

Syllabus Fall 2020

COMM 4544/5444 02

Digital Culture and Communication

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Bettina Fabos

Phone: 319 273 5972

Office hours and location: T-Th 2-3:30pm <https://uni.zoom.us/j/7857053694> and by appointment

Email Address: fabos@uni.edu (also bettina.fabos@uni.edu--they are interchangeable)

Preferred Communication: Email, Zoom, or Slack. Please email to request appointments.

Class Delivery

This course is offered fully online utilizing Blackboard Learn. We will also be using the SLACK messaging tool and ZOOM video conferencing.

We will meet synchronously (live/virtual) Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30pm-1:45pm. Our sessions will be using the following tools:

- **Synchronous SLACK discussion from 12:30-1:30**
(https://join.slack.com/t/uni-dcc/shared_invite/zt-g6tp1j53-J8lKK93mo_S7gXz05O~Ovg)
- **Synchronous ZOOM check in from 1:30-1:45**
(<https://uni.zoom.us/j/7857053694>)

Important Note Regarding COVID-19

Protecting our campus from COVID-19 depends on all of us acting with care and responsibility. To protect each other and our campus community, we are required to wear masks or face shields that cover our mouths and noses inside all campus buildings, including throughout the duration of class. We are asked to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms, stay away from others and seek medical attention if we're not feeling well and/or experience any symptoms such as a fever over 100.4, and to communicate and plan proactively to make up for missed learning. We will maintain physical distancing by sitting in designated areas in the classroom. Failure to follow these requirements can result in students being referred to the [student conduct process](http://uni-mail.org/t/499279/7479074/16765/5/) (<http://uni-mail.org/t/499279/7479074/16765/5/>) and faculty being referred to the Associate Provost for Faculty. We take these steps together recognizing that my mask protects you, your mask protects me, and together wearing masks protects the entire UNI community. Our collective actions will determine our ability to remain together in an in-person learning environment.

Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the land on which we gather is the occupied territory of the Ioway, Sauk and Meskwaki, Wahpeton, and Sioux People.

Course Description and Purpose

Course Description

Investigation of the relationships between technology and communication and their impact on social behavior, thought, and culture. Prerequisite(s): junior standing. (Fall and Spring)

Prerequisite: COMM COR 1010 (48J:002). (Fall)

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to help you critically analyze the complex social, economic, political, and personal pressures and opportunities brought by new technologies and our constantly changing digital environment. It is a foundation course for the Interactive Digital Studies major and minor.

Benefits

The content will benefit you by helping you recognize and navigate current and future digital trends that will play a role in your work life, family life, and friendships. It will help you become discursive in new technology topics, and possibly introduce you to career paths you had not yet previously considered

Credit Hours -3 Credits

This course meets the Course Credit Hour Expectation outlined in the Course Catalog. Students should expect to work approximately 2 hours per week outside of class for every course credit hour.

Generally, I will provide feedback on assignment submissions within a week after the due date. Grading rubrics are included in each of the modules.

Learning Objectives

University Level Outcomes

- **Critical Thinking:** You will demonstrate critical thinking through the ability to evaluate, analyze, and integrate information from a variety of sources in order to develop reasoned positions and solutions to problems.
- **Communication:** you will display competence in oral, written, and visual communication, as appropriate for their discipline.
- **Program Content Knowledge:** You will demonstrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills in their major fields of study.

Interactive Digital Studies Program Level Objectives

- **Digility:** You will develop agile creativity through immersion in new technology.
- **Ideas Matter:** You will be able to critically engage with the ethical, economic and social challenges of our increasingly digital world.
- **Collaboration is king:** You will demonstrate effective collaboration competencies.
- **Confident Self Learning:** You will develop the confidence to approach new digital interfaces, applications, and programming languages to problem-solve independent of peers or instructors.

Course Level Objectives

By the end of the course you will be able to:

1. Explain the critical debates that define our digital age. (CLO 1)
2. Evaluate your personal relationship with technology. (CLO 2)
3. Apply theory to practice by participating in digital culture. (CLO 3)
4. Articulate major future digital trends. (CLO 4)
5. Develop well-researched critical arguments. (CLO 5)
6. Demonstrate collaboration and self-learning skills. (CLO 6)

Modular Level Objectives

1. Evaluate the extent our phone and computer applications occupy our brains, leading us (and society overall) to digital overload. (MLO 1)
2. Examine how our ability to read deeply is becoming jeopardized. (MLO 2)
3. Examine how we use our phones to substitute for memory. (MLO 3)
4. Examine how the business of addiction takes advantage of our psychological vulnerabilities. (MLO 4)

5. Describe the way screens and addiction affect our health. (MLO 5)
6. Describe the physical and environmental implications of technology production and deconstruction. (MLO 6)
7. Explain two opposing strategies for getting people to work more productively and creatively (time to think vs. constant and increasing pressure) (MLO 7)
8. Explore the way boredom can set our minds free. (MLO 8)
9. Differentiate between a work that has all rights reserved (Copyright)), is in the Public Domain, or has been licensed to the Creative Commons. (MLO 9)
10. Articulate the phenomenon of Wikipedia in the context of the public web. (MLO 10)
11. Gain experience in public archiving and the Creative Commons through participation in a nonprofit public archiving project. (MLO 11)
12. Explain government surveillance, power and control, including Aaron Swartz, the U.S. Government case against him (Computer Fraud and Abuse Act), SOPA, and the fight for Net Neutrality. (MLO 12)
13. Explain U.S. government surveillance, power and control, including Edward Snowden and the Patriot Act (especially Section 215). (MLO 13)
14. Explain what is meant by the Panopticon. (MLO 14)
15. Articulate the future of Chinese population control, using surveillance via facial recognition and social credit. (MLO 15)
16. Describe the future trends of surveillance technology worldwide. (MLO 16)
17. Articulate the ethics and increasing tensions surrounding internet Big Tech Privacy and home/corporate surveillance. (MLO 17)
18. Explain Facebook's (and social media's) complicated and compromising role in terms of democracy, privacy, and surveillance. (MLO 18)

Course Organization and Schedule

This course is organized around the following themes--from personal to political. There are 4 modules that contain weekly content:

MODULE 1: Personal Technology

Weeks 1-4 (August 17 - September 13)

Our relationship with smartphones and computers. We will start by focusing on the way digital culture affects our everyday lives.

MODULE 2: The Public vs. Private Web

Weeks 5-7 (September 14 - October 4)

We will then investigate non profit initiatives, like Wikipedia and Fortepan Iowa, that aim to keep portions of the web in public hands. We will also investigate corporate forces that want to dominate and control these initiatives.

MODULE 3: Government Control and the Surveillance State

Weeks 8-11 (October 5 - November 1)

Not too long ago, the most critical debates concerning the Internet involved intellectual property and copyright. Today, the big concern is unregulated surveillance: how so many governments, often with corporate cooperation, are using internet surveillance technology to monitor and control people, and sometimes entire societies. We will take a good hard look at these trends--some of them are alarming in terms of democracy and citizenship.

MODULE 4: Corporate Ethics and Surveillance

Weeks 12-15 (November 2 - November 25)

We will look at the largest companies, like Google and Facebook, critically examine their missions and motives, and circle back to how these companies are affecting our personal lives.

Required Texts/Readings

Course readings include numerous articles, videos and podcasts from leading thinkers about digital culture, as well as a tradebook and two novels:

- Zomorodi, Manoush (2017). *Bored and Brilliant: How Spacing Out Can Unlock Your Most Productive and Creative Self*. St. Martin's Press, ISBN-10: 1250124956, 184 pages (TRADEBOOK)
- *1984*, by George Orwell, Berkley Press (or earlier editions), 292 pages (depending on edition). (NOVEL)

This is SUCH an important novel, and you may have read it in high school or some other class at UNI. If you haven't read it, this is your chance. If you've already read it, it's time to read it again and reflect on how prescient it is. *1984* is a dystopian novel by English novelist George Orwell published in 1949. It follows the character of "Winston," and like the *Circle*, that follows "Mae," we experience through his eyes the consequences of a totalitarian regime run by "Big Brother" that uses mass surveillance and repressive regimentation to keep the society under control. The story takes place in an imagined future, the year 1984, when much of the world has fallen victim to perpetual war (think Covid-19), omnipresent government surveillance (think U.S. government spying initiatives explained in *Killswitch*), historical negationism, and propaganda (themes we'll discuss in Module 4). You will meet Winston, learn what he does for a living, and learn what his life is like in his tiny apartment with a surveillance screen that monitors his every move (there are also "Big Brother" surveillance screens all over his workplace). He has to watch what he says and what he does.

- *The Circle*, by Dave Eggers, Vintage Books 2014, ISBN-10 0385351399, 497 pages. (NOVEL)

This book is a novel, and I think sometimes novels can engage us in ways that a nonfiction article or book never could. [Dave Eggers](#), author of *The Circle*, is one of the most respected writers in the U.S. When he was writing *The Circle* (which was first published in 2014), he meant it to be truly dystopian; the only problem is that he had to keep revising b/c the future kept on catching up to him. And now *The Circle* (a fictional company that's a combination of FB, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, and Google) comments on a lot of the problems we are experiencing with technology and Big Tech today. It is also derivative of the novel 1984 (Orwell), which we will also read! We will read *The Circle* throughout the entire semester and relate it to nearly every topic we talk about in class.

All three of these books are available for **overnight checkout at the Rod Library Reserve desk**. Rod Library offers the option of curbside pickup for anyone who cannot checkout in person due to COVID-19.

All assigned readings, videos, and podcasts are an independent means of providing concrete experience to prepare students for each class session. You are expected to carefully read/view/listen and take the time to reflect upon the assigned materials. Successful online discussions and reflection journals depend heavily on a high level of student preparation with regard to the reading.

Instructional Methods and Evaluation of Performance

This course consists of the following activities and assessments to assist you in achieving the course and instructional module objectives. For each 3 or 4-week module you will work on various combinations of assignments, activities, discussions, readings, and challenges.

Synchronous (Live) Class Discussions via Slack and Zoom

2 per week; 30% of your grade

We will meet synchronously (live/virtual) Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30pm-1:45pm. Sessions will be in two parts:

- Synchronous SLACK discussion from 12:30-1:30 (https://join.slack.com/t/uni-dcc/shared_invite/zt-g6tp1j53-J8IKK93mo_S7gXz05O~Ovg)
- Synchronous ZOOM check in from 1:30-1:45 (<https://uni.zoom.us/j/7857053694>)

Purpose: The purpose of these discussions is to engage with each other in an open discussion to critically examine the results of our personal challenges, the readings, and digital culture writ large. These topics will help students who typically are not accustomed to thinking independently or applying a critical analysis to views or beliefs, to start learning how to do so.

How to Prepare: To be prepared for these sessions you will need to have completed the assigned readings and activities beforehand. A list of what is due and when is available in each weekly content folder in Blackboard Learn.

Participation: Online discussion will require active participation by all students. During our Slack and Zoom Discussions we will critically analyze the week's assigned readings, video, or podcast; discuss the results of the assigned Challenges and Quizzes; clarify course questions; and get to know each other.

You are required to engage in hour-long discussions during the semester (typically 2 per week; see Discussion Alternative below). You are allowed to miss one class discussion and still earn full credit. If you attend every discussion, you will receive up to **2.5%** extra credit.

Etiquette: Please always remember to address our Slack classroom community in a respectful manner. I expect each of you to agree and disagree with civility. I will give you your discussion grade at the end of the semester. You are free to check in with me to get a sense of how you are doing and where you might want to improve.

Discussion Guidelines: Being a good participant does not mean that you always have the answer; it can also mean that you know when to ask the right questions and when to recognize that the answers have already been offered by the class but need to be synthesized. Discussion is a central component of this class insofar as each person's analysis of the text can be enhanced by others' insights. [Here is a link to my discussion criteria \(as adopted by Catherine Palczewski\).](#)

Given that there are no graded tests and quizzes, I use discussion as a way to measure whether students are keeping up with the assigned reading, and have been reading each others' texts. Given this is a communication class, you should be able to communicate your understanding of the readings. You should spend time preparing for discussion in class, reviewing the reading/video/podcast material, and taking notes. You should come to class prepared to ask questions about the parts of the readings you did not understand completely. You should be able to identify textual elements in the assigned artifacts and in the texts analyzed by class members. We will use class discussion to develop our analysis at a more advanced level. I will not review the readings step by step in class, but instead will supplement them with more advanced applications and formulations.

To receive a passing discussion grade, you should consistently participate, demonstrating competence in each of the five discussion elements: **argument, questioning, synthesis, readings** and **hypothesizing**. To receive a "B," you should participate in every class, and excel in at least 3 of the areas. To receive an "A," you should participate in every class and excel in all of the areas. The first week of discussion will not be graded as you get your bearings.

Discussion Alternative: If you miss one day of discussion, this assignment should be a 1.5-2 page paper (single-spaced).

If you miss both days of discussion in a single week, this assignment should be approximately 3-4 pages (single spaced).

Graduate Students: For the readings/video/podcast assigned for the day, provide the following:

1. Complete bibliographic citations.
2. A summary of the reading that identifies the methodology used, the artifact studied, and the main findings (identify the conclusions of the essay, not just the topic).
3. 1-3 key quotations that define a concept central to the reading (with correct citations, e.g. page numbers, attached).
4. A question or questions you have about the reading or that the reading raised for you (for example from week 11, you might ask: How does Social Credit affect the society as a whole and in what ways? What example of social credit is already in place in U.S. culture? How does this system connect to the totalitarianism described in 1984?
5. Connections you see between this reading and other essays we have read. Make a connection to at least 2 other readings.
6. A place where you disagree with the reading.
7. Apply the key insight from the reading to some other example.

14 Challenges

These count as part of your Participation Grade as we will be discussing these each week.

***Bored and Brilliant* Challenges 1-7:** Each challenge in the *Bored and Brilliant* book will get you to think through their reliance, and in some cases overreliance, on digital technology, and see how stepping away from the screens that dominate your life can free you up for autobiographical planning and creative thinking. You will do these challenges during Module 1. We will discuss them during our Weekly class discussions.

Privacy Challenges 1-7: These challenges are designed to help you protect your privacy, given the significant amount of data collection companies and government agencies are collecting about you. You will do these challenges during Module 4. We will discuss them during our Weekly class discussions.

3 Graded Writing Assignments

These count for 20% of your overall grade.

- 3-page Essay (Module 1) **10%**
- 1.5-page Essay (Module 2) **5%**
- 1.5 page Essay/Personal Reflection (Module 4) **(5%--Part of Future Trend Creative Project)**

5 Graded Activities

These count for 35% of your overall grade.

- Wikipedia Editing Project **(5%)**

- Fortepan Iowa Tagging Project **(5%)**
- Fortepan Fotomontage Project **(10%)**
- Future Trend Creative Project **(25%)**

14 Ungraded Quizzes

Part of Participation Grade

There are 4 ungraded quizzes based on each assigned novel section. These quizzes can be taken multiple times and are not timed.

Participation

Counts for 5% of your overall grade.

5% participation will only be awarded to the most engaged and conscientious students.

Extra Credit

Up to 5%

- Fully participate in every class discussion **(up to 2.5%)**
- Uploading a Fortepan Iowa image, properly attributed, to the Wikimedia Commons, and sharing the link on the Slack Discussion Board and with the instructor. This extra credit can be submitted until the last day of class **(up to 2.5%)**

Determination of Grades

Final grades will be reported using the following scale:

Percentage	Letter Grade
93-100%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
63-69%	D+

56-62%	D
50-55%	D-
< 50%	F

Percentages earned for each assessment will be posted in the My Grades of the tools link on the Blackboard website. The total is figured into a percentage, and the grade is determined by the Grading Scale. Students are expected to monitor their own grades on Blackboard and save all graded work on their own computer.

Office of Compliance and Equity Management

The University of Northern Iowa does not discriminate in employment or education. Visit 13.03 Equal Opportunity & Non-Discrimination Statement (<https://policies.uni.edu/1303>) for additional information.

Student Accessibility Services

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Fair Housing Act, and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. To request accommodations please contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS), located at ITTC 007, for more information either at (319) 273-2677 or send an email to accessibilityservices@uni.edu. Visit [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.uni.edu/) for additional information. (<https://sas.uni.edu/>)

Disability Services

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides protection from illegal discrimination for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students requesting instructional accommodations due to disabilities must arrange for such accommodation through the [Office of Disability Services](#). The ODS is located at 103 Student Health Center, phone number: 273-2676.

The Learning Center @ Rod Library

All UNI students are encouraged to take advantage of The Learning Center @ Rod Library (TLC) for assistance with writing, math, science, learning and study strategies, as well as other specific content areas. Due to COVID-19, all tutoring and coaching sessions will be done by appointment only and students will have the option to meet with a tutor in-person at Rod Library or via Zoom. Our hours will remain the same, from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm Monday through Thursday. For more information, go to <https://tlc.uni.edu/schedule>, email TheLearningCenter@uni.edu, call 319-273-6023, or visit the TLC desk located on the main floor of Rod Library. If you are unavailable during normal tutoring hours, online tutoring is also available through Smarthinking. You will

need your CATID and passphrase to gain access. To access the Smarthinking platform go to <https://tlc.uni.edu/online> .

Diversity and Inclusion Statement

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Important note: Given the sensitive and challenging nature of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. It is critical that each class member show respect for all worldviews expressed in class. It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions, please be respectful of others' emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences, and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
2. Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. Notify me of the issue through another source such as your academic advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue.

Academic Integrity

To ensure academic integrity and to follow [UNI policies on Student Academic Ethics](#) (see: IV. Academic Ethics Violations), students will not plagiarize, misrepresent, fabricate, or cheat. Unless otherwise instructed and approved by the instructor, students will take quizzes and exams **individually**, without collaboration with other parties and/or using notes or other texts. Similarly, students will submit work (papers,

presentations, and other assessments) that is their own work (in regard to violations of these ethics policies, see: V. Academic Ethics Sanctions). (<https://policies.uni.edu/301>)

Course Communication and Technology

Online Component

This course is completely online, utilizing Blackboard Learn for instruction, materials, and communication, as well as SLACK and ZOOM. This online component can be accessed through the [UNI eLearning Suite](http://elearning.uni.edu/) (<http://elearning.uni.edu/>).

All of the handouts and information for this course, except for the three required texts, will be available in Blackboard. Students are advised to check the website and their email for communication. Any changes to the course syllabus or schedule will be announced through Blackboard. Assignments are due as specified in the course schedule and on the course Blackboard page in Blackboard. Students are responsible for learning how to use Blackboard for on-time submission of assignments. Blackboard tutorials are also available on the [Blackboard Learn Help website](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student). (<https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student>)

Communication with Instructor

I will primarily communicate with students via email, but I will be available by appointment as well for discussion by phone or Zoom. Send personal concerns to me via my personal email address and request appointments with me if you prefer to discuss concerns and questions live by Zoom rather than in an email. Generally, it will take me 24 hours to respond to emails, except on the weekends where it may take up to 48 hours. I will provide feedback on assignment submissions only as needed, and I will do this as well as grade within one week of the submission.

Attendance, Late Work, and Makeup Work

You will get ½ credit for late assignments. Guidelines for missed Discussions are noted above. As stated in the [UNI Catalog](#), "Students are expected to attend class, and the responsibility for attending class rests with the student. Students are expected to learn and observe the attendance rules established by each instructor for each course. Instructors will help students to make up work whenever the student has to be absent for good cause; this matter lies between the instructor and student. Whenever possible, a student should notify the instructor in advance of circumstances which prevent class attendance." This idea is neither novel nor unreasonable. Students should realize that an hour missed cannot be re-lived, that work can seldom be made up 100%, and that made-up work seldom equals the original experience in class.

See UNI [Policy on Class Attendance and Makeup Work](https://policies.uni.edu/306) (<https://policies.uni.edu/306>)

Online Netiquette and Classroom Civility

Because this is a fully online class, you will mostly be communicating with me and others through email, discussion forums, and other online communication. It is important to think of this communication as a formal dialogue.

- Be sure all communication has an appropriate subject line, identifies yourself, and is crafted professionally. For example, shorthand messages from your cell phone are generally inappropriate. I really appreciate professional email communication!! Please address me by my name ("Bettina," not Dr. Fabos).
- Don't waste my time (e.g., avoid "I hope this email finds you well..."); be succinct in your messages and get to the point: I often have to field 80 or so emails a day.
- Submit assignments through Blackboard NOT email (where they are very likely to get lost).

Technology Requirements

The following information has been provided to assist you in preparing to use technology successfully in this course. You are required to have access to and ability to use:

- UNI Gmail account
- High speed internet connection
- Blackboard Learn is supported on Firefox and Chrome (Internet Explorer and Safari do not support Blackboard and users can experience difficulty opening files)
- If required in this course
- Zoom (see Zoom System Requirements in START HERE for more information)
- YouTube, setting videos to "unlisted" in order to share links
- Google Drive and Google Apps (these are free with your UNI email account)
- Reliable equipment for video recording and storing recorded videos

Technical Support

If you experience any technical problems, contact the **Office of Continuing and Distance Education** at 319-273-7740 (local), 800-772-1746 (toll-free) or cesp-consult@uni.edu. Support hours are Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.