



<b>Course title:</b>	Social Media and Social Change	
<b>Course #/term:</b>	751, Winter 2021	
<b>Time and place:</b>	This is an online class that meets on Mondays from 5-8pm, from February 8 <sup>th</sup> until March 8 <sup>th</sup> .	
<b>Credit hours:</b>	1 credit hour. This amounts to approx. 37 hours of engagement total, or approx. 7-8 hours per week for 5 weeks.	
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	none	
<b>Instructor:</b>	Laura Yakas, PhD, MSW	
<b>Pronouns:</b>	She/her	
<b>Contact info:</b>	<b>Email:</b> lyakas@umich.edu	<b>Phone:</b> 614-301-3312 (note: you need to use WhatsApp to contact me by phone, as I am abroad)
<b>Office:</b>	Remote/Online office hours	
<b>Office hours:</b>	Please email me for an appointment	

### Course Description

This course is about the role of social media in social change. Students will explore research that reveals the ways that social media has changed/is changing the social world. This will include an exploration of the harmful changes that can result from social media (such as mental health issues, and increases in extremism, polarization, and misinformation), as well as the anti-oppressive changes that are possible (such as increases in connection and community for marginalized folks, and the use of social media for activism). Throughout this course, students will also develop their own skills in effective digital presence and activism. Core competencies – including critical thinking, social justice, and social equity – are also examined and discussed.

Note: if you have already read the course description for this course (on the SSW website), you will notice that this is a revised version. The original version is now out of date, and this new version has been tentatively approved.

### Intensive Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS)

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward

social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self-knowledge and self-awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

### **Specific Course Plan for SW 751 with Dr. Yakas**

This course about social media and social change will explore the following “big picture” questions: what are the perks and pitfalls of social media? How is social media changing the social world? How can we harness social media to push for anti-oppressive social change? Over the five weeks of this mini-course, the following themes will be explored: In week one, we will explore the general perks and pitfalls of social media through watching the recent documentary “The Social Dilemma.” In week two we will focus specifically on the ways that social media impacts body image, and how this can have both harmful and healing impacts – rates of body dissatisfaction rise due to the oppressive beauty ideals social media can promote, and yet, social media is a major platform for radical movements of body positivity. In week three, we focus on another specific example of perks and pitfalls: the way that social media impacts human connection and relationships. Rates of loneliness and isolation rise in relation to social media use, and yet, for some marginalized communities (such as transgender or Autistic folks) social media provides a unique space for liberated connection and activism. And especially now, during a pandemic, social media has become a primary source of social connection for a *great* many, regardless of identity. In week four we will talk more specifically about social media and activism, and in week five we will wrap up our time together with space for students to share about their own work and experience in digital activism.

### **My Experience**

#### **What I Am:**

I am a Mad/Disabled anthropologist, social worker, and artist. I completed my PhD in anthropology and social work here at the University of Michigan in 2018. My main interests/areas of knowledge and experience include; Disability culture (including the Mad Pride movement, the Neurodiversity movement, the Disability Justice movement) and how this connects to other forms of anti-oppressive resistance like intersectional feminism, antiracism, and decolonization.

I have devoted much time to studying and teaching theories of oppression using anthropology and the other social sciences. Anthropology is an academic discipline that aims to deeply *understand* humanity, and I am passionate about bridging this with social work, a profession that aims to *change* humanity.

#### **What I Am Not:**

I am not a very active social media user. I have a Facebook account which I rarely use, and an extensive YouTube channel where I share my music videos (many of which contain radical anti-oppressive ideas!). I have never used Twitter, Instagram or TikTok.

#### **What This Means:**

Though I am capable of creating an interesting course about the ways social media impacts social justice, I am not able to share first-hand experience about *using* social media for social change efforts. Therefore, I have shepherded two phenomenal social media activists as visiting speakers. There will also be a “Shared Resources” discussion thread for you to share your knowledge and resources about this topic (I am already aware that some of you are bringing a wealth of knowledge about digital activism into the space!)

## **My Teaching Style**

As a person, I think and feel very deeply, and I practice **radical authenticity** – this shapes my teaching style. I bring my full self into our class, and I invite and expect this from you. This is not normative in our culture (so it may feel uncomfortable at first!), but it is important that we lean into it, for authenticity is a key part of practicing anti-oppression in classrooms. With authenticity, we can challenge the old-fashioned oppressive academic hierarchies that ask us to *pretend* all the time. For example, you don't need to pretend "I have a technology issue, so I can't come to class today" when *really* you feel overwhelmed and stressed – instead, you can tell the truth, and I can reassure you that your need for rest/time off is valid. You don't need to pretend that you already understand something when you *really* feel confused about it and embarrassed that you don't *already* understand it – you can tell the truth, and someone will help you understand. In this class, you can always tell the truth.

Additionally, **connection** is fundamental to my teaching style. I thrive best as an educator when I feel a human connection with students that goes beyond our titles as professor and student. This also contributes to why I bring and ask for authenticity.

## **Trauma-informed Teaching During a Pandemic**

As a Mad/Disabled woman, radical accessibility is very important to me. As an educator, I aim to co-create accessible and trauma-informed learning spaces. I will talk more about this in our first class, but in brief, trauma-informed teaching involves three things:

1) **Choice** – you will always have options in this class. For example, if the list of materials for a certain week feels like too much, you can always choose which to read and focus on (which is why I often provide summaries of the assigned materials). As it says in the "Grading and Assignments" section, you can also choose one Zoom class and discussion post to miss without needing to talk to me about it. And your final project has many options to choose from. In these ways, you can tailor your *personal* journey through this class, all the while scaffolding it within our *collective* journey.

2) **Flexibility** – pandemic learning demands more flexibility than usual, which means that we must all be prepared to accept with grace any unexpected changes or barriers. Deadlines for discussion posts and assignments are flexible, and you can always let me know if you need more time. Materials or weekly topics may change too, if circumstances demand it (for example, last semester during the GEO strike, the plan for my SW 504 class changed).

3) **Transparency** – there will be a lot of open communication between us. When relevant, I will be honest and real with you about my needs and barriers, and I expect you to do the same. As I wrote earlier, radical authenticity is key to the way I practice trauma-informed and anti-oppressive education! You cannot disappoint me as long as you are honest. And I do not believe in "laziness" or "not-working-hard-enough" (see this article titled "[Laziness does not exist: unseen barriers do](#)"), I believe everyone grows at their own pace and that barriers to *individual* growth cannot be separated from the oppressive structures we *collectively* live within.

## **Course Structure**

We will explore a variety of teaching/learning techniques in this class, such as:

- Video lectures
- Visiting speakers

- Whole-group discussions (on Zoom for “real time” conversations, and also using Canvas Discussions)
- Small group discussions and activities (using “breakout” rooms on Zoom)
- Self-reflective and creative writing assignments
- Collaborative “quote” lists (collections of meaningful quotes from assigned materials)

Every week will have a “Module” on Canvas which will contain the assigned materials and the tasks (such as Canvas Discussion posts) for you to do that week.

On every day that we meet for Zoom class, you will receive a “Plan of the Day” Announcement on Canvas, which will tell you what to expect for our meeting that day. There will also be a “Debrief” Announcement that comes shortly after each Zoom class.

A note on content warnings: in the service of our collective learning and growth, this course will dig into a variety of challenging and potentially activating topics. It would be prohibitively labor-intensive for me to provide specific content warnings for each assigned material, but I want to urge you to take care of yourselves however and whenever it becomes necessary.

### **Expected Time Commitment**

A 1-credit class amounts to **37-38 hours** of total expected engagement – including all synchronous and asynchronous work, such as Zoom meetings, reading/watching content outside of class, and assignments. For a 5-week class like ours, this averages to about 7-8 hours per week. Online classes tend to ask students to do **more asynchronous work than synchronous work** – this means there will be more things to read or watch and reflect on (through discussion posts) on your own time. In summary: you should expect that **most of your weekly (and overall) workload will be reading/watching and reflecting on the assigned materials**, with a smaller portion of time devoted to Zoom meetings and additional assignments.

### **Zoom Etiquette**

- Please use cameras when you can, as it makes connection easier for all of us. If you wish, you can use a “[virtual background](#)”. Virtual backgrounds can be fun, and also have the benefit of concealing your literal background if you don’t feel comfortable sharing your space with us!
- Please remember that your participation is always your choice. Please don't log in and then mute yourself and tune out, pretending to be there. If you are experiencing barriers to your attendance, please just let me know, it is all ok! As a Mad/Disabled person, I have great compassion for people facing barriers to participating in the world. And I'd rather keep the space honest and authentic wherever possible. Plus, logistically it could be awkward if you're put into a pair or small group breakout room and don't show up!
- If you are comfortable, please provide your pronouns either by “renaming” yourself in Zoom or by changing your “preferred last name” in Wolverine Access. See this [google doc](#) (prepared by a former MSW student) for instructions on how to do this.

### **Grading and Assignments**

“Good grades” are rarely the main goal or priority of a student who chooses to undertake a social work degree. And for me in the role of educator, I am building toward a philosophy of “[ungrading](#)” (along with several other faculty members in this school). To me, grading is an antiquated system that reinforces systems of oppression and demands that

educators rank students' learning journeys. Therefore, I want to make this explicit right away: the activities and assignments for this class are **not designed to test, judge, or evaluate you**. They are designed to be useful, healing, energizing activities that **invite you** to explore your paths to deepened awareness and compassion.

When I read your work (whether it is a discussion post or your final assignment), this is what you can expect: 1) I will engage with your work by providing written feedback and validation. 2) I will not assign letter grades to your discussion posts, though I will provide a letter grade for your final assignment using the rubric below (a rubric that is designed to be as close to "pass/fail" as is possible within the confines of a graded system):

A = if you receive an A, it means you met all expectations - it means that your work conveyed thoughtfulness, care and depth!

A- = if you receive an A-, it means that you answered the question/followed the instructions adequately, but your response was not as deep or nuanced as it could have been, which would come through in my written feedback.

B+ = if you receive a B+, it means that you did an adequate job, but that you missed something specific or important, which would come through in my written feedback.

In the unlikely event that your work does not meet the criteria for a B+, I will check in with you by email and see what the barriers are.

The graded assignments for this course will be as follows:

### **1. Discussion Posts: 50% of your course grade**

Each week there will be a Canvas "Discussion" with questions or prompts that ask you to reflect on the materials (the assigned readings, videos, etc.). I will not grade individual discussion posts, but everyone will receive an "A" as long as they meet the following expectations throughout the course:

- Make a post each week, **due by 9am the day of our Zoom class (Mondays)**. I ask for this so that I have time to account for your reflections in preparing for our Zoom session, though there is no penalty for posting later. There is no word limit. You are trusted to write the amount that is right for you, though I offer the advice to be concise (if everyone writes 1000 words, it will be hard to read it all!). Note: **you may miss one weekly discussion post without informing me of your absence. Beyond that, I expect you to email me to let me know about the barriers to your participation.**
- Read your classmates posts. This means you are expected to read the whole thread. For example, if you post early in the week, you are expected to return to the thread later in the week to read what was posted after you.
- Aim to respond to your classmates' responses, so that the Discussion thread feels like a conversation. Offer validation (a simple "thanks for sharing" or "YES!" - Canvas also gives you the option of "liking" people's posts). Ask someone a follow-up question, if you feel inspired to. If someone before you wrote something that overlaps with what you want to say, acknowledge them in your post, just as you would in a classroom discussion. Note: **If you choose to respond to a classmates' post in a more meaningful and substantive way (something I will model in my responses to your posts early in the semester), this can count as your post for the week (i.e. you don't also need to respond to the prompts yourself).**

In the context of online learning, Canvas Discussions are our main way of exchanging ideas and developing relationships with one another, so they are very important! And although we lose the spontaneity that is possible in face-to-face discussions, from what I have read about and experienced with online education, we gain something just as precious: the opportunity to **take our time, to slow down our thoughts and feelings**. This can lead to deeper and more robust conversations.

There will also be a weekly Discussion thread devoted to community building. Specifically, each week there will be a **“Life Snapshot and Gratitude”** Discussion where you are asked to share an image (a photograph, a screenshot, a meme) from your daily life and describe it to us, as well as sharing something you feel grateful for. There will be more information about this on the Discussion itself.

## **2. Attendance at our weekly “Zoom Class”: 10% of your course grade**

We will meet each week on **Monday at 5pm** on Zoom for between two and three hours (we have a three-hour time block, but may not always use that whole time). I will not provide specific grades for your attendance each week, but everyone will receive an “A” as long as they meet the following expectations throughout the course: 1) be there, and practicing good Zoom etiquette (see the “Zoom Etiquette” section in Course Structure and Expectations), and 2) respond appropriately to the discussion. Remember, “responding appropriately” does not mean you *have* to speak. It is an invitation to speak if you feel inspired to. You may also use the “chat” feature on Zoom, if you prefer to type rather than verbally share your thoughts. Note: **you may miss one Zoom class without informing me of your absence. Beyond that I expect an email to let me know about the barriers to your participation.**

## **3. Final Project: 40% of your course grade**

The final project for this class (due Friday March 12<sup>th</sup> at 9pm) is designed to be very broad – I will provide a few ideas and options, but you are encouraged to do whatever you think most useful for yourself. You may already have a goal for what you’d like to develop or create (for example, you may be taking this class as a push to finally set up that YouTube channel you’ve always wanted to launch), or you may be taking this class with a more open-ended “let’s just see what happens” mindset. There’s room for all of you!

Because one of the goals of this class is to offer you opportunities to connect and work with each other (to offset the loneliness we are all facing due to the pandemic), I am planning to put you into “project working groups” (so please feel free to let me know if you have friends in this class whose group you’d like to be in). This does not mean you necessarily have to create a final project as a group (though you totally can!), but that you will have a group with whom you workshop and brainstorm ideas with. Every week, you will be given 30 min to an hour of “final project group time” (in Zoom breakout rooms) where you can spend time working on your final projects with the support of your fellow group members. I will also be online at that time and available for questions and support. Note: if the “project working group” idea doesn’t work out (i.e. if it doesn’t feel useful to you all), that’s fine, we’ll just adjust - flexibility is one of the key elements of trauma-informed pandemic learning, after all!

Your final project **must be related to social media, but otherwise, the possibilities are broad!**

Some ideas:

- You might write a blog post about a topic that is important to you (many of the assigned materials we read for this class would be good models, as many of these are blog styled pieces that raise awareness about a social justice issue).
- You might try launching a hashtag campaign that raises awareness about a social justice topic (as many of you will already know, the last decade has featured many powerful hashtags – such as [#BlackLivesMatter](#), [#MeToo](#) and [#DisabledAndCute](#) – these all began with a person or group of people who had an idea, and spread it!). If you choose to do this, please begin early in the course so that you have time (the course is 5 weeks long) to collect data about how it is going!
- You might make an awareness-raising TikTok YouTube video
- You might want to do some awareness-raising about one of the issues that came up in “The Social Dilemma”
- If you already have a background in digital activism, you might write a biography about your digital activism story (for example, how Sonya Renee Taylor tells her story of founding [The Body is Not An Apology](#)), or follow the example of our visiting speaker in Week Two and make a presentation about your digital activism story (to be presented in the final week, Week Five). I am already aware that some of you have a background in digital activism, and this could be a great option for you, and also a benefit to the class who will learn from your experience!
- You might do a “social media self-study” – inspired by “The Social Dilemma,” I have begun tracking my daily use of my phone, and attempting to be more intentional with it. For your final project, you might consider setting some goals for your social media presence (something we will all do together in week one anyway) and then tracking your social media use and writing a journal-entry style review of yourself at the end of the course.

### **Additional Course Logistics**

**1. Email:** I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours, but please feel free to send me a reminder if you are feeling any urgency or anxiety.

**2. Deadlines:** All deadlines for this course are “soft” – which means there is flexibility surrounding them. Please just let me know by email if you are experiencing a barrier to submitting something, whether it is Discussion posts or Assignments. Trust that I am here to support you, and you do not need to hesitate, or obsess over how to word your email perfectly. We are all in this together.

**3. Accommodations for students with disabilities:** If you require an accommodation for a disability/different ability, please let me know as soon as the semester starts. Many assignments and teaching approaches can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work together, and include the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (SSD: 734-763-3000; <http://ssd.umich.edu>), to determine appropriate accommodations. SSD typically recommends accommodations using a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide there is confidential. If you are struggling and unsure whether SSD might be a good resource, please email me to discuss this.

**4. Student mental health and wellbeing:** Graduate school is a tumultuous experience at the best of times... and right now is far from “the best of times.” I have had this quote by James Baldwin on my wall for years: *“The world is scarcely habitable for the conscious young.”* This course is designed to raise your consciousness, which can make the world we inhabit feel uninhabitable. But in order to change the world, we need to see the world for how it really is, the

terrible and beautiful, and I want you to know that I am available for counseling and mentorship as we work through it all together.

**5. Statement on Recording Classes** (this language comes from the University administration): Audio and video recording of in-class lectures and discussions is prohibited without the advance written permission of the instructor. Students with an approved accommodation from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities permitting the recording of class meetings must present documentation to the instructor in advance of any recording being done. The instructor reserves the right to disallow recording for a portion of any class time where privacy is a special concern. If the instructor chooses to record a class, they will decide which classes, if any, are recorded, what portion of each class is recorded, and whether a recording is made available on the course management website. On days when classes are recorded, students will be notified in advance that a recording will occur and be provided with an option to opt-out. Class recordings and course materials may not be reproduced, sold, published or distributed to others, in whole or in part, without the written consent of the instructor.

## Weekly Schedule

### **Week One (Feb 8): The Social Dilemma: Problems with Social Media**

Goal: This week we launch our mini-course with a basic overview of the problems / risks of social media, relying primarily on the recent documentary *The Social Dilemma*.

#### Read:

Please read the syllabus thoroughly before class begins (this includes all the Pages under the Module titled "Course Overview") as there is important information in there about what I expect from you, what you can expect from me and from the course, and what the flow of our journey will be like. It is more comprehensive than most course syllabi, because clear and thorough communication is very important to me (especially with online teaching!).

#### Watch:

Please watch the Netflix Documentary "[The Social Dilemma](#)." If you do not have access to Netflix, please email me and let me know as soon as possible!

This recent documentary covers the major problems/risks of social media – for example, the mental health consequences (such as increases in anxiety, depression, body image issues, and adolescent suicide), the increases in social polarization and “tribalism,” the increases in forms of extremism (such as conspiracy theories, fake news, and hate-based violence), and the issues of data privacy and manipulation of social media users. I also recommend checking out the website for the [Center For Human Technology](#) (which is discussed in the film).

#### Do:

Please use this Discussion to share with us one meaningful quote (or paraphrased idea) from the documentary, something that really struck you as important or mind-blowing.

Please respond to the questions in the Discussion titled “My Social Media Background / Goals.”

Please post in the weekly community building Discussion titled “Life Snapshot.”



\*\*\*\*

### Optional additional resources:

*The Social Dilemma* is a great review of many of the problems that arise from social medium, but if you're interested in more, the following articles from *The Economist* address different facets of these problems (PDFs in "Files")

Do social media threaten democracy? Facebook, Google and Twitter were supposed to save politics as good information drove out prejudice and falsehood. Something has gone very wrong

Who controls the conversation? Free speech on social media is too important to be determined by a handful of tech executives

How the world was trolled: Once considered a boon to democracy, social media have started to look like its nemesis

### **Week Two (Feb 15): Social Media and The Body**

Goal: This week we explore how social media impacts people's relationship to their bodies. We will look at both the dark side (how social media amplifies the harmful consequences of systems of oppression such as fatphobia and ableism) and the hopeful side (how social media is used to promote radical body positivity). We will be joined by visiting speaker [Shira Collings](#), a friend and a fabulous radical body positivity activist.

### Read:

ALOK, 2018, [Why Ugliness Is Vital in the Age of Social Media: ALOK talks with writer and disability justice organizer Mia Mingus about beauty, body positivity, and ableism.](#)

Mia Mingus is a well-known and well-loved member of the Disability Justice community, and in this piece she is interviewed by queer/non-binary activist ALOK.

See also this post on ALOK's Instagram about ["the racist history of hair removal"](#) (and feel invited to check out some of their other posts, they're all pretty rad!)

Sonya Renee Taylor, 2018, Shame, Guilt and Apology – then and now (chapter two of *The Body is Not an Apology*) – PDF in "Files"

*The Body is Not an Apology* is an amazingly powerful book that our visiting speaker today recommended to me. It champions radical self-love / intersectional body positivity as a force to heal ourselves and our transform our culture. This chapter describes the vicious relationship between oppressive ideas about what is "normal" and practices that shame people into believing themselves "abnormal" or "wrong." It also describes the role of media in perpetuating what she calls the "Global Body-Shame Profit Complex." I have been *super* moved by this book, and if you're interested, the whole thing is available on [our library website](#) !

Shira Collings, 2020, [Creating New Connections in Quarantine](#)

This is a short piece written by our visiting speaker (under her former un-married name Emily Cutler). It is about her experience of quarantine and how social media has been

really helpful. This notion – that social media can support marginalized folks in finding community – will reappear as a theme next week.

Shira Collings, 2020, [How Writing and Speaking Out Are Integral to My Recovery](#)

This is another short piece by our visiting speaker (using a pseudonym that she often uses in her more political work, which she will explain during her talk). It is about how writing and engaging in social media activism have been crucial in her eating disorder recovery.

Here is also a screen-shot that she shared with me, which has a list of Fat / weight inclusive activists and professionals that you can follow on social media

#### **Do:**

Please post to the weekly reflection Discussion.

Please post in the weekly community building Discussion titled “Life Snapshot.”

\*\*\*\*

#### **Optional additional resources:**

You might enjoy this TED talk by Sonya Renee Taylor as well: [BODIES AS RESISTANCE: Claiming the political act of being oneself](#) (8 min). I love the quote “will we use our bodies to uphold systems of oppression or to defy them?”

I also highly recommend checking out [The Body is Not an Apology](#) – the website for the global digital body positivity organization that she founded.

Vera Papisova, 2016, [How Social Media and Body Positivity Are Ending Period Stigma](#)

This is a very short piece about the ways that social media is used to challenge the patriarchal taboo/stigma surrounding menstruation

#### **Week Three (Feb 22): Social Media and Social Relationships**

Goal: This week we explore how social media has impacted / is impacting social relationships (especially relevant right now, at a time where most relationships are mediated through social media due to the pandemic). We will examine the perks and the pitfalls, just as we did last week. For some, social media use is connected to increased loneliness and isolation (something which came up in *The Social Dilemma*), and yet many marginalized folks have discovered that social media allows them to find their social niche much more easily than in the pre-social media past.

#### **Read:**

Katherine Hobson, 2017, [Feeling Lonely? Too Much Time On Social Media May Be Why](#)

This brief NPR piece reviews a study that connects social media use to loneliness.

Roger Patulny, 2020, [Does social media make us more or less lonely? Depends on how you use it](#)

This brief piece reviews recent research (out of Australia) connecting loneliness to social media.

Lucy Osler, in press (not yet published, but soon), Taking Empathy Online

This is a soon-to-be-published article written by one of my best friends, a philosopher who studies empathy and human connectedness (she is fascinated by what she calls “we” experiences, moments in which we feel connected to others/ to the greater whole of humanity). This article is all about the ways that empathy and connection can be felt in the digital realm, challenging the simplistic (but common) notion that empathy / connection requires physical presence.

Sarah Kurchak, 2018, [Autistic People Are Breaking Stereotypes And Connecting Online](#)

This piece describes how social media has been helpful to Autistic folks

Ginger Stickney, 2019, [“Stop Looking At Your Phone”?: 5 Ways Internet Technology Helps My Queer, Neurodivergent Family](#)

This is another piece (published on The Body is Not an Apology site!) about the positive impact social media has for some marginalized folks.

Amber Leventry, 2019, [The importance of social media when it comes to LGBTQ kids feeling seen](#)

This is a short article about how social media can be valuable for LGBTQIA+ youth

Katelyn Burns, 2019, [The internet made trans people visible. It also left them more vulnerable: This decade has been a double-edged sword for trans people.](#)

This article talks about both positive and negative impacts of social media in the trans community.

#### **Watch:**

This video (5 min) from a researcher who studies "[the social impacts of hyperconnectivity](#)" (you might also want to read this brief [dictionary definition](#) of the term 'hyperconnectivity' to aid in your understanding).

#### **Do:**

Please post to the weekly reflection Discussion.

Please post in the weekly community building Discussion titled “Life Snapshot.”

\*\*\*\*

#### **Optional additional resources:**

Here are some other research studies about how social media is changing people's social relationships:

[The Future of Well-Being in a Tech-Saturated World](#), Pew Research Center 2018 (a very long report, but you could just skim the contents page to see what the general themes are, which overlap with stuff on *The Social Dilemma*)

[A Majority of Teens Have Experienced Some Form of Cyberbullying](#), Pew research center 2018

[Millennials will benefit and suffer due to their hyperconnected lives](#), Pew research center 2012

[Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering From Severe Anxiety?](#) New York Times 2017 (this article connects social anxiety to social media)

Karen Kelsky, 2020, [Online Education Can Help The Neurodivergent and Disabled](#)

This piece is not about social media, but it is related: it is about how online education creates more accessibility for some Disabled and Neurodivergent folks. I really connected with this piece, as I've found that my own experiences with Madness/Disability mean that online teaching is far more accessible to me than in-person teaching was. As counterintuitive as it may seem due to the difficulties of this pandemic, I've found the past few semesters online to be my best teaching experiences yet!

#### **Week Four (March 1): Social Media and Activism**

**Goal:** This week we dive into the ways social media is used / can be used to push for anti-oppressive social change, while also exploring some of the problems associated with digital activism (such as performative allyship / slacktivism). We will be joined by Dr. [Shanna Kattari](#), a friend/colleague and social media activist.

#### **Read:**

Talia Lavin, 2020, [Keyboard warriors: How the internet can be a lifeline for disabled activists](#)

This is an inspiring piece about the way social media supports social connection (throwing back to last week) and enables activism for Disabled folks.

Cabrera, N. L., Matias, C. E., & Montoya, R., 2017, Activism or slacktivism? The potential and pitfalls of social media in contemporary student activism.

This is a journal article that reviews research about the positive and negative roles that social media plays in student activism.

Rachel Liu, 2020, [#Woke: The Dangers and Possibilities of Social Media Activism and Woke Washing](#)

This piece addresses similar issues to the piece above, though it is not focused only on students, and is written as a blog post rather than peer-review article (so it is more accessible to a wider audience)

Holiday Phillips, 2020, [Performative Allyship Is Deadly \(Here's What to Do Instead\)](#)

This is a brief piece defining 'performative allyship' and describing its harmful impacts.

#### **Do:**

Please post to the weekly reflection Discussion.

Please post in the weekly community building Discussion titled "Life Snapshot."

\*\*\*\*

### **Optional additional resources:**

The NASW has released this resource with [Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice](#) – it features a uniform set of technology standards for professional social workers to use as a guide in their practice. Highly recommended for future use!

I assign Johanna Hedva's [Sick Woman Theory](#) in every class that I teach! It is my favorite Disability Justice piece, and in it, she brings to light so many powerful points about our oppressive culture and what it takes to resist it. One of the key points is how Disabled people are erased when we view activism as something one must be present for in person (the famous question she asks is "How do you throw a brick through the window of a bank if you can't get out of bed?"). It relates really nicely to what we are exploring this week, so if you have some extra time, treat yourself to this beautiful read!

### **Week Five (March 8): Wrapping Up**

Goal: There are no assigned materials this week, as the goal for today is for us to debrief our time together and to offer space for those who wish to present their final project work to the community.

Final assignments are due at the end of this week (March 12th, 9pm).