Course Description
This course examines how digital communication technologies construct and constrain the formation of online identities and social spaces. More specifically, we will explore the technical, cultural, and social forces that make digital lives both familiar and unfamiliar, traditional and subversive. In addition to studying the who, what, where, why, and how of “digital lives,” this course is focused on helping you develop your skills as an academic reader and writer in the discipline of English.

Course Objectives
- Understand theoretical, critical and popular discourses concerning the who, what, where, why, and how of “digital lives”
- Apply core concepts and engage critically with your own “digital life” and the wider digital culture
- Analyze cultural, material, and immaterial practices, objects, and artifacts of digital lives
- Create critical projects in several formats, including a formal research essay, informal reflections, and creative/non-traditional writing and/or multimedia projects

Required Texts

The book is required and we will be working with it every week. You may purchase a physical copy or ebook version. Additional assigned readings are available online for free; see the LEARN schedule for links.

Technology in the Classroom
We will be using the course page on LEARN frequently, and access to it is required. Since this is a digital humanities course, you are encouraged to bring a laptop or tablet computers to class; sometimes we will be online, and sometimes we will be offline. There are also computers available in the classroom if you prefer to use those. When we are working offline, I expect you to be fully engaged with class and you will lose participation points if you are on a device during “offline” work. When we are working online, if you abuse your tech privilege (by spending class time on social networks, websites, games, etc. unrelated to the weekly topic or immediate discussion), you will be docked participation marks at my discretion.

Absences and Attendance
You will note that attendance and participation are worth 25% of your final grade. Absences will impact this grade. Excused absences, as outlined by University Policy, will not impact your grade. If you have an excusable absence, you are responsible for verifying it as outlined in
policy. Attendance is vital to your success in this course. If you choose not to attend, you will be missing in-class exercises upon which some of your grades will depend. There are no “makeups” for this work.

Evaluation and Mark Distribution
This course is reading intensive, writing intensive, and participation intensive: I expect you to do the readings, take careful notes, show up, and take part. The following are graded components of the course and their respective value towards your final mark.

- Group Presentation (20%)
- Twine Project (20%)
- Tumblr Blog (20%)
- End of Term Essay (20%)
- Participation (20%)
  - Idea contribution (5%)
  - Reading quizzes (5%)
  - In-class writing projects (5%)
  - Attendance (5%)

Assignments Descriptions
These descriptions are intended to help you see an overview of the assignment. Detailed assignment sheets are available on LEARN.

Group Presentation (20%)
In a small group, you will be responsible for reading, taking notes, and presenting the materials from your assigned chapter in the textbook. You and your group will sign up for a topic/date and work together to create a presentation reviewing the core concepts from the chapter. The idea is to help your classmates learn the materials from the reading. Your presentation is intended to be a supplement, not a replacement, for reading the chapter. You will create a Powerpoint presentation and share your review with the class. Your group will also upload your slides and notes to a Dropbox for me to mark, and then I will make the notes available to the entire class. These notes will be available for use in the Response Essay at the end of the term. Your notes and Powerpoint are due to the LEARN Dropbox before the start of class on the date you present. You will sign up for a presentation date early in the term. There are no make-up dates available for this assignment. Do not sign up for a date you will not be in class.

Twine Project (20%)
Think about the intersections of identity, technology, social interactions, online content, etc., and make an interactive short story about digital life using Twine, a free, online open-source storytelling tool (http://twinery.org/). It may be fiction or non-fiction, autobiographical or character-driven, realistic or exaggerated. For example, you can write a science-fiction story about cyber-crime, a narrative reflection of a meaningful online interaction, a fantasy story about technology pirates, a non-fiction story about playing a videogame, an interactive exploration of mental health, sexuality, societal issues—just about anything is on the table. In addition to submitting your Twine story, you will also submit an Artist’s Statement—a two page explanation of the story describing your storytelling goals and the connections to digital
life. There will be a tutorial day on Oct. 17th, when a guest lecturer will come in to teach us how to use Twine. The Twine project is due to the Dropbox on LEARN on November 9th, 11:59PM.

Tumblr Blog Posts (20%)
You will create an individual Tumblr page and maintain it over the course of the semester. You must complete four blog responses that reflect on the current or previous week’s assigned readings, discussions, and/or object texts. In keeping with the aesthetics and affordances of Tumblr, blog responses may contain links, images, videos, and other multimedia, but must consist primarily of 200-400 words of your own writing. When a blog post is completed, post a link to the blog into the Dropbox on LEARN by 11:59PM. There are four due dates: the first post is due Sept 28th, 11:59PM; the second is due Oct 19th, 11:59PM; the third is due Nov 14th, 11:59PM; the last post is due Nov 30th, 11:59PM.

End of Term Essay (20%)
By the end of class, you will have access to a comprehensive set of notes from presentations over the term, in addition to your response blog posts and in-class writing. For the end of term essay, there will be four prompts to choose from; you will choose two of these prompts and write a short essay using research and notes you took and collected over the course of the term. Prompts will be posted to LEARN November 30th following class and responses are due to the Dropbox by December 15th, 11:59PM.

Participation (20%)
- Idea contribution (5%)
  In addition to attending class on a regular basis, you will be expected to participate actively in all class discussions. In order to contribute to the best of your ability and earn a high participation grade, you must complete scheduled readings before class. Come to class ready to talk about what you read! If you are not comfortable speaking up in class, or (like me) you are the kind of student who struggles to put their thoughts into words during discussion, you can participate in other ways, too. There is a Learn discussion board available for the same purposes and is treated the same. If these options do not meet your needs, let me know and we can work out a solution for you.

- Reading quizzes (5%)
  Following each group presentation, there will be a short reading quiz based off the book chapter. They will consist of multiple choice, short answer, or fill in the blank questions.

- In-class writing projects (5%)
  We will often spend time during class, usually at the end of a day, to write. I’ll give you a prompt or in-class project, and you write down your ideas, thoughts, and reflections. You may use these as the beginnings of your Tumblr posts, if you would like. These written tasks are simply completion marks—if you put thoughts into words and post it to the relevant discussion board, you will get marks. However, any writing that is half-hearted will either receive partial marks or zero. Yes, I can tell when you don’t try.

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• Attendance (5%)

As indicated in the “Absences and Attendance” section, attendance is expected. To earn these marks, all you have to do is attend class, be on time, and stay on task. Don’t distract your classmates, don’t fall asleep, and don’t be disruptive or disrespectful. Pretty simple stuff.

Assignment Submission, Deadlines, and Late Policy

All assignments are to be handed in to the Learn Dropbox before class begins. Emailing of papers is prohibited. Late assignments will be penalized 10% per weekday and may be graded without comments. Papers more than 5 weekdays late will receive a failing grade. Exceptions will only be made in extreme circumstances and/or with a doctor’s note.

Formatting and Citation

Use MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation style. Please remember to keep frequently updated backup copies in case of computer crashes.

Academic Integrity

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

• Discipline: As a student, you are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for your actions. If you are unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or if you need help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration, you should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, you should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm

• Grievance: If you believe that a decision affecting some aspect of your university life has been unfair or unreasonable, you may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm

• Appeals: You may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 – Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm

• More information: Academic Integrity website (Arts): http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html and Academic Integrity Office (UW): http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/
Accessibility
AccessAbility Services, [https://uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/](https://uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/) located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for those of us with disabilities, without compromising the academic integrity of curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register at the beginning of each academic term.

Accommodations
In cases where you are experiencing problems either in or outside of class that are affecting your attendance and/or work performance, please keep me informed. Under extreme circumstances, alternative arrangements may be made. In addition, please let me know if there is anything I can do to make the course more accessible to you. The course is intended to be challenging, but the structure of the course itself should not be a barrier to your learning.

A (Hopefully Unnecessary) Reminder about Respect and Safety
I would like to draw attention to the title of the course—digital lives. We are looking at our own digital lives, but others’ lives as well. All content we discuss was produced by another human being, and we will speak respectfully about and towards the subjects of and posters of digital media content. You can speak about media that is created to be satirical, truthful, humorous, offensive, honest, or abusive without being derisive towards those who posted the material or those featured in the material. This can be difficult at times. But remember, this is University level coursework. Be professional.

This is not to say we cannot or will not discuss topics, or that everyone must agree. But we will only engage in respectful conversations in online and in-class discussions and assignments. Please help to make this classroom a safe space for everyone. Sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, religious prejudices, etc. will not be tolerated. The material we cover in class may engage in these behaviors and discourses, but members of this class will not.

Schedule
The field of digital humanities—much like its objects of study—moves at a rapid pace. Therefore, this syllabus is a tentative plan for the course, and subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

Week 1:
Thursday Sept 7th
   Introduction: What is a digital life?

Week 2:
Tuesday Sept 12th
   Reading: Lindgren, chapter 1 “Digital Society”
Thursday Sept 14th

Reading: Morrison, “Facebook and Coaxed Affordances” (LEARN)

**Week 3:**

Tuesday Sept 19th

Reading: Lindgren, chapter 2 “Social Media”

Group Presentation

Thursday Sept 21st

Davison, “The Language of Internet Memes” (LEARN)

**Week 4:**

Tuesday Sept 26th

Reading: Lindgren, chapter 3 “Cyber Debates”

Group Presentation

Thursday Sept 28th

Readings: Turkle, “Stop Googling, Let’s Talk” and Jurgenson, “The IRL Fetish”

*Due: Tumblr post 1 due to Dropbox by 11:59PM*

**Week 5:**

Tuesday Oct 3rd

Reading: Lindgren, chapter 4 “Interaction and Community”

Group Presentation

Thursday Oct 5th

Reading: boyd, *It’s Complicated* chapter 1 “Identity” (LEARN)

**Week 6:**

Tuesday Oct 10th:

No class

Thursday Oct 12th

Reading: Rook, “Four Pillars of Internet Research Ethics” (LEARN)

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Week 7:
Tuesday Oct 17th
   Twine Workshop with Guest Lecturer Rob Parker
Thursday Oct 19th
   Twine Workday and Project Pitches
   Due: Tumblr post 2 due to Dropbox by 11:59PM

Week 8:
Tuesday Oct 24th
   Reading: Lindgren, chapter 5 “Communities and Networks”
   Group Presentation
Thursday Oct 26th
   Reading: Hamilton, Garretson, and Kerne: “Streaming on Twitch: Fostering Participatory Communities of Play within Live Mixed Media” (LEARN)

Week 9:
Tuesday Oct 31st
   Reading: Lindgren, chapter 6 “Digital Visuality and Visibility”
   Group Presentation
Thursday Nov 2nd
   Reading: Stembergh: “Smile, You’re Speaking Emoji: The Rapid Evolution of a Wordless Tongue”

Week 10:
Tuesday Nov 7th: No class
Thursday Nov 9th: No class
   Due: Twine Project to Dropbox by 11:59PM

Week 11:
Tuesday Nov 14th:
   Reading: Lindgren, chapter 7 “Feeling Digital”
   Group Presentation
   Tumblr post 3 due to Dropbox by 11:59PM
Thursday Nov 16th:

Readings: Spumante: “The Subtle Art of Trolling” and Rugnetta/PBS Idea Channel “When is a Troll No Longer a Troll?”

Week 12:

Tuesday Nov 21st

Reading: Lindgren, chapter 8 “Digital Citizenship”

Group Presentation

Thursday Nov 23rd


Week 13:

Tuesday Nov 28th

Reading: Lindgren, chapter 9 “Digital Power and Exploitation”

Group Presentation

Thursday Nov 30th

Readings: Ehrentraut, “The Ethics of Commodification” and Meer “Steam Charging for Mods: For and Against”

Tumblr post 4 due to Dropbox by 11:59PM

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