New Media Research Methods – MCMA 510
Fall 2009
College of Mass Communication and Media Arts
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Instructor: Aaron Veenstra – Asst. Professor
Seminar: Tuesday 6:00-8:30 pm, Comm 2216
Office hours: 2:00pm-3:00pm Tuesday, 1:00pm-2:00pm Wednesday, other times by appt.
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Readings
This course is built on discussion of a set of readings each week, and in particular discussion of how those
readings can inform your research interests. As such, it’s important that you read the required readings
before coming to class each week. Sometimes this will prove too much – you’ll have a paper due in
another class, or a heavy grading load to get done. If this happens, be sure to at least familiarize yourself
with each piece and to still be prepared to participate in discussion. Along with required readings, each
week’s schedule will also include some optional readings that illustrate the topics we’re discussing.

Each week’s readings will be available either through the library reserves or at the course website.
Readings will be available at least a week in advance. If you have any trouble getting the readings, please
contact me. In addition to the new media-specific readings we’ll be dealing with in class, you may also
want to find these more general handbooks, depending on your particular interests and needs:

Klaus Krippendorff, Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology, Sage, 1980.
Stanley Wasserman & Katherine Faust, Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications, Cambridge

Course requirements
Your grade in this course will have three components. First, because group discussion is such a vital
component of everyone’s success in this course, 25% of your grade will be based on class participation.
Don’t miss class if you can help it, and let me know ahead of time if you absolutely must miss. In class,
be sure you’re part of the conversation – this is a small class and it won’t be possible just to hide.

Second, you will need to write a short response to each week’s readings, no longer than two double-
spaced pages. In this response, you should critique methodological issues from that week’s readings
(including the optional readings, if you like), also dealing with the way authors’ methodologies relate to
the theory supporting their work. You can miss two of these responses throughout the semester; or, put
another, you must do at least 12 of them. Responses should be sent to me via e-mail by noon each
Tuesday. The weekly responses will be worth another 25% of your grade.

Finally, 50% of your grade will come from a final research paper proposal. This paper should be complete
at least up to the analysis and results sections – if you have data that you are ready to analyze, feel free to
go ahead and do that, but what matters for this course is your study design and how it’s supported by
theory. You will be asked to produce a basic outline of this paper around the middle of the semester so
that I can make sure everyone is on the right track; however, this outline is not part of the graded paper.
During the final week of the semester, everyone will present their papers in class and receive feedback on
their designs.
Academic Honesty
Students must adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses punishable under the academic dishonesty provisions of the Code of Student Conduct. Violations may lead to failure on a graded assignment, failure in the course and/or expulsion from SIUC.

COURSE OUTLINE: (This schedule is tentative; any changes will be announced.)

Week 1 – Aug. 25 – INTRODUCTION: WHAT ARE NEW MEDIA?

Required: None

Optional: Janet Abbate, Inventing the Internet ch. 2 (1999)
Howard Rheingold, The Virtual Community, ch. 3 (1993)

Week 2 – Sep. 1 – STUDYING ONLINE POPULATIONS

Week 3 – Sep. 8 – SOCIAL NETWORK STUDY AND ANALYSIS

Week 4 – Sep. 15 – ONLINE ETNOGRAPHY

Week 5 – Sep. 22 – CONTENT ANALYSIS I: TEXT-BASED INFORMATION

Week 6 – Sep. 29 – CONTENT ANALYSIS II: OTHER MEDIA

Week 7 – Oct. 6 – TRAFFIC AND LINK NETWORKS

Week 8 – Oct. 13 – NEW MEDIA USERS

Week 9 – Oct. 20 – CONDUCTING RESEARCH ONLINE

Weeks 10-14 – SPECIFIC STUDENT RESEARCH INTERESTS

Week 15 – Dec. 8 – PRESENTATIONS