

GEN/ASC2112.3 History of Social Media

Code

GEN/ASC2112.3

Title

History of Social Media

Credits

3

Description

The last few decades have brought us an astonishing array of technological changes, particularly in the ways people gather information and communicate with each other. In an effort to understand the meaning of contemporary media, this seminar will start by examining other moments in history when new technologies have had significant cultural, political, and economic consequences. We'll investigate the origins and implications of "new" media (e.g., the alphabet, printing press, telegraph, photograph, radio, television, internet) and consider how each has prompted new hopes for world peace along with fears for the imminent decline of civilization. We'll focus on "social media," or electronic communication networks in which people create online communities to share ideas, information, photographs, and other user-generated content. While the term usually brings to mind websites like Facebook and Instagram, we'll learn about similarities and differences with older channels of communication that have been around for hundreds of years. With this foundation in mind, we'll ask ourselves: Is social media undermining democracy or enhancing it? Making us safer or less secure? Increasing access to diversity or creating more cultural uniformity? Helping to shape a more sustainable future or further harming the environment? Do we control technology, or does it control us? We'll draw on historical evidence and our own experience to engage with these and other important questions.

Objectives

- Identify significant aspects of the historical relationship between people and communications technology
- Explain the social, political, and cultural effects of various media
- Describe different disciplinary perspectives on the interaction between technology and society
- Analyze predictions about the consequences of technological change
- Apply this theoretical foundation to an analysis of the modern digital environment

Assessment

60 % -first and second assessments

40 % -final assessment