**Theory & Practice of Citizen Media**

JMC 40095 and COMM 45091  
Fall 2010

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**About the course**

This course will help you understand the social dynamics of citizen media, the ways that citizen media affect communication, and the theory and research behind it all. We will study prominent theories and bodies of research in computer-mediated communication. On the “practice” side, we will examine applications of how these techniques affect production, delivery and consumption of news. What are the ethics of these citizen journalists, and how does the growth of their audience affect traditional news outlets? Finally, we will explore the impact citizen media has on the civility of online discourse.


We will have other readings as assigned on the course Web site, but this is the only textbook you will need.

**Web site and blog**

The class Web site is on Blackboard Vista, available via FlashLine. We plan to use the site to give you readings and assignments, as well as point you to examples. We also will have you upload some of your work there.

The class blog is available at [http://citizenmediastark.blogspot.com/](http://citizenmediastark.blogspot.com/). The blog is internal -- visible only to the instructors and members of the class.

**Exams**

The course will include three exams. These assessments, which include multiple choice and short answer questions, will test your understanding of the readings and lectures. Readings and lectures will overlap, but each will cover material the other doesn’t.
Writing assignments

Your two papers – one using academic sources, the other from contemporary sources – require you to explain issues relevant to citizen media as we explore them in the course, including communication concepts such as self-disclosure and legal issues such as libel. You may choose to do the academic or contemporary paper first. They will each be 5-7 pages, double spaced, using three sources. We will explain in class how you should attribute the sources for the two papers. Note that papers can be derived from prior class work but not repetitive (no double dipping).

Unless we announce otherwise, your writing assignments should be uploaded as documents on Vista. Use 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1” margins on all four sides. (NOTE: This is NOT the default in Microsoft Word.) Writing assignments will be graded on form and content. It is not enough just to have good ideas; you must be able to clearly and effectively communicate those ideas. Grammar, spelling, punctuation and format will be considered when grading your assignments.

Social media

Because citizen media takes many forms, including social media tools, we expect you to practice using some of them to discuss the issues we’re studying. This might be within the class blog, on Twitter or possibly in a forum you and your classmates propose. The specific tool we agree to use isn’t as important as the interaction you make happen there. To get the full points, you should post something at least three times a week. Taking “public” notes during class counts as one of your required postings.

Presentation

You will produce a PowerPoint or alternative multimedia presentation describing a pioneering person, site or issue in citizen media. This includes how it got started, what became of it, some biographical information on key people involved and why it matters to us. This should last 5-7 minutes, not counting the discussion that follows. It can be in PowerPoint, an alternative format like Prezi or any number of other multimedia forms – even a simple introduction leading to a video interview. You should end your presentation with two questions – one multiple choice, the other a discussion starter. Students must publish a handout, links or other resources for their classmates on Vista the day of the presentation.

Presentations begin Sept. 13, with selection of topics and dates coming in the second class period. Grading rubric covers presentation content, quality of media (slides, video, interview, etc.), oral presentation characteristics and comprehension.
Grading

Your course grade will be based on the following:

- Exams (3 of them): 100 points each
- Papers (2 of them): 100 points each
- Presentation: 50 points
- Preparation, verbal participation: 25 points
- Social media updates: 25 points

We will use the following grading scale:
A (93-100), A- (90-92.99), B+ (87-89.99), B (83-86.99), B- (80-82.99), C+ (77-79.99), C (73-76.99), C- (70-72.99), D+ (67-69.99), D (60-66.99), F (59.99 and lower).

Attendance

If you must miss a class for work or illness, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to learn what we did and check Vista for any new assignments. But understand that missing a lot of class will hold you back. The verbal participation part of your grade is based on in-class questions and observations, which can’t happen if you’re not there.

Assignments are due at the beginning of class; anything turned in later that day will lose half of a letter grade. Papers lose an additional letter grade per day after that. Personal computer problems are not an excuse -- don’t risk being late by trying to finish at the last minute.

Taking a quiz or exam late will cost you a 10-percent penalty unless it’s for a verifiable medical or personal emergency. If you miss class on an exam day, you need to contact one of us by phone or e-mail that day and state when you plan to make it up (usually the next business day). To avoid the penalty, you must attach a copy of your documentation to the make-up exam, which will be administered at the Testing Center in Campus Center.

Cheating and plagiarism

The College of Communication and Information deals in publishable works and educates its students for various aspects of publishing and other communications professions. Within this framework, every student must be aware of the following rules and definitions while in school or on the job:

Fabrication is, in phrasing first used by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, the cardinal sin. Faking quotations, faking “facts,” or reporting things that did not happen are not only reprehensible; they could be actionable in court.

Plagiaring, as defined by Webster, is “to steal and pass off as one’s own the ideas or words of another.” It is unethical and, in cases involving creative work, usually illegal.
One of the worst sins a communication practitioner may commit is to plagiarize the work of another – to steal his/her words, thought, or outline and pass them off as his/her own. Duplicating work is defined as submitting the same work to more than one instructor (or publication) without the prior knowledge and agreement of both.

Commission of any of these offenses while in school is grounds for disciplinary action. If the complaint is upheld, a variety of punishments may be imposed, from a reprimand to a lowered or failing grade in the course to dismissal from the university.

**Students with disabilities**

Kent State University recognizes its responsibility for creating an institution atmosphere in which students with disabilities can succeed. In accordance with University Policy Subpart E…104.44, if you have a documented disability, you may request accommodations to obtain equal access in this class. Please contact the disability coordinator on campus, Kelly Kulick in Student Accessibility Services, located in the Student Success Center, lower level of the Campus Center, phone (330) 244-5047, or kkulick@kent.edu. After your eligibility for accommodations is determined, you will be given a letter which, when presented to instructors, will help us know best how to assist you.

**Course registration and schedule**

Students who are not officially registered may not attend classes. If you do not officially register by the deadline for course registration, you will not receive credit for this course.

The last day to drop without a `W' on your transcript is Sept. 12. The last day to withdraw from the course is Nov. 7. If you are considering withdrawing, please consult with a staff member in the Student Services Office, 134 Main Hall. Withdrawal from a course can affect financial aid, student status or progress within your major.

Announcements of class cancellations and/or campus closings will be on the campus home page. While information may be broadcast by radio and television, [http://stark.kent.edu](http://stark.kent.edu) is the official site for this. We’ll send you an e-mail and post an announcement on the Vista site if we know ahead of time that we won’t be meeting.

Our final exam time (set by the university) is at **3:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 15.**