

# IN4MATX 251: CSCW

Class 1:  
Introduction & Defining Social  
Media

Daniel Epstein

# 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

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

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

**There are lots of social technologies.  
We'll largely focus on social media this  
quarter.**

# What is social media?

- Social media are the technologies, usually commercial, which people use for social interaction
- Fall under the umbrella term of “Computer-Mediated Communication” (CMC)

# What is social media?

- According to Carr & Hayes, Social Media must have five distinct qualities
  - Internet-based
  - Disentrained: support asynchronous or non-live social interaction
  - Interactive, or social in nature
  - User-generated, the central value comes from the social interaction with others
  - Masspersonal, they allow for broadcast of communication to large audiences

**What sites, platforms, etc. does this definition of Social Media include?  
What does it exclude?**

# Social media: inclusion & exclusion

- Inclusion
  - Facebook
  - Twitter/X
  - Reddit
  - LinkedIn
  - Snapchat
  - TikTok
  - Tinder
  - Grindr
  - Blogs
  - ...



# Social media: inclusion & exclusion

- Exclusion
  - Livestreaming sites, like Twitch; asynchronous interaction is not the main goal
  - Dedicated chat apps, because they're not really about mass communication\*
  - Social features embedded in primarily non-social applications, like Spotify
  - Other cases are more ambiguous. Is Venmo social media? Is Strava?

# Social media: bigger picture

- Definitions matter because they help place bounds on expectations
- They can help a researcher generalize to platforms which share certain qualities
  - Design features
  - Use cases
- But, getting too caught in the inclusion/exclusion of certain platforms misses the bigger point, that social media platforms have commonalities

# Social media and social computing

- Social computing is the research field which examines the design and impact of social media, as well as other forms of social technologies
- Social computing can have a variety of goals
  - Sometimes they help us get things done
  - Sometimes they make our lives more fun
  - Sometimes they help sort out critical societal challenges

# Other terms you might see

- Social networking sites (SNSs)
  - The websites that social media runs on
  - Intended to include things like Facebook/Twitter and exclude things like blogs
- Social Awareness Streams (SASs)
  - Social feeds, “for you” pages, etc.

# **Core components of social media**



# Core components of social media

## The “Profile” Element

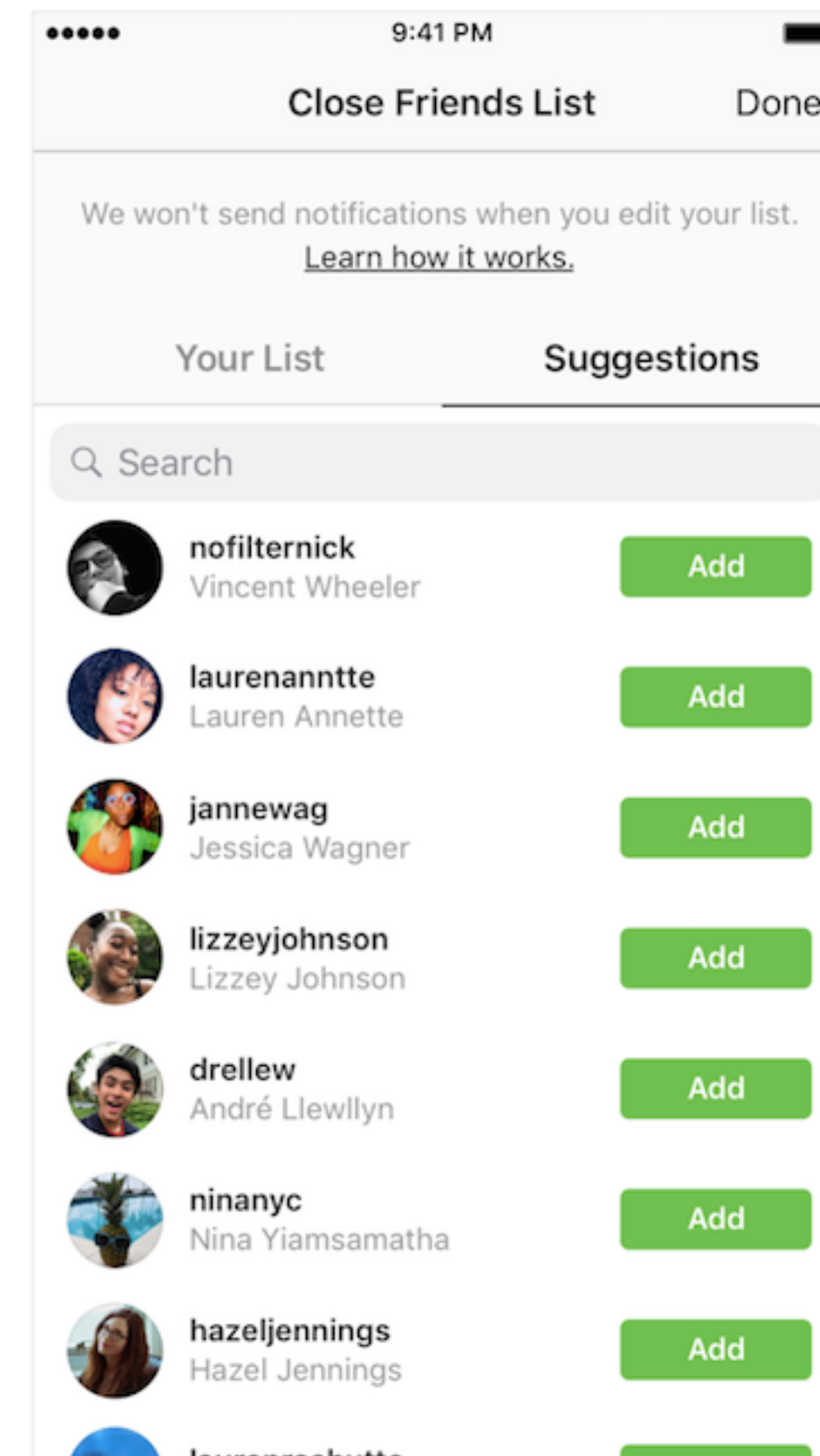
- Allows individuals to display information about themselves in a personalized space
- People design/curate to influence how others might perceive them



# Core components of social media

## The “Network” Element

- Allows individuals to engage with the other people/accounts that they wish to connect to
- Some sort of association (following, friending, etc.) enables people to view the content of others

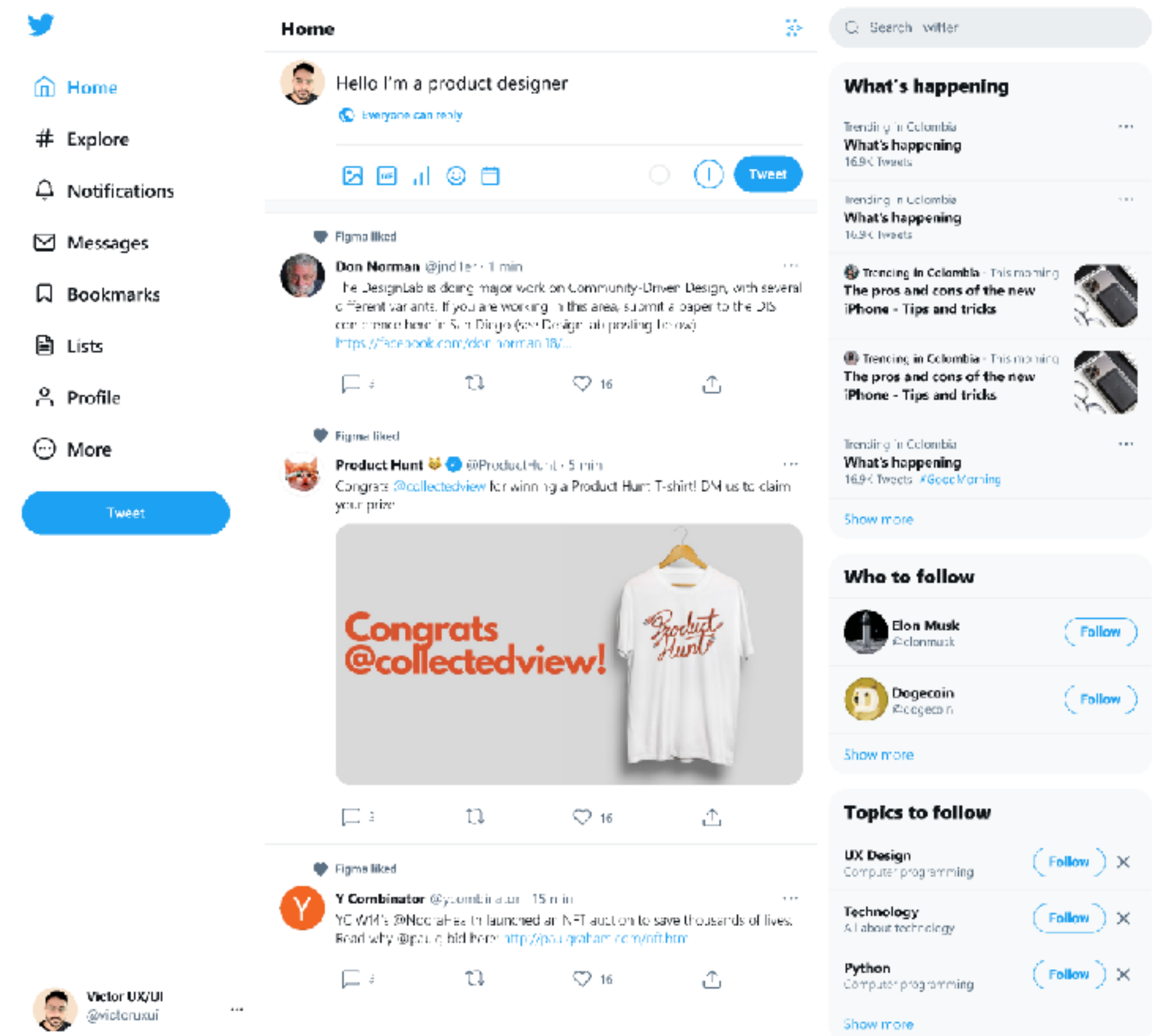




# Core components of social media

## The “Stream” Element

- Some sort of aggregated display for recent news from other accounts
- Typically the “main page” of a social networking site

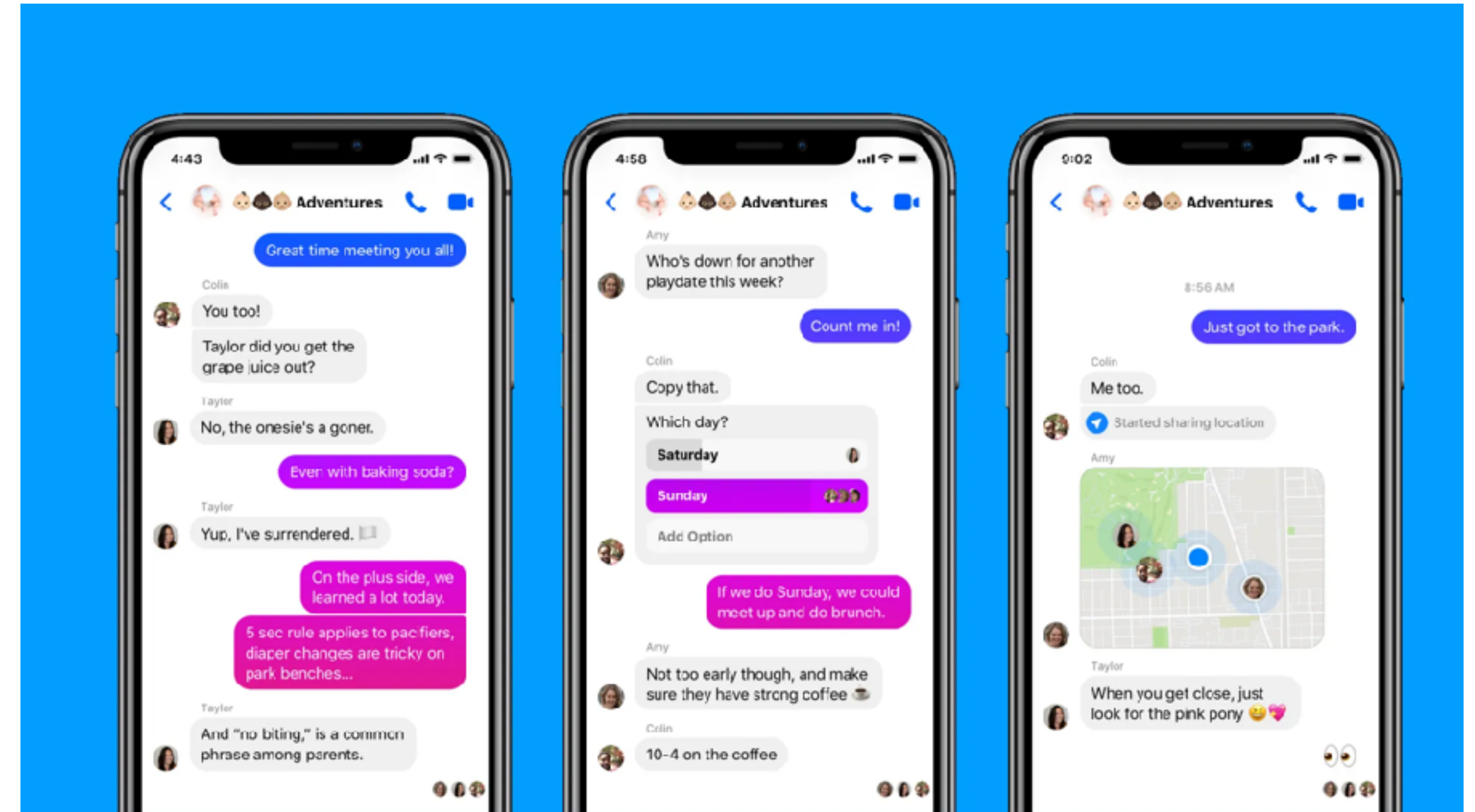




# Core components of social media

## The “Message” Element

- Some method for two or more people/accounts to communicate without broadcasting more publicly
- Some debate about whether messaging belongs in the definition of social media, but it definitely supports the social connections



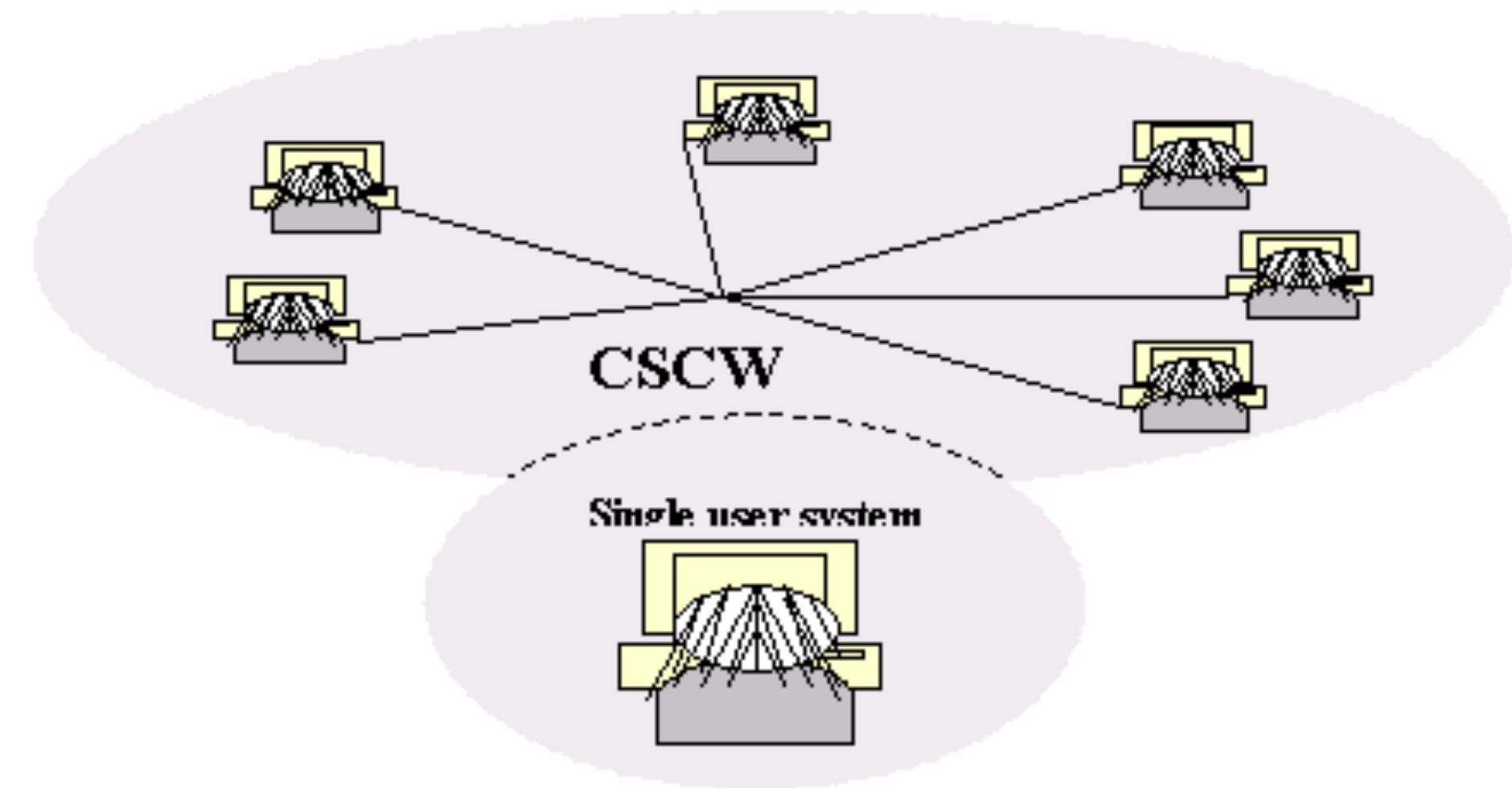
**Ok, so how does any of this relate to CSCW?**

# 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

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[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

<http://cscw.acm.org>



# Social computing and CSCW

- But, more practically... I'm also teaching IN4MATX 153 this quarter
  - **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.
  - (This is technically the course description for 2024-2025)
- Focusing this offering on social computing will help me stay sane, and will enable me to focus more on providing depth of knowledge in this class

# Social computing and CSCW

- We will cover some contemporary “work” in this course
  - Sectors that have shifted online, like gig/crowd work
- But we won’t go as deep into the theoretical underpinnings of how collaborative work gets done
  - Remote collaboration
  - Peer production
  - Distributed cognition
  - ...

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# Course Overview

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

# Learning Objectives

- By the end of this course, you should be able to:
  - Describe canonical intellectual agendas of CSCW and Social Computing, and articulate how a new paper in the space contributes to one or more of the agendas.
  - 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.
  - Make a scholarly contribution to the field of CSCW and Social Computing, and relate the topic to your own research interests.

# Learning Objectives

- This is *not* a course on CSCW-specific methods
  - We will inevitably discuss some approaches common to the field, but methods are largely covered by Qualitative (203) and Quantitative (205) Methods
- This is *not* a course on dissecting the structure of a CSCW contribution
  - There is significant overlap between the structure of a CSCW paper and other HCI papers, which was covered in Research in HCI (232)
  - But CSCW papers are often a bit more theoretical, we'll engage with this throughout the quarter

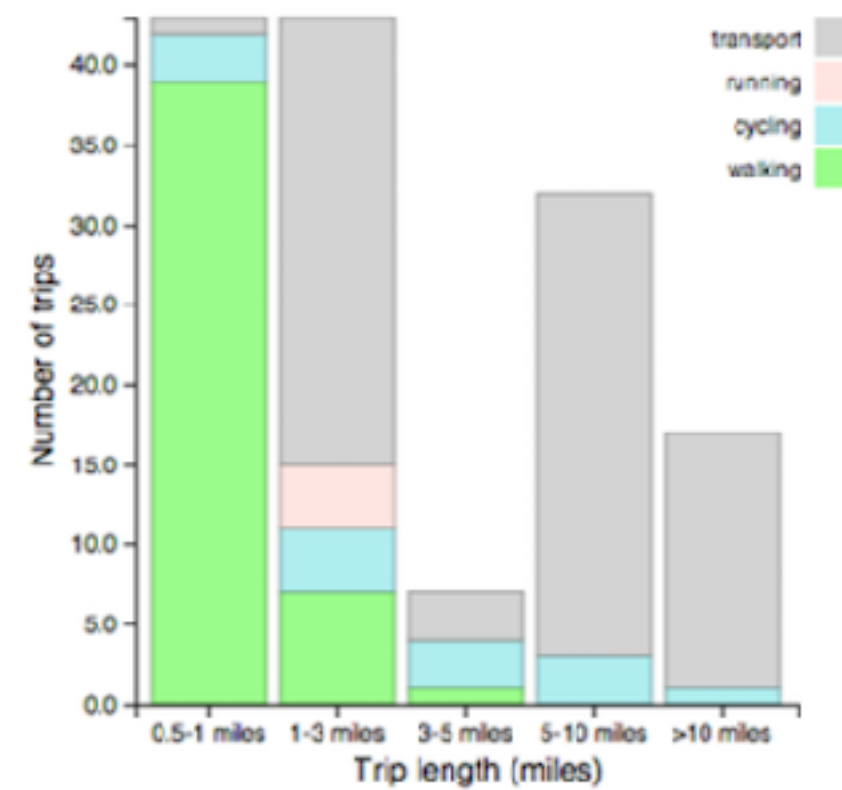
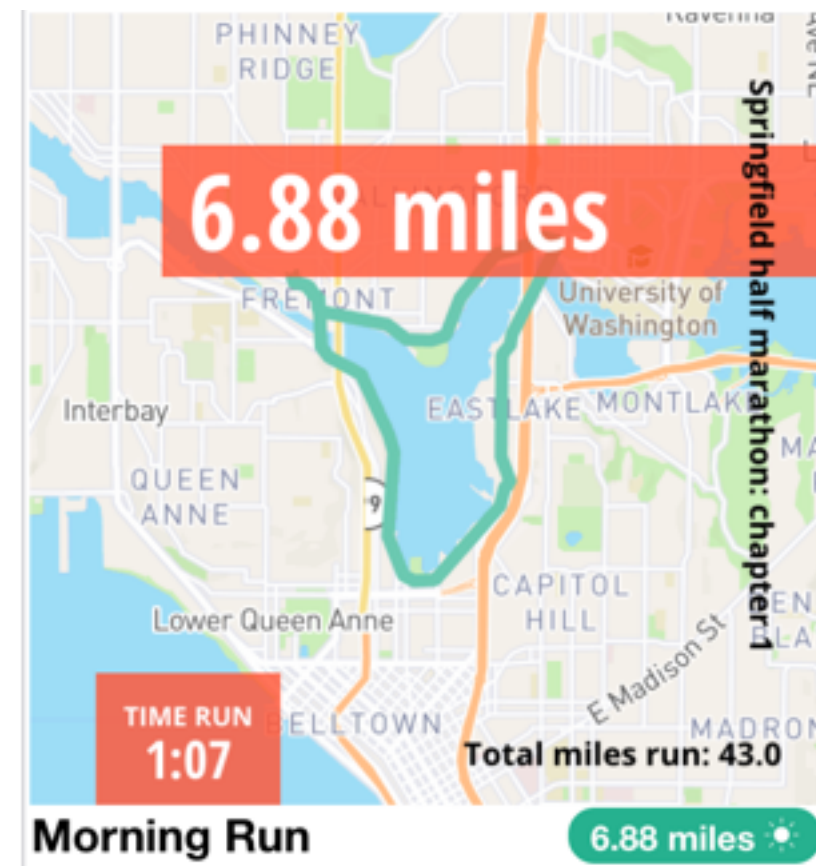
# Who I am

- 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





# Who I am





# Who I am

- I regularly publish at CSCW, but I wouldn't classify it as my "intellectual home"
  - Within CSCW, I focus more on Social Computing than contemporary work
- I'm not as well-versed in modern social media as I used to be
  - I'm not on TikTok, I rarely post to Facebook or Instagram anymore



**Around the room!**  
**Say your name, program & year,**  
**and something fun about you**

# Staying in touch

- Web: <http://inf251-sp24.depstein.net/>
- Email me: [epstein@ics.uci.edu](mailto:epstein@ics.uci.edu)
- Office hours: generally by appointment (send me an email)



# Structure & Readings

- In-person, synchronous, no recording, no hybrid
  - Discussion is a key component of the class
  - Quality hybrid discussions are hard to pull off
- Let me know if you need to miss a class
  - I expect many of you will need to miss a few
  - If you miss a week or less, your grade won't be impacted

# Structure & Readings

- Topics will be organized by common intellectual agendas of CSCW
- In one quarter we can't cover everything CSCW, or even everything in Social Computing
- Poll is up to help determine which topics to focus on (complete it by Wednesday)

# Structure & Readings

- Each day will have 2-3 readings
  - *Framing papers* which introduce the agenda, typically a bit older
  - *Recent contributions* which provide a modern take on the agenda
- Doing the reading is a major component of the course
  - No exams, no assignments

# 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

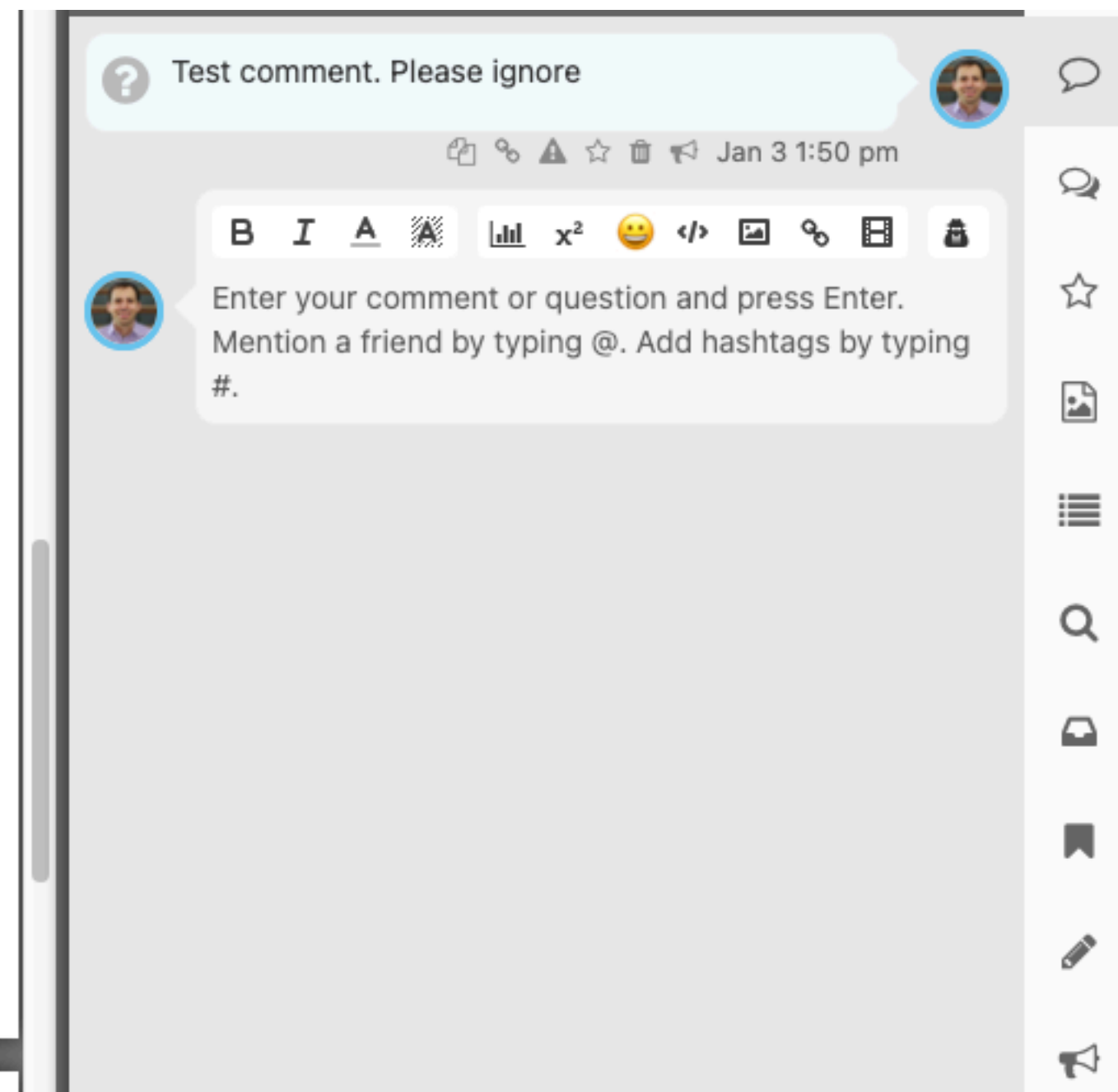
## Insights

- 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



# Structure & Readings

- You will be in charge of leading discussion one day during the quarter
- Poll is out to get feedback on what topic you're most interested in leading discussion on
  - If you're "window shopping" for courses, that's fine
  - Fill out the survey anyway, and let me know so I don't assign you to week 2

# Structure & Readings

- Read smart
  - Can skip critique of recent papers' methods, someone else reviewed them and felt they were conducted rigorously enough
  - Focus on what's relevant today from the “old” readings, not just that they're “old”
- There are required readings for Wednesday
- Again, fill out the discussion leading preferences poll ASAP



# Project

- Quarter-long project, preferably groups of 3 but will consider groups of 2
- Try to connect it to your research, or join with someone else who can
  - I'm open to projects broadly related to CSCW, doesn't have to be Social Computing specifically
  - E.g., any form of interpersonal technology, traditional work settings are also fine
- 1-page project proposal due April 10
- Class website has more details around expectations

# Grading

- 45% Quarter-Long Project
  - 5% Project proposal, 15% Milestone report, 25% Final presentation/report
- 35% Readings
  - 25% Reading Reports, 10% Leading Discussion
- 20% Participation
  - Attendance (on-time!) is expected, and there will be penalty for many absences
  - I strongly encourage speaking up in class, and we will have many small group discussions to facilitate other forms of participation



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# Website Overview

Initial import for Spring 2024, content subject to change.

## INF 251 - Research in CSCW - Spring 2024

[Home](#) | [Project](#) | [Readings](#) | [Calendar](#)

### Basic Information

Class Time: MoWe 9:30-10:50

Class Location: PCB 1200

Perusall:

<https://app.perusall.com/courses/in4matx-251-cscw>

Canvas:

<https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/62681>

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

Office hours: By appointment

### Course Staff

Professor Daniel Epstein

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.

This course will require a substantial amount of reading, as well as analysis of literature and writing. While there will be a few lectures dedicated to giving background on the field, in most weeks we will instead look to understand the research literature through discussion.

We will emphasize open discussion and feedback in all aspects of the course.

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

<https://inf251-sp24.depstein.net/>

# Final Thoughts

- Bear with me this quarter.
  - This is my first time teaching this class, and it has a different structure for other offerings
- 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, discussions, etc. fully formed

# Final Thoughts

- As an elective course, I hope you're here because you're interested in the topic
  - But, I recognize that some of you might just need a class to fill your requirements
  - Some of you self-identify as CSCW researchers, others do not
  - But I believe that all of you can connect your research interests to CSCW, if you wish to
  - My goal is to help you find your connection, or broaden your background if you already have one

# Final Thoughts

- As much as I can, I will share what I know about CSCW
  - But there are plenty of areas where I have limited knowledge
  - Please establish your expertise when you have it, disagree with me, etc.
- You'll get out of this class what you put in
  - You can pass the class by minimally engaging with the readings and not asking questions during class, but you'll learn less
  - Again, I'm here to share what I know and provide some structure for you to learn



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