ENV381S, Winter 2017
Topics in Internet and Environment 2:
Social Media and Environmentalism

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Class Meetings: Fridays 10am - 12 pm, Room AB107; followed by a 1-hour tutorial every week.

Teaching Assistants: Samar Sabie, James Nugent

Course basics are posted on **Blackboard**. We are also using **Piazza** for content delivery and course interaction. Consider these multiple platforms as a "meta" opportunity to think about the key themes in the course:
- **Piazza enrolment:** http://piazza.com/utoronto.ca/winter2017/env381

Course theme & objectives:
This special topics course will examine a range of issues related to the environment and the digital world, with a broad focus on the impacts of social media on environmental thinking and policy-making. It is the second of two new Special Topics courses on the Environment and the Digital World. This course builds on the ideas explored in ENV281F, but does not require it as a pre-requisite.

Contemporary experience of environmentalist thought is increasingly mediated through internet technologies. The dynamics of how people engage with social media often determine how they learn about topics such as climate change, environmental policy, and the nature of protest movements. At the same time, the power of governments and corporations to conduct mass surveillance via the internet can have a chilling effect on those who express dissent over social, economic and environmental policy. The current generation of students has grown up with social media, but often lacks the opportunity to step back and think critically about its broader consequences, especially in the face of grand societal and environmental challenges. The aim of the course is to engage students in the School of Environment in critical thinking about the impacts and ethics of social media, and the ways in which it is used to foster or stifle social change.

Topics include the use of social media as a tool for community-building and collaborative design, the sharing economy, online protest movements, mass surveillance and its implications, and the impact of misinformation on climate denialism. We will also examine the role of "fake news" and alleged hacking in recent elections, and the impact this has on how people understand and react to current political issues.

What you will learn in the course:
- Critical thinking skills for analyzing complex socio-technical systems from the multiple perspectives, using methods from multiple disciplines.
- Methods of problem analysis used in technology design, including the ability to identify multiple stakeholders and their needs, and the use of scenarios for conceptual design.
- Improved technology literacy and communication skills, through: (1) a deeper understanding of how social media platforms work; (2) critical analysis of the ways that social media re-shape our

relationships with each other and with the environment and (3) how to clearly communicate your ideas using a variety of forms.

Required Texts:
There is no set text for this course. Readings will be posted online week-by-week.

Course Evaluation:

Grading Component	Due Date	Weighting
Assignment 1: Problem Analysis for social media design (to be completed in pairs)	Draft: February 10, 2017 Final: February 17, 2017	20%
Assignment 2: Critical Analysis of an existing social media tool and how it is used (group project)	Draft: March 24, 2017 Final: March 31, 2017	30%
Reading Summaries (8 in total)	Due each class (except Jan 6, Feb 10, Mar 24 and Mar 31).	10%
Tutorial Participation	In weekly tutorials	10%
Final Exam	Final Exam period	30%

Coursework Assignments (50% overall): Each assignment is workshopped in tutorials, and then completed outside of class time. Bring a complete draft of the assignment to class on the first due date, and you will receive feedback on your draft during that week's tutorial. You will then submit a revised version the following week. Marking rubrics for each assignment will be available one week before drafts are due. Some of the criteria included in the rubrics include depth of critical analysis, coverage of the literature, coherence and comprehensibility, and presentation.
Assignment 1 is completed in teams of 2-3 students. It involves the first few steps in design for social media, including identifying key stakeholder and their goals, and an initial design using storyboarding. Each team submits and is graded on a single report
Assignment 2 is conducted in teams of 4-6 students. You will identify the pros and cons of an existing social media tool or app, including both short and long term impacts. Each team member will submit and be graded on an individual report, giving your perspective on the team's analysis.

Submitting coursework: All assignments are due in hard copy at the beginning of class (Friday 10am). Late assignments can be submitted to the dropbox located at the School of the Environment.
All assignments should be single spaced, using 12 point font with 2.5cm margins and numbered pages. A cover page must be included with the following information:

Your name(s);   2) Course title &   3) Instructor's name;
    1) Title of assignment;   number;   4) TA's name;

Reading summaries. Each week, you will summarize five interesting insights from that week's assigned reading. Due in hardcopy at *the start* of the next lecture (except in weeks when an assignment is due). Can be handwritten (legibly) or typed; bullet points or prose – your choice.

Tutorial participation. Ten tutorials, of one hour duration, will be held over the course. Please attend and participate! Full attendance and participation will earn you 10%.

Final exam. A two-hour final exam worth a maximum of 30% will be held during the exam period at the end of term. The exam will be a combination of short and long answer questions based on lectures, readings and assignments. You may bring a one-page (8.5"x11") singled-sided summary sheet to the exam, which may be typed or handwritten.

Class Policies:

Late Penalty for assignments: If you are having difficulty completing your work for any reason, please discuss this with Prof Easterbrook *before* the due date, to arrange an alternative schedule. If you have not agreed an alternative plan prior to the due date, work submitted up to one week late will receive half marks; after this, it will not be accepted. Note: If you are unavoidably absent from the university, please contact the instructor as soon as you return, to discuss the situation.

If you are unable to attend a tutorial, please email your TA and state the reason why. You may be asked to provide documentation such as a note from a physician, police or registrar.

Requests to re-mark an assignment must be submitted in writing to Prof. Easterbrook and clearly state the reason for your request. Prof. Easterbrook will respond within a week as to whether your assignment will be remarked. Your assignment will be remarked by your TA.

Communications policy: We will use Piazza for all announcements about the course, and to respond to questions outside of class time. The instructors will respond to substantial questions on Piazza within 24 hours (except on weekends). Do not expect responses to questions about assignments within 24 hours of the due date. Please do not email the course instructors and TAs unless your questions are urgent or personal.

Academic Integrity:

Very few of us have truly original ideas – we almost always build on the ideas and information provided by others. However, it is a serious offense to represent someone else's words as your own, or to submit work that you have previously submitted for marks in another class or program. Assignments, reading summaries and exams will be reviewed for evidence of these infractions. Penalties for these offences can be severe and can be recorded on your transcript.

- Trust your own ability to think and write and make use of the resources available at U of T that can help you do so (e.g. professors, TAs, writing centres). See the U of T writing website, especially the "How Not To Plagiarize" document at http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/home and the website of the Office of Student Academic Integrity.
- Every written assignment must include an Academic Integrity Checklist, signed by you (see the course website). Read the checklist carefully before you sign it.

The following is a list of examples (not complete) of what constitutes an academic offence:
- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Copying material word-for-word from *any* source (including lecture and study group notes) without quotation marks and a citation for the author/source.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts, including references to sources that you did not use.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including:
  - Working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work
  - Having someone rewrite or add material to your work while "editing".
  - Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission.
- On tests and exams:
  - Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone
  - Looking at someone else's answers
  - Letting someone else look at your answers

- ○ Using material copied word-for-word from *any* source (including lecture and study group notes) without quotation marks and a citation for the author/source.
  - ○ Misrepresenting your identity
  - ○ Submitting an altered test for re-grading
- ● Misrepresentation:
  - ○ Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including doctor's notes
  - ○ Falsifying institutional documents or grades

Participation:

Students are expected to attend every class and tutorial having completed the required readings or videos, etc., and ready to participate fully in the discussion through both attentive listening and speaking. Cell phones should remain off and out of sight. Students wishing to use computers to take notes should refrain from using the internet during class unless this is part of an in-class assignment.

Accommodation:

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility

Outline of Topics

More detail and suggested additional readings are provided on a separate readings list.

	Date	Lecture Topic	Hand in
Part 1: Knowledge			
1	Jan 6	Introduction: Is Social Media Sustainable?	
2	Jan 13	Truth and Denial: Does the internet make us smarter?	Reading Summary
3	Jan 20	Digital Inequality: Who's not online?	Reading Summary
Part 2: Sharing			
4	Jan 27	Open Source, Open Data, Open Science?	Reading Summary
5	Feb 3	Intellectual Property: What is it, and who owns it?	Reading Summary
6	Feb 10	The wisdom of crowds?	Draft Assignment 1
Part 3: Activism			
7	Feb 17	Social and environmental movements on the internet	Reading Summary
	Feb 24	*No Lecture – Reading Week!*	
8	Mar 3	Secrets and Lies: the ethics of hacking, cracking and trolling	Reading Summary
9	Mar 10	Governance, surveillance, and the suppression of dissent	Reading Summary
Part 4: Behavioural Change			
10	Mar 17	Sustainability of our internet habits	Reading Summary
11	Mar 24	Virtualization and the New Green Economy	Draft Assignment 2
12	Mar 31	Course Summary and Review	