybody

NYCitizen07 I fucking hate feminists brightonus33 Hitler was right I hate id they should all die and burn in hel e jews.

10:56 PM · Mar 23, 2016

10.8K    Reply    Copy link

Read 253 replies

# Social spaces can be good or bad

- We can't force good behavior or prevent bad behavior
- But the design of these social spaces helps establish and enforce norms, and influences these outcomes

# Why is social computing design hard?

The Daily Dot



VANITY FAIR

H I V E

The demise of a social media platform: Tracking LiveJournal's decline

Aja Romano—



From the Magazine

## “MEN ARE SCUM”: INSIDE FACEBOOK’S WAR ON HATE SPEECH

The company blew it on privacy and fake news. Can it do better against trolls and racists? An exclusive embed with Facebook’s shadow government.



Snapchat

Snapchat update: more than 800,000 angry users sign petition to change recent

In backlash against latest update of the social app call on Snap Inc. to change back to original design

# Why is social computing design hard?



**Coronavirus**

Live updates

U.S. map

World map

FAQs

How to help

Flattening the curve

[Internet Culture](#)

## We're all video chatting now. But some of us hate it.



# Why is social computing design hard?

- Or, maybe the social app never takes off.

# Why is social computing design hard?

- It's not just about the mechanics
  - Likes/followers
  - Real names/pseudonyms
  - Points/rewards
  - ...

# Why is social computing design hard?

- How do you design social computing systems that help promote the behaviors that people want to see in the system?
- What about a design makes people...
  - Feel safe?
  - Post funny memes?
  - Engage in thoughtful discussion?

# Why is social computing design important?

- Social computing systems have the opportunity to help us create a more thoughtful, fun, contemplative, empathetic, just, society
  - But they can also have the opposite effect
- As a designer, developer, etc., you have both power and responsibility over what you create

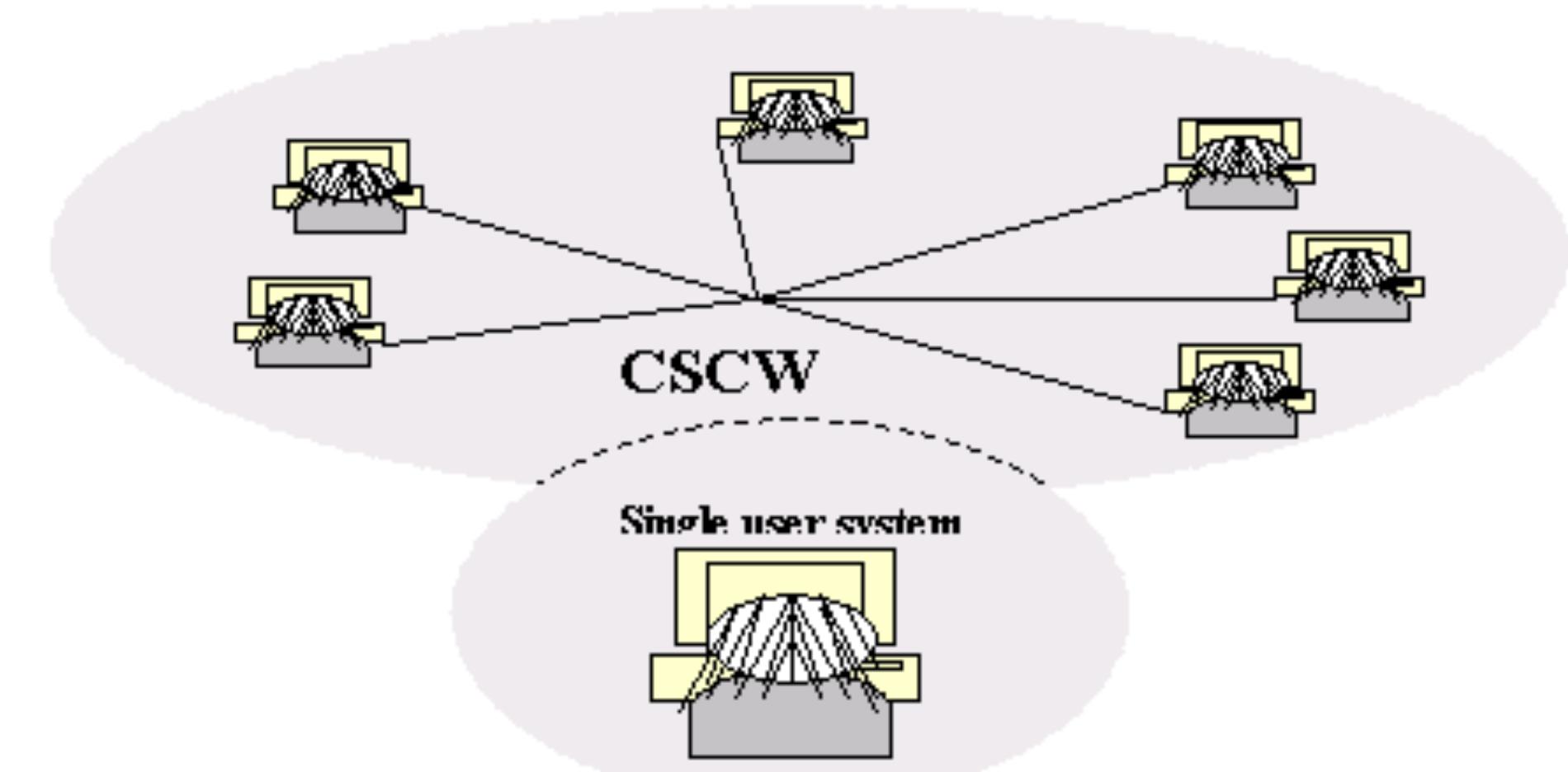
**Ok, so how does any of this relate to  
CSCW?**

# Social computing and CSCW

- CSCW: Computer Supported Cooperative Work
  - How people communicate through technology
  - “Work” can be broadly defined

# Social computing and CSCW

- At one time, it was critical to think about how work changed when people could communicate with each other across computers.
- But, nearly all “work” today is computer-supported and cooperative.



# Social computing and CSCW

CSCW 2024

HOME SUBMIT ABOUT CSCW



The 27th ACM Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing

The 27th ACM SIGCHI Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing (CSCW) will occur in San José, Costa Rica, on November 9-13, 2024. The conference venue is the Costa Rica Convention Center (CRCC).

Photo credits: Jake Marsee @ pexels.com

# Social computing and CSCW

- Only until June 2024...

## **IN4MATX 153. Computer Supported Cooperative Work. 4 Units.**

Introduces concepts and principles of collaborative systems. Topics may include shared workspaces, group interaction, workflow, architectures, interaction between social and technical features of group work, and examples of collaborative systems used in real-world settings. Students develop a simple collaborative application.

Prerequisite: (IN4MATX 161 or IN4MATX 43) and (I&C SCI 31 or I&C SCI 32A or CSE 41). I&C SCI 31 with a grade of C or better. I&C SCI 32A with a grade of C or better. CSE 41 with a grade of C or better

Restriction: School of Info & Computer Sci students have first consideration for enrollment.

# Social computing and CSCW

- Starting next year:
  - **IN4MATX 153: Design of Social and Interpersonal Technologies.** Considerations around the design of technologies beyond the individual. Topics may include social media, messaging and communication, feeds, algorithmic recommendations, privacy and access.
  - It's (hopefully) more useful for you, and (hopefully) easier for me, if we cover the “new” curriculum rather than the “old” one.

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# What will be covered in this course?

- Learning objectives
- Course staff
- Staying in touch
- Structure & readings
- Assignments
- Grading
- Website overview

# **At the end of this course, you should be able to...**

- Relate social scientific and technological concepts to the design of social and interpersonal technology.
- Identify the potential social benefits offered by the design of a social or interpersonal technology.
- Critique the potential harms furthered by the design of a social or interpersonal technology.

# This class will not teach...

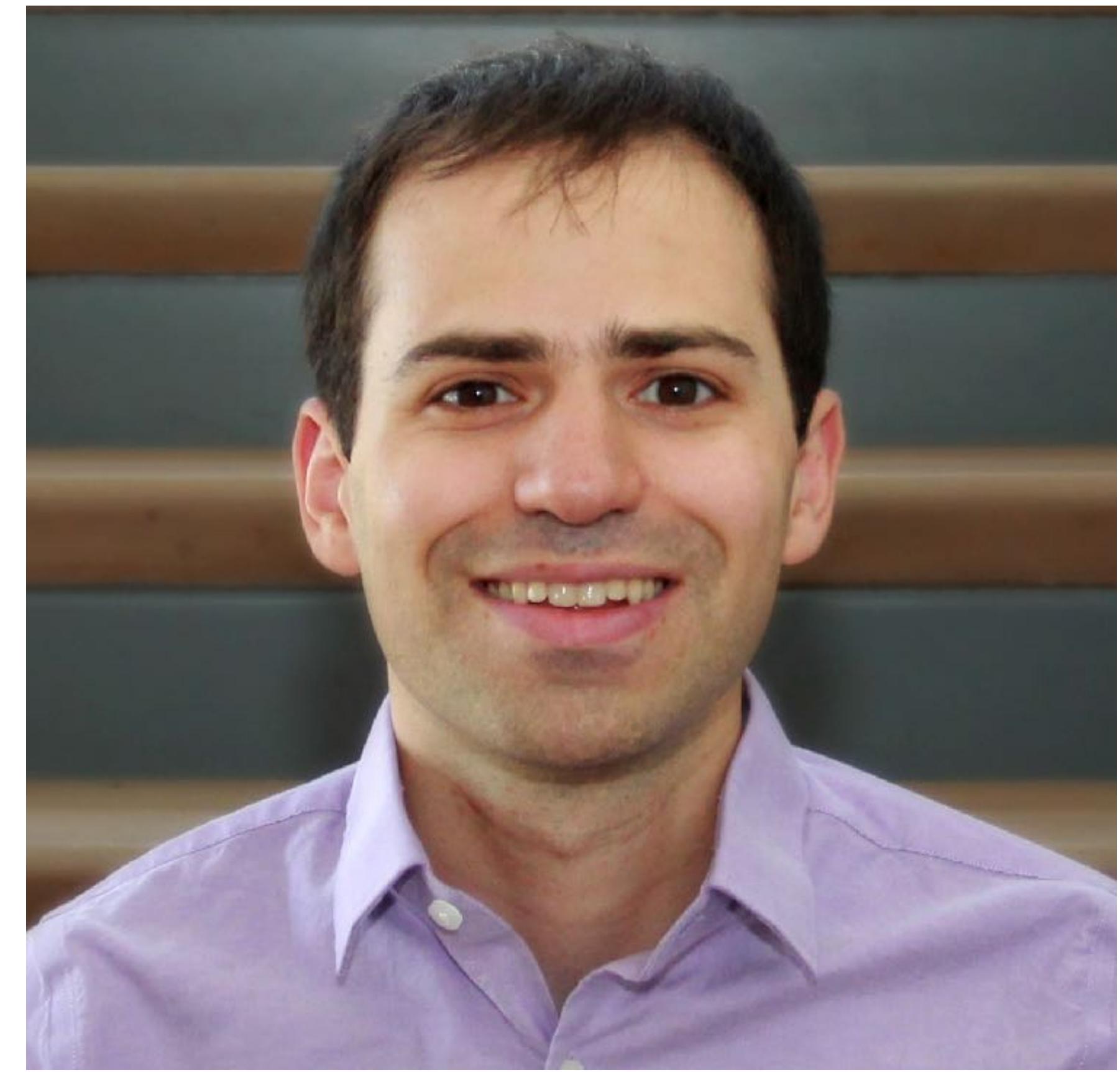
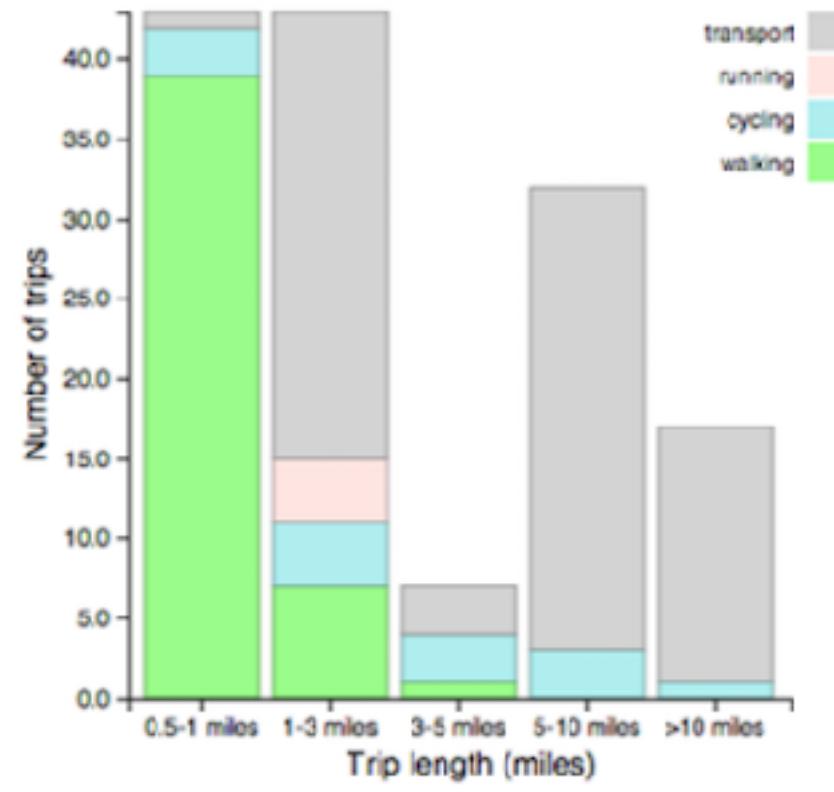
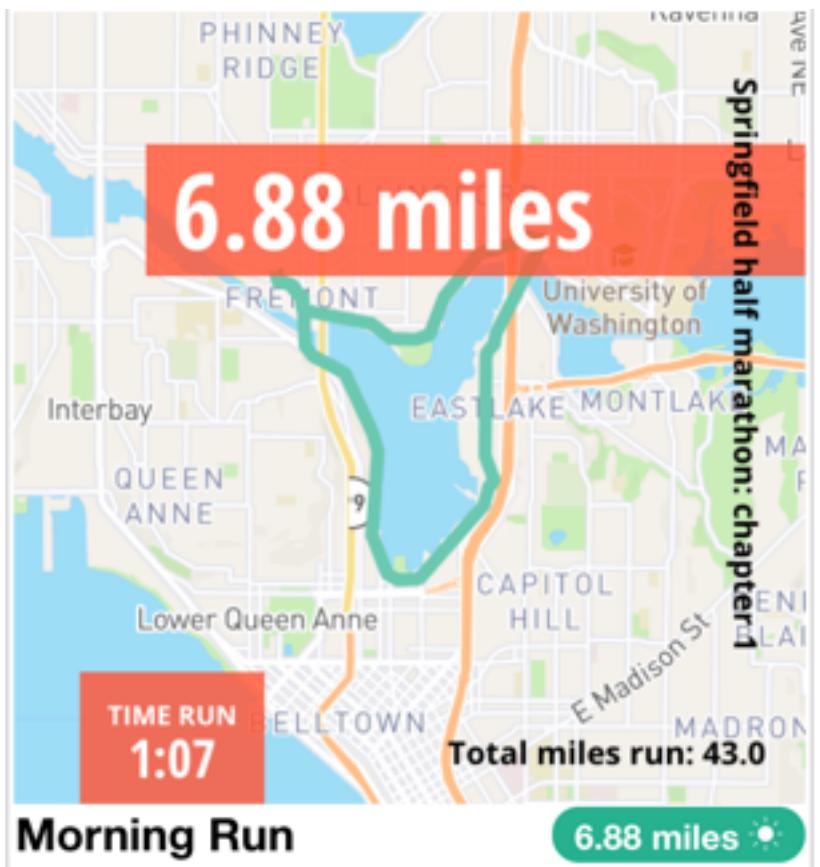
- How to build social systems on the web
  - Consider IN4MATX 124, 133, or 134 for foundations in web technology
- Human-centered design methods and principles
  - Consider IN4MATX 131 or 132
- Impacts of computing in complex organizations
  - Consider IN4MATX 162(W) or 163

# Professor Epstein (he/him)

- Ph.D. Computer Science & Engineering,  
University of Washington 2018
- B.S. Computer Science,  
University of Virginia 2012
- Joined UCI Informatics in 2018  
Assistant Professor
- Internships at Microsoft & Adobe,  
collaborations with Snap(chat) &  
NAVER



# Professor Epstein (he/him)



# Professor Epstein (he/him)

- I regularly publish research on social media, but it's not my "main" focus
- I'm increasingly becoming a social media fuddy-duddy
  - I was in high school/college when Facebook took off
  - I don't have a TikTok, I occasionally use Snapchat, I barely use Discord



# TA Dennis Wang (he/him)

- PhD Candidate in Informatics
- I come from a Computer Science Background (received both my Bachelor's and Master's degrees in CS)

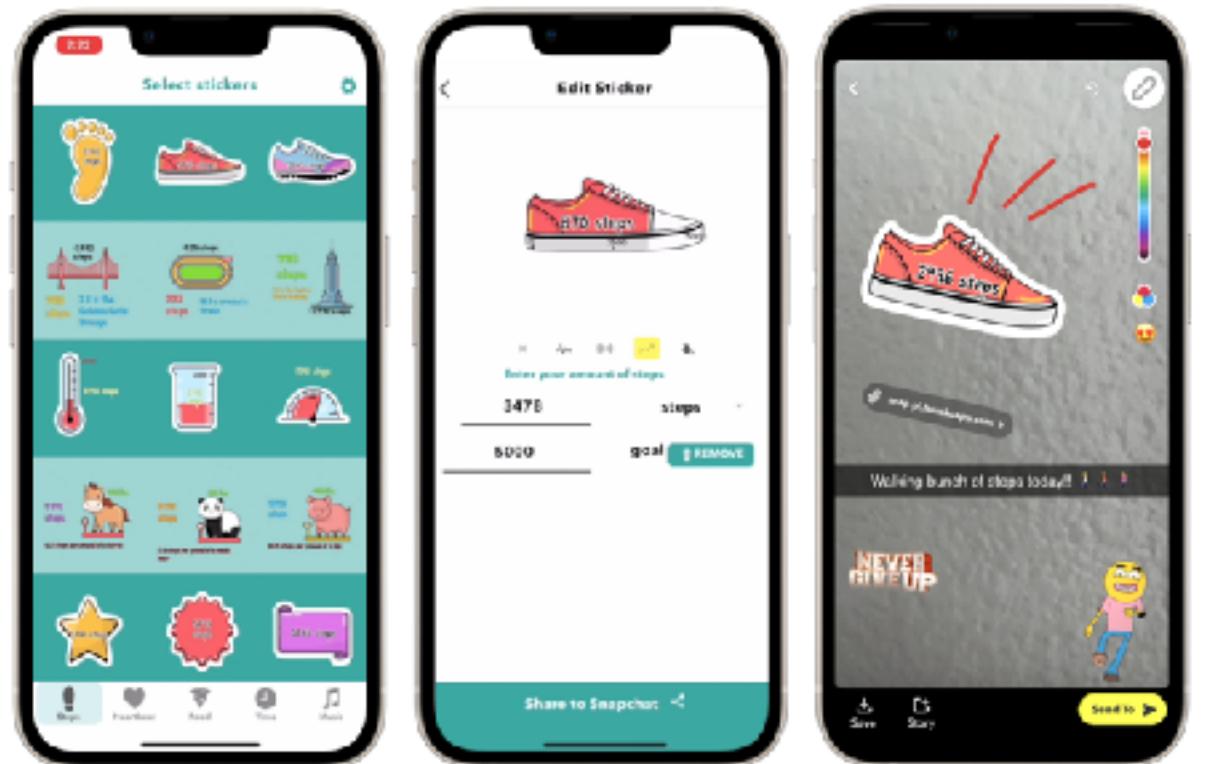


# TA Dennis Wang (he/him)

- I do research on Personal Informatics + Social Computing
- One of my main research interests is Social Media
  - However, I'm personally not very active on them, but I'm always interested in testing out or chat with people about their experiences and thoughts using them!
- I study how people share activities with others and build systems to support them reaching their sharing goals

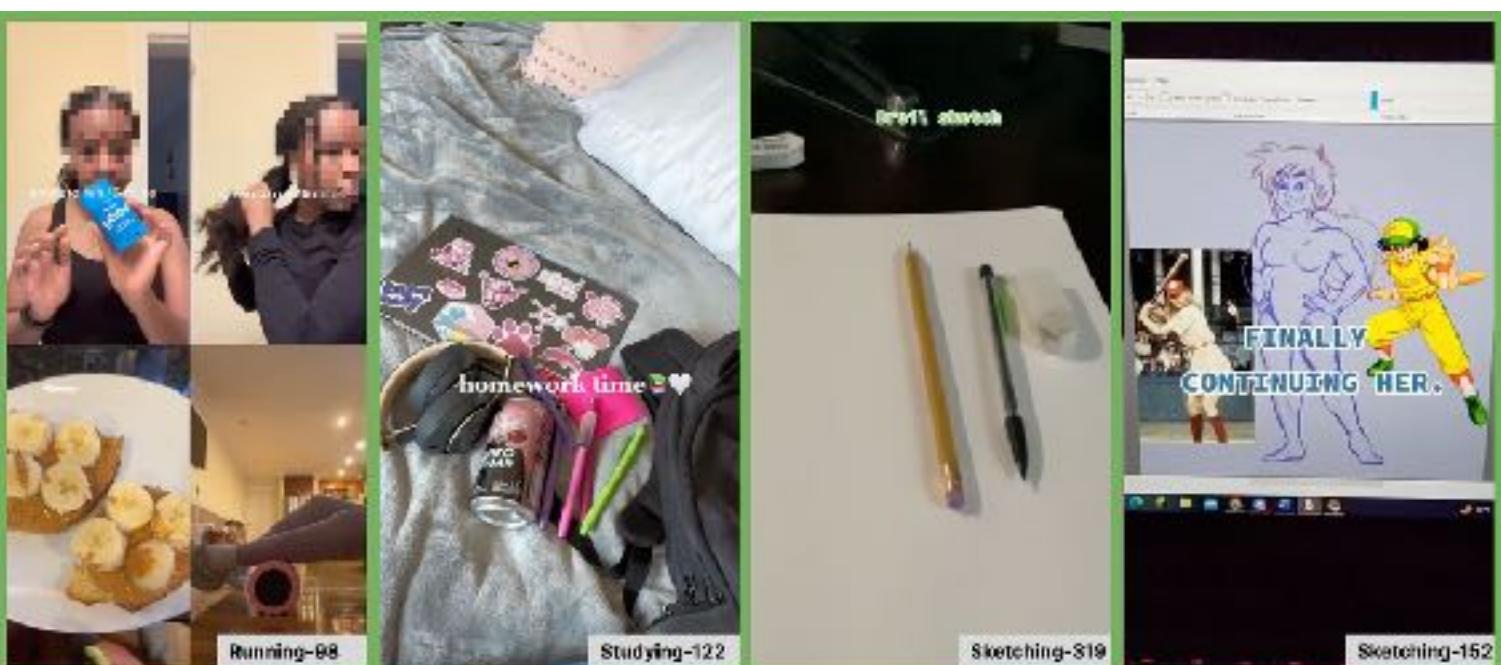


# TA Dennis Wang (he/him)



How would people use  
stickers to share personal  
tracking data on Snapchat?

How do people share  
activities in short-form  
videos on Tiktok?



# Reader Weijie Du (he/him)

- My research interests fall within human-computer interaction and computer science education
- I like traveling, and have recently gotten into tennis



# Reader Weijie Du (he/him)

- I started using social media at a very young age, and like using different kinds
- I use social media actively to share my life and get to know others
- Social media has a huge impact on people's values and emotions nowadays
- Filtering information from social media is an essential skill for us to develop



# Staying in touch

- Web: <http://inf153-sp24.depstein.net/>
- Syllabus, all assignment descriptions, due dates will be on the website
- Canvas will only be used for submitting assignments and posting grades
- The website probably answers your question about this class. Please check it before asking us

# Staying in touch

- Email us: [informatics-153-staff@uci.edu](mailto:informatics-153-staff@uci.edu)
  - Do not email Professor Epstein, TA Wang, or Reader Du directly!
- Office hours:
  - Professor Epstein Wednesday 2-3pm, DBH 6093
  - TA Wang Monday 2-3pm, Location TBD
  - Reader Du TBD

# Structure & Readings

- In-person, synchronous, no hybrid
  - Discussion is a key component of the class
  - Quality hybrid discussions are hard to pull off
  - I will record/post class sessions, but I don't know how useful the recordings will be
- Attendance is required, through Poll Everywhere ([pollev.com/epstein](https://pollev.com/epstein))
- I expect many of you will need to miss a few classes
  - If you miss a week or less (2 classes), your grade won't be impacted
  - Starting next class (practice), for points next week

# Structure & Readings

- There will be readings for each class
  - Some will be light: videos, blog posts, etc.
  - Some will be heavy: research papers
  - I'll try to balance readings so you don't have too much for a given week
- Similarly, you can miss two readings for two class sessions without penalty
  - Starting next class (practice), for points starting next week

# Structure & Readings

- Going to use Perusall, a collaborative reading/commenting tool
- Comments graded binary 0/1 to simplify grading, but more and deeper comments will lead to better discussion and thus better learning

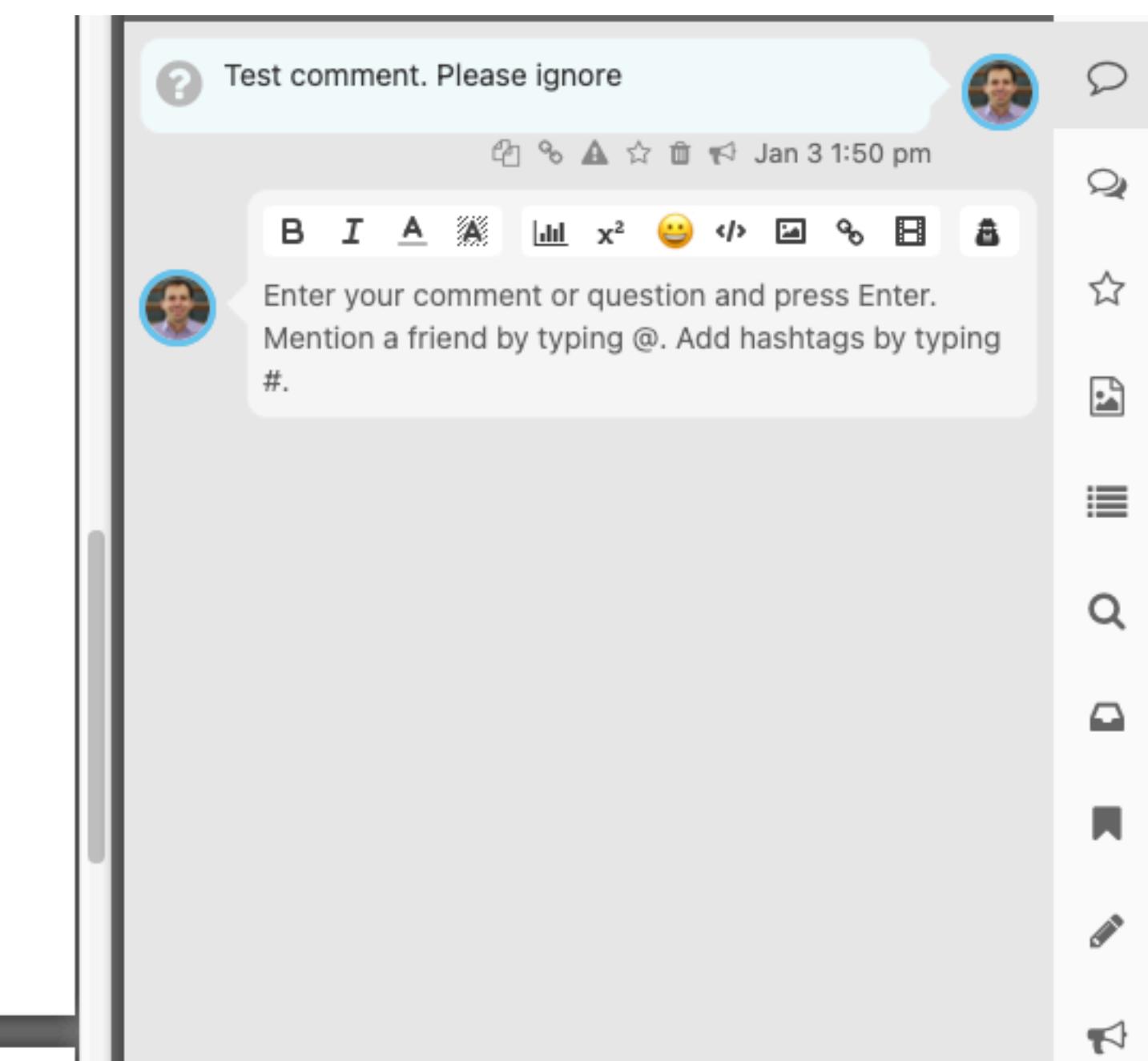
## Insights

- Knowledge generated by HCI research can be categorized into certain contribution types.
- Each contribution type has key characteristics that imply how it is judged.
- The contribution types used for submissions to the CHI conference have evolved over time to distill types of knowledge from other concerns.

All scholarly fields strive to contribute new knowledge. In the field of human-computer interaction (HCI), this new knowledge increasingly comes in rich forms like videos and demos, but the archival research paper remains the most widely used and accepted capture and delivery mechanism for research knowledge. The knowledge contribution made by a research paper—or more precisely, made by the work a research paper describes—is any research paper's central feature. For example, a theoretical physics paper may contribute a new mathematical model for the behavior of light near black holes. A civil

engineering paper may contribute a new method for stress-testing bridges. A social anthropology paper may contribute an account of people's reactions to teen pregnancies in rural religious communities. Whatever the field of inquiry, whatever the phenomenon of interest, every research paper strives to make a research contribution by offering new knowledge. In an effort to distinguish this kind of knowledge from everyday know-how, some scholars even capitalize the term: Knowledge.

In the whole of human inquiry, there are, of course, countless specific research contributions to be made. But



# Assignments

- 3 assignments, intended to prompt reflection on the design of social platforms and the content that go on them
  - A1: Making a Meme
  - A2: Analyzing Defunct Social Platforms
  - A3: Practicing Content Moderation

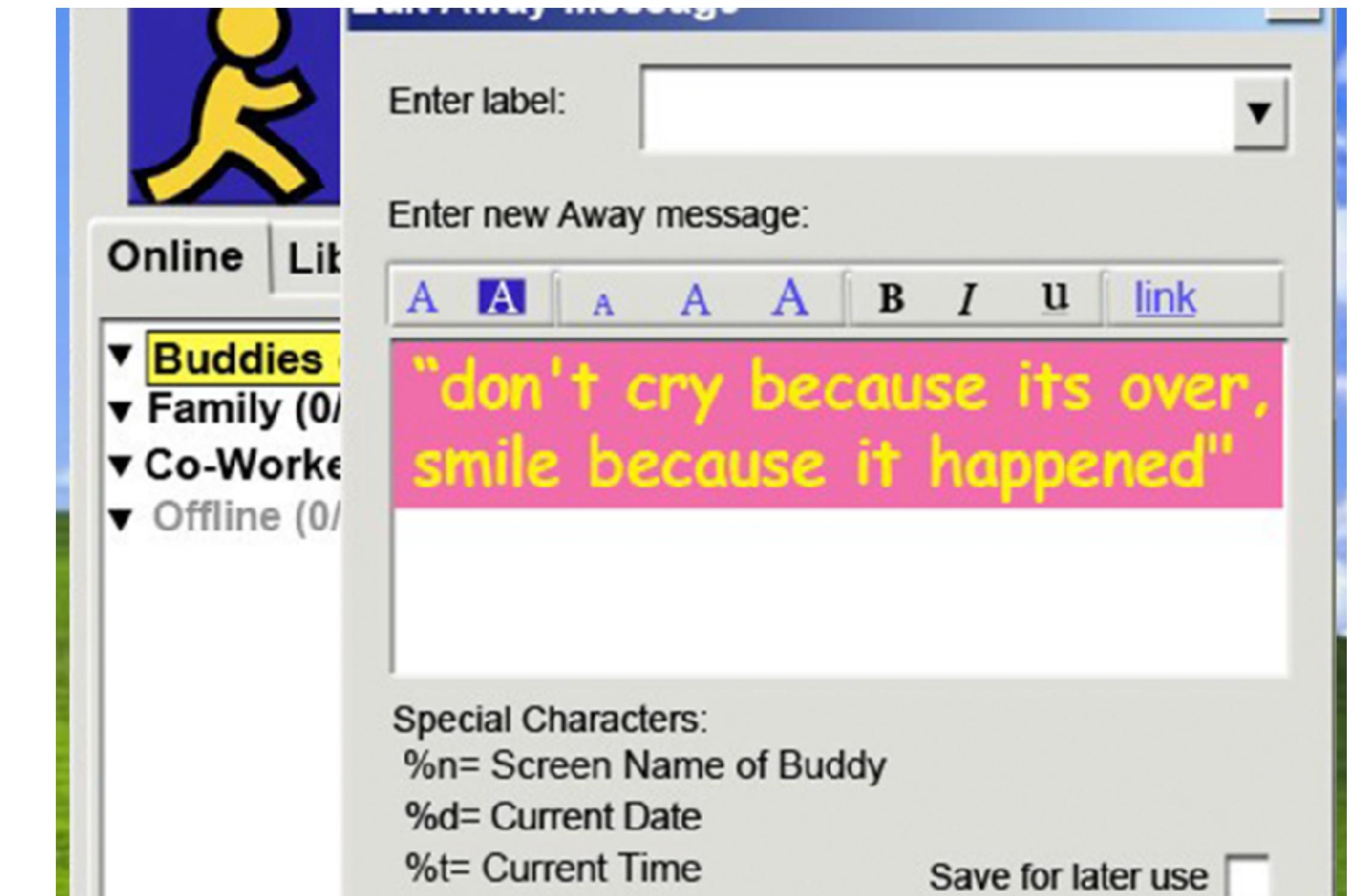
# A1: Making a Meme

- Learning goal: understand what makes content go viral online, and appreciate how difficult it is!
- Make and refine a meme, on any platform, and reflect on your experiences



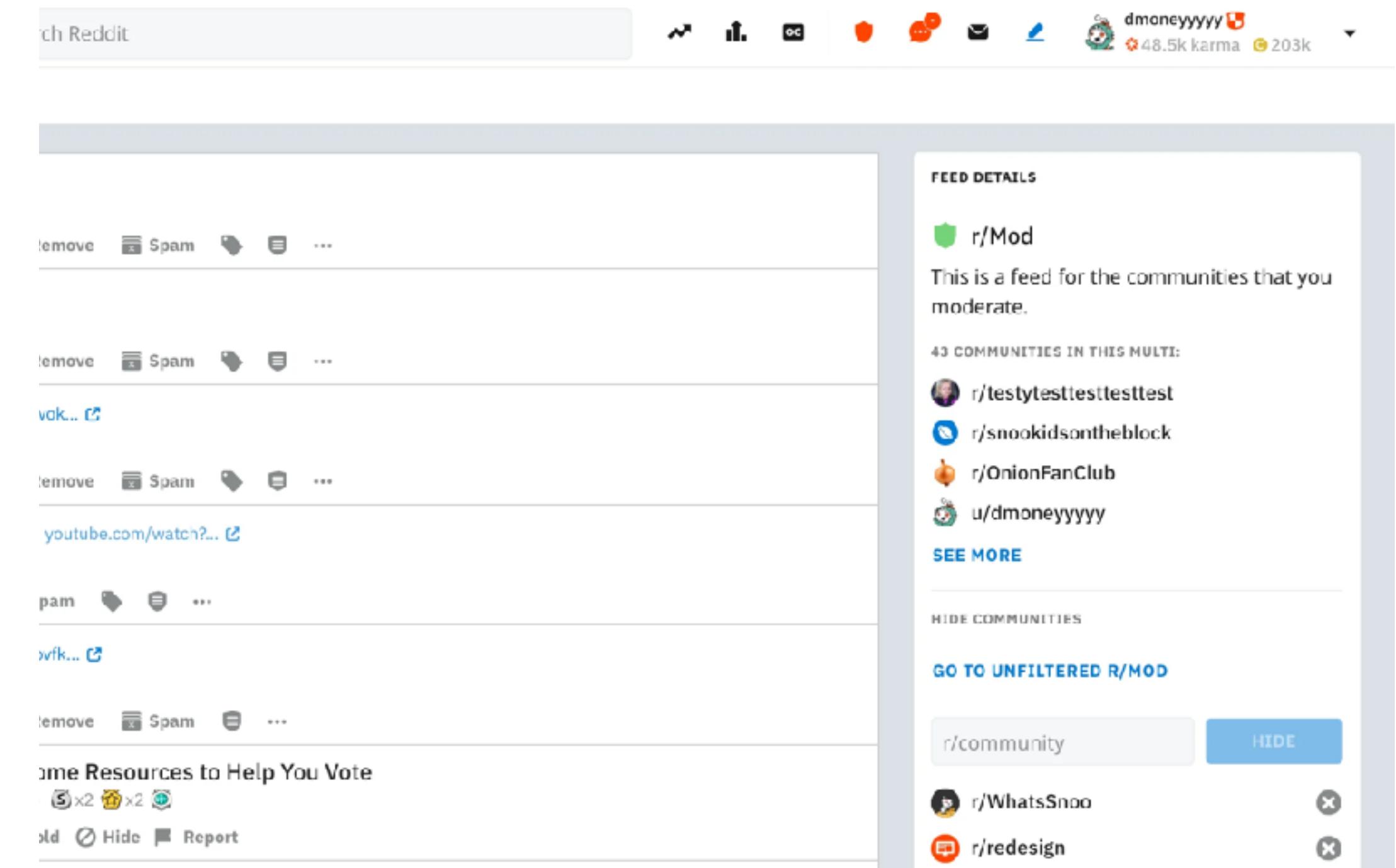
# A2: Analyzing Defunct Social Platforms

- Learning goal: understand how the social media landscape has evolved/devolved, and consider what aspects of platforms serve people's social needs
- Read up on a social platform that was once prominent, consider what it did well and why it died out



# A3: Practicing Content Moderation

- Learning goal: understand how moderators assess new online content, and consider the challenging decisions and labor which goes into moderating
- Make decisions on the relevance and appropriateness of posts within a Reddit community, and reflect on the process



# Take-home Exam/Essay

- I don't know much about it yet, I'm still deciding
- But it will be take-home
  - Probably open-note/lecture/whatever
  - Probably a mix of short and long-answer questions
- The goal of it will be to demonstrate knowledge gained from readings and lecture that are not well-covered by the assignments

# Grading

- 45% Assignments
  - 15% Making a Meme, 15% Analyzing Defunct Social Platforms, 15% Practicing Content Moderation
- 15% Online Reading/Video Engagement
  - Perusall, with up to 2.5% extra credit across the quarter for thoughtful engagement
- 15% In-Class participation
  - PollEV, with up to 2.5% extra credit across the quarter for thoughtful engagement
- 25% Final Take-Home Exam/Essay

# Course Overview

- Learning objectives
- Who I am
- Staying in touch
- Structure & readings
- Assignments
- Grading
- Website overview

# Website Overview

Initial import for Spring 2024, content subject to change.

## INF 153 - CSCW - Spring 2024

[Home](#) | [Assignments](#) | [Syllabus](#) | [Calendar](#)

### Basic Information

Class Time: MoWe 12:30-1:50

Class Location: ICS 174

Perusall:

<https://app.perusall.com/courses/in4matx-153-cscw/>

Poll Everywhere: <https://pollev.com/epstein>

Canvas:  
<https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/62680>

Email: [epstein@ics.uci.edu](mailto:epstein@ics.uci.edu)

Office hours:

Professor Epstein: We 2:00-3:00, DBH 6093

TA Wang: Mo 2:00-3:00, DBH ????

Reader Du: TBD

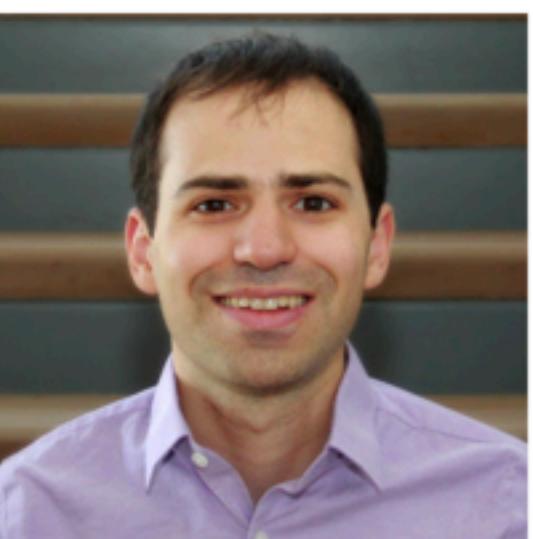
### Course Staff

Professor Daniel Epstein  
TA Dennis Wang  
Reader Weijie Du

Welcome! This class focuses on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, with a particular emphasis on Social Computing/Social Media. People regularly socialize and work with one another online. Understanding how technology supports as well as inhibits socialization and work can lead to better designed technologies in the future, as well as more thoughtful critique and policy surrounding these technologies.

### Course Staff

Professor Daniel Epstein



TA Dennis Wang



Reader Weijie Du



### Repository

This website is live on GitHub: <https://github.com/uci-inf-153/inf153-sp24>. You can create issues if information is unclear, incorrect, or out-of-date. You can even submit a pull request to resolve them yourself!

### Acknowledgments

This course pulls content and readings from [Nazanin Andalibi](#), [Michael Bernstein](#), and [Oliver Haimson](#).

Thanks, everyone!

<https://inf153-sp24.depstein.net/>

# Final Thoughts

- This is a “be here” class, in that I expect that you will show up and you will participate
- This is also a critical thinking class, I will expect a lot of reading and writing
- This is not a “skills” class, in that you’ll come out with knowledge of techniques etc. that you’ll use directly in jobs
- But, I expect this class will influence how you approach designing social features should you do so professionally, and also shape how you think about social media in your personal lives
- We are at capacity, I expect others would love to take your spot if you decide this course isn’t for you

# Final Thoughts

- Bear with me this quarter.
  - This is my first time teaching 153
  - The topic is a radical change from prior versions
- I promise to do my best to make the topic relevant and interesting
- I promise to be communicative and responsive to feedback
- But, I'm working on the fly
  - I don't have all the readings/videos, assignments, discussions, etc. fully formed

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