Why should I take this course?

Google the question, “How is the Internet changing us?,” and you will find no shortage of opinions – or fears. In this course, you will critically examine empirical evidence for whether the Internet is changing the way we learn, educate, broadcast, communicate, socialize, make decisions, emote, attend, develop, age, and receive psychological therapy.

IMPORTANT:
THIS COURSE IS COMPLETELY ONLINE.

You MUST have access to high-speed Internet EVERY DAY of the ENTIRE COURSE.

What will I learn?

At the end of the course, you should be able to...

(1) Identify ten previous technologies or past-times that were previously feared — and appraise how those fears parallel fears about the Internet.

(2) Assess five principles of learning on which Internet-based higher education capitalizes.

(3) Evaluate five challenges that college students face today and how Internet-based education can tackle each challenge.

(4) Critique the claim that the Internet is making interpersonal communication briefer and less formal.

(5) Illustrate five intentional and five unintentional instances in which the Internet has amplified mass communication.

(6) Connect the social psychological phenomenon of similarity attraction to the popularity of online dating sites; connect interpersonal aggression to the phenomenon of online bullying and trolling.

(7) Interpret how and why emotional contagion spreads through the Internet; hypothesize why there are so many photos, gifs, and videos of cats on the Internet.

(8) Identify how each of seven sources of motivation can affect Internet use; describe five reasons why people binge watch (TV shows or movies).

(9) Adjudicate four reasons why the Internet is not changing our attention spans.

(10) Discriminate three primary decision-making heuristics and generate an example of how each applies to Internet use.

(11) Relate two positive effects of Internet use on aging and two on child development.

(12) Explain how much variance in Internet activities is accounted for by personality factors; describe four famous selfies made prior to the Internet.

(13) Evaluate whether Internet-based psychological therapy works as well as in-person therapy.

(14) Formulate two ways that secondary Internet-data (Facebook likes, Tweets, Wikipedia clicks, etc) can answer psychological research questions.

How will I learn?

You will read and synthesize original research literature, augmented with readings and videos from the popular press (e.g., WIRED magazine, TED talks).

Your course grade will be based on the quality and timeliness of your completing multiple assignments per unit, including interactive discussions conducted asynchronously and synchronously (through text-based chat).

You will be expected to engage with the course by accessing the course website every day. At the end of the course, you will produce a Term Project, demonstrating your mastery of the course content.

MORTON ANN GERNSBACHER, PH.D. Professor
RACHEL HAMILTON, M.S. Teaching Assistant
CHELSEA ANDREWS, M.S. Teaching Assistant
HOW MUCH TIME DO I NEED TO SPEND ON THIS COURSE?

PSYCH 532, "Psychological Effects of the Internet," is a 4-credit, semester-long course. Therefore, you’re expected to spend a total of 180 work hours on this course (4 course credits x 45 work hours per credit).

You should plan to spend 12 hours of work each week on assignments and another 12 hours of work across the semester on your Term Project.

WHAT BOOKS DO I NEED TO BUY?

None! (zero)

All course materials, including the Assignments and the instructions for the Term Project, will be available online.

WHAT EXAMS DO I HAVE TO TAKE?

None! (zero)

There will be no quizzes, no tests, and no final exam. Instead, your grade will be based on Assignments and a Term Project.

IMPORTANT NOTE!

This is a completely online course. You are required to have daily access to high-speed Internet. Not having access to the Internet (because you forgot to pay your cable bill or you are traveling or your roommate is hogging all the bandwidth playing video games) will NOT be a valid excuse for not completing your work.
How can I do well in this course?

The best way to learn any new skill – be it playing acoustic guitar or speaking Portuguese – is to practice every day.

Similarly, the best way to do well in this course is to engage with the course every day. Get on the course website every day.

If you’ve taken other online courses, you might be surprised by how this course works.

In other online courses, you might have been able to hang back and then cram in a lot of work at the end of the term. A hang-back strategy will not work in this course.

In this course, you must keep up. You will have two weeks to complete most assignments. You will also have one week of ‘late time’ after each assignment is due to complete the assignment late.

But after one week of ‘late time,’ you’ll no longer be able to complete the assignment.

So, to do well in this course, you must keep up. And work ahead to avoid unexpected mishaps, because after each assignment is gone, it’s gone – just like in real life.

How will I earn a grade in this class?

On each assignment, you can earn the following points:

3 points: If you completed the assignment before its due date and you fulfilled all the assignment’s requirements.

2 points: If you completed the assignment before its due date AND you corrected your assignment to fulfill all the requirements within one week of its due date.

1 point: If you did not complete the assignment before its due date OR if you completed the assignment before its due date but you did not fulfill ALL the assignment’s requirements and you did not correct your assignment to fulfill all the requirements within one week of its due date.

0 points: If you have not completed the assignment one week after its due date.

Points earned on all assignments will be added to points earned on the Term Project. Your final course grade will be the total points you earn as a percentage of the total points possible, using the grading scale to the right.
What are the important dates to know?

Course Opens: Mid-January * Begin Working Ahead Then! *

Unit 1: January 23 to January 28 * Welcome to the Internet *

Unit 2: January 29 to February 4 * Learning via the Internet *
January 31: Last day to drop this course or withdraw from all courses without getting a grade of DR or W on your transcript
February 4: Last day to request instructional accommodations (for existing disabilities)

Unit 3: February 5 to February 11 * Educating via the Internet *

Unit 4: February 12 to February 18 * Communicating via the Internet *

Unit 5: February 19 to February 25 * Broadcasting via the Internet *

Unit 6: February 26 to March 4 * Socializing on the Internet *

Unit 7: March 5 to March 11 * Emotion and the Internet *

Unit 8: March 12 to March 18 * Motivation and the Internet *

Unit 9: March 19 to March 25 * Perception & Attention to the Internet *
March 23: Last day to drop this course
March 26 to April 1: Spring Break

Unit 10: April 2 to April 8 * Decision Making on the Internet *

Unit 11: April 9 to April 15 * Development & Aging with the Internet *

Unit 12: April 16 to April 22 * Personality on the Internet *

Unit 13: April 23 to April 29 * Clinical Psychology on the Internet *

Unit 14: April 30 to May 4 * Conducting Research on the Internet *
May 4: Last day to turn in Term Project
HOW DO I RECEIVE REASONABLE INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES?

UW-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility.

Students are expected to inform the instructor of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. The instructor will work either directly with the student or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations, as part of a student’s educational record is confidential and protected under FERPA.

WHERE DO I TAKE COMPLAINTS ABOUT A TEACHING ASSISTANT OR COURSE INSTRUCTOR?

Occasionally, a student may have a complaint about a Teaching Assistant or Course Instructor. If that happens, you should feel free to discuss the matter directly with your Teaching Assistant or your Course Instructor.

If your complaint is about the Teaching Assistant, and you do not feel comfortable discussing it directly with them, you can discuss it with the Course Instructor. If you don’t want to approach the Course Instructor, you can discuss the matter with Professor Karl Rosengren, KRosengren@wisc.edu, a faculty member on the Psychology Department’s Undergraduate Committee. However, complaints about grading should be resolved with the Teaching Assistant or Course Instructor in the majority of cases.

If your complaint concerns sexual harassment, you may take your complaint to Dr. Linnea Burk, Clinical Assistant Professor and Director, Psychology Research and Training Clinic, Room 315 Psychology (608-262-9079; Burk@wisc.edu).

If you believe the Teaching Assistant or Course Instructor has discriminated against you because of your religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or ethnic background, you may talk to Professor Karl Rosengren. Or you may take your complaint to the Equal Opportunity Complaint Investigator in the UW-Madison Office of Compliance, 361 Bascom Hall (608-265-6018).

FROM YOUR PROFESSOR

I am genuinely interested in each and every student succeeding in this course. If you encounter any barriers to your success, please let me know. I’m always available by email at MAGernsb@wisc.edu.

[Signature]

Margo J. Gernsbacher
WHAT’S THE BEST WAY TO RESPOND TO ANOTHER STUDENT’S DISCUSSION BOARD POST?

YOUR RESPONSES TO OTHER STUDENTS’ DISCUSSION POSTS SHOULD ALWAYS CONTAIN AT LEAST TWO (OR MORE) OF THE FOLLOWING:

★ A COMPLIMENT
   I like how ...
   I like that ...

★ A COMMENT
   I agree that ... because ...
   I disagree that ... because ...

★ A CONNECTION
   I have also read that ...
   I have also seen that ...
   I have also heard that ...
   I have also thought that ...

★ A QUESTION
   I wonder why ...
   I wonder how ...
   I wonder who ...
   I wonder what ...
   I wonder when ...
   I wonder where ...

WHAT ARE THE ETHICS OF BEING A STUDENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY?

THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AT UW-MADISON EXPECT THEIR STUDENTS TO UPHOLD THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT. BY REGISTERING FOR THIS COURSE, YOU ARE IMPLICITLY AGREEING TO CONDUCT YOURSELF WITH THE UTMOST INTEGRITY THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER.

In the Department of Psychology, acts of academic misconduct are taken very seriously. Such acts diminish the educational experience for all involved – students who commit the acts, classmates who would never consider engaging in such behaviors, and instructors.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating on assignments, sabotaging the work of classmates, plagiarizing the work of classmates or published sources, and assisting fellow students in acts of misconduct. For detailed information on how to avoid plagiarism, see http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html.

Students who have knowledge that classmates have engaged in academic misconduct should report this to the instructor.
HOW CAN I TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FLEXIBILITY ACCOMMODATION THAT IS BUILT INTO THIS COURSE?

THIS COURSE IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN, WHICH PRESCRIBES THAT INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS SHOULD BE BUILT INTO THE ENVIRONMENT AND AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS (JUST LIKE ELEVATORS AND CURB CUTS) RATHER THAN NEEDING TO BE REQUESTED EX POST FACTO OR AVAILABLE TO ONLY SOME STUDENTS.

Therefore, in this course, all lecture videos are accompanied by written transcripts; all PDFs are screen-readable (and voiceable with text-to-speech software, as well as searchable and highlightable). There are no timed tests, no in-person lectures or in-person labs, and no in-person attendance requirements.

The course offers nearly a hundred grading opportunities, rather than only two or three across the entire semester. The course is highly structured with explicit due dates. All of these accommodations are built into this course to facilitate all students' success.

Most importantly, the course has a built in flexibility accommodation available to all students. All students have the opportunity to work ahead; to turn work in late (with a small penalty); and to miss occasional assignments and still earn a good final grade.

Flexibility is built into this course to aid all students, including students with disabilities and chronic health conditions, students with religious conflicts, students with caregiving responsibilities and unpredictable work schedules, student athletes — everyone.

To take advantage of the flexibility accommodation, you must do three things.

First, take advantage of the opportunity to work ahead. Complete as many assignments in advance as you can. If, for example, you are a student with a chronic health condition, the work you do in advance when you are feeling well will be like money in the bank for the times later in the term when you might not be feeling well.

Second, take advantage of the opportunity to turn in work up to one week late, with a small penalty. Experiment with Canvas’s “What If” grades, and you’ll see that all students can turn in some assignments late and still earn a final grade of A. It is unnecessary to ask for an extension on any assignment because all students have a one-week extension on every assignment, including the Term Project.

Third, take advantage of the opportunity to miss an assignment if needed. Again, experiment with Canvas’s “What If” grades, and you’ll see that all students can miss an assignment here or there and still earn an A in the course.

Flexibility is built into this course because we know how important it is for everyone to have a built-in flexibility accommodation. Take advantage of it.
What can I expect from Professor Gernsbacher?

Professor Gernsbacher and her Teaching Assistants abide by the “Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education.”

1. She will educate using the methods of active learning.
2. She will emphasize your spending time on task.
3. She will provide rapid feedback to you.
4. She will encourage you to cooperate and reciprocate with other students.
5. She will communicate high expectations.
6. She will respond to your email within 24 hours.
7. She will respect your diverse talents.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE A QUESTION, COMMENT, OR CONCERN?

Whenever you have a question, comment, or concern, feel free to email Professor Gernsbacher at MAGernsb@wisc.edu Do NOT email the TAs.

Please title the subject line of your email message PSY 532: Question and be sure to use your wisc.edu email account.

If you want to meet with Professor Gernsbacher synchronously (via phone, video conference, or text chat), simply email her to set up a time!