SI 529 Online Communities

Winter 2021 Course Syllabus
Instructor: Professor Nazanin Andalibi

Note: This syllabus is subject to change and updates; students will be notified in class (when applicable) and via Canvas (always).

Course Summary

Online communities are central to how we work, play, learn, protest, socialize, and more. But why are some successful and some fail? How can we improve interactions and experiences in online communities, facilitate positive outcomes like social support and connectedness, while reducing negative outcomes like various kinds of harm?

In this course, we will be introduced to social science concepts and theories such as identity and self-presentation and some principles of designing online communities, and will practice to apply them in a variety of online contexts. This course will engage with hard topics that are relevant to online communities today, including race, gender, disability, health, politics, violence, misinformation, and ethics.

This course requires reading about online communities research, critiquing, and connecting theory to practice. The course includes both individual and group components. Projects involving original research of online communities, and projects coming up with ideas for new online communities.

We cannot possibly cover everything related to online communities in this class, and that is okay. There are so many critical and exciting topics to learn about online communities. We will use the class readings, discussions, assignments, activities, guest speakers, and space as a starting point. You will have opportunities to go beyond these topics to increase the breadth of everyone’s learning (e.g., through participating in extra credit points), as well as to go in depth about a particular topic through your online community study and final design or research project. If you are more interested in the design aspects of online communities, you can select to do your final assignment in the design track, and if you are more interested in the research aspects of online communities, you can select the research track.

This course does not teach research methods, interaction design, or team work dynamics. This is a graduate-level course, which means that you are expected to supplement your learning with other courses and resources. For example, if you want to know more about research methods to apply it to your project, you are expected to do your own research. You can of course always
reach out to the instructor and the GSI for guidance, but taking initiative and ownership is important.

All classes will take place on Zoom synchronously. Lectures will be recorded and available for viewing afterwards. Group work time and some in-class activities will not be recorded.

Class meetings: Tuesdays 6-9pm EST
● Class link: https://umich.zoom.us/j/93961052984

**Instructional Team**

**Instructor** Dr. Nazanin Andalibi
● Email: andalibi@umich.edu
(See the *Communication with the Instruction Team section*)
● Student hours: Tuesdays, 10am-12pm EST or by appointment
● Student hours location: https://umich.zoom.us/my/dr.andalibi
● More info: nazaninandalibi.net

**GSI** Zoe Robinson (she/her)
● Email: zoer@umich.edu
● Student hours: Monday 11am-12pm EST, Wednesday 7-8pm EST
● Student hour location: https://umich.zoom.us/j/93026028803

**IA** Criss Cheng (he/his)
● Email: crisscy@umich.edu
● No student hours

**Learning Objectives**

After taking this course, you should be able to:

● Understand important features of online interactions
● Assess an online community using the vocabulary and concepts of multiple theoretical frameworks
● Analyze online interactions critically
● Understand and discuss the ethical aspects of online communities
● Understand, discuss, and shape research topics in the online communities field
## Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture Date</th>
<th>Lectures / Labs Topic</th>
<th>Assignments Due (on Tuesdays before 5:30pm)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 19</td>
<td>Week 1: Introduction to online communities, SI 529, and each other</td>
<td>Pre-class survey (due 5pm)</td>
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<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>Week 2: Ethics of studying and designing online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Black Mirror In-Class Workshop (6 pt)</td>
<td>Project management plan for community analysis study</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal for community analysis study</td>
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<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Week 3: Design and online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>Week 4: Identity and online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>Week 5: Marginality and online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Dr. Kathryn Ringland</td>
<td>Survey to select a design or research track for the final project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 23</td>
<td>Week 6: Online Community Study Paper Presentations</td>
<td>Online community study paper</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Online community study slides</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2</td>
<td>Week 7: Wellbeing and online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Dr. Estelle Smith</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>Week 8: Algorithms and online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 16</td>
<td>Week 9: Privacy and online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Dr. Oliver Haimson</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 23</td>
<td>Week 10: NO CLASS</td>
<td>Wellbeing Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>Week 11: Abuse, harassment, and extremism on online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 6</td>
<td>Week 12: Misinformation, conspiracy theories, and online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Dr. Kolina Koltai</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>Week 13: Regulation and content moderation on online communities</td>
<td>Reading response for week 13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Dr. Shagun Jhaver</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 20</td>
<td>Week 14: Final Project Presentations</td>
<td>Project slide</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Project paper</td>
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</tbody>
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**Before we get started,** I want to acknowledge that these are challenging times, and many students are struggling. We aim to be flexible and accommodating in this course. Please reach
out to the instructional team as soon as possible if you are experiencing challenges and we can discuss how to adjust the course to meet your needs. The main goal here is for you to learn, and we are here to help support you in learning.

**Course Format**

This course will involve synchronous interaction between the instructor and students in Zoom online classrooms. Classes will involve lectures, in-class activities, discussions, and group work. Some activities will involve the whole class, and other activities will use breakout rooms for small group interaction. Please see the [Attendance and Class Participation](#) section for more information about our expectations for student participation in class.

**Team Work**

There are two team-based assignments for this class: Online Community Study and Final Research/Design Assignment.

All class activities and assignments are the same for all students. However, close to half way through the semester, the students will choose a research or a design track for their final group assignment.

The main difference this makes in the student experience is the choice of the final deliverable being design or research-focused. At that point, we will randomly assign students into (possibly new) teams. Teams who have worked together for the Online Community Study assignment and would like to stick together for either track can do so. Otherwise, students will be placed in teams with others interested in the same track. You may not change your mind about the research or design track once you have declared your interest in one because with the time that we have in the class, switching tracks and projects will be very difficult to manage, so give it some thought and read the assignment descriptions before picking one.

**Grading**

You should do good work in this class because you care about the project you pick and because you want to learn how to design interactive systems. That said, we must adhere to university policy and use grades, so here is how grades will work in this class:

- Class participation (25 points)
  - In-class activities (6 points total, 0.5 points for each lecture)
    - Note: there are 13 total in-class activities, but you only need to complete 12 to get full credit.
  - Participating in class discussions, Q&As (13 points)
    - Note: based on your active and meaningful participation in discussions, you’ll receive a mid-term assessment (6pt) and an end-of-semester assessment (7pt)
    - Please see the rubric in the assignment section below.
  - Group work (6 points)
    - Note: you will assess your group mates twice throughout the semester for community analysis study and design/research assignment. How you are assessed by your
teammates for your collaboration and contribution to work as well as professionalism factors into this grade.

- Reading reflection papers (16 points total, 2 points for each reading response)
  - Note: there are 10 total reading responses, but you only need to complete 8 to get full credit
- Pre-class survey (1 point)
- Black Mirror in-class workshop: (6 points, see rubrics)
- Project management plan for community analysis paper (1 point, see rubric)
- Community study proposal (1 point, see rubric)
- Online community study paper (20 points, see rubric)
- Online community study presentation (5 points, see rubric)
- Final design report or research paper (20 points, see rubric)
- Final Design report or research presentation (5 points, see rubric)

**TOTAL:** 100 points possible

Final grades will be recorded as letter grades using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97 - 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 - 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 - 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 - 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 - 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 - 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 - 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73 - 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 - 72</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Late Policy**

Many of our classroom activities involve discussions, conversations, and reflections. For this reason, it is important that you finish your assignments on time and come to class prepared to discuss them when relevant. To encourage timely completion of assignments – and, thus, your ability to fully participate in the class – late homework assignments will be penalized 10% per 24-hour period. Unexcused reading reflections and in class activities/Black Mirror workshop will not be accepted. In some cases, extensions may be granted if possible. Students must communicate with the instructional team *before* the deadline if at all possible.

**Grade Discrepancies**

Students are responsible for viewing their grades in Canvas and informing the instructor of any discrepancies within seven days (after seven days, no adjustments will be made to grades). Students must keep copies of any work submitted until final grades are submitted. No petitions for grade adjustments will be considered after April 20 - after this, the only basis for changing your grade will be to correct instructor errors in recording or calculating your grades.

**Re-grading Policy**

For project-based and other assignments, if you feel that the merit of your work on any assignment has not been fully recognized, you may choose to submit the assignment for
re-grading within 7 days after grades are released for that assignment. To submit work for a re-grade, you must explain in an email why you feel your work deserves re-grading. You should provide details and point to specifics in the assignment that you feel merit a higher grade. One of three outcomes is possible: your grade may be raised, it may remain the same, or it may be lowered. The re-grade is final, even if it is lower than the original grade. You can only ask for a re-grade twice (two times in the semester).

**Extra Credit**

Extra credit assignments may be assigned throughout the semester at the instructor's discretion. Students are responsible for checking that Canvas has correctly registered their participation and will have one week after extra credit grades are uploaded to inform the instructor about any problems (after this, scores will not be adjusted). Regardless of how many extra credit opportunities are offered, students can receive a maximum of 3 points in extra credit during the semester.

You will have the option to participate in a reading response extra credit activity for up to 1 point and only once. You can choose to find an article of your choice/interest, read it, and reflect on it. Eligible articles are journal articles or conference proceedings (e.g., ACM CHI, ACM CSCW, ACM DIS, ACM TOCHI, New Media and Society, Social Media and Society) AND they should be about online communities. Regardless of how many extra credit opportunities are offered, students can receive a maximum of 3 points in extra credit during the semester.

These reflections should follow similar guidelines as your regular required reading reflection papers. They should be true reflections, not summaries. They will be similarly graded. I may ask you to share your reading response with the class and lead a discussion about it so that the rest of the class, including the instructional team, can also learn from it.

**Attendance, Class Participation, and Recording Classes**

Your in-class group/individual activities and class participation grade both rely on you being in class. We will do individual and group activities frequently. **All group submissions should include the names of all group members who were present and contributed.** In particular, the time dedicated to your teamwork is crucial to the success of your team project. **If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out what you missed in class by referring to the syllabus and your classmates. Additionally, you are responsible for communicating with your team about how you will catch up on your project work.**

**Class will be held on Zoom and will be synchronous.** Class participation includes attending class and participating in class discussion. Most of the class should participate in synchronous class time with their video on, most of the time. If having your video on does not work or is not comfortable for you the whole semester, please email me so I'm aware of it. At the minimum, I ask that you include a photo of your face and use your first and last name on your Zoom profiles, so that we can tell who is who and get to know each other better. It really helps me to see you, if at all possible, so that I can get to know you better.

Since we will be in online classrooms using Zoom, there are several ways that you can participate in class discussions. While I encourage you to raise your virtual hand and then unmute your microphone to speak when the instructor calls on you, you can also use the chat feature to
contribute to the conversation. The GSI or IA will moderate lecture class sessions and will call my attention to chat questions and comments.

Our strong preference is for you to attend class synchronously so that you can interact with the instructors, your fellow classmates, and your teammates. In class activities and class participation often do not lend themselves to replication outside the class and/or individually. So, please do not ask if you can make up for them. If you miss the class, you will need to watch the recorded video of the class. If you are regularly not in class synchronously, class participation grade will suffer because you are not able to participate in the class discussions and activities. This may mean that taking the course may not be the best use of your time and resources right now.

Lectures will be recorded and available on Canvas afterwards. Parts of the class that require group work that do not lend themselves useful to recording, will not be recorded. As part of your participation in this course, you may be recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, please contact the instructors the first week of class to discuss alternative arrangements.

Students may not record or distribute any class activity without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student’s own private use.

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**Missing Class Due to Illness or Emergency**

UMSI recognizes the extreme circumstances surrounding this academic term. We strive to provide an inclusive environment and to support the academic success of all students. If you experience illness or emergency during the term, please inform the GSI before class that you cannot participate in class. If you cannot participate due to illness or emergency, the instructor will provide as much support and flexibility as possible for you to complete the course when you are able.

If you have ongoing physical or mental accommodation needs, you can contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (734-763-3000; ssd.umich.edu/). If you will be out for an extended period, or if you need additional academic support, please contact your academic advising team.

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**What-If Scenarios**

If you are not able to join class at the designated class times, please contact me to discuss as soon as possible at or before the beginning of the term.

The instructional team will be joining class from our homes, as will many of you. Therefore, things might not always go as planned due to technical difficulties. Here are some contingency plans:

- If we are dropped from the Zoom meeting, please wait for us to return for at least 15 minutes. If our Internet goes down, we will call in from our phones. If that does not work, we will post on Canvas about next steps as soon as possible.
- If your Internet goes down during the synchronous class, please rejoin using your phone if possible. If it is not possible to rejoin, please watch the recorded lecture asynchronously to cover what you have missed.
- When you are presenting as part of a group, you should have a contingency plan to present on your group member’s behalf if they lose connection. This means that while you may do group work, everyone should know the work and be able to present it, which is the expectation regardless of class delivery mode.
If you miss any part of the class or your participation suffers due to Internet issues, you should contact the GSI immediately to determine next steps. Do not wait until the end of the semester or for weeks to see if you can make up for what was missed.

**Tools**

We/your teams may use the following tools throughout the course for various activities:

- Miro
- Zoom
- Google docs/slides
- Software for prototyping and wireframing for those doing the design track for the final assignment (your choice - many students use Figma or Adobe XD for digital prototyping, and Balsamiq for wireframing).

We also recommend that you consider using technology for team collaboration. You can consider tools such as Slack, Google docs/slides, or Trello to help you manage your progress and collaborative activities. It is up to you what tools you use to collaborate, and we strongly encourage you to have a conversation with your teammates about this early on and set expectations and goals.

**Communication with the Instruction Team**

When you email the instructional team, we are interacting in a professional context. Please use appropriate etiquette, such as suitable salutations and signatures. Do not use text message slang or Internet slang. Please use “[SI 529]” at the start of the subject header in emails you send to me.

Your first point of contact for most class/assignment-related issues will be your GSI (Zoe Robinson, zoer@umich.edu). If there are issues you would like to discuss with me, please contact me directly. If you are not sure whom to contact, you can email us both and one of us will respond. Please do not contact the IA (Criss Cheng).

You are more than welcome and encouraged to come to the instructor’s office hours to discuss matters pertaining to your ideas, research interests and aspirations, or your career goals. That is to say, my virtual office door is open, and you should feel free to stop by. I am here (or there) to help. Office hours will take place on Zoom and will be 1-1. If more than one student joins the office hours Zoom link at the same time, you will be in the “waiting room” until we let you in for your 1-1 office hours session. We will be able to see that you are waiting. If your team wants to attend office hours together, we can let multiple students into the Zoom call at once.

While we will do our best to respond to your inquiries as soon as possible, you can expect that it may take us up to 2 business days to respond to your emails. Questions that require discussions lengthier than a short (5 minutes or less) response will be better addressed in Zoom office hours. Please do not expect emails on weekends or over holidays. If you need a response by a certain time, please make sure to plan accordingly.
**Some Guidelines for Dialogue within the Classroom**

We will do our best to:

1. Maintain confidentiality. We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange.
2. Commit to learning from each other. We will listen to each other and not talk at each other. We acknowledge differences among us in backgrounds, skills, interests, identities and values. We realize that it is these very differences that will increase our awareness and understanding through this process.
3. Not demean, devalue, or “put down” people for their experiences, lack of experiences, or difference in interpretation of those experiences.
4. Trust that people are always doing the best they can. We will give each other the benefit of the doubt. We will assume we are all trying our hardest and that our intentions are good even when the impact is not.
5. Challenge the idea and not the person. If we wish to challenge something that has been said, we will challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing this idea or practice.
6. Speak our discomfort. If something is bothering us, we will share this with the group. Often our emotional reactions to this process offer the most valuable learning opportunities.
7. Step Up, Step Back. We will be mindful of taking up much more space than others. On the same note, empower ourselves to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.
8. Not to freeze people in time. We are all works in progress. We will be willing to change and make space for others to do so. Therefore we will not assume that one comment or one opinion made at one time captures the whole of a person’s character.

- The Program on Intergroup Relations, University of Michigan, 2012

**Accessible Teaching and Learning Environment**

I know that courses at UM and UMSI can be demanding, but that is because we want you to be able to learn, explore, and reach your full potential. I aim to create an accessible environment for teaching and learning in my classroom. Each of us comes to class with different assumptions, values, and opinions. Rather than being in the way, however, I see such differences as valuable starting points for building the community I hope we build over the course of the semester.

If you find that any aspect of the course creates a barrier to you achieving your learning goals and objectives, please reach out to me (the sooner the better) and we can discuss how we can adjust to meet your needs. You can reach me via email (andalibi@umich.edu) or online via Zoom (after class, during office hours, or by appointment).

We will use Zoom’s live captioning during all class sessions and will make lecture slides available after class.

I also want to let you know about the following resources that might help you find the School of Information, and the University at large, more accommodating:
- UMSI Office of Academic and Student Affairs (OASA): 333 Maynard (5th floor, Collegian building, which is located next to the Maynard entrance to Nichols Arcade)
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (734) 764-8312
- Psychiatric Emergency Services (U of M Hospital): (734) 996-4747
- Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) 24-Hour Crisis Line: (734) 936-3333
- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD): (734) 763-3000
- Sweetland Center for Writing: https://lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/undergraduates.html

If you ever need, or want, assistance navigating and making use of these resources, please don’t hesitate to ask me. I am here to be your advocate.

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; http://ssd.umich.edu) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Please present this form to me at the beginning of the term, or at least two weeks prior to the need for the accommodation. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

**Student Mental Health and Wellbeing**

We support your health and wellbeing. If you are experiencing a physical or mental health challenge, trauma, grief/loss or some other personal life challenge, and an adjustment of course timelines can help you work through it, please come talk to us as soon as you can so we can discuss how to best accommodate your needs. We encourage all of you to try to get enough sleep, to prioritize taking care of yourself, and to try to find social support from people around you.

The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students, while acknowledging that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impact students’ academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and https://caps.umich.edu/ during and after hours, on weekends and holidays or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at (732) 764-8320 and https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources. For a more comprehensive listing of the broad range of mental health services available on campus, please visit: http://umich.edu/~mhealth/.
For Students Experiencing Food Insecurity

College students are experiencing food insecurity at alarming rates. The Maize and Blue Cupboard is here to provide an immediate and comprehensive response for the U-M community by providing food, kitchen supplies, personal and household items, and additional support. Maize and Blue Cupboard is open to all UM students. You can go look around, or leave with a couple grocery bags - it's your choice. [https://mbc.studentlife.umich.edu/](https://mbc.studentlife.umich.edu/)

Academic Integrity

_Abridged version:_ Unless otherwise specified in an assignment, all submitted work must be the work of each individual student’s own, original work. **If students are referencing others’ work, put it in quotes. If students are directly quoting, or building on others’ writing, provide a citation.** See the [Rackham Graduate policy on Academic and Professional Integrity](https://www.umich.edu) for the definition of plagiarism, and associated consequences. Violations of academic and professional integrity will be reported to UMSI Student Affairs. Consequences impacting assignment or course grades are determined by the faculty instructor; additional sanctions may be imposed by the assistant dean for academic and student affairs.

**Collaboration**

UMSI strongly encourages collaboration while working on some assignments, such as homework problems and interpreting reading assignments as a general practice. Active learning is effective. Collaboration with other students in the course will be especially valuable in summarizing the reading materials and picking out the key concepts. You must, however, write your homework submission on your own, in your own words, before turning it in. If you worked with someone on the homework before writing it, you must list any and all collaborators on your written submission. Each course and each instructor may place restrictions on collaboration for any or all assignments. Read the instructions carefully and request clarification about collaboration when in doubt. Collaboration is almost always forbidden for take-home and in-class exams.

For this course’s team assignments, we expect that you are collaborating with your team members and that each of you is contributing to the assignments. If that is not the case, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can help you manage your team dynamics if needed -- it is much harder to help students when they wait until a late point in the semester to share challenges such as a team member not doing their part or being unreliable for whatever reason. For the individual assignments, we expect you to do this work independently, though you are allowed and encouraged to discuss your work with your fellow classmates.

**Plagiarism**

All written submissions must be your own, original work. Original work is not mere paraphrasing of someone else’s completed answer. Largely duplicate copies of the same assignment will receive an equal division of the total point score from the one piece of work. You may incorporate selected excerpts, statements, or phrases from publications by other authors, but they must be clearly marked as quotations and must be attributed. If you build on the ideas of prior authors, you must cite their work. You may obtain copy editing assistance, and you may discuss your ideas with others, but all substantive writing and ideas must be your own, or be explicitly attributed to another. See the [MSI student handbook](https://www.umich.edu) available on the UMSI intranet for
the definition of plagiarism, resources to help you avoid it, and the consequences for intentional or unintentional plagiarism.

**READINGS**

All readings will be available on the Canvas website for this class, unless they are only available online, in which case a URL will be provided. (Note that readings may change; any changes will be announced via Canvas).

If you cannot access a reading for some reason, please let us know ASAP via email so we can correct the problem for the entire class.

Please note: **everyone in the class is expected to come to class having read the required readings for that class.** If you do not do the required readings, your understanding of the course material will suffer, as will your grade and the classroom discussions. All readings and reading responses are due at the beginning of the lecture, at 5:30pm on Tuesdays.

Please see the **reading reflections** section in the Assignments section of the syllabus for details and instructions.

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**W1. Intro to communities and class**

No reading response due.

- [A New Perspective on "Community" and its Implications for Computer-Mediated Communication Systems](https://example.com) by Amy Bruckman.

Recommended (optional):

- [Feed me: motivating newcomer contribution in social network sites](https://example.com) by Moira Burke, Cameron Marlow, and Thomas Lento. 2009.

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**W2. Ethics of studying and designing online communities**


Recommended (optional):
- Beyond the Belmont Principles: Ethical Challenges, Practices, and Beliefs in the Online Data Research Community by Jessica Vitak, Katie Shilton, and Zahra Ashktorab. CSCW, 2016.

W3. Design aspects of online communities

- Nine Principles of Community Design by Amy Jo Kim.

W4. Identity and online communities

- Pages 1-58 (intro and most of chapter 1), in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life by Erving Goffman. Doubleday, 1956. [Must login with U-M credentials, then click "check out" to access the text.]
- We need online alter egos now more than ever by Judith Donath. Wired Magazine, 2014.

Recommended (optional):
- Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community by Judith Donath.

W5. Marginality and online communities (disability, experience, race, gender)

- Default Publicness: Queer youth of color, social media, and being outed by the machine by Alexander Cho. New Media & Society, 2018.

Recommended (optional):

**W6: online community study presentation**

No readings.

**W7. Wellbeing and online communities**


Recommended (optional):
- Instagram photos reveal predictive markers of depression by Andrew G. Reece and Christopher M. Danforth. EPJ Data Science 6, 1: 1–12, 2017. [okay to skim]
- Social Support, Reciprocity, and Anonymity in Responses to Sexual Abuse Disclosures on Social Media by Nazanin Andalibi, Oliver Haimson, Munmun De Choudhury, and Andrea Forte. ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction (TOCHI), 2018.
- Write for Life: Persisting in Online Health Communities through Expressive Writing and Social Support by Haiwei Ma, C. Estelle Smith, Lu He, Saumik Narayanan, Robert Giaquinto, Roni Evans, Linda Hanson, and Svetlana Yarosh. Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction, 2017.

**W8. Algorithms and online communities**

- Algorithmic Folk Theories and Identity: How TikTok Users Engage in Algorithmic Resistance and Identity Co-Production by Nadia Karizat, Dan Delmonaco, Motahhare Eslami, and Nazanin Andalibi. [link forthcoming]

Recommended (optional):

W9. Privacy and online communities


Recommended (optional):
- Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) on Privacy [browse]
- “Anonymized” data really isn’t—and here's why not by Nate Anderson. Ars Technica, 2009.

W10. No class, wellbeing break

No readings.

W11. Abuse, harassment, and extremism and online communities

Warning: some of the readings and the sites we look at for today may trigger negative memories. Feel free to discuss any concerns with the faculty, and do what is right for you.


Recommended (optional):
“We Dissect Stupidity and Respond to It”: Response Videos and Networked Harassment on YouTube by Rebecca Lewis, Alice Marwick, and William Clyde Partin. American Behavioral Scientist.

Watch: The Internet is a trash fire. Here’s how to fix it by Lisa Nakamura. TED, 2019.


Stormfront is like a second home to me by De Koster and Dick Houtman. Information, Communication & Society, 2008.


W12. Misinformation, conspiracy theories, and online communities


Recommended (optional):


W13. Regulation and moderation of online communities


Chapter 4: Regulating Behavior in Online Communities (pages 125-170), in Building Successful Online Communities: Evidence-Based Social Design by Kraut and Resnick.

Recommended (optional):

If your website’s full of assholes, it’s your fault by Anil Dash. 2011.

Designing Good Policy for Online Platforms and Communities by Cindy Au. Medium, 2015.


W14. Final presentations

No readings.
READER REFLECTIONS (INDIVIDUAL)

Each week, you will write a reading reflection for the assigned readings from that week, which you will submit on Canvas assignments.

This assignment is intended to encourage you to do the reading before class for every class, and to help you to think carefully about the reading. Without reading the material, your participation in class, activities, and (individual/team) assignments and your learning will suffer.

The reflection may focus on one reading for the day, or may connect themes from multiple readings. If you choose to write about just one reading, please include a short paragraph about each of the other readings so we know you read them. Note that you are not required to read the “recommended readings,” but you are encouraged to.

These should be at least 2 paragraphs single space, and up to 1 page. Your response should reflect on the readings and discuss points you found particularly interesting. **What you don’t want your reflection to be is just a summary or reiteration of the readings.** Please reflect on your readings. Tell us what they mean. Relate readings to one another, or to online sites or your own experiences. We are looking for insight.

Some topics you might write about:
• What did you find interesting about the reading?
• What are the key issues the reading raises?
• What are the importance and broader implications of those issues?
• Do you see connections between readings from prior weeks or did you find one or more relevant readings to connect your assigned readings to? Write about that connection.

Although you may just write about shortcomings of the reading, you are discouraged from doing so. It is easy to tear pretty much anything apart, and is not necessarily a productive exercise. Even if you mainly disagree with a reading, the more interesting question to ask yourself is: what about this was valuable? So reflections that their only points are statements like “they could have done this other study but they did not, or they did not report on this other issue” will not be considered very insightful.

There are 10 total weeks of class with readings, but to give you some flexibility, you only need to turn in 8 reading reflections. You are, however, responsible for doing the readings even on weeks you don’t turn in reading responses.

• Full credit is 2 points for each reading response. You will get full credit if it is clear that you read the readings and you engaged with them meaningfully and specifically in your response, your writing is professional and free of errors, and your references cited properly and using the APA format.
• You will get half credit or less if you wrote something, but it’s not clear if you actually did the readings or not (e.g., lack of specifics and/or meaningful engagement) or if you merely provide a summary without much reflection.

Reading reflections may not be turned in late, unless there is a reasonable excuse. The reason for this is that readings are a foundational part of this graduate class’s experience.

**First Week Survey (individual)**

This survey will help us collect info on your background and interests, and give us your preferences for group work. You need to fill out the survey by Jan 19, 5:00 pm. This is so that we can assign you to teams in time so that you can meet your group members during the first class or shortly after it. Responding to this survey is an easy way to get 1 point.

**Participating in class discussions**

Based on your active and meaningful participation in class discussions, you’ll receive a mid-term assessment (6pt) and an end-of-semester assessment (7pt). This will be a measure of both contribution quantity and quality. Note that doing the readings and other preparation work is necessary for contributing to classroom conversations in a way that is productive and moves the discussion forward, not backward. In other words, please do not say something just to “say something” – you need to contribute to the discussion in a meaningful way in order to receive full credit for this portion of the grade. You can do so in class and/or post about current events pertaining to online communities in the Canvas discussion section. This should be a reflective commentary from you, similar to how you are expected to participate in class discussions (e.g., just posting a link with a sentence does not count). Please note that if we have time, sometimes I may invite you to share what you have read/written on Canvas during the class time so that we can all have a discussion about the interesting things you find and reflect on.
Community Study Assignment Proposal (team)

Submit a brief (½ to 1 page, in PDF format) problem statement for the project your team would like to work on this semester. **We need to approve your proposal before you can proceed with your proposed study.** If you happen to want to change your site, you should get our approval again. But we strongly encourage you to think this through using the guidelines in the assignment description so that you won’t need to. We want to make sure that you have a good reason to study the site you want to study and that you will be doing so responsibly and ethically.

You will brainstorm ideas as a team to determine what problem/online community you’d like to focus on. This assignment helps you learn how to articulate the problem space, and specify the constraints and opportunities that you will consider when carrying out research in online communities, in this case participant observation.

Tips for planning your proposal:

- Read the [community analysis assignment](#) and tips about selecting a community.
- It's a good idea to choose a site that is successful. You'll learn more by thinking in detail about something that works than by tearing apart something that doesn't work. And it's much easier to do a thoughtful analysis of a successful site.
- Pick a site that you enjoy and can imagine yourself spending a lot of time on. You will be there a lot for your participant observation.
- To be a participant observer on a site, you need to really participate. If you are studying a karaoke site, you had better start singing! As you pick a site to study, make sure it's one where you are comfortable participating.

Mid-term Rubric

Students actively participate in lecture and discussion activities (e.g., when asked about points in the readings types in the chat or speaks, asks questions, posts on canvas) | 6 pts

While students are present, they rarely contribute to class by offering ideas and asking questions. | 2 pts

While Students are present in lecture, they do not participate by offering ideas or asking questions | 0 pts

End-of-semester Rubric

Students actively participate in lecture and discussion activities (e.g., when asked about points in the readings types in the chat or speaks, asks questions, posts on canvas) | 7 pts

While students are present, they rarely contribute to class by offering ideas and asking questions. | 3 pts

While Students are present in lecture, they do not participate by offering ideas or asking questions | 0 pts
Because this is a group project, all members of your team need to feel comfortable to participate in the site. Not everyone may be so excited about it, but everyone should feel safe and comfortable to participate.

**Rubric**

| Statement describes the online community, provides a link to the community, and shares a good reason for studying it | 0.5 pts |
| Statement describes how the team will carry out the study ethically and protect their own safety and wellbeing as well | 0.5 pts |

**Community Study Assignment Project Management Plan (team)**

Develop a plan to complete your project. There will be work to do, and you need to distribute the work. It is crucial to develop a plan of who is responsible for which parts of your deliverable. Have open and direct communication with your group for an improved experience for all.

Submit a ½-page plan that describes what you will achieve by Feb 23 and how you will divide the work between your team members. If your team doesn’t meet its own goals and expectations, have a conversation with each other and see how you might overcome the challenges. If you run into problems, reach out to us as soon as possible.

**Rubric**

| 1/2-page plan for who is responsible for what over the next few weeks | 1 pts |

**Community Study Assignment (team)**

Your group will select one online community to study and you must have a set of research questions that are motivating your choice. Your choice must be approved by the instructors before you begin your analysis.

Analyze the community in terms of principles and theories we have discussed in class. Specifically, and at least, analyze the community in terms of Amy Jo Kim's “Nine Principles for Community Design” (one of your readings). How does the community address each of these issues? In what ways is the community successful? Is it meeting the needs of its members? Compare and contrast the community to other similar ones. In what ways could the community be better designed? How would you change it?

In your paper, make sure to cite the course readings (and feel free to go beyond them) and include a detailed bibliography.

Your team will conduct original research. Each team member will conduct participant observation in which you participate in your chosen online community for at least 8 hours. Past time spent on a site does not constitute part of those hours. All team members must do this. Take careful notes about your experience each time you do your observations. If you interact with community members as a researcher—e.g., asking others about their experiences—you must identify yourself as a student studying the site for an assignment.
Some useful research tools are Google Scholar and the UM Library web databases.

**What to Turn In**
2000-3000 words per group. Appendices do not count towards the page length. If you do need more space, please feel free to use it to tell your story well, but do not go above twice the noted word limit. Please use APA style to format your paper and its bibliography: You can find a sample format [here](#).

**Introduction**
Begin your paper with a short description of your site and its functionality. Briefly describe the audience. Describe the research questions that you were looking to address.

**Related Work**
Describe prior literature and other communities that motivated your research questions and that help us understand your results.

**Methods**
Describe how you did your research: How did you participate? Did you interact with anybody? Did your team members have different participation strategies? What worked and what did not work? How did you ensure you ethically conducted this assignment?

**Results**
Present the findings that you discovered. These should be organized in a logical way and should address the research questions you started with. You may have learned other things you were not focusing on that are still relevant here—document those things as well. Identify key characteristics, behaviors, goals, and values of the community’s users. Identify key insights relevant to the community. Elaborate with illustrative stories and quotes. You will be evaluated on your ability to turn your notes to insights/results that help you to better understand your site.

**Conclusion**
Recommend actions and future research. Do not leave this to the last minute. We expect to see careful and thoughtful ideas presented that are not obvious at first glance. If you could have come up with these conclusions without doing the research or taking the class, you haven’t thought about it enough.

**Appendix**
As appendices, you should submit each team member's research notes clearly noting what belongs to whom and including full names. They do not need to be formatted or polished.

You should NOT include identifiable information or direct posts from online communities you studied in your report or presentation. If you need to share data for the paper or presentation, you should use methods to anonymize the quotes (though paraphrasing), usernames, pictures, etc. You can also utilize a method called “ethical fabrication.”

You will be graded on the following qualities:

- Quality of writing, synthesis, and argumentation.
- Attention to detail.
- Quality of field work.
- Thoughtful citation of course readings. Show us that you have done the readings and they have aided in your understanding of what you observed.
- Insight into research issues about the design of online communities.
- Spelling, grammar, narrative clarity.

### Rubric

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### Community Study Assignment Slides and Presentation (team)

Prepare and submit a slide deck that illustrates your community study. If you use Google slides or other online collaborative tools, please do not submit a link. Export it as a powerpoint or PDF and submit that. The project slides will be shown on your laptop during the final presentations. You should design for 16:9 landscape Full HD (1920x1080p) widescreen resolution. The design and the layout of the slides is open for creativity. Your slide or slide deck should include the following:

- Your project’s name
- The names of all team members
- Main points from the required paper sections: introduction, related work, methods, results, conclusion

Not all team members need to talk as part of the presentation, but at least 2 team members should. You do not need to include every single detail that you have included in your paper in your presentation, but just the highlights and provide us with a takeaway.

**Note:** student presentations will be very short (5 minutes), so you will need to be very concise. **You should have a script and rehearse your presentation.** Because we have limited time, I will have to cut you off if you go over 5 minutes.

### Rubric

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Overview
For this assignment, you will be asked to design an online community, one that you could potentially create. The topic or focus of the online community can be anything you choose, but the goal is to create a site that people would actually use. You’ll need to describe both the social and technical features of the site, including how they interact to produce the processes you are trying to encourage.

Some questions your design document should answer (note that you don’t need to answer all of these questions and we are not asking for a document organized by responses to these questions; these are topics to cover):

- What is the topic or focus of the community?
- How will you attract members? How will you retain them? How will you grow the community?
- What are the identity rules you are going to enact?
- What types of user roles will you encourage?
- What are the types of participation you’ll ask of users?
- How will you encourage participation and contribution?
- What moderation system will you use, if any? Why?
- What are some metrics you will use to gauge the success of the community?
- What other similar sites already exist? How will your site be different from existing sites? What is your advantage?

To complement your assigned reading material and to help you succeed in this assignment, we recommend the book “Building Successful Online Communities: Evidence-Based Social Design” By Paul Resnick, Robert E. Kraut, and Sara Kiesler. The book is available as an e-book at the UM library. It is a very easy and readable book!

Your imagined audience for this document is an investor whom you are trying to convince to give you seed funding. With that in mind, you’ll need to make arguments about how there is a real need for this community, how your sociotechnical design will work, and how your design will be effective. To do that, use evidence from our readings, research on your own from both academic and business press arguments, the recommended book above, and provide examples from other online communities, especially those you are using as inspiration or which represent your competition.

This should not look like a double-spaced, typical academic paper (that said, please use APA style to format your report and its bibliography where relevant: You can find a sample format here,)
You should use design elements and formatting to make it look interesting (ProTip: there are templates in Word to make that easy). Your description should include wireframes, screenshots, or other visual elements to demonstrate how these tools will work, though hand drawn work is fine. Imagine that the investor type is busy, and they are not going to slog through an uninteresting prospectus. With that in mind, think about how to call out information and images that will support your arguments. Your document should be about ten pages long (single-spaced), not including the cover page. Now that you know the general information regarding this assignment, please read on for the required organization of what you will include in your reports.

You will hand in:
1. Elevator Pitch
2. Mockup
3. User Scenario(s)
4. Competitive Analysis
5. Ethical reflections
6. Contribution statement

1. Elevator Pitch
Describe what your new site is, who it is for, and how it will be sustained financially. Your business model could be either for-profit or nonprofit. You do not need a financial statement, just a written description of the business model for your community.

Some sites will have more than one target audience. If so, describe each audience, and how the site will contribute different things for each group.

This is not an exercise in science fiction-- please make your design technically realizable. Do not include features that require major technological advances to achieve. It's acceptable to describe a feature that would require such an advance only if you also provide a currently practical alternative.

2. Mockups
Create a set of 6-12 digital mockups depicting your design using a tool of your choice. You should propose one overall app or site (i.e., the same branding across all mockups), but with 6-12 different pages within the app or site (e.g., a profile page, a discussion page, etc). If you have a team of 2, you can submit 6 designs; if you have 5 or 6 group members, you should be around 12. You can choose which designs to depict in your main document and add the rest to the appendices with names of who created each design. You should choose mockups that are reasonably distinct from one another (do not create only minor variants of the same design). These do not need to be comprehensive or sequential (you do not need to mockup all possible screens for your design) and you do not need expert graphic design skills to do this (constructing in Powerpoint is acceptable). Your designs should be somewhere between a low and medium-fidelity prototype: in other words, they should have major components of the design, interface details (buttons, etc.), images, some amount of color, and some amount of text. They do not need to have sophisticated color schemes or branding and they do not need to be interactive. You do not need to design your own icons or other images--using creative commons licensed images in your design is fine and recommended. Provide captions (brief descriptions) of each mockup you submit.
3. **User Scenario(s)**
Write a fictional story of someone using your site. Scenarios describe how someone might come to your online community, why, and what they would do there. Why do they come there, and what do they do when they are there? If you have more than one target audience, write a scenario for each.

Submit 2 scenarios for each mockup. Scenarios should be about 100 words each. For example, one design handed in for this class was for "gemini.com," a site for parents of twins. So you might begin your scenario with, "Susan is Mom to identical twin boys, age 5 months. Her double stroller has broken, even though it’s relatively new. Looking for recommendations on a more reliable brand, she...." In this scenario, you might go on to describe how she found the site looking for a stroller purchase, but then stayed to engage in a BBS discussion about whether to dress identical twins alike.

4. **Competitive Analysis**
What other sites like this already exist? How will your site be different from existing sites?

5. **Ethical Reflections**
Include a section on potential risks and harms your community might introduce and how you will address those.

6. **Contribution statement**
Provide a brief and accurate description of who on the team did which parts of the assignment.

You will be graded on the following qualities:

- Insight into research issues about the design of online communities.
- Description of the sociotechnical processes behind the design of the community, including the evidence provided for claims, and thoughtful engagement with the scholarship
- The look and feel of the prospectus, its “interestingness”
- Spelling, grammar, narrative clarity, etc.

**Rubric**

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Design Track’s Final Slide Deck and Presentation (team)

Prepare and submit a slide deck that illustrates your design assignment. If you use Google slides or other online collaborative tools, please do not submit a link. Export it as a powerpoint or PDF and submit that. The project slides will be shown on your laptop during the final presentations. You should design for 16:9 landscape Full HD (1920x1080p) widescreen resolution. The design and the layout of the slides is open for creativity. Your slide or slide deck should include the following:

- Your project's name
- The names of all team members
- Main points from the required report sections: elevator pitch, mockups, user scenarios (just 1 is enough), competitive analysis, ethical reflections -- you don’t have to include in this order; do what makes sense to you. The main purpose of the presentations is to showcase to the class what you have been working on this term.

Not all team members need to talk as part of the presentation, but at least 2 team members should. You do not need to include every single detail that you have included in your report in your presentation, but just the highlights so that we can understand what you have done, how you have done it, and what problem you wanted to address.

Note: student presentations will be very short (5 minutes), so you will need to be very concise. You should have a script and rehearse your presentation. Because we have limited time, I will have to cut you off if you go over 5 minutes.

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Research Track’s Final Assignment (team)

Overview

For this assignment, you will propose a research study of online communities, one that would lead to a journal paper of publishable quality if it were carried out -- this means, something that would add meaningful, novel, knowledge to the body of scholarly literature and is well-motivated and done. This track may be of particular interest to those who want to do a master’s thesis or get a PhD, or find research roles after graduation. Please submit it as a PDF on Canvas and include all contributing team members' names in the submission.
Your research proposal should include the following elements:

1. Introduction
   You will need to motivate the study, show how this study would contribute to what we already know about online communities, and show how this study addresses an important research question. It’s very important to begin with a strong rationale for why this study matters.

2. Literature review
   This is the major part of this deliverable. Using both in class readings and your own literature review, summarize previous research and relevant theories that are important for understanding your research question and study. You’re constructing this to prove that you are really approaching a novel problem and contributing new insights or understanding as opposed to answering a question that has already been addressed. The literature review should lead to clearly articulated hypotheses or research questions that your method can address. As a rule of thumb, you should have between 20-40 citations here. Check with us if you’re uncertain what would count. For example, Wikipedia articles or blog posts do not count, but you can have just a few popular press articles if you want.

3. Proposed methods
   This should be a very detailed description of the methods you will use to answer your question, including information about how you would collect data and analyze them.

   Some pointers:
   It’s not enough to say something like “I’ll do a survey of users.” You need to clearly explain how you will recruit participants, how many participants you’ll recruit, and the specific questions you’ll ask (Add (questionnaire items). Same with any other method you propose. For example, if you say you will do interviews, be specific about that.
   It should be in the realm of the possible. If you say something like “I’ll use Facebook server data to analyze posting patterns of Moms” you need to show how you would get that particular dataset (which is not publicly available). You can assume you will have some funding, but do not have access to unlimited funds.

   Feel free to use references in this section to justify specific methods. For instance, if you think a cognitive walkthrough is the right method to use to address your question, cite a piece that argues this.

   Discuss any ethical considerations in carrying out the study.

4. Discussion
   It is obviously a bit awkward to have a discussion section for a paper without results, but use your imagination! Include a short section where you reiterate what you would expect to find for your study, why it is important or interesting and how your findings would contribute to related areas
of studies. Please also include a small section on the limitations introduced by your choice of method.

5. References & Appendices
List references that you cite in your write-up. If needed, you can have questionnaires or similar material in appendices. You can also include information that is too extra and/or detailed for the text of the paper itself but helpful to explain your argument and idea in appendices.

Please use APA style to format your paper and its bibliography: You can find a sample format here. It should not be more than 15 pages long (double space), not including a cover page, a list of references and appendix at the end of the paper (easy to get there with double spacing).

What does a good paper look like?
- There is a compelling nature to the research question
  - Makes a contribution to the existing literature. The research question is concrete (not overly vague) or too broad. It should also be well-connected to the topics of the course and online communities.
- The topic is covered well through the literature review. The narrative argument is strong and connects the research question/hypotheses to the proposed method. Statements made in the literature review are supported by evidence/citations from previous literature.
- The method is reasonable and well-justified in the text. The method should be very specific. For example, if you argue to use an interview, list questions you would ask and a protocol you would follow.
- The paper should be well-written, with careful sentence construction and well-written sections. APA style is appropriately used. Headers help structure the paper.

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Research Track’s Final Slide Deck and Presentation (team)

Prepare and submit a slide deck that illustrates your assignment’s main points. If you use Google slides or other online collaborative tools, please do not submit a link. Export it as a powerpoint or PDF and submit that. The project slides will be shown on your laptop during the final presentations. You should design for 16:9 landscape Full HD (1920x1080p) widescreen resolution. The design and the layout of the slides is open for creativity. Your slide or slide deck should include the following:

- Your project’s name
- The names of all team members
Main points from the required paper sections: introduction, literature review, proposed methods, discussion

Not all team members need to talk as part of the presentation, but at least 2 team members should. You do not need to include every single detail that you have included in your paper in your presentation, but just the highlights and provide us with a takeaway.

Note: student presentations will be very short (5 minutes), so you will need to be very concise. You should have a script and rehearse your presentation. Because we have limited time, I will have to cut you off if you go over 5 minutes.

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