

We'll devote the first good chunk of class on Tuesday to getting to know each other and to going over the syllabus and expectations for the class. We will spend the rest of the class – hopefully the majority of our time – talking about the readings. The material I've selected for the first day are going to try to do two things: (I) introduce material on the promise – and to a lesser extent, the challenges – of designing Internet research; and (II) spark conversation about ethical considerations in Internet research. To help frame and introduce the course, I've assigned four articles: two articles from a more theory-driven and critical approach and two from an empirical and social scientific approach. Be ready to compare the texts to each other in class both within each pair and between them.

Start with the Philip Agre article which is an influential article published by the Association of Internet Researchers (AIR or AoIR) which is one of the major conferences, communities, and venues for Internet research. Agre's piece is an early and influential set of reflections on what Internet research can and should constitute. It's a difficult piece but worthwhile.

The second article by Nicolas Gane and David Beer is an introduction to a book called *New Media: The Key Concepts*. The first half of the chapter relies heavily on the work of philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychiatrist Félix Guattari. If you're familiar with the work of D&G, you'll probably appreciate this. If you're not familiar with D&G, you may find this part inscrutable but don't worry too. The most important part is the second half of the chapter which introduces the general framing of the rest of Gane and Beer's book which is structured around what they feel are the six core "concepts" in Internet research. I think the breakdown is a thought-provoking approach to thinking about the key issues in the field. We can discuss, in class, whether this approach at looking at concepts in Internet research is useful and whether these concepts are complete and/or useful.

The second two articles are take a much more social scientific approach. The first is a short blog post by University of Michigan communication professor Christian Sandvig. It's provocative and I have some disagreements with some of the things the article argues but I think it does a fantastic job of capturing both the promise and some of the challenges and limitations of using the Internet for social science research. The final article is a very short article from *Science* written by a "who's who?" of computational social science and "big data" research. Published only a few years go, the article has been enormously widely cited. The article's tone is breathless, if not entirely uncritical, and is cited by Sandvig's

blog post.

In the last part of the class, I want to spend some time talking about ethical issues in Internet research. This second part is also going to be a example of how I plan to organize readings for this class. We'll start with one or more "core" texts and then explore and reflect on a set of examples. In this case, I want you start reading with the AoIR "Ethical Guidelines" draft. It's split up over many webpages pages but please click through them and read it carefully. Once you're done, read the Kramer et al. piece which is the now famous (perhaps infamous) study of emotional contagion on Facebook. Next, quickly scan James Grimmelmann's list of resources. This includes an incomplete, but incredibly detailed, list of commentaries and other material related to the case. Don't worry about reading the post in depth or following the links. The thing I want to impress upon you is just how big a deal this study was and just how diverse a set of responses it evoked.

To get a big more detail on those reactions, I want you all to carefully read three different reactions. The first is Nicholas Carr's article. You only need to read the first half (up until the section about "the right to be forgotten") although you won't regret reading the whole thing. Carr is hardly the study's most vociferous critic but he cites several of the most intelligent people who were upset by the study and describes their argument in some depth. Next, read the pieces by Michael Bernstein and Cliff Lampe – both friends of mine as well as friends of the study's authors and the Facebook data science team. Lampe and Bernstein have very different, and much more sympathetic, attitudes toward the study.

The issues that the Facebook study raised are deep ones in regards to the ethics of Internet research. I want to work from this study to a more broad reflection on what would and would not be reasonable for Internet researchers to do based on your the AoIR document, IRB training you may have had, and your own moral compasses. We're not going to solve these problems in class on Tuesday – and we'll be talking about this stuff all quarter long – but I want to at least frame some of the big tough questions so we have them in our mind over the course of the quarter.

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