



APPLIES TO ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/2015

## **ELE 3766 Social Networks and Communities**

### **Programme**

Elective

### **Responsible for the course**

Christian Fieseler

### **Department**

Department of Communication and Culture

### **Term**

According to study plan

### **ECTS Credits**

7,5

### **Language of instruction**

English

### **Introduction**

Understanding relationships is vital for organizations and is particularly critical to the success of marketing and/or public relations activities. However, new forms of communication and cooperation have made it more difficult for organizations to have an overview or control over their relationships. Analyzing and detecting social networks and communities allows organizations to make sense of the social and information networks arising from the pervasive availability of the Internet and new interactive applications whose use by consumers and other stakeholders can be a benefit for organizations but also can put their reputations at risk. The course introduces basic theoretical perspectives and research methods of social networks and their applications with a focus on communication networks.

Against this background the course will cover particular aspects of social networks and communities impacting corporate communication, marketing and other communicative aspects of product and service development, and reputation.

### **Target groups**

Bachelor students with an interest in corporate communication (for example, public relations, customer relations, public affairs), marketing (especially advertising and branding), journalism, media and technology. The course is ideal for students who intend to pursue a career in marketing and communication, but also in communication related tasks in consulting or strategy-related corporate functions.

### **Learning outcome**

#### **Acquired Knowledge**

After completing the course students should have gained a basic understanding of:

- What is changing in marketing and communications, but also why these changes are occurring.
- Major current economic, technological and social developments in the Internet, and the ensuing implications for enterprises in general and for marketing and communication in particular.
- Scientific and cultural backgrounds on the properties of social networks, the (sub-)culture of Internet communities, the characteristics of digital media to issues of transparency, attention and power
- Basic tools for researching and analyzing social networks

#### **Acquired Skills**

On completion of the course students are able to:

- Explain how organizations can reach their target audiences in an increasingly fragmented media environment
- Articulate social networks' impact on the production, authorship and quality of messages and content
- Identify novel ways of creating and maintaining social capital to avoid reputational crises and activism
- Outline important innovations in addressing target groups
- Perform social network analysis

#### **Acquired Knowledge**

Upon completion of this course students will have an understanding of current communication challenges, but also the requisite knowledge that will help them to fundamentally understand and anticipate societal as well as organizational changes. These include the major current economic, technological and social developments in the Internet, and the ensuing implications for enterprises in general and for marketing and communication in particular.

### **Prerequisites**

There are no formal prerequisites.

### **Compulsory reading**

**Books:**

Kadushin, Charles. 2012. Understanding social networks : theories, concepts, and findings. Oxford University Press

**Other:**

Articles available on Itslearning

**Recommended reading****Books:**

Howe, Jeff. 2009. Crowdsourcing : why the power of the crowd is driving the future of business. Crown Business  
 Palfrey, Jeffrey and Urs Gasser. 2012. Interop : the promise and perils of highly interconnected systems. Basic books  
 Shirky, Clay. 2011. Cognitive surplus : creativity and generosity in a connected age. Penguin Books

**Articles:**

Borgatti, S.P. & Foster, P. 2003. The network paradigm in organizational research : a review and typology. Journal of Management. 29(6). 991-1013  
 Boyd, D. & Ellison, N. B. 2007. Social network sites : definition, history, and scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication. 13(1). 210-230  
 Enders, A., H. Hungenberg, H.P. Denker, S. Mauch. 2008. The Long Tail of Social Networking : Revenue Models of Social Networking Sites. European Management Journal. 26(3). 199-211  
 Granovetter, M. (1973). 1973. The strength of weak ties. American Journal of Sociology, 78(6). 1360-1380  
 Kaplan, A.M., Haenlein, M. 2010. Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media. Business Horizons, 53(1). 59-68  
 Kietzmann, J.H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I.P., Silvestre, B.S. 2011. Social Media? Get Serious! Understanding the Functional Building Blocks of Social Media. Business Horizons, 54(3). 241-251

**Course outline**

- Defining social networks
- Creating and Sustaining Social Capital in the Web 2.0
- Principles and Applications of the Social Internet
- Social Networks: Forms of Analysis and Applications
- Communities, Peer Production and Collaboration Processes
- Trust on the Internet
- Attention Economy - The Future of Content
- Communication implications of digital business models
- The (Counter-) culture of the Internet
- Engaging social networks online

**Computer-based tools****Learning process and workload**

The course aims at combining formal lectures with a case teaching approach. In addition, experts involved in branding and corporate communications will present their insights. The course will consist of the following elements:

- *Formal lectures* for basics of the topics and to provide a conceptual framework;
- *Case studies* for deepening knowledge of the management process, as well as for applying theoretical knowledge real-world situations;
- *Guest lectures* by media and communication experts in order to gain insights in their roles/activities and experiences.

Recommended use of hours:

| Activity                                              | Hours |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Participation in teaching sessions, presentations     | 39    |
| Group work in class                                   | 6     |
| Preparation for teaching sessions, reading literature | 60    |
| Research and outside reading                          | 45    |
| Work on project paper                                 | 50    |
| Average recommended study hours                       | 200   |

**Project paper**

Students will write a paper in small groups in which they have to imagine that they are communication consultants, experts on one of the central modules covered in the lecture. Their analysis should be based on four key questions:

1. *Be convincing* : **What is the relevance of the topic for today's business world?** Why is it necessary to address the topic? Why does it make good business sense?
2. *Be informed* : **How well does today's business world address the topic?** Do you find any signs that it already

systematically addresses your topic? Are there signs that businesses need to catch up on their efforts?

3. *Be creative* : **What are opportunities for improvement?** How can businesses become even better at addressing your topic? What new, exciting measures would you propose? How could they benefit from your suggestions?

4. *Be rigorous* : **Why should business believe you?** How can you ground your assumptions in theory, as it pertains to your particular topic, based on the literature handed out to you as well as additional (scholarly) material?

The length of the paper should not exceed 20 pages and shall correspond to general scientific requirements. With the paper students are also required to hand in a short presentation summarizing their approach to the topic, not exceeding 15 slides. It is taken for granted that students prepare for the lectures and play an active role within the course.

#### **Use of hours**

30 hours - Lectures

9 hours - Presentations

6 hours - Group work (in class)

45 hours total

#### **Examination**

A Project paper concludes the course.

The project paper may be solved individually or in groups of up to three students. For more information about the project paper see the section "Learning process and workload".

#### **Examination code(s)**

ELE 37661 - Project paper, counts for 100 % to obtain final grade in ELE 3766 Social Networks and Communities  
7,5 CTS credits.

#### **Examination support materials**

All support materials are allowed.

#### **Re-sit examination**

A re-sit is held in connection with the next scheduled course.

#### **Additional information**