

## DISCIPLINE DESCRIPTION

### 1. Information about the program

1.1 Higher education institution	BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
1.2 Faculty	FACULTY OF POLITICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCES
1.3 Department	JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT
1.4 Field of study	COMMUNICATION SCIENCES
1.5 Level of study	MASTER
1.6 Study program / Qualification	MEDIA COMMUNICATION

### 2. Information about the discipline

2.1 Discipline title	Communication in Virtual Communities						
2.2 Course lecturer	Andrei Costina						
2.3 Seminar assistant	Andrei Costina						
2.4 Year of study	1	2.5 Semester	2	2.6. Evaluation type	C	2.7 Discipline type	OB

### 3. Total estimated time (hours of didactic activities per semester)

3.1 Number of hours per week	3	of which: 3.2 course	2	3.3 seminar/laboratory	1
3.4 Total hours in the study plan	42	of which: 3.5 course	28	3.6 seminar/laboratory	14
Time distribution:					hrs
Studying the manual, course reader, bibliography and notes:					36
Supplementary documentation in the library, on electronic platforms and in the field:					18
Preparing seminars/laboratories, homework, syntheses, portfolios and essays:					36
Tutorials					16
Examinations					2
Other activities: .....					
3.7 Total hours of individual study	108				
3.8 Total hours per semester	150				
3.9 Number of credits	6				

### 4. Prerequisites (where applicable)

4.1 based on the curriculum	•
4.2 based on competences	•

### 5. Conditions (where applicable)

5.1 for the course	• Projector, laptop, sound system
5.2 for the seminar/laboratory	•

## 6. Accumulated specific competencies

<b>Professional competencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the basic concepts related to the digital anthropology field of study. The ability to use specific research methods to gain valuable insights in this area and to use this information to communicate more efficiently in these contexts.</li> <li>(C2.1) Understanding theories regarding technologically mediated communication.</li> <li>(C3.1) Identifying and using the main theories concerning media communication, target audience segmentation and the dynamics of various types of audience: <b>reception theory, encoding/decoding, uses and gratifications, popular formats and audience segments</b></li> <li>(C5.5) Creating products for the media using multiple tools in order to combine various types of media (identifying the story, documenting it, assuming a specific angle of approach and using various journalistic genres to finish the product).</li> </ul>
<b>Transversal competencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing the ability to work (alone or in a team) towards creating a final media product, deliverable for mobile markets.</li> <li>(CT 1) Providing a resolution for professional situations taking into account efficiency but also ethics and deontology.</li> <li>(CT 2) The ability to work as a multidisciplinary team efficiently, within a hierarchical structure.</li> </ul>

## 7. Discipline objectives (from the accumulated competencies grid)

7.1 General objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the nature of virtual communities as a socio-cultural-anthropological environment, the mechanisms behind the social interactions that occur in such circumstances, the exchange of information that takes place and the impact it may have on the individual.</li> </ul>
7.2 Specific objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting to know how social structures operate on an informational level in a virtual world, the stereotyping and labeling involved, the flow of information and its consequences in order to design better communicational systems.</li> </ul>

## 8. Contents

8.1 Course	Teaching methods	Observations
1. Introduction – Course explanation and basic notions.	Presentation Open discussion	Introductory course, curricula presentation, the importance of the course and its structure.
2. Anthropology 101, traditional anthropology and how it turns digital.	Presentation Explanation	The classical notions of anthropology adapted to suit a researcher into the contemporary digital context.
3. The networked society.	Presentation (multimedia)	From the simple concept of global village to the

		network of social networks created online.
4. Traditional communities versus virtual ones, common grounds and differences.	Presentation Open discussion	What parameters define a social group as a community and what are the finer differences between various platforms that encourage online social interaction and aggregated communities
5. Types of virtual communities according to platform.	Presentation (multimedia)	Types of different platforms that exist in the digital realm and their characteristics.
6. Information flow in digital worlds. Projections of self and the social context.	Presentation	The concept of persistent worlds and the persistence of information online. Avatars.
7. Social structures in virtual communities	Presentation Open discussion	Defining various typologies of aggregations between individuals with common parameters.
8. Translating social norm from the physical to the virtual.	Presentation Open discussion	What does the social norm consist of in the digital realm and how it is enacted and enforced at a community level.
9. Deviance, bullying and violence in virtual communities.	Presentation Open discussion Examples	Breaking the social norm, modus, drive and consequences in virtual worlds.
10. Adapting methodology to research online communities.	Open discussion Presentation Examples	Classical socio-anthropological methods, rarely yield results in the digital world. Methodology must be tailored and customized to each type of community in order to provide relevant results.
11. Typologies of individuals involved in immersive graphic intensive worlds.	Presentation Demonstration	Defining general typologies in MUDs starting from Richard Bartle's scheme of stereotypes.
12. Online games (MMORPGs) and their role in forming digital social structures.	Presentation Examples	How the most immersive virtual worlds structure complex social systems.
13. Newer technologies and their impact on online social aggregation (Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality).	Presentation (multimedia)	The impact of new technologies on how humans interact.
14. Final open session Q&A	Open discussion	Question session, open class.
8.2 Seminar	Teaching methods	Observations

1. Understanding the social context of virtual communities.	Open discussion Presentation	Basic anthropology notions and their correspondance into the digital.
2. Defining the nature of the informational exchange as well as interpersonal electronic interaction.	Open discussion Presentation	The networked society, the persistence of information and the distinct nature of social aggregation.
3. The virtual projections of parts of the real existence is something to be delved into.	Open discussion Presentation	From avatars to whole new worlds, story driven or replicas of real existence.
4. The rules, the leadears and the fellons all ported in various environments.	Open discussion Examples	Social norm and social structure in virtual communities. Deviance.
5. Understanding specific research methodology and the adaptability potential.	Open discussion Examples	The tools available to better understand these phenomena.
6. How to draw upon useful conclusions.	Open discussion Examples	Using the insights gained from digital anthropology research to better communication, especially on a strategic level.
7. Integrating new hardware in the social mediation process.	Open discussion Demonstration	The upcoming role of Augumented Reality and Virtual Reality in the social interaction and aggregation.

#### Bibliography

Agger, Ben. *The Virtual Self A Contemporary Sociology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Bartle, Richard. *A Self of Sense*. 2003. <http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/selfware.htm>

Bartle, Richard. *Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players Who Suit MUDs*. 1996. <http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hclds.htm>

Boellstorff, Tom. *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Book, Betsy. *Moving Beyond the Game: Social Virtual Worlds*. State of Play Conference. 2004.

Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996.

Clauset, Aaron; Newman, M. E. J.; Moore, Cristopher. *Finding Community Structure in Very Large Networks*. *Physical Review E*. Vol. 70. Nr. 6, 2004.

Curtis, Pavel. Nichols, David. *MUDs Grow Up: Social Virtual Reality in the Real World*. *in H. Rheingold. The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1992.

Kim, Amy Jo. *Community Building on the Web : Secret Strategies for Successful Online Communities*. Cambridge: Peachpit Press, 2000.

Krotoski, Aleksandra. *Social Influence in Second Life: Social Network and Social Psychological Processes in the Diffusion of Belief and Behaviour on the Web*. University of Surrey, 2009. PhD Thesis.

Turckle, Sherry. *Computational Technologies and Images of the Self*. Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2001.

[www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org).

**9. The corroboration of discipline contents with the expectations of epistemic community representatives, professional associations and representative employers in the study program's corresponding field**

Understanding social communication is the key to any media professional. Understanding the intricacies of this phenomenon in the digital realm is a step forward toward devising new and adapted communicational strategies as well as cultural customs and artefacts that stem from the virtual projections of individuals and social systems and aggregations.

**10. Evaluation**

Type of activity	10.1 Evaluation criteria	10.2 Evaluation methods	10.3 Weight in final mark
10.4 Course	The study of a certain aspect pertaining to a virtual community using adequate and adapted digital anthropology methodology.	Research Paper submission	75%
10.5 Seminar/laboratory	Research progress throughout the semester	Examination	25%
10.6 Minimum performance standard			
The minimum requirements for this class are, but not limited to, the ability to understand this particular social environment as well as the differences from the physical counterpart, to make use of research methods in order to discover new facets of such social aggregations and to determine potential courses of actions and typologies of the individuals involved.			

Date

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Course lecturer signature

  
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Seminar assistant signature

  
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Date of approval in the Department

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Head of department's signature

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