The question is whether online-offline is one or two, I am emphasizing that they are neither - not simply the same, nor completely different. – Mr. Teacup (2012)

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology has rapidly changed our way of communicating, socializing, researching, and instructing in the field of education. Scholars, researchers, and educators must seek out new ways of understanding the social and communicative aspects of ‘being’ within and among computer and non-computer mediated environments. For this course, students will explore what I call the online-offline (ONL-OFL) continuum. The ONL-OFL Continuum describes what happens when our selves move, as well as describes the practices that constitute our selves moving within and among computer mediated and non-computer mediated contexts. Additionally, the ONL-OFL Continuum says that ‘connected’ realities inform ‘disconnected’ realities, and vice versa, and as such may very well result in the (re)shaping, (re)making, and co-construction of experiences across contexts.

The ONL-OFL Continuum takes to task issues concerning movement, i.e. shifting and tracing, and subsequently, marking. If we can 1) identify these shifts and traces, and then 2) probe these shifts and traces that occur within and among networks through well-articulated and exhaustive descriptions, then we might be able to transition beyond digital dualism rhetoric. Doing so may also allow us to begin exploring how shifting and tracing reflect changes in the way we communicate and identify across contexts.

The syllabus below reflects my dream course. One of which combines my research passions for web theory, social theory, and communication theory. Since there are many perspectives to cover, I suspect that in practice I would not be able to cover everything in depth. However, in creating this hypothetical course, I have also generated a useful bank of sources and discussion questions that may be valuable for future higher education courses that I intend to teach. This syllabus may also be useful for other instructors and scholars in the field of Internet studies.
COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate level course will engage philosophical, methodological, and pedagogical perspectives\(^1\) to address meaning and function of the online-offline continuum. I recommend that students have some background in the history of communication, as well as a firm grounding on various communication and social theories before taking this course. The course does not present a chronology of perspectives, but rather functions to navigate through relevant issues concerning learning, socializing, acting, and ‘being’, within/among connected and disconnected environments. In taking this course, students will encounter interdisciplinary perspectives from social theory, science fiction, feminist theory, psychoanalytic theory, communication theories (including web/network theory), and ethnography. Students will be required to identify relevant research and theoretical perspectives, and synthesize this information in the form of class discussions, assignments, and midterm and final projects. Students will explore the following questions throughout the course:

1. How can conceptions of space, place, and time help us understand and approach researching the online-offline continuum?
2. How have scholars been articulating theories of identity and space/place?
3. What kinds of selves does the online-offline continuum construct (Leander & McKim, 2003)?
4. What new forms of ethnography and learning constructs are emerging because of the online-offline continuum, and how have scholars been (re)working ethnographic research methods of the online-offline continuum?
5. What new social and literary practices, and cultural moments, have emerged as a result of the online-offline continuum?

\(^1\) Perspectives from online blog posts and articles will be continuously updated each semester, and perhaps throughout the semester.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To obtain a deeper understanding of relevant perspectives and research related to ontological, social, and cultural aspects of the online-offline continuum.
- To identify practical methods and strategies for researching literacy and social practices across online and offline contexts.
- To develop further questions for one’s own research that involves ideas related to ‘situatedness’ across online and offline contexts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Midterm – Literature Review/Exploratory Analysis

For the midterm assignment, you will complete a literature review based on the perspectives covered in class so far. To compose your literature review, first pick a topic that interests you most and then choose 2-3 readings that you have found most fascinating. *Think: which of the readings have I deeply connected with?* You should include in your literature review at least one additional reading that we have not covered in class. Please only highlight scholarly, print, and/or peer reviewed literature in your essays, not blog posts or online news articles. You may, however, reference blog posts and online news articles to illustrate or contextualize your discussions about the literature reviewed.

Format: 5-7 page paper, or you may complete a multimedia project (video, website, wiki, blog, MediaThread or VoiceThread presentation) that illustrates your review. If you choose the multimedia option, you must complete a two-page paper that describes a meta-analysis of your review. In the meta-analysis, you will describe your multimedia project, and you should also indicate why you chose to complete a multimedia project instead of a 5-7 page paper. Multimedia means that you will incorporate various kinds of media in your project. Do not simply copy/paste text from a Word document onto a Wordpress blog or wiki. You should include an array of media that further illustrates your analysis. No PowerPoint or Prezi presentations please.
In addition to reviewing the literature assigned, the midterm should also address the following questions:

1. What perspectives are you drawn to most?
2. How do the authors’ theories and perspectives relate to your interests?

Please do not approach the midterm as an opportunity to present an editorial or opinion piece on scholarly work. Instead, think of this paper as a way to address some of the lingering questions you have so far about the material. The midterm is an exploratory analysis, and offers you a chance to delve more deeply into the readings through independent research. You should leave the midterm with more questions than answers.

**Final – Contemporary Issues & Scholars in Conversation**

For your final assignment, you may choose from the following options to complete your analysis:

1. Continuation/expanded analysis of the midterm.

-OR-

2. A new exploratory analysis on a topic we have covered during the second half of the course.

The final paper or multimedia project should continue to reflect scholars ‘in conversation’ about a contemporary issue that concerns researching, learning, socializing, and/or ‘being’ within and without digital media contexts. Similar to the midterm, you will select a topic of interest, then choose 2-3 readings that you have found most fascinating throughout the course. You may stick with the same topic you wrote on previously and expand on your ideas by including additional sources, or you may select a new topic and readings. The choice is yours. You should include in your final analysis at least one additional reading that you have not already covered in your midterm, and that we have not covered in class. Please only highlight scholarly, print, and/or peer reviewed literature in your essays, not blog posts or online news articles. You may, however, reference blog posts and online news articles to illustrate or contextualize your discussion on the literature reviewed.
Format: 10-12 page paper, or you may complete a multimedia project (video, website, wiki, blog, MediaThread or VoiceThread presentation) that illustrates your review. Same multimedia guidelines apply for the final as for the midterm. In your meta-analysis for the final, please indicate why you chose to complete a multimedia project instead of a 10-12 page paper. Again, no PowerPoint or Prezi presentations please.

Discussion Questions and Student-Led Facilitation

Each student will be assigned one week to present questions about the readings and facilitate discussion. The purpose of inviting students to compose weekly discussion questions is so that they can co-create class culture. Facilitating class discussion also ensures that students are accountable to each other and accountable to the texts. Since this course will cover a great deal of readings, I understand that students may not be able to cover every reading assigned in depth. Therefore, student-lead seminars help other students who may have fallen behind throughout the semester.
COURSE SCHEDULE
UNIT I: Contemporary perspectives on ‘Cyberspace’

Unit I Rationale: The course begins with current debates and perspectives about ‘cyberspace’; what it is, ‘where’ it is, and what does it mean to us? There are plenty of conversations happening between scholars, theorists, educators, and students online so this is where I believe students can enter into the conversation about the online-offline continuum with relevancy. My hope is that students will emerge from these conversations with more questions than answers about the notion of situatedness in and among ‘connected’ and ‘disconnected’ worlds.

WEEK ONE
Cyberspace

*Agenda*: Introductions, course/syllabus overview, and class discussion on meanings of ‘cyberspace’.

*Readings:*
- Rey, P.J. “There is no ‘Cyberspace’” Cyborgology (2012)
- Mr. Teacup. “There is Only Cyberspace” Mrteacup.org (2012)

*Recommended Paired Readings:*

*Discussion questions:*
How do we understand ‘cyberspace’? Furthermore, with this understanding, how do we conceptualize experience, existence, and learning in the context of so-called ‘cyberspace’?
WEEK TWO
The ‘Digital Dualism’ Debate

*Agenda:* Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.

*Readings:*

*Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:*
Discussion questions should reflect an engagement with this week’s and last week’s reading. Student should pose questions that push the debates forward.

*Assignment:* Also for this week, students must comment on at least one of the blog posts listed above.

WEEK THREE
Connecting in the Digital Age

*Agenda:* Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.

*Readings:*
  - Excerpts:
    - Chapters 3 “Communication in Digital Spaces”
    - Chapter 4 “Communities and Networks”
    - Chapter 5 “New Relationships, New Selves?”
    - Conclusion

*Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:*
Discussion questions should reflect an engagement with this week’s and last week’s readings. Student should pose questions that push the conversation and Baym’s ideas forward.
UNIT II: Shifting, Marking, and Identity: Philosophical Perspectives

Unit II Rationale: The course continues by interrogating conceptual issues concerning identity and movement, along with furthering discussions about space of place from philosophical perspectives. How are these issues related, if at all, when it comes to shifting between and among ‘connected’ and ‘disconnected’ worlds? What are ‘selves’, exactly? I want students to think about the relationship between consciousness, place, and space when conceptualizing movement. By beginning with Anzaldua’s “now let us shift” in this section, I invite students to think about shifting and being ‘marked’—both noteworthy concepts as it relates to how identities emerge and how knowledge gets created in the digital age.

WEEK FOUR

Conceptualizing ‘Selves’

Agenda: Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.

Readings:

Recommended Paired Reading:
- Turkle, Sherry “Identity in the Age of the Internet” from Life on the Screen (1997).

Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of this week’s and last week’s readings. Questions should also be posed in ways that allow the authors to engage in conversation with each other. Student should pose questions that engage Anzaldua and Nakamura’s idea on identity in the digital age.
WEEK FIVE
What’s ‘Real’ Anyway?

Agenda: Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.

Readings:
  ➢ Excerpts:
   “How Real is Reality?” (pgs. 1-60) *Specific excerpts from this section TBA.

Recommended Paired Readings:

Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of this week’s and last week’s readings. Questions should also be posed in ways that allow the authors to engage in conversation with each other. Student should pose questions that engage Lacan’s theoretical perspectives on ‘the Real’ as it relates to online-offline experiences.
WEEK SIX
Subjects and Objects

Agenda: Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.
Readings:

Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of this week’s and last week’s readings. Questions should also be posed in ways that allow the authors to engage in conversation with each other. Student should pose questions that engage Haraway and Rothenberg’s discussions on dis/embodied subjects and objects as it relates to the online-offline continuum.

WEEK SEVEN
On Networks and (Changing) the Social

Agenda: Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.
Readings:

Recommended Paired Readings:
- Interview with Manuel Castells (2011): “The Popular Uprisings in the Arab World Perhaps Constitute the Most Important Internet-Led Facilitated Change”

Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of this week’s and last week’s readings. Student should pose questions that engage perspectives of space, place, and (changing) ‘the social’ in the digital age.
UNIT III: Tracing Shifts and Being ‘Marked’: Methodological Issues

Unit III Rationale: The second half of the course calls on perspectives from the first half of the course to help ground and further interrogate issues concerning how to study and conduct research within and among online-offline contexts. Students will grapple with questions regarding who are actors, what is space/place (and whose space/place is it?), and what are sitings? Student will be encouraged to think about approaches to studying ‘things’ that constantly move. Further questions that will be addressed in this unit concern, how do we describe shifting? And what might constitute an actor being marked within/among the online-offline continuum?

WEEK EIGHT
Subjects and Objects, and (Changing) the Social - continued

MIDTERM PAPERS OR PROJECT DUE

Agenda: Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.
Readings:
  ➢ Excerpts:
    - “Introduction: How to Resume the Task of Tracing Associations” (pgs. 1-20)
    - “Introduction to Part I: Learning to Feed off Controversies” (pgs. 21-26)
    - “On the Difficulty of Being an ANT: An Interlude in the Form of a Dialog” (pgs. 141-156)
    - “Introduction to Part II: Why is it so Difficult to Trace the Social?” (pgs. 159-164).

Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of this week’s and last week’s readings. Student should pose questions that engage authors’ ideas about subjects and objects of the (changing) social, particularly as it relates to sociality within/among the online-offline continuum.
WEEK NINE
Ethnography

*Agenda:* Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.

*Readings:*
  - Excerpts:
    - Chapter 3 “The Virtual Objects of Ethnography” (pgs. 41-63)
    - Chapter 4 “The Making of a Virtual Ethnography” (pg. 67-71)
    - Chapter 5 “Time, Space and Technology” (pgs. 83-114)

*Recommended Paired Readings:*

*Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:*
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of this week’s and last week’s readings. Student should pose questions that engage authors’ ideas about conducting ethnography in the digital age.

WEEK TEN
Tracing

*Agenda:* Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.

*Readings:*

*Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:*
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of this week’s and last week’s readings. Student should pose questions that engage authors’ ideas about ethnography in the digital age and what this means for researching youth practices across connected and disconnected contexts.
WEEK ENEVEN
Term Break

WEEK TWELVE
Being ‘Marked’: Confronting Cyberbullying, Social Inequalities, and Death Within Among the Online-Offline Continuum

Agenda: Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.

Readings:
  - Excerpt:
    - Chapter 5: Gender, White Supremacy & the Internet in Global Context

Recommended Paired Readings:
- Conley, Tara L. “Introducing the Online-Offline Continuum (A Work in Progress)” from Wordpress.cheeseeggs.com
- Conley, Tara L. “The Pinterest Problem” (forthcoming)
- Daniels, Jessie (2011). Cyber racism in High School from Racism Review
- Daniels, Jessie (2012). “Microsoft’s ‘Avoid Ghetto’ App: Racism Built into Technology”
- Daniels, Jessie (2012): “Trayvon Martin, Racisim, and Social Media” from Racism Review
Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of this week’s and last week’s readings. Questions should also be posed in ways that allow the authors to engage in conversation with each other. Student should pose questions that engage authors’ ideas about what it means to be ‘marked’ in the digital age with concerns about cyber-bullying, social inequalities, and confronting death/suicide through social media.

Assignment: For this week, students will observe current events online as it relates to conceptions of ‘being marked’ and report their observations to the class. Students should think about how trauma might relate to being ‘marked’.
UNIT IV: Teaching and Learning in Connective Spaces: Pedagogical and Literacy Issues

Unit IV Rationale: As the course draws to a close, students will continue to think through current debates, and philosophical and methodological issues regarding the online-offline continuum. The final unit of the course will focus on teaching practices and learning strategies within/among the online-offline continuum, or connective contexts. Since some of the graduate students in the course are educators and/or educational researchers, this final unit should prove relevant to their interests and encourage future pedagogical conversations beyond the course.

WEEK THIRTEEN
‘Cyber’ Pedagogy and Digital Literacy?

Agenda: Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.

Readings:
- Laserna, Catalina (2012) “Beyond ‘Digital Literacy’ There is Cyberspace: What Does This New Concept Index?” (forthcoming)

Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of the course readings throughout the semester. Student should consider engaging the question concerning whether or not the terms like ‘cyber’ or ‘cyberspace’ are useful signs/signifiers to describe learning and teaching that takes place in connective spaces.
WEEK FOURTEEN
Towards New Pedagogies and Literacies

*Agenda:* Student lead facilitation on this week’s readings.

*Readings:*
    - Excerpts:
      - Chapter 2: “The Virtual Self: Authoring Identity” (pgs. 5-37)

*Student Discussion Question and Facilitation:*
Discussion questions should demonstrate an understanding of the course readings throughout the semester. Student should pose questions that might address ways in which Thomas’ idea of identity and ‘seamlessness’ connect with prior discussions about identity in the context of online and offline spaces.

Week Fifteen
Closing Symposium

*Agenda:* Students should prepare a brief overview of their final paper/project to share with the class. During our final gathering we will reflect on the course, readings, and any other relevant issues students would like to cover. Students will also fill out end of the semester course evaluations.