

# MMC 5427

## Research Methods in Digital Communication

University of Florida, Online Masters in Social Media  
3 Credit Hours

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Course Website: <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>

### What you will learn

This course is designed to make you think strategically and theoretically about how, why and with whom you interact via digital media. By the end of the course you should have a fundamental understanding of research tools that will help you both plan for and evaluate the effectiveness of online communications methods including a multitude of social media and web tools. Specifically, you will develop a better understanding of the consequences – costs and benefits -- of local and global messaging and interactivity.

### Expectations

Complete assignments on time, watch and comment on class lectures, participate in online class discussions, and complete research proposal.

There will be penalties for late work:

- Less than an hour late: 5 points off.
- More than an hour late but less than 24 hours late: 10 points.
- More than 24 hours late but less than 48 hours late: 15 points.
- More than 48 hours late but less than 72 hours late: 25 points off
- More than 72 hours late but less than one week late: 50 points off
- One week or more late: No credit

### Assignments

Students will produce blog posts based on course assignments and comment on assignments by other students. In addition to the assignments, students will be responsible for weekly readings and reactions as well as writing a research proposal with a specific focus on in-depth evaluation of an online interactive medium. Students will be required to watch lectures and write reactions to the lectures. Late work will not be accepted.

## Requirements

You must be prepared to create a WordPress blog for this course. Your blog will serve as a personal introspective on the assignments. There is no cost associated with creating a WordPress page. If you already have a blog from a previous course, you may create a new tab for this course on the blog. If you do not already have a WordPress account, you can create one by going to <http://wordpress.com/>. Step-by-step instructions on how to create your blog are provided on their site. These should be set up by week TWO and you should inform the instructor of your WordPress site name. Be sure to allow comments when you create your blog.

Readings will be assigned weekly. The posted readings should be read for the week listed on the syllabus and not as homework for the following class. Students will be responsible to check the course website (Sakai) weekly for assigned readings which will be included on the syllabus. A total of 11 of our 12 weeks of class have assigned readings. As much as 35% of your grade will be based on your readings to discussions comments about on Sakai and to comment on the posts by other members of the class.

## Recommended books:

1. American Psychological Association (2009), *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, Washington, DC: APA.

## Grading

Your work will be evaluated according to this distribution:

- Watching class lectures and providing a reaction: 10%
- Weekly reading posts:20%
- Weekly reading reactions comments: 15%
- Assignments: 20%
- Commenting on assignments: 10%
- Final paper: 25%

## Weekly Lecture and Reaction Post:

The Instructor will post a lecture video to Sakai for each of the 12 weeks and two additional videos – one will cover the syllabus and the other will provide an overview of the field of communications. These videos will vary in length depending on the material but will include questions posed to the class throughout the videos. It is your responsibility to watch each of the videos and provide a reaction to the 12 course videos on Sakai. Although it is possible to watch the videos at any time and at any pace, keeping up with the videos week to week according to the schedule will be easier as many build off the other along with the weekly readings. Posts will be due by noon each Monday throughout the term.

Your reactions are not just summaries of the material presented, but actual reactions to the discussion. You may discuss areas not mentioned during the lecture that relate to the discussion, or discuss topics not included in the lecture. The most important part is to respond and react to any questions posed in the lecture by the instructor.

You are expected to provide a 300-500 word response to each lecture video. The response should not just be to the material included in the video, but also to any and all questions posed during the lecture by the professor. Online courses like this do not allow for the same level of discussion as live classes, and providing questions during the lecture to be answered by the class is the only means to ensure full participation.

Lecture reaction posts are awarded points of 0 -100 according to levels of completion:

- 100 points: Completed task fully and the same week of the lecture according to the schedule. Reaction meets word requirement and provides an actual reaction to the lecture and not a summary. Additionally, answers all the questions posed by the instructor during the lecture.
- 90 points: Reaction post made the same week of the lecture according to the schedule. Reaction DOES NOT meet word requirement, but provides an actual reaction to the lecture and not a summary, and answers all the questions posed by the instructor during the lecture.
- 75 points: Reaction post made the same week of the lecture according to the schedule. Reaction DOES NOT meet word requirement and DOES NOT provide an actual reaction to the lecture and instead is a summary, but answers all the questions posed by the instructor during the lecture.
- 50 points: Reaction post made the same week of the lecture according to the schedule. Reaction DOES NOT meet word requirement, DOES NOT provide an actual reaction to the lecture and instead is a summary, and DOES NOT answer the questions posed by the instructor during the lecture.
- 0 points: No reaction post made.

### **Weekly Reading Discussion Post:**

You are expected to write a weekly Sakai discussion post or “thought paper” (approx. 250-500 words based on the readings or topics assigned each week). Posts will be due by noon each Monday throughout the term of the week the readings are assigned. These reactions will be posted to the Sakai Discussion page.

Discussion posts should provide a short summary of the readings, but more importantly, your analysis or insight on the readings, as well as an example of the technology or method discussed. You should also include at least **two questions** based on the reading. Questions should be included as a means to demonstrate how you believe the topic could have been expanded or where you believe the reading did not fully cover a given issue. These questions will also be used to provide classmates ideas for comments they may post in response to your post. Please follow appropriate netiquette rules. Your posts should discuss **ALL** the readings assigned to demonstrate you have completed the assigned readings.

Your classmates will comment on your discussion post and you will comment on theirs to you. For full credit, you are expected to respond to every post made. Only if no students post reactions to your post are you are not required to make any comments.

You should provide all responses to their comments by **4:00 PM on the Saturday** of the week assigned.

Weekly discussion reading posts are awarded points of 0 -100 according to levels of completion:

- 100 points: Completed task fully and on time and demonstrates an understanding of the reading and not simply a summary of what was read. It is your job to take the information and apply it to a real-world situation. Should cover all the readings assigned and pose at least two questions to classmates, and respond to their posts in reaction to what you have written.
- 90 points: No questions were posed to your classmates, but otherwise satisfied the objectives of the assignment OR questions were posed, but your responses to your classmates' posts were not made.
- 85 points: Not all the readings were covered in your post, but otherwise satisfied the objectives of the assignment.
- 75 points: Post did not fulfill word requirements (250-500 words) or merely summarized the readings but did not advance the material.
- 50 points: Post was posted late and did not demonstrate any evaluation of the readings OR post did not include at least two questions AND did not cover all the readings.
- 0 points: No post listed.

NOTE: Your weekly Lecture Reactions Post and weekly Reading Reaction Post are both due on Mondays by noon.

### **Weekly Reading Reactions Comments:**

Each week you will be asked to comment on **three** reading discussion posts by fellow students. Each comment of substance is valued as a completed response. To be counted, a comment must appear on the other student's reading discussion post in Sakia by 4 p.m. on the Friday of the week assigned. No more than three comments will be counted in any single week.

Students will be required to read and comment on at least 3 posts of their classmates. Comments must add something of value to the conversation thread (be thought provoking). You have the week to read and comment on the posts of the other members of the class. The instructor will evaluate the degree to which your posts add to the conversation and not done simply to fulfill the grade requirement. Remember, reading discussion posts are due on Mondays and you have until Friday to comment on these posts.

Weekly reading reaction comments are awarded points of 0 -100 according to levels of completion:

- 100 points: Completed task fully and on time of three posts on other student's discussion post that add substance to the discussion.

- 66 points: Two completed comments on other student's discussion post that add substance to the discussion.
- 33 points: One completed comment on other student's discussion post that add substance to the discussion.
- 0 points: No comments posted or the comments posted do not add to the discussion.

The grading is partially subjective on the part of the instructor. In addition, while you may comment on the original post made by one of the students in the class, you may also feel compelled to react to a comment made by another student which could further the discussion.

### **Assignments:**

There are a total of EIGHT assignments during the 12 week semester. So, not all weeks will have assignments – it is your responsibility to know which weeks do and do not have a required assignment.

Specific details about each assignment are listed in the course schedule. But, each Assignment blog post should be at least 400 words.

The assignments are intended to get you to use the material learned from the weekly readings and lectures and apply them to the real-world. While this is more of a theoretical course, it is important to see how they concepts apply to your daily lives. Each assignment relates to the topics discussed that week and may require you to use programs and websites outside of Sakai.

Complete each assigned assignment, and then post your reaction/results to your blog.

Blog posts seem pointless if no one is reading them, and blog comments show a blogger that someone is paying attention. Your classmates will provide reaction to your assignments on your blog. You will have until **4:00 PM on Saturdays** of the week assigned to respond to the comments made on your blog.

Your Assignment blog posts are due by **6:00 P.M. on the Wednesday** of the week assigned. You can post any time before when it is due, but it must be posted by this time.

### **Grading For Assignments:**

Assignments are awarded points according to levels of completion:

- 100 points: Briefly covered assignment for the week, majority of writing is your reaction to the assignment, and responded to reactions from classmates to your assignment.
- 90 points: Briefly covered assignment for the week, majority of writing is your reaction to the assignment, but DID NOT respond to reactions from classmates to your assignment.

- 85 points: Briefly covered assignment for the week, majority of writing is your reaction to the assignment, responded to reactions from classmates to your assignment, but DID NOT meet word length.
- 75 points: Briefly covered assignment for the week, majority of writing is your reaction to the assignment, but DID NOT respond to reactions from classmates to your assignment and DID NOT meet word length.
- 65 points: Majority of post does not provide analysis of assignment, did respond to reactions from classmates to your assignment, but DID NOT meet word length.
- 50 points: Majority of post does not provide analysis of assignment, DID NOT respond to reactions from classmates to your assignment, and DID NOT meet word length.
- 0 points: Did not complete assignment.

### **Commenting on Assignments:**

Each student will be required to comment on three assignments made by a classmate similar to the Reading Reaction Posts on Sakai. This means you have to be aware which weeks there will be assignments. Assignments will be posted to your classmates' blogs and you will be required to provide three reactions to their assignments.

Reactions should be between 150 – 400 words and provide a reaction to their assignment and not just a summary of the material presented.

Reactions should be posted to Sakai by 4:00 PM on the Friday of the week they are due.

Assignment Reactions are awarded points of 0 -100 according to levels of completion:

- 100 points: Completed task fully and on time of three posts on other student's blog assignment post that add substance to the discussion.
- 66 points: Two completed comments on other student's blog assignment post that add substance to the discussion.
- 33 points: One completed comment on other student's blog assignment post that add substance to the discussion.
- 0 points: No comments posted or the comments posted do not add to the discussion.

### **Final Paper:**

Each student will prepare a final research proposal paper in APA style (if you are unfamiliar with APA style please see the APA Style Book). The final paper will be a research proposal that will include an introduction, a literature review, and a proposed research method for measuring effectiveness of an interactive medium of your choice. The proposal paper is not a final research project, but provides clear understanding of the method you would use to answer a research question or organizational issue and a proposal of how you would do it. Final papers should be between 10 pages without a title page and references. An easy rule of thumb breakdown is one-two pages for your

Intro, six-eight pages of Literature Review, and two-three pages for Methods and Research Questions.

**By week SIX you should email a summary of your projected research proposal to the instructor to demonstrate you have begun working on the paper and that you are on the right path toward completion.** The summary should be at least one page and include some background and your proposed area of study.

**During week EIGHT, we will hold a group Q&A session using Google Hangouts to discuss the final paper and to address any questions you may have.** A date and time for this session will be set during week six of the semester. You may indicate your availability when you submit your summary to the instructor.

An actual final paper submitted in a previous class, along with the instructor's grade comments, is available on Sakai. In addition, two guide handouts will be provided in Sakai on how to write a research proposal.

#### **University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:**

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

Students with Disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. DRC is located in room 001 in Reid Hall or you can contact them by phone at 352-392-8565.

University counseling services and mental health services:

**\*\*Netiquette: Communication Courtesy:**

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. [Describe what is expected and what will occur as a result of improper behavior]

<http://teach.ufl.edu/docs/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

#### **Getting Help:**

For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Sakai, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- [Learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu)
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

**\*\* Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket**

number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Other resources are available at <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help> for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
  - <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
  - 352-392-1575
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please visit <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints> to submit a complaint.

**Course Evaluation.** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>

Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

#### **University Policy on Academic Misconduct:**

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>.

**The University of Florida Honor Code** was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."

On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

For more information about academic honesty, contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1261.

## Schedule

### COURSE INTRODUCTION VIDEO

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- Introduction and overview of research tools for digital media
- Introduction to Social Media: Why they matter and what you need to know about their impact including blogs, wikis, tweets, podcasts, social networks, apps, bookmarking, etc.

### COURSE SYLLABUS VIDEO

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- Explanation of course requirements and assignments

### WEEK ONE

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- Identifying goals and objectives of interactive media use
- Understanding and developing target audiences/online communities, both internal and external

#### READ

- [Database of Brands \(targeted to kids, teens or adults\)](#)
- [comScore Releases Report, "Next-Generation Strategies for Advertising to Millennials"](#)
- [Advancing Digital Commerce Capabilities to Drive Financial Value Perspective and Benchmarking Framework](#)
- [The 10 Best Brand Channels on YouTube](#)
- [Mapping and Leveraging Influencers in Social Media to Shape Corporate Brand Perceptions](#)

You must have your WordPress blog set up by Week Two.

### WEEK TWO

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- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) – Understanding who you want or need to reach and how to target them using optimization tools.

#### READ

- [Google Webmaster Guidelines](#)
- [SEM Glossary of Terms](#)
- [The Beginners Guide to SEO](#) (This is very long, so take a look but you are not required to read all of it)

### RECOMMENDED READING (ADDITIONAL READINGS IF YOU WANT MORE INFO):

- Unbounce Blog <http://unbounce.com/blog/>
- Marketing Experiments [http://www.meclabs.com/marketing\\_experiments](http://www.meclabs.com/marketing_experiments)
- Internet Retailer <http://www.internetretailer.com/>
- SEOmoz <http://SEOMoz.org>
- Search Engine Land <http://SearchEngineLand.com>

### ASSIGNMENT: SEO KEYWORDS

Pick a favorite multinational company and create a list of 10 keywords you think should be associated with that company and its products.

Do a Google search of those keywords and see where in the results (if at all) you find the company you selected (you may have to go to the tenth page or more of the results).

Go to the company's website and review the html coding and see if any of the words you selected appear on their homepage including in alt tags and html.

### WEEK THREE

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- Web analytics (i.e. Google Analytics)
- Measuring, collecting, analyzing and reporting Internet data for the purposes of understanding and optimizing Web usage.

#### READ:

- [Google 101: How Google crawls, indexes and serves the web.](#)
- [Google Analytics – social reports](#)
- [Share Your Google Analytics Data As An Infographic](#)
- [The Beginner's Guide to Google+](#)
- Google Analytics for [WordPress](#)

### WEEK FOUR

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Using online surveys for both formative and evaluative research

- Survey Monkey
- OpinionLab
- Qualtrics

#### READ:

- [The Smartphone's Dramatic Impact on Survey Research](#)
- Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2005). The value of online surveys. [Internet Research, 15\(2\), 195-219.](#)

- Chang, T. Z. D., & Vowles, N. (2013). Strategies for improving data reliability for online surveys: A case study. [International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 4\(1\), 121-130.](#)
- Behrend, T.S., Sharek, D.J., Meade, A.W., & Wiebe, E.N. (2011). The viability of crowdsourcing for survey research. [Behavior Research Methods, 43\(1\), 800-813.](#) (Click the button that says “View” on the right side to read and download the article.)

Familiarize yourself with <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>, <http://www.opinionlab.com/> and <http://www.qualtrics.com/>.

### **ASSIGNMENT: SURVEYS**

Identify one service, register for the free trial and explore how you might use one of these programs to answer a research question you may be considering. You can select any of the services. (Advice – Survey Monkey is more user friendly for first time users but Qualtrics will offer more options).

Create a short survey and distribute it to your friends on social media.

Explain the purpose of the survey and what you hope to better understand.

Continues into week Five.

### **WEEK FIVE**

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- User testing and social analytics/scores (Customer Relationship Management (CRM): Looking beyond “likes” and “friends” as measurements of satisfaction

#### **READ:**

- [HootSuite: Social Analytics](#)
- [Why Marketers Should Get to Know Customers' 'Digital Selves'](#)
- [Beyond Likes: How Google and Adobe Aim to Measure Your True Social ROI](#)
- [Effects of the Recession on Public Mood in the UK](#)
- [This Is The Best Twitter Conversation You Will Read Today](#)
- [The Future of Social Customer Relationship Management](#)

### **ASSIGNMENT: WHAT DID YOU FIND**

Provide the results to your survey from Week Five.

Interpret your results.

### **WEEK SIX**

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- Digital ethnography – Conducting in-depth research of digital cultures using Second Life online 3D virtual world as a case study

#### **READ:**

- Boelstorff, T. (2008), Coming of Age in Second Life, Chapter 1 available online at <http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s8647.pdf>
- Davis, D. Z. (2012). Engaging the Disengaged via Performance in Online Virtual Worlds. [Selected Papers of Internet Research](#), (12.0).
- Wiecha, J., Heyden, R., Sternthal, E., & Merialdi, M. (2010). Learning in a virtual world: experience with using second life for medical education. [Journal of Medical Internet Research](#), 12(1).
- [It's Easier to Maintain Weight Loss in Second Life Than in Real Life: Study](#)

### **ASSIGNMENT: WHEN ONE LIFE IS NOT ENOUGH**

Create an account (free) in Second Life by going to [Secondlife.com](http://Secondlife.com) and spend at least 2-4 hours orienting yourself to the space including learning to move, fly, alter your appearance and communicate.

Write about your experience using Second Life and interacting with others.

NOTES – many of the people you meet will not speak English. Setting up your Avatar can be difficult. Be mindful of the more “adult” areas of Second Life. You may also want to buddy up with others in the class and enter the game at the same time so you know someone online. And remember, it is a virtual world – so you don’t have to be scared.

**Remember to submit a summary of your final proposal topic this week.**

### **WEEK SEVEN**

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- Mobile analytics – Using mobile applications and sites and how they differ in use and analysis

#### **READ**

- [Cisco Visual Networking Index: Global Mobile Data Traffic Forecast Update, 2012–2017](#)
- [Linking Consumers to Your Cause with QR Codes](#)
- [A novel approach on Applications, Research Challenges and Mining for Mobile Crowdsensing](#)

### **ASSIGNMENT: DISCOUNT DOUBLE CHECK**

Download a NEW TO YOU mobile app for a product/service/company.

Does it offer any discounts? Coupons? Reviews? Does it include global positioning?

How useful is the app?

### **WEEK EIGHT**

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- Reputation management and environmental scanning – have you “Googled” yourself?

#### **READ**

- [Data Points: Social Faux Pas As consumers go online to vent, fewer than half of companies are ready to react](#)
- [Amplifying your social echo](#)
- Liu, L., & Shi, W. (2010). Trust and reputation management. [Internet Computing, IEEE](#), 14(5), 10-13.
- Kirwan, G., & Mc Guckin, C. (2013). Professional Reputation and Identity in the Online World. [Reputation in the Cyberworld](#), 19, 47.

### **ASSIGNMENT: SCAN ME – SCAN YOU**

When managing your online reputation, whether as an individual or an organization, you first need to know what your reputation is and what people are saying about you. One of the easiest and least expensive ways to do this is a simple Google search.

Search for yourself on Google by name and email. You may want to include your state of residence too (or country).

What do you find? Did you find anything different on Bing?

Be sure to log out of all of your accounts and clear your browsing history first.

**Remember this week's Google Hangouts Q&A session to discuss your final papers.**

### **WEEK NINE**

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- Crowdsourcing - Harnessing the power of online communities using mashups to create measurable change

#### **READ:**

- [The Rise of Crowdsourcing](#)
- IBM's "[Jamming for a Smarter Planet](#)"
- Poetz, M. K., & Schreier, M. (2012). The value of crowdsourcing: can users really compete with professionals in generating new product ideas?. [Journal of Product Innovation Management](#), 29(2), 245-256.
- [Growing Your Business With Crowdsourcing](#)

### **ASSIGNMENT: START KICKING**

Visit the kickstarter.com site.

Are there any projects that interest you?

Do you have any projects you would want to get funded?

### **WEEK TEN**

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- Mapping effective design with eye tracking and click tracking technologies

#### **READ:**

- [New Poynter Eyetrack research reveals how people read news on tablets](#)
- Download the free whitepaper, [Eye Tracking and Click Mapping Google Places](#)

- Download the free whitepaper, [FACEBOOK GRAPH SEARCH: Mediative Eye Tracking Study](#)
- [Smile For the Cop With the Smartphone and the Facial Recognition Software:](#)

## WEEK ELEVEN

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- Big Data – what is it and what does it mean for all of us?

### READ:

- Gantz, J., &Reinsel, D. (2012). THE DIGITAL UNIVERSE IN 2020: Big Data, Bigger Digital Shadows, and Biggest Growth in the Far East. [Technical report, IDC.](#)
- [Big data](#): The next frontier for innovation, competition, and productivity
- [The Age of Big Data](#)

## WEEK TWELVE

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- Data security, privacy and ethical issues of collecting data online.

### READ:

- [Can Employers Legally Ask You for Your Facebook Password When You Apply for a Job?](#)
- [Heart Gadgets Test Privacy-Law Limits](#)
- [Supercookies: What You Need to Know About the Web's Latest Tracking Device](#)
- [What is Tor? A beginner's guide to the privacy tool](#)
- [Facebook and OKCupid Experiments: Ethics, Conversion Testing, and UX Design](#)

### Disclaimer:

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.