

Cyberspace Ethnography: Political Activism and the Internet

ANTH 498C/SOCI 498D ADVANCED TOPICS IN ANTHROPOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY

Course Coordinator:
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Meeting days and times:
Tuesdays: 2:45pm–5:30pm
Campus: SGW, Room: MB- S1.255

FOCUS

With marked prominence since the Greek riots of December 2008, to the so-called “Twitter Revolutions” in Moldova and Iran, to promoting the campaigns of anti-globalization activists protesting at G20 gatherings, the mainstream mass media regularly tell us that Twitter (and of course Facebook, YouTube, and blogs), have been central. In some cases, the mainstream news media even use Twitter to source their “information” on certain political upheavals, raising challenging questions about the relationships between mass media and new media, between state and civil society, between governance and the perceived agency of digital activism.

The mainstream media’s privileged position of broadcast centrality in the control and direction of information has been, some might still argue, significantly eroded by the emergence of new media technologies, of many-to-many communication and narrow-casting. If the printing press enabled or determined the creation and institution of nationalism, of the nation as an imagined community, then it is possible that the Internet, and specifically social media, are helping to bolster if not create new social movements and empowering diverse sections of civil society in their struggles against the state, against governments and corporations, and even against each other. We thus witness a range of concerns in the literature on politics and power in/via the Internet, ranging from new utopian conceptualizations of a cyber democracy, to critiques of balkanization and fragmented associations, to serious worries that social media are the best state surveillance tool yet, permitting heightened policing of citizens, or even crowd sourcing intelligence for the cause of national security. Anyone can use social media to organize causes and project political messages, including states and their military and intelligence agencies - witness the techniques of “soft power” and “genetically modified social movements.”

This seminar focuses on manifestations and extensions of **political activism** that use the **Web**. In particular, we are dealing with political movements, causes, and campaigns that exist in the physical world, but that also rely on use of Internet-based social network media to advance their political projects, raise consciousness, and build their support base. Our approach is both historical and contemporary, both through readings and our ethnographic analyses in this course. (In terms of the course coordinator's teaching and research specializations, this seminar was conceptualized as an extension of Political Anthropology combined with elements of the triad of courses he teaches in media: Visual Anthropology, Media Ethnographies, and Cyberspace.)

Twitter is the primary gateway and research site for this course. This is for the following reasons:

1. Twitter is the "newest and hottest" thing in the political buzz surrounding various political movements and campaigns (for example, the so-called "Twitter revolutions" of Moldova and Iran, or the Obama electoral campaign) and is regularly featured prominently in the mainstream media in connection with politics;
2. Twitter serves as a useful gateway to the websites of various political causes almost all of which feel the need to maintain a Twitter presence;
3. Twitter, specifically via the "tweets" of its users, leaks into blogs, Facebook groups, Flickr, and YouTube, but places these within the context of actual interactions and exchanges between political activists who are Twitter users.
4. Twitter presumably allows us to witness how political activists produce and shape messages, distribute them, and consume information and ideas, in interaction with others.

We shall not preoccupy ourselves in this course with dated debates and worries of a past generation surrounding the "real-ness" of cyberspace, that is, the extent to which online expressions are to be judged inauthentic and "unreal" by virtue of their "virtuality" ... except to the extent that the political actors and analysts themselves as real issues of political and analytical concern.

We shall be doing online ethnography, in a somewhat collective and structured manner, without worrying about whether online ethnography can be done, or to what extent it can or should be conceived as "real" ethnography. We go where people go, we follow them, we listen to them, we learn from them, we try to make sense of their actions and messages - these are our only concerns, rather than defensive debates designed to jealously guard outmoded disciplinary boundaries.

We shall not consume our time with a wandering and unworkably generalized study of "Internet and culture," in terms of "cyberculture," "community," "disembodiment," "identity," and so forth, unless the political actors and analysts themselves raise elements of these concerns as topics of importance. Otherwise this course will not be a broad overview of culture and community on the Web, in favour of maintaining a focus on political activism.

PURPOSES AND GOALS / STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In the course of this seminar you will develop an ethnographic research paper based on an investigation of a specific political organization that has an active presence in Twitter, or a small cluster of closely related political activists who use Twitter to further offline political objectives. It will be ethnographic in the sense that you will immerse yourselves in a network, study the ties between actors and the strength of their relationships, examine how meanings are produced and shaped, look at how actors attempt to build momentum for a cause, and the ways that they marshal various online technologies and techniques. One way of doing this is to maintain an active presence in Twitter yourselves, and to extend the in-class seminar experience to Twitter as well.

There are no tests or exams in this course. Class sessions will not be lecture-based. Sessions will be organized and conducted as workshops, examining relevant case studies, discussing their applicability, debating which methods of research and analysis one might use, and raising problems or difficulties encountered in research. Videos and technical tutorials will also be offered by the course coordinator during the seminars. Otherwise, the time spent in class is primarily devoted to group discussion.

Students are expected to show initiative in the course, especially in connection with their research and their class and Twitter discussions. Students should be challenging themselves intellectually, and not be taking the obvious, easy way out. As an advanced course, the quality of research and writing should be nearly as good, if not equal to anything we read in the course.

Students are also expected to be active participants in class. There are no points awarded for attendance, but active participation does require regular attendance. Students should not act as mute bystanders in their own education, and should instead show that they are making an investment in their own learning process, which is greatly enhanced by: (1) asking questions; (2) sharing your opinions; and, (3) answering questions posed by others. "Shyness" and related reasons are not valid excuses for non-participation. Students who attend regularly, and rarely or never participate in seminar discussions, can expect a grade of zero for this component of the course.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COURSE COORDINATOR

The course coordinator will lead seminar discussions, share his notes on theories and case studies of relevance to our broader discussions, offer technical tutorials on using Twitter and studying Twitter users, provide continuous feedback on individual research projects, and share resources through seminar discussions in Twitter itself. He will offer his inputs in class, on the course blog, and in Twitter.

Through feedback on guided research exercises, and with his availability during office hours, and in Twitter, students should expect to have regular access. Contact via e-mail is also recommended, though responses may not be immediate.

The course coordinator does not seek to impose any particular political position on students in

this course. He will evaluate materials on the basis of their showing sound reasoning, well substantiated arguments, and effective writing - regardless of the political opinions of the student authors.

Ultimately, the aim of the course coordinator is to ensure that students in the course produce top quality research and feel encouraged to share their findings with others. As an advanced undergraduate seminar, the course coordinator expects students to produce work of a very high standard.

COURSE WORK, EVALUATION, POLICIES

These are the main components of work for this course in broad terms:

- (1) Writing exercises, as components of your final research paper. For several weeks students will be assigned tasks to perform, and to write about, as guided components of their ethnographic research.
- (2) Seminar discussion of assigned case studies and analytical readings.
- (3) Maintaining an active presence in Twitter, and sharing some of your questions, comments, notes, and research findings with the class in Twitter. This can include links to readings you are doing, accompanied by a few words on their significance or relevance.
- (4) Sharing your notes, to allow for feedback in the development of your research project, and as evidence of steady progress in your work. The course director strongly recommends to students that they use **Diigo** for these purposes (see: <http://www.diigo.com/index>) which will likely prove to be a very valuable tool for your future learning and research.
- (5) A final research paper that represents the culmination of your experience and analysis stemming from an investigation of the Internet practice of a specific political organization, campaign, movement, cause, or group of activists with shared goals.

The breakdown of the overall course grade, given the above, is as follows:

- (a) Guided research steps, writing exercises: 30%
- (b) Seminar participation in class: 15%
- (c) Seminar participation in Twitter: 10%
- (d) Collected research notes/Diigo annotated bookmark list (Mar. 2): 10%
- (e) Final research paper (Apr. 20): 35%

Complete schedule of assignments:

1. Guided research exercise #1, worth 2.5%, due Jan. 19
2. Research exercise #2, worth 0% but mandatory, due by Jan. 19
3. Guided research exercise #3, worth 5%, due Feb. 2
4. Guided research exercise #4, worth 7.5%, due Feb. 16
5. Collected research notes/Diigo list, worth 10%, due Mar. 2
6. Guided research exercise #5, worth 5%, due Mar. 16
7. Guided research exercise #6, worth 10%, due Mar. 30
8. Final research paper, worth 35%, due Apr. 20

Research Steps:

1. Your very first step in this course is to choose for the focus of your research for the semester either a formal political organization (such as a political party, or a particular wing of one, or an electoral campaign, or a political lobby group as possible examples), or a particular political campaign (for example, Free Tibet, or the Gaza Freedom March, anti-G20 campaigns, human rights, etc.), or a political movement (for example, women's rights, indigenous rights, environmental activism, animal rights, etc.), or a narrow cause (possible examples might be efforts to challenge electoral redistricting, to remove or reinstate a political media celebrity, etc.), or a small cluster of activists working almost as if they were a team (think of anarchists working in disparate locations toward common goals). The one key condition is that, whatever you choose, it/they must have an active Twitter account.

Please present a short statement to the course director, circa 250 words at most, identifying and explaining your choice, for the start of class on Tues., Jan. 19. → 2.5% of the final course grade

2. Set-up a Twitter account by Tues., Jan. 19, and then follow instructions presented in class, on the course blog (<http://webography.wordpress.com/blog/>), and on the course director's Twitter account (<http://twitter.com/CyberActivism>). Unless technical limitations impede you, you should also consider setting up a Diigo account (<http://www.diigo.com/index>) at the same time.

When setting up your Twitter account, keep in mind that you will be interacting with other people in Twitter as a research, and that it can be very off-putting for some to be investigated and maybe critiqued by an anonymous entity. A personal photo is not necessary, but it may allay people's fears if you provide either a link to the course website (<http://webography.wordpress.com/>) or to the course coordinator's Twitter page (<http://twitter.com/CyberActivism>). To heighten your identifiability to other members of the seminar, you should include 498 within your username - for example, "Anima498list" - and, if you are worried about privacy, some very close approximation to your real name (also so you can be identified by other members of the seminar, and the course director), for example: Allison Smith could either chose to keep her name as is, or use A. Smith, or Allison S., or Alli Smith.

Please set up your Twitter account (required), and a Diigo account (recommended), some time on Tuesday, January 19, and then immediately contact the course coordinator via Twitter to inform him of your details.

Note: if you already have a Twitter account, set up a separate one just for this course. The course coordinator has done the same and can give advice on any problems you might encounter with setting up a second account.

Note: students who do not have home computers and Internet accounts, but who do have Web-enabled cell phones, can also access Twitter via cell phone. See Twitter itself for further instructions, and these helpful websites:

- Twitter Phone FAQ: <http://help.twitter.com/forums/59008/entries/14014>
- How to Use Twitter with Your Cell Phone: http://www.ehow.com/how_2075926_use-twitter-cell-phone.html
- Getting Twitter setup on your mobile phone: <http://www.butterscotch.com/tutorial/Getting-Twitter-Setup-On-Your-Mobile-Phone>
- 20 ways to use Twitter from your mobile phone: <http://www.simplehelp.net/2008/04/16/20-ways-to-use-twitter-on-your-cell-phone-or-mobile-internet-device/>
- Twits to Go: Top 12 Twitter Apps for Your Phone: <http://mashable.com/2007/07/09/twitter-mobile-2/>

For more news and ideas on using Twitter, reviews of social media, see:

- MASHABLE: <http://mashable.com/>
- TECH CRUNCH: <http://www.techcrunch.com/>

3. **Gaining access and negotiating entry:** As you make your way around Twitter and begin to look a little more closely at interactions and Twitter profiles, and begin trying to converse with the tweeter(s) at the focus of your study, record your observations separately. This is essentially the first step of any ethnographic project, concerning how you gained entry, any experience you had of disorientation, and how you gained familiarity. Also record your first impressions of Twitter. (If you already have experience in Twitter, try to recall your first impressions, and write about these.)

Note: Whenever answering questions about the purpose and nature of your research, be as open as possible. Also mention that your research paper will *not* be published or otherwise distributed (except to those at the focus of your research), and that you do not write in public (on Twitter) about what they told you in private (in an interview, if you should secure the chance). Otherwise, emphasize that the bulk of what you will write about is what they have already decided to make public. If your interlocutor is anonymous, do not ask personal questions that might compromise their anonymity.

Please submit a short statement describing these experiences, in less than 500 words, for the start of class on Tuesday, February 2. → 5% of the final course grade

4. **Who are their “significant others”?** As you continue observing and interacting with the tweeter(s) at the focus of your research, try to determine who their most important partners or contacts are in Twitter, and try to figure out why. Do they regularly send tweets to particular tweeters? Do they tend to *retweet* more from some sources than others? Which ones? What appears to be the purpose of the retweet? Are their own messages regularly retweeted, and if so, by whom? What do you think accounts for the observed regularities?

Please submit a short overview of what you have learned in carrying out this step, and submit it in print, keeping yourself to no more than 750 words, for the start of class on Tuesday, February 16. → 7.5% of the final course grade

5. **The central narrative:** Having had some time to follow, read, and reflect on the messages generated from the tweeter(s) at the centre of your study, what is the dominant theme of their messages? Does this theme have certain consistent components to it? What are they? Do their ideas fit together to produce a coherent whole?

Please submit a short synthesis of the dominant narrative of the messages produced by those at the focus of your study, printed, in no more than 500 words, submitted for the start of class on Tuesday, March 16. → 5% of the final course grade

6. **Statistical overview:** Using the online analytical tools below, produce the statistical output concerning your primary tweeter. What are your preliminary conclusions from the statistics you see? Use these tools:

- i. TweetStats: <http://tweetstats.com/>
- ii. Twitalyzer: <http://www.twitalyzer.com/>
- iii. TwitterAnalyzer: <http://twitteranalyzer.com/Default.aspx>
- iv. TwitterGrader: <http://twitter.grader.com/>
- v. Retweet Rank: <http://www.retweetrank.com/>
- vi. Klout: <http://klout.com/>
- vii. TweepDiff (compare followers between two Twitter users - may not be relevant to all research projects, skip if appropriate):
<http://tweepdiff.com/>
- viii. TwitterFriends: <http://twitter-friends.com/index.php>
- ix. TweetEffect: <http://tweeteffect.com/>
- x. Between (track a conversation between two tweeters):
<http://www.betweeen.com/>

Please print out the main findings generated from each report, in the order shown above, and conclude with a final paragraph on what conclusions you think you can draw from these analyses. Submit this for the start of class on Tuesday, March 30. → 10% of the final course grade

Overall Research Path:

Students should not resign themselves to thinking that following the guided research exercises

above is enough to produce a complete research paper. It is expected, and intended, that each of the steps above will produce valuable material that will appear again in some form in the final research paper - but they are not enough, by themselves.

In producing a research paper, students need a comprehensive strategy that combines personal experience of being immersed in Twitter, with description, and analysis. The guided research exercises above accompany the personal experience of immersion, producing the kind of ethnographic and statistical data needed for the descriptive parts of a research paper.

However, a little more work is required:

- (1) Students should connect what they learn directly and personally in Twitter, with broader studies of Twitter, using published reports and journal articles that very often are themselves available online for free.
- (2) In turn, students should connect what they learn in Twitter, and about Twitter, with broader background research and theorizing on the political phenomenon they are studying.

For example, a student studying a women's rights organization, and how it uses Twitter, should:

- (a) be able to place some of what they learn within the context of studies of Twitter as a whole, and,
- (b) intersect their work with research on contemporary women's rights struggles, studies of civil society, and new social movements, for example.

Rather than aim for reading whole books, students should rely more on journal articles, or items of similar length, available through the Concordia journal databases (JSTOR, EBSCOhost, etc.) and online in open access journals (as one example, the Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication).

Students should thus emulate the case studies presented in, and read for, our seminar sessions.

Useful Resources for Effective Research Papers:

All students in the course should invest some time in studying the following resources, some of which are mandatory for this course.

1. How to Find Research Articles:
<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/perindex.html>
2. How to Write a Research Paper:
<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/researchpaper.html>
3. How to Use the Web for Research:
<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/internethandout.html>
4. Info Research 101 - Interactive Tutorial: <http://library.concordia.ca/help/tutorial/#>

5. APA Citation Style Guide - *the mandatory way to cite sources in this course*:
<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/apa.php>

6. All Concordia Library "How To" Guides: <http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/>

You might also consider becoming involved with Concordia's *Community University Research Exchange* - see: <http://www.qpirgconcordia.org/cure/>

Course Policies:

No late work is accepted in this course. Any work that is late is automatically assigned a grade of zero. Only in extreme cases will late work be accepted, pending full and original documentation, and the final decision rests with the instructor.

Students are responsible for acquiring course content. Therefore, if a class is missed, no independent tutorial will be provided by the professor to brief the student on what transpired in the class the student missed, nor will a summary or any notes be provided. Students may not video or audio record any lectures, nor take photographs during class. Students should make arrangements with one another to get a photocopy of the notes for a missed class, and be willing to return the favour.

Students are responsible for getting their assignments in on time. No exceptions are allowed, except in extreme cases, restricted to those situations discussed here. In all cases, precise, original documentation will be required before any extension can be granted, and only in the case of a **death in one's immediate family** (i.e. parents, siblings), or **serious illness**. In such cases, the illness or death must cover most of the period during which given work has been assigned.

If you enter the course with a pre-existing medical condition that will impede you from completing the course, then please speak to the instructor about your ability to successfully complete the course. This is to avoid any requests for late completion, given that in the past, not one single student who has ever asked this professor for an "incomplete" [INC] has ever completed the course, and in all cases their grades were automatically converted to fail.

Arrangements for Late Completion should be negotiated and arranged with the instructor *before* final grades are due. Only the most compelling reasons, with convincing documentation, can be considered. *Please keep in mind that the instructor will most likely not accept requests for late completion.*

There is one major exception to these policies: in the event of a major public health crisis, or events beyond the University's control, alternative course requirements and grading policies will be developed and used.

Students are responsible for being active learners in class - asking questions, and sharing their viewpoints. Passive learning leads to mediocre and poor outcomes. If the professor never hears from a given student, and still does not know the name of the given student by the end of the course, then the student is doing something terribly wrong and the participation grade will

probably match that performance. The participation grade is not based on regular class attendance - attending class is a prerequisite for participation, much like being alive is a prerequisite for registering in the course, as such no points are awarded for meeting the basic requirements. Students who never ask a question, and are never heard in class, can expect a very low participation grade - but more importantly, it means that such students have not made the necessary personal investment in their own education. Also, students whose behaviour in class is disruptive and abusive can expect a guaranteed grade of zero for participation, in addition to any further penalties imposed by the University.

Students should also understand that grades are not open to negotiation. If a student feels that factual errors were made in an assessment, or that the evaluation was manifestly unfair, then of course the student should speak to the professor. Asking for a paper to be reassessed, however, does not mean that a higher grade will be the guaranteed outcome: in fact, the grade could go lower, or stay the same. Students' performance in other courses is most assuredly not a valid basis for anticipating particular grade outcomes in this course.

There will be *no* supplemental work.

Do *not* call the main office for course-related inquiries.

Please avoid coming to class late as other students have regularly complained about the disruptions that this can cause, especially when it is a regular occurrence and students enter the room at all times. Students who are observed to be repeatedly late will likely incur a deduction from their participation grade.

How work is graded:

For all work done in this course you will receive a numerical grade which will be converted to a letter grade when final grades are processed. To translate numbers into letter grades, please consult the following chart, copied directly from a faculty handbook in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. It is vital that you understand that the characterizations below (i.e., "excellent") are central in guiding the instructor's evaluation of the quality of a paper.

Work that covers all of the basics, in a reasonably competent fashion, without major flaws, is deemed "satisfactory." Work that has few flaws, and shows an advanced understanding, writing and research ability is deemed "very good." Work that leaves little room for improvement (within the context of expectations of a 400 level course), demonstrating that the student has taken considerable initiative, showing sophisticated understanding and ability, is deemed "excellent."

A+	90-100	} EXCELLENT	C+	67- 69	} SATIS- FACTORY	D+	57- 59	} POOR
A	85- 89		C	63- 66		D	53- 56	
A-	80- 84		C-	60- 62		D-	50- 52	
B+	77- 79	} VERY GOOD	VERY POOR {			F or FNS	40 (30-49)	
B	73- 76					R	20 (0-29)	
B-	70- 72							

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS & PLAGIARISM ISSUES

Section 16 (Academic Information: Definitions and Regulations) of the Undergraduate Calendar will be strictly administered - particularly on deadlines, Failing Grades, Administrative Notations, Late Completions='INCompletes' (Grade/INC), 'Failed No Supplementals' (FNS), 'Did Not Writes' (Grade/DNW).

Students must familiarize themselves with Concordia University's **Academic Integrity Website** (<http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity/>), and in particular its page devoted to plagiarism (<http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity/plagiarism/>).

ANNOUNCEMENTS, E-MAIL USE

In the event of an unscheduled cancellation of a class, the appropriate notice is posted by the University on its website. See the "Class Cancellations" link on www.concordia.ca. In addition, digital billboards on campus will announce the cancellation. You will also be notified by email.

For the duration of this course, please check your email at least once each week, and look for any messages that begin with the course number.

Having said that, please ensure that you have the right email address entered in your MyConcordia student profile. That is the same email address to which course messages are sent.

DISCLAIMER

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change".

IMPROVING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

The University offers many services that can help students. To improve students' ability to succeed in their courses, get the most out of the university experience, and ensure their success in completing their degree, it is strongly recommended that you make a note of the following list of services:

- Concordia Counseling and Development offers career services, psychological services, student learning services, etc. <http://cdev.concordia.ca/>
- The Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides: <http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations.html>
- Advocacy and Support Services: <http://supportservices.concordia.ca/>
- Student Transition Centre: <http://stc.concordia.ca/>

- New Student Program: <http://newstudent.concordia.ca/>
- Access Centre for Students with Disabilities: <http://supportservices.concordia.ca/disabilities/>
- Student Success Centre: <http://studentsuccess.concordia.ca/>
- The Academic Integrity Website: <http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity/>
- Financial Aid & Awards: <http://web2.concordia.ca/financialaid/>
- Health Services: <http://www-health.concordia.ca/>

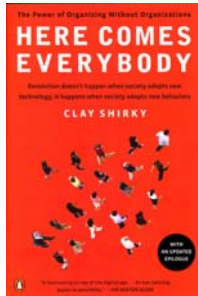


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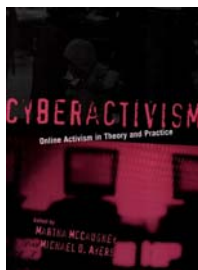
BOOKS TO PURCHASE

Readings for this course are drawn from the two books below (available for purchase in the Concordia Bookstore), and from articles accessible via the Web (see the links from the schedule of readings).

<http://bkstore.concordia.ca/services/coursebook.asp?DEP=ANTH&CRS=498C&SEC=&submit=List+Books&IMG=Y>



HERE COMES EVERYBODY
The Power of Organizing without Organizations
By
Clay Shirky
London: Penguin, 2008



CYBERACTIVISM
Online Activism in Theory and Practice
Edited by
Martha McCaughey & Michael D. Ayers
London: Routledge, 2003

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS

Week #1: Tuesday, January 12

Course overview,
Introduction to Twitter

See:

1. Sysomos: Inside the Political Twittersphere
2. Sysomos: An In-Depth Look Inside Twitter

Sunday, January 17, 2010

- *Deadline for withdrawal with tuition refund from winter-term courses.*
- *Last day to add winter-term courses.*

Week #2: Tuesday, January 19

Twitter "Revolutions"

Video presented in class: Clay Shirky: "Protest Culture -- Ad Hoc vs Institutional, and What it Means"

Readings:

1. "Rioters of the World Unite"
2. "Inside Moldova's Twitter Revolution"
3. "Protests in Moldova Explode, With Help of Twitter"
4. "Student Protests Are Turning Into A Twitter Revolution In Moldova"
5. "Students use Twitter to storm presidency in Moldova"
6. "Moldova's Twitter Revolution"
7. "More analysis of Twitter's role in Moldova"

8. "The myth of the Moldova 'Twitter revolution'"
9. "Think Again: Twitter"
10. "'Twitter revolution' Moldovan activist goes into hiding"
11. The Digi-Active Guide to Twitter for Activism:

Assignment due: present a short printed statement to the course director, circa 250 words at most, identifying and explaining your choice of political organization/ campaign/ movement/ cause/ activists. [See Step #1 above] (2.5% of the final course grade)

Other key task(s) to fulfil by Jan. 19: set up a Twitter account, and if possible a Diigo account, as per Step #2 above.

Week #3: Tuesday, January 26

The "Iranian Twitter Revolution," Part One

Video presented in class: "Clay Shirky: How social media can make history"

Also see: TED Blog: "Q&A with Clay Shirky on Twitter and Iran"

Additional Videos:

1. Twittering and Iran
2. Iran: The Twitter Revolution
3. Twitter, Our Window to Iran
4. White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs on Twitter in Iran
Hillary Clinton Supports Twitter Use in Iran

7. Former Deputy National Security Advisor Recommends Twitter for Nobel Peace Prize
8. Jared Cohen, "Children of Jihad"
9. The Trouble with Tweeting About Iran

Readings:

1. "Iran's Wired Generation Challenges Ahmadinejad"
2. "'Where is My Vote?': Iranian Expats Organize Online"
3. "Iran can no longer suppress its youth"
4. "Iran: networked dissent"
5. "The Revolution Will Be Twittered"
6. "Iran's Twitter Revolution"
7. "The Twitter Revolution"
8. "Social Networks Spread Defiance Online"
9. "Iranians Protest Election, Tweeps Protest CNN"
10. "Iran, citizen media and media attention"
11. "U.S. State Department speaks to Twitter over Iran"
12. "Twitter Blog: Up, Up, and Away"
13. "Profile: The Kid at the State Department Who Figured Out the Iranians Should Be Allowed to Keep Tweeting"

14. "Condi's Party Starter"
15. "Activists call on U.S. to provide unfettered Internet access to Iranian citizens"
16. "Washington Taps Into a Potent New Force in Diplomacy"
17. "Twittercraft: Foreign Policy by Other Means"
18. " 'Inane and Half-Baked': Twitter Is the Forrest Gump of International Relations"
19. "Bush Advisor: Twitter Founders Should Get Nobel Peace Prize"
20. "Cyberwar guide for Iran elections"
21. "How (Twitter and) I Crashed Iran's Propaganda Web Sites"
22. "DDOS attacks on Iran's web-sites: what a stupid idea!"
23. "Watch Out for Twitter Hype in the Iran Elections"

Week #4: Tuesday, February 2

The "Iranian Twitter Revolution," Part Two

Video presented in class: "Evgeny Morozov: How the Net aids dictatorships"

Additional Video:

1. "Not quite Twitter, not quite a revolution":

Readings:

1. "America's Iranian Twitter Revolution"
2. "A Look at Twitter in Iran"

3. "Can Twitter turn politics into profit?"
 4. "The Revolution Will NOT Be Twittered"
 5. "In Iran, The Revolution Will Be Tagged"
 6. "It's not a Twitter revolution in Iran"
 7. "Iran Elections: A Twitter Revolution?"
 8. "Iran's "Twitter Revolution" – myth or reality?"
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10. "Iran's Twitter Revolution? Maybe Not Yet: Some Iranian election protesters used Twitter to get people on the streets, but most of the organizing happened the old-fashioned way"
 11. "Doubting Twitter: Let's not get carried away about its role in Iran's demonstrations"
 12. "The repercussions of a 'Twitter revolution'"
 13. "Twitter on the Barricades: Six Lessons Learned"
 14. "The Fog Machine: Iran, Social Media and the Rise of Genetically Modified Grassroots Organizations"
 15. "Exposing Canada's Role in US "Black-Ops" in Iran"
 16. "More on Twitter and protests in Tehran"
 17. "Iran's crackdown proves that the 'Twitter revolution' has made things worse"
 18. "How Iran is using the internet to 'hunt down' online protesters"
 19. "Iran: Downside to the 'Twitter Revolution' "
 20. "The Iranian Election on Twitter: The First Eighteen Days" :

Optional:

→ "Updated: The Irony of Iran's 'Twitter Revolution'"

→ "The Irony of Iran's 'Twitter Revolution'"

Assignment due: present a short printed statement to the course director, circa 500 words at most, describing and reflecting on your experience in entering Twitter, gaining access to the tweeter(s) at the focus of your research, disorientation experienced, and any initial impressions of Twitter use. [See Step #3 above] (5% of the final course grade)

Week #5: Tuesday, February 9

Readings:

→ [Cyberactivism] Introduction

→ [Cyberactivism] Ch.2, "Indymedia.org: A New Communications Commons"

→ [Cyberactivism] Ch. 3, "Classifying Forms of Online Activism: The Case of Cyberprotests against the World Bank"

Week #6: Tuesday, February 16

Readings:

→ [Cyberactivism] Ch. 4, "The Radicalization of Zeke Spier: How the Internet Contributes to Civic Engagement and New Forms of Social Capital"

→ [Cyberactivism] Ch. 5, "Democracy, New Social Movements, and the Internet: A Habermasian Analysis"

Assignment due: present a short printed statement to the course director, circa 750 words at most, describing (and analysing in the most preliminary way), the ostensible network of your tweeter(s) and how they build their ties through regular messaging and retweeting. [See Step #4 above]. (7.5% of the final course grade)

Week #7: Tuesday, February 23

Mid-Term Break: Feb. 22-28

Week #8: Tuesday, March 2

Readings:

→ [Cyberactivism] Ch. 7, "Mapping Networks of Support for the Zapatista Movement: Applying Social-Networks Analysis to the Study of Contemporary

Social Movements"

→ [Cyberactivism] Epilogue: "Current Directions and Future Questions"

Assignment due: please direct the course coordinator either to your Diigo list, showing your collection of research notes to date, or if you did not use Diigo, please print out your research notes and submit them for the start of class today. (10% of the final course grade)

Monday, March 8, 2010

• Last day for academic withdrawal from two-term and winter-term courses.

Week #9: Tuesday, March 9

→ Read Shirky, chapters 1 & 2

→ Also read: A Digi-Active Introduction to Facebook Activism:

Week #10: Tuesday, March 16

→ Read Shirky, chapters 3 & 4

Assignment due: submit a short synthesis of the dominant narrative of the messages produced by those at the focus of your study, printed, in no more than 500 words, submitted for the start of class on Tuesday, March 16. [See Step #5 above] (5% of the final course grade)

Week #11: Tuesday, March 23

→ Read Shirky, chapters 5 & 6 & 7

→ Also examine: Quick 'n' Easy Guide to Online Advocacy:

Week #12: Tuesday, March 30

→ Read Shirky, chapters 8 & 9

Assignment due: print out the main findings generated from each report, in the order shown above, and conclude with a final paragraph on what conclusions you think you can draw from these analyses. Submit this for the start of class on Tuesday, March 30. [See Step #6 above] (10% of the final course grade)

Friday, April 2 through Monday, April 5: University closed

Week #13: Tuesday, April 6

→ Read Shirky, chapters 10 & 11 & Epilogue

→ Also examine: *Blog for a Cause! The Global Voices Guide to Blog Advocacy*, by Mary Joyce

→ And peruse: *Cross-Posting for Advocacy: An Introduction to Effective Social Media Integration*

Tuesday, April 20:

Assignment due: Please submit your research paper, no more than 2,500 words (not including references to published sources), in the office of the course coordinator (H-1125-11) on Tuesday, April 20, 2010, between 4:00pm and 5:00pm. If you cannot come during that hour, please submit your paper before then by depositing it in the mailbox marked Forte in the Department.

No papers will be accepted by email. Late papers receive an automatic grade of zero. No exceptions to this course policy will be allowed.

(35% of the final course grade)