

# SI529 eCommunities

Fall 2010 Course Syllabus

Prof. Paul Resnick

## Overview

This course is intended to help students to analyze online interaction environments with an eye toward design. For the purpose of this course, a community is defined as a group of people who sustain interaction over time. The group may be held together by a common identity, a collective purpose, or merely by the individual utility gained from the interactions. An online interaction environment is an electronic forum, accessed through computers or other electronic devices, in which community members can conduct some or all of their interactions. We will use the term eCommunity as shorthand, both for communities that conduct all of their interactions online and for communities that use on-line interaction to supplement face-to-face interactions.

The course prepares students for roles as online community designers and managers. The first half of the course examines different types of online communities. In parallel, it introduces the Community of Practice analytic framework. While not all online communities are communities of practice, that framework provides a set of concepts and vocabulary that are very useful for understanding and describing the interactions that happen in online communities and the changes that happen over time, to the individual participants and the community as a whole.

The second half of the course connects social science theories with the goals of online community managers and with the alternative social and technical design alternatives available to them. The central construct is the design claim: Alternative X will help/hinder the achievement of goal Y, in contexts Z. Students will draw on these claims to make design suggestions for a new or existing online community.

## Logistics

Meets Mondays 8:30-11:30AM in Room 2245 North Quad

Professor Paul Resnick

Office Hours: Fridays 2-3PM in Room 4344 North Quad  
[presnick@umich.edu](mailto:presnick@umich.edu)

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, a student should be able to:

- Describe an online community using the concepts and vocabulary of Communities of Practice;
- Make principled design and management choices for online communities.

## Pre-requisites

There are no formal pre-requisites.

This course assumes some familiarity with technologies and the ability to explore them on your own. This course will spend very little time explicitly teaching about technology, but will frequently assume it as background.

## Texts

We'll be reading excerpts from a large number of books and articles. Links to electronic copies are provided through cTools.

## Class Activities

Each week there will be assigned readings. Occasionally, there will also be optional readings. All of these will be available electronically through cTools. Our engagement with these readings will begin on-line, *before* the class session for which they're assigned, and continue in class. We will engage in four ways:

- **Description:** statements or questions about what the author claims.
- **Critique:** arguments about whether the author is correct or what the author has left out.
- **Connection:** how the claims or concepts relate to those in other readings.
- **Application:** how the reading applies to the communities we are studying.

The online engagement will be through generation of a wiki page about each of the readings, with a section for my intro of the reading, and for each of the four activities above.

You should sign your contributions with your name, so that at the end of the semester I can look back on all of them and tally your contributions. Basically, I will be counting the number of weeks in which you made some substantive contribution. Ten or more weeks will count as full credit. A contribution can be a question as well as an answer. Some short things are substantive contributions; some long things are not. After a couple of weeks, I will circulate a marked-up version of the wiki page for at least one reading, so that you can see which things I consider to be a substantive contribution. You are welcome to come see me during office hours to discuss these.

## Assignments

- See weekly assignments related to class activities above
- Make an edit on Wikipedia and write up your reflections, due Sep. 19
- Community description paper due Oct. 25
- 5 design suggestions (1-2 pages) due Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
- 4 responses to classmates design suggestions, due Nov. 15, 22, 29, Dec. 6.
- Final paper with cumulative (revised and expanded) design suggestions for the community you've studied, 10-20 pages, due Dec. 20.

This is a 3-credit course, so you should expect to spend, on average, 12 hours per week on the course, over the course of the 14 week semester. Here's my approximate estimate of how that time would be split up:

- required reading (3 hours)
- in-class time (3 hours)
- weekly online wiki pages reading and editing (2 hours)
- major assignments (4 hours/week averaged over the term)

## Grading

- Participation (Online commenting/editing; in-class discussion) 16%
- Peer feedback (responses to 4 design suggestions) 4%
- Community description paper: 30%
- Design suggestions: 10%
- Design suggestions paper: 40%

## Schedule

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	Assignment due
1	Sep 13	Course Introduction; Metaphors; Ethical Considerations	Oldenburg (Oldenburg 1989) Chapter 2, pages 20-42 (Wellman 1996) (boyd 2008) Sections 1.4-1.5, pages 15-41 (Etzioni and Etzioni 1999) (Powazek 2002), Introduction (Resnick 2005)	
2	Sep. 20	Production Communities	(Forte, Larco et al. 2009) (Mockus, Fielding et al. 2002)	Make an edit on

			(Benkler 2002) especially section II.C (Wenger 1998)Vignettes and Chapter 1	Wikipedia
3	Sep. 27	Q&A and Technical Support  (Prof. Resnick at RecSys conference: Prof. Mark Ackerman guest instructor)	(Hansen, Ackerman et al. 2007)  (Adamic, Zhang et al. 2008)  (Wenger, McDermott et al. 2002) chapter 1 and 2  (Wenger 1998) chapter 2	
4	Oct. 4	Health and Wellness Communities	(Preece 1999)  (Richardson, Buis et al. under review)  (Resnick, Janney et al. forthcoming)  Wenger (Wenger 1998) ch. 3	
5	Oct. 11	Gaming Communities	(Steinkuehler and Williams 2006)  (Williams, Ducheneaut et al. 2006)  (Martey and Stromer-Galley 2007)  (Ducheneaut, Yee et al. 2007)  (Wenger 1998) ch. 4	
	Oct. 18	No class: fall break		
6	Oct. 25	Enterprise Communities; Intro to Design Alternatives	(Drakos, Rozwell et al. 2009)  (Technologies) Gold in Them Hills  (Technologies 2009)Community Health Index  (Kraut and Resnick Under Contract) Introduction chapter*	Community Description Paper

7	Nov. 1	Startup	(Powazek 2002) chapters 1 and 2*  (Kraut and Resnick Under Contract) Startup chapter*  (Wenger, White et al. 2009) Chapter 6*	Design suggestion 1
8	Nov. 8	Newcomers	(Kraut and Resnick Under Contract) Newcomers chapter*  Wenger chapter 6  (Crumlish and Malone 2009) Pages 70-75	Design suggestion 2
9	Nov. 15	Commitment: Bonds and Identification	(Kraut and Resnick Under Contract) Commitment chapter*  (Wenger 1998) chapter 8  (Berscheid and Reis 1998)p. 203-210 (first encounters) and 222-226 (relationship formation)*  (Crumlish and Malone 2009) Chapter 4, pg. 81-120  <u>Optional:</u>  (Minow 1997) chapter 2*  (Burkhalter 1999)*	Design suggestion 3  Response to peer design suggestion from previous week
10	Nov. 22	Regulation	(Kraut and Resnick Under Contract) Regulation chapter*  (Donath 1999)*  (Herring 2000)  (Crumlish and Malone 2009) Chapter 15	Design Suggestion 4  Response to peer design suggestion from previous week
11	Nov. 29	Contributions	(Kraut and Resnick Under Contract) Contribution chapter*  (Crumlish and Malone 2009) Chapter 6	Design suggestion 5

			(Latane 1981)	Response to peer design suggestion from previous week
12	Dec. 6	Design Jam 1: SI Alumni Network		Response to peer design suggestion from previous week
13	Dec. 13	Design Jam 1: Steps FB App		
	Dec. 20			Cumulative design paper

## An Important Note on Plagiarism

At the University of Michigan and in professional settings generally, plagiarism is an extremely serious matter. All individual written submissions must be your own, original work, written entirely in your own words. You may incorporate excerpts from publications by other authors, but they *must be clearly marked as quotations* and properly attributed. You may obtain copy editing assistance, and you may discuss your ideas with others, but all substantive writing and ideas must be your own or else be explicitly attributed to another, using a citation sufficiently detailed for someone else to easily locate your source.

All cases of plagiarism will be officially reported and dealt with according to Rackham policies. There will be no warnings, no second chances, no opportunity to rewrite; all plagiarism cases will be immediately reported to SI's Dean of Academic Affairs. ***Consequences can range from failing the assignment (a grade of zero) or failing the course to expulsion from the University.*** For additional information about plagiarism, see the "Academic and Professional Integrity Policy Statement" in the [SI Master's Student Handbook](#), the Rackham [pamphlet on Academic Integrity](#), and the [Plagiarism](#) document from the UM Libraries. If you have any doubts about whether you

are using the words or ideas of others appropriately, please discuss them with your GSI or professor.

## Accommodations

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way we teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://www.umich.edu/sswd/>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.

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