

Carleton University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
SOCI 3210 A / DIGH 3700 A

Fall, 2026

Sociology of Our Digital World

Lecture: Thursdays 2:35 pm- 5:25 pm

Instructor: Dr. Suzanne Kennedy

Office Hours: via Zoom, by request

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Brightspace course page link: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/453100>

Pre-requisites & Precluded Courses: Introduction to Sociology (SOCI 1001 and 1002) or equivalent

Method of Delivery: in-person lectures and in-class activities

In this course, you are expected to learn from your texts, your teacher and from one another. This requires striving towards understanding each other but it does not imply striving towards finding agreement. Our class will be racially, religiously, politically, culturally, generationally, and economically diverse. We will be of different gender identifications and sexual orientations and our lived experiences and reactions to the course material will reflect this diversity. Sharing our perspectives and interpretations on the course material will enhance everyone's learning experience and you are encouraged to openly express any disagreements with the authors you will read, with your fellow classmates, or with the Professor in the different participation fora that are available for this course. However, you are expected to conduct yourself in such a way that shows the utmost respect to others who may – or may not – share your views. Derogatory comments and hateful behavior towards others (and their views) will not be tolerated.

Carleton University acknowledges the location of its campus on the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin nation. In doing so, Carleton acknowledges it has a responsibility to the Algonquin people and a responsibility to adhere to Algonquin cultural protocols.

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the field of Digital Sociology, drawing on central ideas presented in Neil Selwyn's book *What is Digital Sociology?* The course explores how digital technologies (such as social media, algorithms, and data analytics) interact with and shape society, culture, and social relationships. Students will examine the role of digital technologies and practices through a sociological lens and explore concepts including identity, power, labor,

inequality, and surveillance. The course critically engages with the implications of these technologies on social structures and our lived experiences.

This course will use a case study approach to help students apply theoretical learnings to real world examples. The first half of the course will help set the foundation for understanding what is meant by digital sociology, what the field of digital sociology covers, as well as its significance both theoretically and practically. During the second half of the course, students will work through cases to explore and apply sociological concepts such as power, race, class, gender, identity, citizenship, social relationships, and social institutions

By the end of the course, students will be able to critically analyze the role of digital technologies in contemporary society, with a specific focus on understanding the sociological concepts that underpin our digital realities and their implications for social change.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand the core concepts and debates within the field of Digital Sociology.
2. Apply sociological frameworks to assess the role of digital technologies in contemporary society.
3. Explore the inequalities and power dimensions of digital technologies and their societal consequences.
4. Develop skills for conducting digital sociological case-study research and analysis.

Required Texts:

All readings (articles and book chapters) will be made available on Brightspace. Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course

Assignment and Evaluation Schedule:

Evaluation Overview:

Type	Weight	Due Dates
Reflection posts (individual assignment)	4 x 10 = 40%	September 17 September 24 October 1 October 8
Learning portfolio proposal (individual assignment)	15%	October 16
Case study: Group presentation on learnings from the case, the context map and future implications	20%	November 11 and December 3 (depends on number of groups)

Learning portfolio and speculative futures write-up (individual assignment)	25%	December 10
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Evaluation Details:

1. **Reflection Posts:**

During each of weeks 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the course, you will submit one 350-word reflection post addressing specific questions provided for each of the reflections. Each reflection is worth **10%** of your overall grade (total **40%**) and is to be submitted via Brightspace

2. **Learning portfolio proposal 15%:**

3. **Case study presentation 20%:**

During weeks 11 and 12 of the course, each group will deliver a 7-10-minute presentation regarding their chosen case for investigation, the case materials they have gathered, and the sociological concepts they are using to investigate their case. Each group will develop a context map for their presentation (no slides). All sources must be appropriately referenced. Context maps and speculative future scenarios must be submitted on Brightspace no later than 8 am the day of group's presentation. This learning activity is worth **20%** of the total assessment (**7.5%** for the in-class presentation, **5%** for the intellectual quality and rigor of the context map, **5%** for the imaginative and speculative quality and rigor of the futures scenario, **2.5%** for the selection of additional readings and case material).

4. **Learning portfolio and speculative write-up 25%:**

Each student will submit a learning portfolio about their critical exploration of digital sociology, as well as a 500-word speculative piece that envisions a possible future using a digital practice of their choice on Brightspace

Class Schedule, Readings, and Course Topics:

WEEK 1 - Sept. 10: What do we mean by the term Digital Sociology?

Readings:

- Course outline
- Selwyn, N. (2019) *What is Digital Sociology?* Preface
- Selwyn, N. (2019) *What is Digital Sociology?* Chapter 1: "Digital Sociology: Promises and Precedents?" pages 1 - 13

Topics

- Overview of digital sociology as a field of study
- Tracing relationships between society and technology
- Discussion of the course design and the case-study method used in this course
- Your questions about the course

WEEK 2 – Sept. 17: What does Digital Sociology Concern Itself with?

Reading:

- Selwyn, N. (2019) *What is Digital Sociology?* Chapter 1: "Digital Sociology: Promises and Precedents?" pages 13 – 21
- Selwyn, N. (2019) *What is Digital Sociology?* Chapter 2: "Digital Sociology: Central Concerns, Concepts and Questions"

Topics

- Why digital sociology?
- How and why technological concepts are important to investigate sociologically
- The role of social theory
- Possible scenarios and examples for selecting a case to explore
- Conducting group work

Reflection 1: Uploaded on Brightspace by 11:30 am.

WEEK 3 - Sept. 24: The Quantified Self

Readings:

- Lupton, D. (2016), *The Quantified Self*. Introduction
- Elliott, A (2023) *Algorithmic Intimacy* Chapter 4: Therapy Tech

Topics:

- Assumptions underpinning digital self-tracking
- The politics of self-presentation and digital surveillance
- Surveillance or personal improvement?
- Selecting a case and creating groups

Reflection 2: Upload on Brightspace by 11:30 am.

WEEK 4 – Oct.1: Platforms and the Public Sphere

Readings:

- Van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & De Waal, M. (2018) *The Platform Society* Introduction excerpt: "The Platform Society: A few definitions and a quick reading guide"
- Doctorow, C. (2025) *Enshittification* excerpts: Introduction (pp. 3-5); Part One The Natural History (pp. 7-10); Case Study: Facebook (pp. 11-19); Case Study: Amazon (pp. 20-28)

Topics:

- Digital platforms and role of governments, corporations, and institutions.
- Public values and private interests
- Geopolitical imaginaries and platform ecosystems
- Techno-feudalism

- Narrowing down the focus for your chosen cases and selecting which sociological concepts to investigate.

Reflection 3: Upload on Brightspace by 11:30 am.

WEEK 5 - Oct. 8: Power, Control, and Surveillance

Readings:

- Véliz, C. (2021) *Privacy is Power* Ch 3 pp. 51-87
- Benjamin, R. (2024) <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-new-artificial-intelligentsia/>

Topics:

- Exploring privacy in a digital world
- Establishing groups for group case work

Reflection 4: Upload on Brightspace by 11:30 am.

WEEK 6 - Oct. 15: Inequalities, Refusals, Inevitabilities

Readings:

- Véliz, C. *Privacy is Power* (2021) Ch 3 pp. 88-96
- Doctorow, C. (2025) *Enshittification* excerpts: The Cure (pp. 213-226);
- Cole, D. (2026) <https://breachmedia.ca/black-prisoners-are-assigned-harsher-living-conditions-in-ontario-jails-thanks-to-ai/>

Topics:

- Inequalities, algorithms, AI
- Issues of scope and scale
- Gathering relevant texts and artifacts for your case

For class next week:

- Bring the potential case you want to explore for your learning portfolio
- Bring brainstorming tools (pen and paper, digital tool, etc.)
- Revisit your reflection from week 2 on Selwyn's Ch 2: Digital Sociology: Central Concerns, Concepts and Questions

Learning portfolio proposal due: Upload on Brightspace by 11:59 pm, Friday October 16

WEEK 7 - Oct. 22: Framing technical characteristics in sociological terms

Readings:

- Cottom, T. (2025) Actually, AI is pretty mid.

Topics:

- In-class group work and discussion
- What technical aspects from your case have you turned into which sociological concepts?
- What questions are you asking of your case?
- How has exploring your case impacted your sociological knowledge?
- How and why is digital sociology useful?

FALL READING WEEK OCT.26-30 – NO CLASS, NO READINGS

WEEK8 – Nov. 5: Working on Cases and Working Through Resources

Readings:

- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006) Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research
- Davis, J. & Soane, M. (2026) AI's Sociological Era

Topics:

- Examining the texts and artifacts you have gathered for your case (see Flyvbjerg)
- Formalizing groups
- Sketching a mind map

WEEK 9 - Nov. 12: Envisioning radical futures workshop

- In-class group work and discussion
- What does it mean to imagine a radical, speculative future?
- Doing imagination work
- Getting comfortable working outside your comfort zone

WEEK 10 - Nov. 19: Context map workshop

- In-class group work and discussion
- What technical characteristics from your group case have you turned into which sociological concepts?
- What questions are you asking of your group case?
- What connections have you made between your group case and framing technical concepts as sociological issues?
- How and why is digital sociology useful for your group case?

WEEK 11/12 - Nov. 26/Dec. 3: Group presentations

- Groups present their context maps, summarizing key learnings about sociological concepts from their chosen case, futures that are perceived to be foreclosed, and what we might imagine otherwise
- Peer feedback and class discussion.

WEEK 13 - Dec. 10: Finetuning your learning portfolio

Learning portfolio due: To be uploaded on Brightspace by 11:59 pm, Thursday December 10, 11:59pm

Course Policies:

- **Attendance:** Regular attendance is essential for success in this course. More than two unexcused absences will result in a grade penalty.
- **Collaborative group work:** Full participation in group work is required. Students who do not adequately participate in group work will not be eligible to receive the group's grade and will be given a lower grade in-line with their contribution and participation.
- **Late Work:** Late assignments will incur a 2% penalty per day unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. If you need an extension, contact me before the due date of the assignment so we can determine an appropriate resolution.
- **Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism or cheating will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the assignment or course.
- **AI Policy:**

The use of generative AI is not necessary and not permitted in this course. Students may use basic AI tools for basic word processing functions, including grammar and spell checking (e.g. Microsoft Word editor, Copilot, Grammarly)

 - **Why have I adopted this policy?**

This policy ensures that student voices and ideas are prioritized and authentically represented, maintaining the integrity of the work produced by students while allowing basic support to enhance clarity, correctness, layout and flow of ideas. The goal of adopting a limited use of AI is to help students develop foundational skills in writing and critical thinking by practicing substantive content creation without the support of AI.
 - **Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools (e.g. ChatGPT)**

Any use of generative AI tools to produce assessed content is considered a violation of academic integrity standards. As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described here with the course instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.
 - Note: Students can also access resources related to citing Generative AI on the [MacOdrum Library website](#)

Classroom and Collaborative Group Work Conduct

The point of the group work is not to create a final project with a single answer, rather the group work using case studies is designed to demonstrate each group's learning. The more diverse the group, in terms of experiences and backgrounds, the more productive and nuanced the learning. As stated at the beginning of this course outline, our class will be richly diverse and have the potential to offer us deep and nuanced learnings as we work together to explore digital sociology in a safe and respectful environment.

Citation Style

The Chicago author-date citation style (17th edition) is to be used in the assignments and papers of this course. For more information, please see:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

Additional Information

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar Regulations, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52
F= Below 50	WDN = Withdrawn from the course	DEF = Deferred	

Academic Regulations, Accommodations, Plagiarism, Etc.

University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found on the university's website, here:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/>

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (<https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>). For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at **613-520-6608** or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*).

*The deadline for contacting the Paul Menton Centre regarding accommodation for February/March examinations is **February 1, 2026** and **March 15, 2026** for April examinations.

For Religious Obligations:

Please contact the course instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: www.carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

For Pregnancy:

Please contact the course instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: www.carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

For Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: www.carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else's work as your own and is a serious academic offence. For the details of what constitutes plagiarism, the potential penalties and the procedures refer to the section on Instructional Offences in the Undergraduate Calendar. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the Carleton University Student Academic Integrity Policy (See <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>). The Policy is strictly enforced and is binding on all students. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Students who infringe the Policy may be subject to one of several penalties.

What are the Penalties for Plagiarism?

A student found to have plagiarized an assignment may be subject to one of several penalties including but not limited to: a grade of zero, a failure or a reduced grade for the piece of academic work; reduction of final grade in the course; completion of a remediation process; resubmission of academic work; withdrawal from course(s); suspension from a program of study; a letter of reprimand.

What are the Procedures?

All allegations of plagiarism are reported to the faculty of Dean of FASS and Management. Documentation is prepared by instructors and departmental chairs. The Dean writes to the student and the University Ombudsperson about the alleged plagiarism. The Dean reviews the

allegation. If it is not resolved at this level then it is referred to a tribunal appointed by the Senate.

Assistance for Students:

“As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>”

Emergency Resources ([on and off campus](#))

- Crisis/Urgent Counselling Support: 613-520-6674 (Mon-Fri, 8:30-4:30)
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

Carleton Resources

Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>

Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Equity & Inclusive Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Career Services: <https://carleton.ca/career/>

Off Campus Resources

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>

Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>

Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service
<https://walkincounselling.com>

Important Information:

- Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).
- Students must always retain a hard copy of all work that is submitted.
- Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.
- Carleton University is committed to protecting the privacy of those who study or work here (currently and formerly). To that end, Carleton's Privacy Office seeks to encourage the implementation of the privacy provisions of Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) within the university.
- In accordance with FIPPA, please ensure all communication with staff/faculty is via your Carleton email account. To get your Carleton Email you will need to activate your [MyCarletonOne account](#) through Carleton Central. Once you have activated your MyCarletonOne account, log into the [MyCarleton Portal](#).
- Please note that you will be able to link your MyCarletonOne account to other non-MyCarletonOne accounts and receive emails from us. However, for us to respond to your emails, we need to see your full name, CU ID, and the email must be written from your valid MyCarletonOne address. Therefore, it would be easier to respond to your inquiries if you would send all email from your connect account. If you do not have or have yet to activate this account, you may wish to do so by visiting <https://students.carleton.ca/>.

Autumn TERM 2026 – Important Dates and Deadlines

Date	Activity
August 31, 2026	Last day for receipt of applications from potential fall (November) graduates.
September 2, 2026	Deadline for course outlines to be made available to students registered in full fall, early fall, and fall/winter courses.
September 7, 2026	Statutory holiday. University closed.
September 8, 2026	Academic orientation (undergraduate and graduate students).
	Orientation for new Teaching Assistants.

Date	Activity
	All new students are expected to be on campus. Class and laboratory preparations, departmental introductions for students, and other academic preparation activities will be held.
September 9, 2026	Fall term begins. Full fall, early fall, and fall/winter classes begin.
September 15, 2026	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in early fall courses.
September 18-20, 2026	Full summer and late summer term deferred final examinations will be held.
September 22, 2026	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in full fall, late fall, and fall/winter courses.
	Last day to withdraw from early fall courses with a full fee adjustment.
	Graduate students who have not electronically submitted their final thesis copy to Graduate Studies will not be eligible to graduate in fall 2026 and must register for the fall 2026 term.
September 30, 2026	Last day to withdraw from full fall and fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment.
October 1, 2026	Last day for academic withdrawal from early fall courses.
	Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodations for Oct/Nov final examinations from the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities. Note that it may not be possible to fulfil accommodation requests received after the specified deadlines.
October 9, 2026	December examination schedule (fall term final and fall/winter mid-terms) available online.
October 12, 2026	Statutory holiday. University closed.

Date	Activity
October 15, 2026	Last day for receipt of applications for admission to an undergraduate degree program for the winter term from applicants whose documents originate from outside Canada or the United States.
October 16, 2026	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in early fall term undergraduate courses, before the official Oct/Nov final examination period (see examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar).
October 23, 2026	Last day of early fall classes.
	Last day for final take-home examinations to be assigned in early fall courses, with the exception of those conforming to the examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar.
	Last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for early fall courses.
October 26, 2026	Deadline for course outlines to be made available to students registered in late fall courses.
October 26-30, 2026	Fall break, no classes.
October 31- November 1, November 7-8, 2026	Final examinations in early fall undergraduate courses will be held.
November 2, 2026	Late fall classes begin.
November 13, 2026	Last day to withdraw from late fall term courses with a full fee adjustment.
November 15, 2026	Last day for academic withdrawal from full fall and late fall courses.
	Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodations for December full fall and late fall examinations and fall/winter midterm examinations from the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities. Note that it may not be possible to fulfil accommodation requests received after the specified deadlines.

Date	Activity
	Last day for receipt of applications for admission to an undergraduate degree program for the winter term.
November 20-22, 2026	Early fall undergraduate deferred final examinations will be held.
November 27, 2026	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in full fall term or fall/winter undergraduate courses, before the official December final examination period (see examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar).
November 30, 2026	Last day for receipt of applications from potential winter (February) graduates.
December 4, 2026	Last day for graduate students to submit their supervisor-approved thesis, in examinable form to the department.
	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in late fall term undergraduate courses, before the official final examination period (see examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar).
December 11, 2026	Fall term ends.
	Last day of full fall and late fall classes.
	Classes follow a Monday schedule.
	Last day for final take-home examinations to be assigned, with the exception of those conforming to the examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar.
	Last day that can be specified by an instructor as a due date for term work for full and late fall courses.

Date	Activity
	Last day for receipt of applications for undergraduate degree program transfers for winter term.
December 12-23, 2026	Final examinations in full fall and late fall courses and mid-term examinations in fall/winter courses will be held. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
December 23, 2026	All final take-home examinations are due on this day, with the exception of those conforming to the examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar.
December 24, 2026 at noon through January 1, 2027 inclusive	University closed.