Note: For the actual course, I hope to turn this syllabus into a simple website that students can continue to access after the course is completed. Each section will be on its own page so that students can more easily find the information. Readings will be linked directly. The tutorial cache for Project 1 will be uploaded.

Course Information
Psychology and the Internet
Tuesdays, 4:10-6pm

Instructor Information
Ben Silver
Bms2202@columbia.edu
Office hours: Thursdays 3-5pm or by appointment

Learning Objectives
1. Students will be able to **critique** new/innovative methods and disciplines in the context of older and more common ones.
2. Students will be able to **conduct** data scraping procedures for real internet data that can help answer psychological research questions.
3. Students will be able to **develop** real-world recommendations for internet regulations, internet use, and technology design based on psychological principles.

Annotation: These three LOs organize the entirety of the course. In my mind, the three big components of the course are Assignment 1, Assignment 2, and participation. Assignment 1 is the data tutorial and it speaks to LO2: this is a hands on assignment in which students will actually get practice carrying out the methods that are used to conduct psychology research with online data. Assignment 2 is the op-ed and it speaks to LO3: this is an opportunity to apply psychology research to the "real world". Participation includes other smaller assignments and class discussions, and carries over the entire course, just like LO1 does.

Course Description
If the purpose of psychology is to understand human behavior, then we need to ensure that the questions we ask and the methods we use accurately reflect the world in which human behavior takes place. Increasingly, human behavior takes place online. The Internet is not some incidental toy that we play with on the side of real life – the internet is real life, and we need to study it as such. There are two primary ways the Internet impacts psychology: the tools we use and the questions we ask. Traditionally, psychology experiments have been carried out in a lab with controlled experiments. But the internet gives us a trove of new tools and datasets to understand psychological processes that have been studied for decades. For example, to study social interaction, we can look at social media. To study

emotions, we can look at disclosures on reddit. To study curiosity, we can look at search behavior. In addition, we can also ask *new* psychological questions that reflect our changing world. It is important to know not just how people behave generally, but how they behave online specifically, and how that differs from behavior in offline settings. Each week of the course will focus on a different aspect of psychology research on the internet. The first half of the course will focus on new tools to ask existing research questions, and the second half of the course will focus on new research questions elicited by online environments.

This is a discussion seminar for advanced undergraduates. Instructional methods include readings, in-person and digital discussions, personal reflections, and two projects. The emphasis will be on psychology literature and psychological principles, but students from related disciplines, including neuroscience, computer science, data science, and information science, among others, are welcome in the course.

Assignments

Summative Assessment 1: Data tutorial
In order to apply what you've been learning about the internet as a rich source of psychology data, your midterm assignment will be to construct a tutorial to present to our class on how to download data from one data source, and some of the things you can do with that data once you have it in hand. These tutorials will also live on our class website and can be accessed after the class ends so you can conduct psychology research online on your own. The structure of the assignment will be as follows:
- You pick a data source from the approved list of data sources
- You meet with me for a "kickoff" meeting. Come with questions about your chosen method and data source.
- Create a rough draft of your tutorial – either in Python or R – and submit it to me. The tutorial should take 5-10 minutes for a user to complete.
- I will provide you with feedback, and you will submit a final draft of the tutorial and will also walk the class through your tutorial.

Summative Assessment 2: Op-ed
Many of the psychological theories and research questions that we will discuss in class have real implications for internet use in everyday life. Legislative proposals to regulate online environments have been gaining steam, but rarely are those proposals rooted in rigorous understandings of psychology and human behavior. Furthermore, the motivation for these policies is not often effectively communicated to the public. Your final assignment is to write an op-ed for a specific publication (your choice!) highlighting one aspect of the internet that encourages harmful or self-destructive behavior, and ideas for how to change/improve it. I encourage you to think of this assignment as an opportunity to write something that you can actually try to get published in a general audience publication. The details:
- Your op-ed should be 1,200-1,500 words long.

- You should choose a specific publication for your op-ed, and your writing style should align with that publication.
- You must cite at least four psychology research papers in your op-ed.
- You also need to hand in an "article supplement," which includes a justification for the publication you chose, and for each paper you cite, a one paragraph summary of the paper, and a one paragraph summary on how the paper relates to your argument
- Before handing in your final assignment, you will send me a "pitch" that includes your proposed topic/issue, and the paper summary/inclusion argument for two papers

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Annotation: With both of the above assignments, I am seeking to create work for students that also serves other purposes. Many of the assignments in my graduate school classes also serve my research, whether it's analyzing my own data for a stats class or writing a grant proposal for a theory class. I have structured these two main assignments (which I think of as a midterm and a final) so that students can find use for them outside of the course. With Assignment 1, they'll be left with a trove of tutorials that will make it easier for them to conduct this research on their own at a later point in time. With Assignment 2, they'll have written an actual op-ed (and a pitch!) that they can then try to get published for real, if they so please.

Reading presentation
Each of you will be responsible for kick-starting our discussions for one week of the course by giving a 15-minute presentation on the readings at the start of class. This assignment is designed to give you ownership over the course material and allow you to feel a bit more like an expert on a topic you're particularly interested in. The details:
- Your presentation should be in the format of a slideshow, approximately 15 minutes long
- Your presentation should summarize at least two of the assigned readings and one unassigned but related reading that you find on your own
- Your presentation should conclude with some discussion questions
- This presentation is intended to be informal, with room for questions from your peers throughout the presentation

Digital discussion and reflection
Towards the end of the semester, we will hold two live digital discussions using X [Note: I'm not sure what platform I want to use. Maybe Slack]. You are expected to attend one of these sessions. At this session, you will discuss the readings with your peers in real time, both posting your own thoughts and responding to others'. The idea here is not to post big long paragraphs as is typically expected of discussion posts, but short thoughts, sort of like you're in a big group chat. This digital discussion will last for one hour. After attending your digital discussion, you should right a 500-word discussion reflecting on the experience. You may wish to answer questions like:

- How do digital conversations differ from in-person ones?
- What do you like/dislike about discussing the readings digitally?
- How did the digital discussion impact your learning/understanding of the readings?
- How did the digital discussion impact your relationship with your peers in the course?

Participation reflection
Midway through the course, you will write a 250 word reflection on how you think you are doing in your participation in the course, with a focus on the three components in the participation rubric. I will give you feedback on your reflection about where I agree and disagree. The purpose of this assignment is for you to be honest with yourself about your relationship to the course while also getting a concrete sense from me about how are you doing.

Course Policies

Participation
Participation is a slightly vague term that means something different to every instructor, and yet it is incredibly important in a seminar class such as this. For the purposes of this class, participation is evidence that you are engaging with the readings and the class material. This evidence can occur in a number of ways. It might mean speaking in class and being an active and considerate member of full-class discussions. (Active means you step up and share your thoughts, considerate means you step back and not take up too much space.) It might also mean attending my office hours and speaking with me about the material one on one.

Participation is important in this course because it is our way of constructing collective meaning of this material. Much of what we will read is part of new and rapidly-developing subdisciplines of psychology, and as a result, there is still plenty to say and to critique. Your participation will allow the entire class to grow a more informed understanding of the new/innovative research questions and methods that we will learn about. In addition, the midterm and final assessments in this class will be made easier by your participation. Asking questions about new methods will make it easier for you to complete the coding tutorial, and critically analyzing our readings will make you more adept at arguing a particular position and communicating it effectively for the op-ed.

Finally, participation is part of your grade. However you choose to engage with the material, it is my expectation that you will do so in a way that positively contributes to your classmates' experience in this course. Your participation will be assessed based on the below rubric. Midway through the semester, I will ask you to send me a reflection on how you think you are doing regarding participation: where you are doing well, and where you can improve. I will provide you with feedback on this reflection to indicate if your assessment aligns with mine. At the end of the semester, I will provide you with a participation grade based on the rubric.

For a participation rubric, see the participation rubric document on Canvas.

Attendance and lateness

Above anything else, I value clear communication. I'm understanding that school is not your entire life and that life sometimes gets in the way of school. But I ask that you clearly communicate with me when this happens, or when you anticipate it happening. Extra-curricular conflicts are sometimes unavoidable, but your communication demonstrates to me that you are committed to engaging with this course. For both attendance and late assignments, my policies are similar:

Attendance is expected at every class. If you are unable to make class one week, all I ask is that you try to let me know at least 24 hours in advance.

On-time assignments are always expected. If an assignment will be late, or you need an extension, please let me know as far in advance as possible.

Resources
[University and academic resources will go here]

Course Calendar

Date	Topic	Readings due	Assignments due
9/3	Introduction to course	All readings TBD.	
9/10	*Module 1: Psychology with the internet* Ethics		Syllabus quiz OR annotated syllabus
9/17	Emotion		Schedule a tutorial kick-off meeting with me
9/24	Social networks		
10/1	Curiosity		Data tutorial draft
10/8	Schemas and language		Participation reflection
10/15	Data tutorial presentations		Data tutorial
10/22	*Module 2: Psychology about the internet* Folk beliefs		
10/29	Impression formation/management		Digital discussion reflection (only complete one)
11/12	Nudging and decision-making		Digital discussion reflection (only complete one)
11/19	Misinformation and disinformation		

11/26	The internet and mental health		Op-ed pitch
12/3	Humor OR student choice		Due 12/12: Final op-ed + supplement

Annotation: I kind of like the idea of a student choice week. I'm hoping that by the end of the course, students will have begun to think about this discipline more broadly and will be curious about particular topics or ideas that we may not have covered. I'm not sure exactly how it will work yet, but perhaps a few weeks before the class can nominate topic ideas and we can take a vote on what we do for the final week. I would still be responsible for providing the readings.