Instructor: Kent Aardse  
Lecture: Monday and Wednesday 2:30-4:00pm, room DWE 1515  
Office: PAS 1060  
Office Hours: Monday 1:30 - 2:30pm (and by appointment)  
Email: kaardse@uwaterloo.ca

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. We will look at several thematics that include Civic Life Online, Digital Media and Credibility, Gender, Race & Ethnicity, and Game Ecologies, among others.

Learning Objectives:
1. To demonstrate an understanding of the basic terms by which scholars study and theorize the Internet.
2. To demonstrate an understanding of the role of our digital lives in contemporary society.
3. To identify, compare, and contrast characteristics of various models of digital life.
4. To enhance student ability to read these works through various and intersecting critical perspectives (historical, psychological, philosophical social, cultural, literary).
5. To help students develop a clear, concise, and scholarly voice.
6. To enhance students’ analytical, critical, and written skills.

Required Texts

Essays are found on LEARN.

Assignments
*Note* ALL assignments must be completed in order to pass this course.

Participation 15%  
Course Blog 20%
Assignment Descriptions

Participation (15%): This is a discussion-based class, and you are expected to attend each class and engage thoughtfully in the discussion. I will be keeping track of, and your mark will reflect, your attendance.

Course Blog (20%): Throughout this course, you will maintain a personal blog on whichever platform you so choose. You are responsible for sending me the URL to your blog within the first week of class. You will maintain one blog entry per week during the semester. More detailed instructions will be provided in class.

Short Essay (20%): Due on Wednesday, September 30. Students will write a short essay, 3 pages, double-spaced, discussing your experiences with digital spaces. More detailed instructions will be provided in class.

Annotated Bibliography (15%): Due on Wednesday, October 21. This one page document provides a preliminary plan of research for your term essay. It will detail your thesis statement as well as provide a minimum of 2 academic citations that support your argument. The purpose of this assignment is to have you thinking about your papers well in advance, to the point that you have already started your secondary research before you sit down to write your essay. An annotated bibliography requires you to cite your sources and explain in 2 or 3 sentences how these sources help you flesh out your argument.

Term Essay (30%): Due on Wednesday, December 2. Your essay will be 6 pages in length, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font. You are required to use 2 secondary sources, in addition to your primary source(s), and they must be cited properly and documented on a Works Cited page in accordance with MLA format. You will be required to form your own thesis statement, but I will be available to discuss these beforehand. Essays handed in on time will be given a grade with written feedback.

Course Policies & Other Important Matter:

Contact Policy
Please feel free to make contact with me during my office hours, by appointment, or via email. Please reserve emails to quick concerns or questions. I will try to respond to all emails within 48 hours.
Assignment and Extension Policies:

Assignments handed in via email will NOT be accepted.

Each student in the class has the option to exercise a one-week extension on any of the written assignments. If you do so, you will not receive any written commentary or feedback, but will not be deducted any marks. You must let me know if you are using your extension before the assignment is due. If your assignment is late for any other reason, and you are not using your extension, you will lose 2% per day, including weekends and holidays.

Classroom Etiquette:
You are expected to show respect and consideration towards your instructor and fellow classmates. Respect and consideration involves not talking while others are talking, actively listening, and not using any electronic devices (excluding lap-tops for note-taking) during class time. This means, cell-phones are turned off, no text-messaging, no internet browsing, and no social networking. If you are caught using electronic devices in any of these ways, you may be asked to leave the classroom.

***PLEASE NOTE*** The use of any electronic devices or any type of behaviour that is distracting or disrespectful to others (i.e., chatting, texting, facebook, etc.,) will be noted and will detract from your participation grade. In other words, I will be keeping track of each incident that takes away from the others’ engagement in class and will evaluate the degree to which your participation grade will be penalized.

Class Schedule

Week One - Introduction to Digital Lives

Sept 14 - Class Introduction and Syllabus Review

Sept 16 - Amanda Todd’s Story, Online Dating

Week Two - Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

Sept 21 - Goffman - Introduction to The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life & Grammar/Writing Lesson

Sept 23 - Ellison - “Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment.”

Week Three - Participatory Culture

Sept 28 - Jenkins, et al. Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture. - “Executive Summary” & First Half of “Core Media Literacy Skills”
Sept 30 - Jenkins, et al. Second Half “Core Media Literacy Skills.” *Short Essay Due*

Week Four - Teen Life Online

Oct 5 - d. boyd - *It’s Complicated* p. 29-54

Oct 7 - d. boyd - *It’s Complicated* p. 54-77

Week Five - Civic Life Online

Oct 12 - NO CLASS THANKSGIVING

Oct 14 - Rheingold - “Using Participatory Media and Public Voice to Encourage Civic Engagement”

Week Six - Digital Media and Credibility

Oct 19 - Flanagin & Metzger - “Digital Media and Youth: Unparalleled Opportunity and Unprecedented Responsibility"

Oct 21 - Rieh & Hilligoss - “College Students’ Credibility Judgements in the Information-Seeking Process” *Annotated Bibliography*

Week Seven - Race and Ethnicity

Oct 26 - Daniels - “Race, Civil Rights, and Hate Speech in the Digital Era.”

Oct 28 - Nakamura - “Don’t Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in World of Warcraft.”

Week Eight - The Ecology of Games

Nov 2 - Salen - “Toward and Ecology of Games.”

Nov 4 - Bogost - “The Rhetoric of Video Games”

Week Nine - Identity and Digital Media

Nov 9 - Buckingham - “Introducing Identity.”

Nov 11 - Weber & Mitchell - “Imaging, Keyboarding, and Posting Identities: Young People and New Media Technologies.”

Week Ten - Neuromancer

Nov 16 - Pages 1 - 42
Nov 18 - Pages 43 - 87

**Week Eleven - Neuromancer**

Nov 23 - Pages 88 - 150

Nov 25 - Pages 151 - 212

**Week Twelve - Neuromancer and Course Wrap Up**

Nov 30 - Pages 213 - 271

Dec 2 - Course Wrap-Up *Term Essay Due*

**UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS**

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations ([www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf](http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf)) state that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at [uwaterloo.ca/health-services/student-medical-clinic/services/verification-illness](http://uwaterloo.ca/health-services/student-medical-clinic/services/verification-illness).
- If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

**Academic Integrity**: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

**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 Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under St. Jerome’s University Academic Discipline Policy and UW Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, [http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71](http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71).

**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. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome’s University Grievance Officer.

**Appeals**: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under St. Jerome’s University Academic Discipline Policy or Grievance Policy if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome’s University Appeals Officer.

**Academic Integrity website (Arts)**: [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)
Academic Integrity Office (UW): [http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/](http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/)

**Note for students with disabilities:** The AccessAbility Services (AS) 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 AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.