English 108D – Digital Lives  
(Fall 2019, Section 001)

Instructor: Dr. Stephen Fernandez  
Email: sffernan@uwaterloo.ca

Lecture: Tuesday & Thursday, 4:00 pm – 5:20 pm (HH150)  
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 2:30 pm – 3:30 pm, and by appointment (HH 262)

1) Course Description

This course explores the ways in which social media and other digital media objects can influence our communities as well as how we represent ourselves and others through digital communication. What do we mean by “digital lives”? How are “digital lives” different from biological conceptions of “life”? In seeking a broader definition of “lives”, we will examine the rendering of both human and nonhuman lives in digital environments and the seemingly ubiquitous digitization of everyday experiences in the real (i.e., physical) world. Students taking this course will get to study the complexities of online and participatory cultures and to reflect on their place and practices within those cultures. To facilitate our exploration, we will consider the following questions as the term unfolds:

How do digital media technologies affect interpersonal interactions and relationships?

How might the incorporation of digital media technologies into fields of education, commerce, and healthcare influence the ways in which humans learn, work, play, live, and care for others?

In what ways do digital media technologies and the cultural content produced with these technologies impact the accessibility and inclusivity of public spaces online and in real life, particularly for persons with disabilities and people living with mental illness?

The course will include a variety of readings on cybercultures, new media, and digital communication, and students will also be offered the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge through the development of original creative projects.

2) Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to demonstrate some of the following skills:

- Analyze and interpret practices of self-presentation and the socio-cultural implications of participatory cultures in digital communication.

- Speak and write confidently and knowledgeably about digital media, civic life online, and the rendering of human and nonhuman forms of life in digital environments.

- Conduct effective research and analysis in the style of academic writing and through the development of creative, speculative, or applied projects.
3) Required Text (Available at UW Bookstore)


3.1) Supplementary Texts (Available on LEARN)


4) Course Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments</th>
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| 1    | Sep 5: Course Introduction & Syllabus Review | }
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sep 10</td>
<td>What do we mean by “Digital Lives”?</td>
<td>Lecture Slides on LEARN</td>
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<td>Sep 12</td>
<td>Project Group Formation “Speed Dating”</td>
<td>In-Class Interactive Activity</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sep 17</td>
<td>Digital Lives and the Sense of (Not) Belonging</td>
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<td>Sep 19</td>
<td>“Real” Reality and “Virtual” Reality: Reflecting on Digital Technology and the Mass Media</td>
<td>Bugeja, “Introduction: The Need to Belong” (pp.1-18)</td>
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<td>Bugeja, “Chapter 1: The Impact of Media and Technology” (pp.19-43)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sep 24</td>
<td>The (Im)Possibility of Digital Ethics: Competing Values in the Age of Techno-Culture</td>
<td>Bugeja, “Chapter 2: The Age of the Machine” (pp.44-63)</td>
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<td>Sep 26</td>
<td>Tiny Nodes in the Informational Network: Locating Digital Lives in the Sea of Big Data</td>
<td>Bugeja, “Chapter 3: Big Data, Little People” (pp.64-82)</td>
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<td>Oct 3</td>
<td>Communicating Selfie Culture</td>
<td>Senft and Baym, “What Does the Selfie Say?”</td>
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<td>*** Major Project Proposal DUE in CLASS ***</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 8</td>
<td>(Cyber)Bodies, Biopolitics, and Digital Disability</td>
<td>Goggin and Newell, “The Business of Digital Disability”</td>
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<td>*** Selfie Essay DUE on LEARN ***</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 15</td>
<td>Fall Reading Week – NO CLASS</td>
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<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading/Activity</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 17</td>
<td>Fall Reading Week – NO CLASS</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 22</td>
<td>Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Emotion</td>
<td>Bugeja, “Chapter 7: Machine versus Moral Code” (pp.133-152).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Oct 24</td>
<td>Artificial Community and Digital Morality</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 29</td>
<td>Animating Emotions – Emoji as Digital Life</td>
<td>Felbo, Rahwan, Obradovich, “What Can We Learn from Emojis?”</td>
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<td>Oct 31</td>
<td>Emojis, Personality, and Virtual Impressions</td>
<td>Glikson, Cheshin &amp; van Kleef, “The Dark Side of the Smiley”</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 5</td>
<td>Artificial Life, or How to Fall in Love with Your Operating System (OS)?</td>
<td>Excerpts from the movie, Her (2014)</td>
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<td>Nov 7</td>
<td>Instructor at Conference – NO CLASS</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 12</td>
<td>Avatars and Digital Environments</td>
<td>Beth Coleman, “What is an Avatar?” in Hello Avatar</td>
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<td>Nov 14</td>
<td>Digitally in Love: Representing Gender, Sexualities, and Desire in the Online World</td>
<td>Anastasia Salter, “Virtually Yours”</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Nov 19</td>
<td>Major Project Workshop Session 1</td>
<td>In-Class Activity</td>
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<td>Nov 21</td>
<td>Major Project Workshop Session 2</td>
<td>In-Class Activity</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Nov 26</td>
<td>Major Project Presentation – Session 1</td>
<td>1) In-Class Presentation</td>
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<td>Nov 28</td>
<td>Major Project Presentation – Session 2</td>
<td>1) In-Class Presentation 2) All Development Blog Posts Due Online</td>
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5) Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Note for students with disabilities: The Access Ability Services office located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the Access Ability Services office at the beginning of each academic term.

If you would like to discuss your specific learning needs in person, please let me know at your earliest convenience. If you require any course material in an alternative format, feel free to let me know. You can get in touch with me at: sffernan@uwaterloo.ca

6) Evaluation and Assignments

Participation (Attendance and Discussion) 10%

Selfie Essay (Individual, 800 words) 25% Due: **Oct 10, 2019, 11:59PM** on LEARN

Major Project (65%):

→ Proposal and Timeline (Group) 5% Due: **Oct 3, 2019** in Class

→ One-Minute Video (Group) 30% Due: **Nov 26, 2019** & **Nov 28, 2019** in Class

→ Development Blog (Individual, TWO 250-word Blog Posts) 15% Due: **Nov 28, 2019** on Group Project Blog

→ Reflection Paper (Individual, 500 words) 15% Due: **Dec 5, 2019, 11:59PM** on LEARN

6.1 – Group Assignment Disclosure Checklist

Students will form Project Groups consisting of 4 students. In accordance with University of Waterloo policy concerning group assignments, students are required to fill out the Group Assignment Disclosure Checklist before submitting their group assignments for evaluation. Please print out the Checklist (available on LEARN) and fill out all sections accurately.
6.2 – Late Assignment Penalty

Late assignments will incur a **2% grade deduction** for every day beyond the official due date that is stipulated in the syllabus.

If you require an extension on any individual-based assignment, please inform me **BEFORE** the date on which that assignment is due. Please note that the due date for group-based assignments cannot be extended.

7) Special Notes

7.1 – Special Note on Participation Grade

If you are unable to attend class due to medical reasons or other extenuating circumstances, please email me **BEFORE** the start of the class from which you will be absent. Students who are absent from class for a sustained period (i.e., more than 1 week) without proper explanation and/or documentation will not receive any marks for their Participation Grade (10%).

The Participation Grade for Attendance and Discussion will include students’ contribution to in-class discussions as well as online forum discussions that take place on LEARN. Students are encouraged to **post at least ONE Question** on the LEARN discussion forum and **at least ONE Response** to another student’s question at any point during the term.

You will receive a **tentative Participate Grade** by . You will have the opportunity to enhance your level of participation in the course in the remaining weeks of the term. Please feel free to talk with me about how you could improve your Participation Grade.

As we are a Community of Learners, we will endeavour to ensure that all discussions that take place in class and online are conducted in a manner that fosters **inclusion, collegiality, and respect** for the opinions of other students in the class. Students enrolled in this course are expected to employ respectful language and behave appropriately at all times.

7.2 – Special Note on Mental Health and Wellbeing

If you encounter any issue pertaining to mental health and wellbeing, please feel free to contact me via email to discuss the issue. You may also contact me in person during regular office hours, or arrange an appointment to discuss the matter privately. You can be assured that all discussions are strictly confidential, and your privacy will be fully protected.

If you require professional counselling and psychological services, or other forms of mental health programs, please visit the UWaterloo Counselling Services office in Needles Hall North, 2nd Floor, or visit their website: **https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-wellness/counselling-services**

You can also contact Counselling Services by phone at: 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
7.3 – Special Note on Basic Needs

Access to the basic needs of life is a crucial aspect of overall wellbeing for any person. Proper nourishment is vital for good physical, cognitive, and mental functioning. If you encounter any trouble accessing such basic needs as food and clean water, please visit the FEDS Office’s Student Food Bank website: [https://uwaterloo.ca/feds/feds-services/feds-student-food-bank](https://uwaterloo.ca/feds/feds-services/feds-student-food-bank)

You can also visit the FEDS Office at the basement of the Student Life Centre (SLC), or contact the office by phone at: 519-888-4568 ext. 84042, or by email at: recept@feds.ca

8) University Policies

8.1 – Academic Integrity

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

See UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage: [https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/](https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) & Arts Academic Integrity webpage: [https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/current-undergraduates/student-support/ethical-behaviour](https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/current-undergraduates/student-support/ethical-behaviour) for more information.

8.2 – Discipline

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

When misconduct has been found to have occurred within the context of the course, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 – Student Discipline. [https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71)


8.3 – Grievance

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 – Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4: [https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70)
8.4 – Appeals

A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72 http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.html

9) Writing Help at the UW Writing Centre

The Writing Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices, and communicate in the style appropriate to their disciplines. Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments, using and documenting research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit http://www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre

Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

9.1 – Additional Note on Writing Support

The Communication Specialists at the Writing Centre will guide you to see your work as readers would. The Specialists can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not change or correct your work for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.