

SYA 4930 DIGITAL INEQUALITIES
SPRING 2025
DR. BARBARA ZSEMBIK

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION: Dr. Zsembik, 2014 Turlington Hall, 392-0780 zsembik@ufl.edu, office hours Tuesdays 2-4 pm or by appointment

COURSE WEBSITE: <http://elearning.ufl.edu>

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS: For personal and public communication regarding the course, please email me through Canvas.

REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS : All readings are free to the public or accessible through the UF libraries ARES system.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES FEES : None.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Uses a sociological perspective to examine inequalities in access, use, and impact of digital technologies on people in the United States. Includes attention to workforce development and training in the digital economy. Compares positive, negative, and neutral impacts of digital technologies across social strata.

This is an asynchronous course available to UF residential students.

COURSE GOALS AND/OR OBJECTIVES :

Students will summarize state-of-the-art scientific knowledge of the causes, contexts, and consequences of digital inequalities in U.S. society.

Students will analyze the relative merits of sociological theories of inequalities for explaining patterns in access to, use of, and impacts from digital technologies in U.S. society.

Students will, in written form, disseminate research findings and policy recommendations from written and spoken scientific research presented in video lectures, scientific journal articles, and technical reports.

HOW THIS COURSE RELATES TO THE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE

SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM: The following SLOs in Sociology are accomplished through completing this course:

Identify, explain and apply basic concepts in sociology

Analyze, critique and interpret sociological scientific literature

Effectively communicate in writing sociological concepts and research

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS: The course is structured into 14 discrete modules. The first two modules orient us to definitions of digital inequalities and relevant theories to explain them. The next two modules focus on the First Digital Divide: access to high quality and affordable technologies and applications. Modules 5 through 8 focus on the Second Digital Divide: skills and training experiences and use patterns of new and emerging technologies. The Third Digital Divide in modules 9 through 13 focus on the positive and negative impacts on individuals and society of digital technologies. In the final module, we attempt to peer into the future of digital technologies and their articulations with systems of stratification.

Students engage materials through instructor lectures, public talks and lectures, documentaries, health reports, and scientific journal articles. Students demonstrate their understanding of the content and analytic skills through quizzes and group discussions.

COURSE POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE POLICY (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>): “Students are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. Absences count from the first class meeting.” Please see the UF policies on acceptable reasons for absences and UF’s Illness Policies (<https://shcc.ufl.edu/forms-records/excuse-notes/>). “The university recognizes the right of the instructor to ... require documentation for absences (except for religious holidays), missed work, or inability to fully engage in class.”

I will provide make-up work for documented and approved absences, usually to be completed within one week of the missed assignment.

Missed work due to technology problems will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, but completing work at least one hour before the deadline is the best way to accommodate challenges.

For issues with technical difficulties for Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (<https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/>)

- (352) 392-HELP (4357)
- helpdesk@ufl.edu
- Walk-in: The Hub, 1765 Stadium Road

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from the Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

UF POLICIES:

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. To get started with the Disability Resource Center: <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the

possible sanctions. UF's Conduct Code: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/> . If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

AI USE POLICY: AI-generated content for this class refers to text generated by artificial intelligence in response to your prompting. Students are allowed to use AI-generated text summaries of required readings. Students are **NOT ALLOWED** to use AI-generated content in their discussion posts or reply posts. Use of AI-generated content in discussion and reply posts is considered to be in violation of UF's Academic Conduct policy.

CLASS DEMEANOR OR NETIQUETTE: All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. Review the course netiquette posted on the course website.

CAMPUS RESOURCES:

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273- 4450.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392- 1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.

Teaching Center: 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138 | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information.

Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information.

GRADING POLICIES:

METHODS BY WHICH STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED AND THEIR GRADE DETERMINED

	Quizzes	Discussion Posts	Reply Posts	14 sets of graded assignments
Points per assignment	15 points each	10 points each	5 points each	30 points per week
Total points	210	140	70	420

There are 2 categories of graded work to accumulate 420 total points. Quizzes comprise 15 points each for a total of 210 points and worth 50% of the final course grade. You will answer 15 quiz questions within a 30 minute window. Each week, the quiz is available on Wednesday between 12:01am and 11:59 pm, AND after you have completed the prerequisites readings and viewings. You may use course materials to complete the quiz. You may attempt each quiz once. Quizzes use a combination of multiple choice, fill in the blanks, and true/false questions. I review all quiz items to determine whether the question is a good one and make adjustments for the questions that I determine did not adequately assess knowledge.

Discussion posts are worth 10 points and reply posts are worth 5 points, for a total of 210 points and worth 50% of the final course grade. **For a reply post to be graded and counted, the original discussion post must be completed first.** Each week, the discussion assignment is available after you have completed the quiz. The original discussion post is due before 11:59pm on Fridays, and the reply post is due before 11:59 on Sundays.

I will make the course content available 2-3 weeks ahead of the module opening, but the quizzes and discussion posts deadlines remain. This will allow you to review the material well before the deadlines.

[INFORMATION ON CURRENT UF GRADING POLICIES FOR ASSIGNING GRADE POINTS](#)

GRADING SCALE:

A 93+, A- 90-92, B+ 88-89, B 83-87, B- 80-82, C+ 78-79, C 73-77, C- 70-72, D+ 68-69, D 63-67, D- 60-62, F 59 and lower. Here is how I round grades. If the 2 numbers to the right of the decimal are .49 or lower, I round down. If the 2 numbers to the right of the decimal are .50 or higher, I round up. For example, a score of 79.49 will become a 79% and a score of 79.50 will become an 80%.

For more information: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNED COURSE MATERIALS:

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

The Canvas syllabus tool automatically generates a listing of assignment deadlines

1. Introducing and defining digital inequalities
2. Theories of digital inequalities

The First Digital Divide

3. Access to digital technologies
4. Access to AI technologies
5. The mobile underclass

The Second Digital Divide

6. Algorithmic literacy
7. Formal and self-directed curricula
8. Digital work and the digital economy
9. Social media use across the life course

The Third Digital Divide

10. Social connectivity
11. Health and well-being
12. Privacy
13. Surveillance
14. Climate
15. After the Fourth Revolution