

CS 8001 ONC Syllabus

Understanding Online Communities

Summer 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor of Record: Ana Rusch, ARusch3@gatech.edu

Primary Instructors: Ciabhan Connely, ciabhanconnelly@gatech.edu

General Course Information

Description

The seminar will cover identity, free speech, and behavior in online communities. Online communities are spaces on the web where people find community and friendship around shared hobbies, life experiences, and more. We will first explore the nature of identity and self expression in online spaces and discuss the history of online social platforms. We will look into the business models and incentive structures that lead platforms to be designed the way they are today. Finally, we will tie everything together by discussing how platforms shape online behavior (for both good and bad).

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand basic concepts of online communities.
- Discuss the history of online social platforms.
- Identify how different platforms shape online behavior.

Required Course Materials

All required readings will be on Canvas.

Course Requirements & Grading:

This class is graded Pass/Fail. You need a 60% or better in the class to pass.

- 50% Attendance
- 50% Participation

Course Policies

Flexibility

All of the above grading requirements are negotiable. If you have difficulty making regular meetings, participate more on Ed Discussion for your participation grade.

Attendance

We will meet bi-weekly on Zoom, eight times throughout the semester. Please do your best to attend these meetings, as much of the value of this course will come from the lectures and in class discussions. If you have a legitimate reason you cannot make it to a class, please email me as far in advance as you can.

Participation

You will be graded in part on your class participation. This is a discussion-centered course, so your ideas are valuable to both you and your classmates. Every week, I will post a prompt on EdDiscussion for you to discuss with your classmates. If you make a couple of posts here each week you will get 100% on your participation grade. You will also receive participation points for thoughtful questions or comments in class. You will also be assigned readings each week. Try to keep up with these, as they will be relevant to class discussions

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. The Student-Faculty Expectations articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.