

SciencesPo

SOCIOLOGY – MASTER LEVEL

18891 – DIGITAL SOCIOLOGY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to enable master students to think and investigate digital technology in a sociological way. We will approach the “digital” both as a topic and an instrument of sociological inquiry. First, we will analyze how digital technology has transformed ways of being and practices classically studied by sociology (interacting, mobilizing, getting informed, working, engaging in cultural practices, etc.). Second, we will explore how sociology can benefit from digital technologies and from new sources of data to deepen its knowledge of the social world.

COURSE VALIDATION

The validation process and workload will be discussed with all the students during the first session. My suggestion is that the validation be based on the following elements:

- 1. Class participation (+ 1 point)**

- You are expected to be actively engaged during the course and to intervene regularly to enrich the collective discussions.
- For most sessions, the **reading** of a book chapter or article is required. This is important work, and you are expected to have read it carefully. The quality of collective discussion depends on that.

2. Oral presentation of a research paper (individual assignment, 50%)

For each session, 3 students will be asked to present a research article or a book chapter in front of the class during the semester. Each presentation will last 10 minutes, and will be accompanied by slides.

- A first student will present the required reading, focusing on the research design and main results
- For a few texts (marked with an *), a second student will present the same required reading, answering specific questions about the methodology used by the author(s)
- A third student will present the complementary reading.

In the course's shared folder, you will find a [table](#) with all the papers and questions.

3. A note providing a digital sociology perspective on your master's thesis project (individual assignment, 50%).

At the end of the semester, each student is required to hand on a 4-page note explaining how a digital sociology perspective could be applied to an aspect of her master's thesis dissertation. It may be about considering analyzing empirical data from the internet, using a digital research method, or asking a research question inspired by digital sociology.

Deadline:

December 5, 2022: the date on which you will send your 4-page note.

Attendance, Academic honesty and plagiarism

The same rules apply in this course as in the rest of the program. Class attendance is mandatory. All the same, no form of plagiarism nor academic dishonesty will be accepted during this course.

WORKLOAD

- For most sessions, the reading of a book chapter or article is required. This is important work, and you are expected to have read it carefully. The quality of collective discussion depends on that.
- To help you prepare your final note, we will have regular exchanges during sessions.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

Session 1 – What is digital sociology?

Monday, August 28, 12:30-14:30pm

Session 2 – Inequalities

Monday, September 5, 12:30-14:30pm

Required reading:

1. danah boyd (2014), "Can Social Media Resolve Social Divisions?" (Excerpt from *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*).

Complementary reading:

2. Jen Schradie (2019), "Bureaucracy's revenge and the organization of digital activism" (Excerpt from *The Revolution that wasn't. How digital activism favors conservatives*).

Session 3 – Sociability

Monday, September 12, 12:30-14:30pm

Required reading:

3. (*) Marie Bergström (2018), "What is Behind the Age Gap between Spouses? The Contribution of Big Data to the Study of Age Differences in Couples", *Revue Française de Sociologie*.

Complementary reading:

4. Barbara Barbosa Neves (2015), "Does the Internet matter for strong ties? Bonding social capital, Internet use, and age-based inequality", *International Review of Sociology*.

Session 4 – Work

Monday, September 19, 12:30-14:30pm

Required reading:

5. (*) Angèle Christin & Catlin Petre (2020), "Making peace with metrics: Relational work in online news production", *Sociologica*.

Complementary reading:

6. Alex J. Wood et al. (2019), "Networked but commodified: The (dis)embeddedness of digital labour in the gig economy", *Sociology*.

Session 5 – Mobilization

Monday, September 26, 12:30-14:30pm

Required reading:

7. (*) Ceren Budak & Duncan Watts (2015), "Dissecting the Spirit of Gezi: influence vs. selection in the Occupy Gezi Movement", *Sociological Science*.

Complementary reading:

8. Zenep Tufekzi (2017), "Leading the Leaderless" (Excerpt from *Twitter and Tear Gas – The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*).

Session 6 – Redoing ethnography

Monday, October 3, 12:30-14:30pm

Required reading:

9. Gabriela Coleman (2014), "Project Chanology – I Came for the Lulz but stayed for the Outrage" (Excerpt from *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*).

Complementary reading:

10. Brayne, Sarah & Angèle Christin (2021), "Technologies of crime prediction: The reception of algorithms in policing and criminal courts." *Social Problems*.

Session 7 – Investigating texts

Monday, October 10, 12:30-14:30pm

Required reading:

11. (*) Christopher A. Bail & Taylor W. Brown (2019), "Prestige, Proximity, and Prejudice: How Google search terms diffuse across the world", *American Journal of Sociology*.

Complementary reading:

12. Sylvain Parasio (2022), "The Art of Bringing About Publics" (Excerpt from *Computing the News – Data Journalism and the Search for Objectivity*).

Session 8 – Following networks

Monday, October 17, 12:30-14:30pm

Required reading:

13. Gueorgi Kossinets & Duncan J. Watts (2009), "Origins of homophily in an evolving social network." *American journal of sociology*.

Complementary reading:

14. Jean-Philippe Cointet et al., (2021), « De quelle(s) couleur(s) sont les Gilets jaunes ? Plonger des posts Facebook dans un espace idéologique latent », *Questions de société*.

Session 9 – The publics of digital sociology

Monday, October 24, 12:30-14:30pm

Required reading:

15. Sara Ann Wylie (2018), "Landman Report Card. Developing Web Tools for Socially Contentious Issues" (excerpt from *Fractivism. Corporate bodies and chemical bonds*).

Complementary reading:

16. Anders Koed Madsen & Anders Kristian Munk (2019), "Experiments with a Data-Public: Moving Digital Methods into Critical Proximity with Political Practice", *Big Data & Society*.

REFERENCES

Beuscart, Dagiral and Parasie (2019), *Sociologie d'internet*, 2nd Edition, Armand Colin.

Cardon, D. (2019), *Culture numérique*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po.

Marres, N. (2017), *Digital sociology: The reinvention of social research*, John Wiley & Sons.

Schradie, J. (2019). *The revolution that wasn't: How digital activism favors conservatives*.
Harvard University Press.