**Class Details**

Culture and Social Media Technologies

**Prerequisites**
None

**Class Description**

This course will examine “social media” from a cultural perspective, with a focus on how media technologies figure in practices of everyday life and in the construction of social relationships and identities. This course is based closely on one offered in New York by Professor Laura Portwood-Stacer, but we will examine many of the issues in the context of Central and Eastern Europe and compare the “Western” experience of social media with the situation in the post-communist world.

Although many of our readings will deal with Social Network Sites (SNSs), we will attempt to form an expansive definition of what constitutes “social media.” We will also work from an expansive definition of “technology,” considering the term in a cultural sense to include various practices and tools used to communicate in everyday life. The course will also look at the impact of social media on journalism and activism, including a dissection of the recent debates on the power of social media to transform these fields.

Questions we will consider include: What falls under the definition of “social media”? What tools can we use to study the place of social media in culture? How can social media enable the formation of community? Does the consumption of social media differ in Central and Eastern Europe, and if so, how? How are constructions of youth, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality mediated through social media technologies? Can social media technologies be a vehicle for political activism? How are social media used in marketing and advertising? What are the ethical issues associated with social media technologies? Is it possible to refuse social media? Are social media improving or harming the state of journalism?

The course will be in the form of discussions around the required readings, plus several guest lecturers from among social media experts in Prague.

**Desired Outcomes**

By the end of the term, students should have achieved the following:

- They will have transformed from mere social media users/consumers into practitioners familiar with this phenomenon in a much broader and theoretical sense.
- They will understand the differences in social media consumption between the “West” and East Central Europe, with many examples in mind.
- They will have improved their communication and writing skills through feedback from the instructor on social media posts and other course contributions.

**Assessment Components**

- **Class twitter feed participation – 10%**

We will hold an ongoing conversation about our observations of social media in contemporary culture in the form of a class twitter feed. You should create a new twitter account specifically for this course. Tweets should be personal thoughts/insights/questions, responses to readings or lectures, and/or links to relevant material on the web, and should include the course hashtag (to be decided). You will be required to post a total of 40 tweets throughout the semester (a maximum of 10 of these may be links). Each student will be required to start tweeting at least three times a week, starting in the course's second week, with a penalty of one grade for each week of lateness. Tallies will be taken at
regular intervals to ensure regular participation.

**Class Blog Posts – 25%**

I will regularly tweet questions that you may expand upon in blog posts of a few paragraphs. These posts will require you to make connections between course readings/theories and your own observations/ experiences of social media. You are also encouraged to post responses to other students’ blog posts. You will be required to post a total of 6 posts (a minimum of 2 of these must be original posts versus responses to other students’ posts). Of these 6 posts, half should deal with aspects of social media related to Central and Eastern Europe. Each student will be required to post once a week, starting in the courses’ second week, with a penalty of one grade for each week of lateness. Again, tallies will be taken at regular intervals to ensure regular participation.

**Research Paper – 20%**

You will conduct research on a specific topic of your choosing related to social media in Central and Eastern Europe. Your research may either be a review of literature or an empirical study (we will discuss this more in class). You will write up your study in an 8-10 page paper that will be due during the final exam period.

**Research Presentation – 5%**

You will create a multimedia presentation of your research, which you will share with the class as well as post online. You may choose to make a video, an audio podcast, and/or a slide presentation. The presentation should 1) explain the topic you researched, 2) describe the methods you used to conduct your research, 3) summarize your findings, and 4) point to directions for further research on the topic.

**Participation/Attendance – 40%**

You are expected to do the required reading before class and will be required to answer a short quiz on the reading at the beginning of some classes. The quizzes will represent one third of your participation grade (i.e. 5% of your overall grade).

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent work demonstrating a critical and observant approach to the subject, sound research, active participation in discussions, and an ability to express thoughts cogently and persuasively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Very good work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Satisfactory work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Passable work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure to achieve a passable standard.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grade conversion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A=94-100</td>
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<td>A-=90-93</td>
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<td>B+=87-89</td>
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<td>B=84-86</td>
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<td>B-=80-83</td>
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Grading Policy

Attendance Policy

Each unexcused absences will result in your final grade being reduced by 3%. Absences only for medical reasons will be excused. To obtain an excused absence, you are obliged to supply either a doctor’s note or corroboration of your illness by a member of the housing staff (either an RA or a Building Manager). Absences due to travel will not be excused.

Late Submission of Work

Late submission of work is strongly discouraged and will be penalized in appropriate fashion. Good excuses (not the dog ate my homework) will be entertained, but not necessarily approved.

Plagiarism Policy

According to the Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook, plagiarism is defined as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work as though it were one’s own. More specifically plagiarism is to present as one’s own a sequence of words quoted without quotation marks from another writer, a paraphrased passage from another writer’s work; facts or ideas gathered, organized and reported by someone else, orally and/or in writing. Since plagiarism is a matter of fact, not of the student’s intention, it is crucial that acknowledgment of the sources be accurate and complete. Even where there is no conscious intention to deceive, the failure to make appropriate acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism.

The College of Arts and Science’s Academic Handbook defines plagiarism similarly and also specifies the following:

“Presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written), writing a paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea without a reference to the source of the idea, or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both teachers have given their permission in advance).

Receiving help on a take-home examination or quiz is also cheating – and so is giving that help – unless expressly permitted by the teacher (as in collaborative projects). While all this looks like a lot to remember, all you need to do is give credit where it is due, take credit only for original ideas, and ask your teacher or advisor when in doubt.”

“Penalties for plagiarism range from failure for a paper, failure for the course or dismissal from the university.” (Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook)

Required Text(s)

Almost all of the reading can be found in one of the three readers (a handful of assignments are only online and will be noted by the instructor).


Supplemental Texts(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)

[Click here and enter guidelines on Internet Research, if appropriate]

[Click here and enter information (e.g. camera and film, sketch book)]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 1</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, Feb 4</td>
<td>Introduction, class requirements</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Session 2** | Thursday, Feb 6 | Studying Social Media                    | Boyd, d. m. & Ellison, N. B. Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship.  
Beer, D. Social network(ing) sites... revisiting the story so far: A response to danah boyd and Nicole Ellison.  
Hargittai, “Whose Space? Differences Among Users and Non-Users of Social Network Sites” |
| **Session 3** | Tuesday, Feb 11 | Studying Social Media (continued)         | Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age* (selections)                      |
| **Session 4** | Thursday, Feb 13 | Guest Lecturer: Veronique O’Donoghue, course teaching assistant and contributor to NetProphet, TOL’s tech/social media blog | This lecture will introduce you to twitter and WordPress (if you don't know them already), and show you how to post to the class blog.  
Forming Community and Performing Identity through Social Media  
Greenhow & Robelia, “Old Communication, New Literacies”  
Donath & boyd, “Public Displays of Connection”  
HP Labs, Feedback Loops of Attention in Peer Production  
Sandvig, The Oversharer (and Other Social Media Experiments)  
| **Session 5** | Tuesday, Feb 18 | Alternative Social Networks (Gaming and Virtual Reality) | Nardi, excerpts from *My Life as a Night Elf Priest*  
Boelstorff, excerpts from *Coming of Age in Second Life*  
Krystina Derrickson, *Second Life and The Sacred: Islamic Space in a Virtual World*  
http://www.digitalislam.eu/article.do?articleId=1877 |
| **Session 6** | Thursday, Feb 20 | **Guest lecturer: Jaroslav Valuch, Social media usage in the Czech Republic, Ushahidi (TBC)** | Youth  
Boyd, “Social Steganography: Obtaining Privacy in Social Media”  
Boyd, “Facebook’s Privacy Trainwreck”

**Youth (continued)**

boyd, d. Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life

Herring, “Questioning the generational divide: Technological exoticism and adult constructions of online youth identity”

**Session 10**

Thursday, March 6

**Gender/Sexuality**

Banet-Weiser, “Branding the post-feminist self: Girls’ video production and youtube”

Marwick, “Conspicuous and Authentic: Fashion Blogs, Style, and Consumption”


**Session 11**

Film screening: *Catfish*. “Young filmmakers document their colleague’s budding online friendship with a young woman and her family which leads to an unexpected series of discoveries.”

**Session 12**

Tuesday, March 11

**Guest lecturer: Rostislav Valvoda, People in Need Foundation, about their video advocacy program (TBC)**

**Please read:** Toepfl, "Managing public outrage: Power, scandal, and new media in contemporary Russia," http://nms.sagepub.com/content/13/8/1301

**Session 13**

Thursday, March 13

**Gender/Sexuality (continued)**

Gudelunas, “There’s an App for That”

Gudelunas, “Online Personal Ads: Community and Sex, Virtually”

**Session 14**

Tuesday, March 18

**Race and Ethnicity**

Boyd, “How Race and Class Shaped Facebook, Myspace”

Byrne, The future of (the) “race”: Identity, discourse, and the rise of computer-mediated public spheres

Thomas, “KPK, Inc.: Race, Nation, and Emergent Culture in Online Games”

**Session 15**

Thursday, March 20

**Race and Ethnicity (continued)**

Nakamura, “Race and Identity in Digital Media”

Manjoo, “How Black People Use Twitter”

Session 16
Friday, March 21
Make up Thursday

The Debate Over the Power of Social Media for Change

Gladwell, “Why the revolution will not be tweeted.”
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell


Tufekci, “New Media and the People-Powered Uprisings,”
http://www.technologyreview.com/blog/guest/27122/?p1=A3

Madrigal, “Gladwell on Social Media and Activism,”

Session 17
Tuesday, March 25

The Debate Over the Power of Social Media for Change (continued)

El-Nawawy and Khamis, “Cyberactivists Paving the Way for the Arab Spring: Voices from Egypt, Tunisia and Libya”
http://www.cyberorient.net/article.do?articleId=7994

The Role of Information Communication Technologies in the “Arab Spring”
Ekaterina Stepanova
http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/ponars/pepm_159.pdf

Session 18
Thursday, March 27

Politics and Activism, Case Study: Kony 2012

Pew Research Center, “The Viral Kony 2012 Video,”

Dunn, Understanding How Social Media Fueled The Kony 2012 Craze,
http://edudemic.com/2012/04/understanding-how-social-media-fueled-the-kony-2012-craze/


New York Times, “Room for Debate,” all selections:

Session 19
Tuesday, April 1

Countering a Utopian View of the Internet


Evgeny Morozov, “First thoughts on Tunisia and the role of the Internet”:
http://neteffect.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/14/first_thoughts_on_tunisia_and_the_role_of_the_internet

Session 20
Thursday,
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>April 7-11</td>
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<td>Session 21</td>
<td>Journalism and Social Media (continued)</td>
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<td>Visit to RFE/RL to meet with Glenn Kates (TBC)</td>
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<td>Session 22</td>
<td>Learning About and Reaching Consumers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday,</td>
<td>Clemons, “The complex problem of monetizing virtual electronic social networks”</td>
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<td>April 17</td>
<td>Mangold &amp; Faulds, “Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix”</td>
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<td>Session 23</td>
<td>Learning About and Reaching Consumers (continued)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday,</td>
<td>Kozinets, “How online communities are growing in power”</td>
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<td>April 22</td>
<td>Weber, excerpts from Marketing to the social web: How digital customer communities build your business</td>
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<td>Session 24</td>
<td>Guest Lecturer: Denis Gibadulin, Google Strategic Partner Manager (TBC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday,</td>
<td>Gleick, “What Defines a Meme?”</td>
<td><a href="http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/What-Defines-">http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/What-Defines-</a></td>
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<td>April 24</td>
<td>Memes - The Evolution of an Idea</td>
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**a-Meme.html**

Chatfield, “Cute cats, memes and understanding the internet,”  

Jenkins, If It Doesn’t Spread, It’s Dead (Part One): Media Viruses and Memes  
[http://henryjenkins.org/2009/02/if_it_doesnt_spread_its_dead_p.html#sthash.GEwwtmGg.dpuf](http://henryjenkins.org/2009/02/if_it_doesnt_spread_its_dead_p.html#sthash.GEwwtmGg.dpuf)

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<th>National Holiday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 27</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, May 13</td>
<td>Presentations and group feedback/discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 28</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, May 15 (last day of classes)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 29</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, May 20</td>
<td>Presentations and group feedback/discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 30</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, May 22</td>
<td>Course Wrap-up</td>
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**Classroom Etiquette**  
[Click here and enter information about classroom etiquette.]

**Required Co-curricular Activities**  
[Click here and enter information about required activities, whether organised by NYU or not.]

**Suggested Co-curricular Activities**  
[Click here and enter information about suggested activities, societies, lectures, etc.]