

PS 214 CYBERPSYCHOLOGY
IES Abroad Vienna

DESCRIPTION: Could you imagine life without the Internet? Some decades ago this was what life was like, there were no smartphones, no computers and no social networks. Now the Internet has reached virtually every corner of the lives of many people, especially among youths and young adults, bringing about tremendous changes in the way we live.

Let's stop for a moment and consider what this is doing to our lives... how is it affecting the way you and other people think, feel, perceive and define themselves and communicate with others? What are the opportunities and threats it brings to our lives and how can we learn to deal with them in a way that benefits us and our society?

This course is an invitation to take a closer look at how scientific research in cyberpsychology – as a new field of research based on, adding to and extending other psychological disciplines such as social psychology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology – is trying to explain how the Internet is influencing all our lives and to learn more about how these dynamics might influence our future world, in the fields of work and study, leisure and play, identity and relating to others in relationships and groups.

It will include practically relating the psychological theories to your own online behavior, observing, reflecting and discussing your findings in class as well as field trips to counseling and healthcare centers in Vienna that offer online counseling to their clients.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: at least one introduction to psychology course (preferably social psychology) and/or especially strong interest in psychology

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures
- Presentations
- Practical exercises
- Discussion in class
- Course-related trips
- Case studies
- Moodle

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class participation – 10 %
- Homework Journal – 20 %
- Midterm exam – 20 %
- In-class Presentation – 20 %
- Final exam – 30 %

Class participation

Students are expected to read and think about the readings assigned for each week in advance and participate in discussion in class.

Homework Journal

The homework journal consists of shorter exercises assigned on a weekly basis, related to the assigned readings and submitted electronically via Moodle. It is due each week 24 hours before the next class meeting.



It will typically include a short written assignment (200 to 300 words), including practical exercises helping students reflect on their own behavior, experience and observations in the virtual realm of the Internet and thus get a better personal understanding of the theories and phenomena described in the literature.

Students will be graded based on showing their capacity of connecting the theories to their own lives and experiences in the digital world as well as with their own well-grounded opinions, providing a fruitful basis for discussion in class as well as on the Moodle online forum.

In-class Presentation

In addition to the midterm and final exam and the homework journal, students are expected to do an oral presentation of about 15-20 minutes, alone or in a small group of 2 (student's choice), on one special topic of their choice (e.g. Forensic Cyberpsychology, Sport and Health Cyberpsychology, Consumer Cyberpsychology and Online Marketing, the Psychosocial Benefits of Blogging...).

The presentation should be accompanied by visual aids (e.g. Powerpoint, the Whiteboard,...) and include a handout of the key facts for class, including sources.

Midterm and final exams

The midterm and final exams will be based on the readings and on all material covered and discussed in class. They will be written in-class and will consist of a combination of the following types of questions: short answer, short essay, multiple-choice and true or false.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Articulate the main theoretical concepts of Cyberpsychology
- Define the ways being online influences how people feel, think, behave and interact with others
- Compare the opportunities and risks of private and professional activities in the evolving realm of virtual worlds
- Describe health-related challenges and deviant behavior on the Internet
- Critically evaluate and self-reflect their own online behavior
- Develop a well-sustained position about their choice of participation in the various opportunities the Internet provides (e.g. social networks, blogging, MOOCs, working online) and be able to support it

COURSE CONTENT NOTE – TRIGGER WARNING:

At times this semester we will be discussing psychological phenomena on the Internet that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students or that might invoke unpleasant memories from the past (especially in weeks 8 to 10 when we discuss clinical phenomena such as cyberbullying, trolling and cyberstalking).

If you suspect that specific material is likely to be emotionally challenging for you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have before the subject comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to course material with the class or with me individually afterwards, I welcome such discussions as an appropriate part of our classwork.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during a class discussion you may always do so without academic penalty. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

IES Vienna requires attendance at all class sessions, including field study excursions, internship meetings, scheduled rehearsals, and all tests and exams. Attendance will be taken for every class. If a student misses more than two classes without an excuse, the final grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade (for example, A- to B+) for every additional unexcused absence.

Excused absences are permitted only when:

- 1) a student is ill (health issues),
- 2) when class is held on a recognized religious holiday traditionally observed by the particular student, or
- 3) in the case of a grave incident affecting family members;

- 4) 4) Exceptions may be made for conflicting academic commitments, but only in writing and only well in advance of missed class time.

Please refer to IES Vienna Attendance Policy for details on how to get your absences excused.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments & Reading
Week 1	<p>Introduction to Cyberpsychology</p> <p>What is Cyberpsychology? How can we try to understand and describe the ways people feel, think, behave and interact online?</p> <p>After a short look at the history of humans on the Internet and the definition of Cyberpsychology we will discuss Suler's eight dimensional model of cyberpsychology architecture to analyze how people define themselves as individuals and in groups, interact with others, communicate, use their senses and perceive time in the virtual realm, as well as deal with the question what is "real" and in which ways perceptions of reality change (or don't change) the way we live.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Kirwan, Gráinne. "Introduction to cyberpsychology" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 1, p. 3-13.</p> <p>Suler, John (2016): <u>Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric</u>. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 1 "Cyberpsychology Architecture", p. 21-53.</p> <p>Kirwan, Gráinne and Andrew Power. "What is cyberpsychology?" in: Power, A. et al (2014). <u>Cyberpsychology and New Media: A thematic reader</u>. Psychology Press. Chapter 1, p. 3-14.</p>
Week 2	<p>Identity and Self in the Digital World</p> <p>What do we reveal or hide about ourselves online? Why do some people create an idealized version of their identities on the Internet and which hidden or negative aspects of themselves might slip out? Why do some people choose to stay anonymous or invisible on the Internet? What makes people susceptible or resistant to the Disinhibition Effect?</p> <p>In week 2 we will discuss questions like these and learn about concepts that help us understand the way people define and see themselves in the digital world, such as the Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects Theory, Impression Management, the Equalisation Hypothesis and the Disinhibition Effect.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Connolly, Irene. "Self and identity in cyberspace" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 4, p. 45-54.</p> <p>Suler, John (2016): <u>Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric</u>. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 3 "The Dynamic Digital Psyche", p. 68-94 & Chapter 4 "The Disinhibited Self", p. 95-111.</p> <p>McKenna, Katelyn. "Through the Internet looking glass – Expressing and validating the true self." in: Joinson, A. et al. (2007): <u>The Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology</u>. Oxford University Press, Chapter 14, p. 205-221.</p> <p>Chester, Andrea and Di Bretherton. "Impression Management and identity online" in: Joinson, A. et al. (2007): <u>The Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology</u>. Oxford University Press, Chapter 15, p. 223-236.</p>
Week 3	<p>Communication in the Virtual World</p>	<p>Readings:</p>

	<p>How do we communicate in the digital world? How do people express themselves online, using ever-changing forms of words, pictures, emoticons and other forms of communication?</p> <p>We will look at the way people communicate with each other in the digital world and how different forms of communication shape our relationships, our language and our thinking.</p>	<p>Suler, John (2016): <u>Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric</u>. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 7 “Text talk”, p. 158-193, and Chapter 8 “Image talk”, p. 194-224.</p> <p>Kirwan, Gráinne. “Computer Mediated Communication and online media” in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 3, p. 31-43.</p>
Week 4	<p>Relating, Friendship and Love in the Digital Realm</p> <p>Why do people choose to communicate with some people online but not with others? How do they perceive other people?</p> <p>The ways people relate to each other in the digital world will be analyzed and discussed, speaking about topics such as interpersonal perceptions, transference, taking on a new identity, black hole experiences and online dating and love. Furthermore we will discuss the concept of what is perceived as “real” in the digital world and how this influences the way people interact with each other online.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Suler, John (2016): <u>Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric</u>. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 6 “Other than you think: Interpersonal Perceptions”, p. 127-157.</p> <p>Fox Hamilton, Nicola. “Love and relationships online” in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 6, p. 71-83.</p> <p>Fox Hamilton, Nicola and Gráinne Kirwan. “A cross-cultural comparison of deception in online-dating profiles using languages analysis” in: Power, A. et al (2014). <u>Cyberpsychology and New Media: A thematic reader</u>. Psychology Press, Chapter 5, p. 49-59.</p> <p>Green, Melanie “Trust and social interaction on the Internet” in: Joinson, A. et al. (2007): <u>The Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology</u>. Oxford University Press, Chapter 4, p. 43-52.</p>
Week 5	<p>Groups in the Digital Realm</p> <p>How do people behave in groups and what specifics of group-related social behavior are there when people meet online? What can we learn from current research about how to build a successful online community?</p> <p>What strengthens group boundary online?</p> <p>We will discuss questions like these and learn about phenomena such as groupthink, collective identities and social loafing on the Internet.</p> <p>WRITTEN MIDTERM EXAM</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Hurley, Olivia. “The dynamics of groups online” in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 8, p. 98-108.</p> <p>Barton, Hannah. “Persuasion and compliance in cyberspace” in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 9, p. 111-123.</p> <p>Suler, John (2016): <u>Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric</u>. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 10 “One of Use – Groups and Communities”, p. 254-280.</p> <p>Tanis, Martin. “Online social support groups” in: Joinson, A. et al. (2007): <u>The Oxford Handbook of</u></p>

		<p><u>Internet Psychology</u>. Oxford University Press, Chapter 10, p. 139-154.</p> <p>Douglas, Karen. "Psychology, Discrimination and hate groups online" in: Joinson, A. et al. (2007): <u>The Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology</u>. Oxford University Press, Chapter 11, p. 155-164.</p>
Week 6	<p>Virtual Reality and Fantasy Worlds on the Internet</p> <p>In what ways can online environments feel real, when do they feel like fantasy and how can you tell the difference? How do we react to real vs. imaginary places?</p> <p>We will discuss how Virtual Worlds can be created for leisure as well as for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes and how we can understand the ways Virtual Worlds can influence people's perceptions, feelings and behavior.</p> <p>Thursday, November 8, during class time:</p> <p>Course-related trip to Europe's first Virtual Reality Café VREI (www.vrei.at) to get to know and try out cutting-edge virtual reality technology as a basis for discussion in class.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Suler, John (2016): <u>Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric</u>. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 14 "Synthesized Realities and Synthesized Beings", p. 353-379.</p> <p>Kirwan, Gráinne. "Psychological applications of Virtual Reality" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 20, p. 271-283.</p>
Week 7	<p>Education, Work and the Internet</p> <p>How will the Internet influence our future professional lives?</p> <p>The Internet is increasingly shaping and changing the ways people live, study and work. We will discuss innovations such as MOOCs (massive open online courses) and their impact on the future of education as well as the online workplace and its implications for the future of work.</p> <p>WRITTEN FINAL EXAM</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Flood, Cliona. "The online workplace" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 14, p. 181-192.</p> <p>Palmer, Marion. "The Internet as an educational space" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 15, p. 194-206.</p> <p>Greaney, John. "Attention and distraction online" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 7, p. 86-97.</p>
Week 8	<p>Health-related problems of excessive Internet use</p> <p>Which effects can the Internet have on people's health?</p> <p>This week we will look at challenges such as information overload, excessive gaming and mobile phone separation anxiety as well as discuss at which point of Internet use passion and devotion transforms</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Suler, John (2016): <u>Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric</u>. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 11 "Change and Excess", p. 281-308, and Chapter 12 "Addicted or Devoted", p. 309-326.</p>

	<p>into addiction, possibly leading to health-related, social and other problems for the individual as well as for society as a whole.</p>	<p>Flood, Cliona. "Abnormal cyberpsychology and cybertherapy" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 12, p. 153-164.</p> <p>Siggins, Mark and Cliona Food. "Mobile phone separation and anxiety" in: Power, A. et al (2014). <u>Cyberpsychology and New Media: A thematic reader</u>. Psychology Press, Chapter 4, p. 38-48.</p> <p>Morahan-Martin, Janet. "Internet use and abuse and psychological problems." in: Joinson, A. et al. (2007): <u>The Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology</u>. Oxford University Press, Chapter 21, p. 331-345.</p>
Week 9	<p>Deviant behavior on the Internet</p> <p>Which forms of deviant behavior are there on the Internet, where does this come from, how can we understand them psychologically and what helps people stay safe on the Internet?</p> <p>There are mild as well as more severe forms of deviant behavior on the Internet, ranging from a misunderstanding of the rules and challenges of this medium to outright criminal conduct. This week we will discuss phenomena such as Trolling, Stereotyping, Hate Speech, Cyberstalking or Online Identity Theft.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Suler, John (2016): <u>Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric</u>. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 13 "The Digital Deviant", p. 327-352.</p> <p>Barton, Hannah. "The dark side of the Internet" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 5, p. 58-69.</p> <p>Connolly, Irene. "Young people and the Internet" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter 17, p. 224-234.</p> <p>Kirwan, Gráinne. "Privacy and trust online" in: Connolly, I. et al (2016): <u>An Introduction to Cyberpsychology</u>. Routledge, Chapter, Chapter 10, p. 124-136.</p> <p>Reilly, Karen and Gráinne Kinwan. "Online identity theft: An investigation of the differences between victims and non-victims with regard to anxiety, precautions and uses of the Internet", in: <u>Power, A. et al (2014). Cyberpsychology and New Media: A thematic reader</u>. Psychology Press. Chapter 11, p. 112-125.</p>
Week 10	<p>Online Counseling and Online Therapy</p> <p>Is it possible to conduct counseling or even psychotherapy online and what are the chances and challenges of that?</p> <p>We will look at the ways counseling and therapy are increasingly brought online and the challenges and opportunities this poses for the clients as well as</p>	<p>Suler, John (2016): <u>Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric</u>. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 15 "Electric Therapeutics", p. 380-416.</p> <p>Balick, Aaron. "How to think about psychotherapy in a digital context" in: Weitz, P. (2014): <u>Psychotherapy 2.0. – When Psychotherapy and Technology Meet</u>. Karnac Books, Chapter 2, p. 23-40.</p>

	<p>discuss if and how it is possible to conduct high-quality professional help in the psychological sector online.</p> <p>Thursday, November 29, during class time:</p> <p>Course-related trip to HPE ("Hilfe für Angehörige psychisch Erkrankter), an organization offering online-counseling for relatives of people suffering from a mental illness</p>	<p>Dunn, Kate. "The therapeutic alliance online" in: Weitz, P. (2014): <u>Psychotherapy 2.0. – When Psychotherapy and Technology Meet</u>. Karnac Books, Chapter 4, p. 75-88.</p> <p>Chalfont, Alexandra and Martin Pollecoff. "Challenges and dilemmas in the online consulting room" in: Weitz, P. (2014): <u>Psychotherapy 2.0. – When Psychotherapy and Technology Meet</u>. Karnac Books, Chapter 5, p. 89-108.</p> <p>Osborn, Andy and Cliona Flood. "Establishing an online counseling service for substance use: An exploratory study" in: Power, A. et al (2014). <u>Cyberpsychology and New Media: A thematic reader</u>. Psychology Press, Chapter 13, p. 149-157.</p>
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REQUIRED READINGS:

- Connolly, I. et al (2016): An Introduction to Cyberpsychology. Routledge.
- Joinson, A. et al. (2007): The Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology. Oxford University Press.
- Power, A. et al (2014). Cyberpsychology and New Media: A thematic reader. Psychology Press.
- Suler, J. (2016): Psychology of the Digital Age – Humans become electric. Cambridge University Press.
- Weitz, P. (2014): Psychotherapy 2.0. – When Psychotherapy and Technology Meet. Karnac Books.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Amichai-Hamburger, Yair (2013): The Social Net: Understanding Our Online Behaviour. Oxford University Press.
- Carr, Nicholas (2011): The Shallows – What the Internet is doing to our brains. Norton & Company.
- Crystal, David (2011): Internet Linguistics: A Student Guide. Routledge.
- Krotoski, Aleks (2013): Untangling the Web: What the Internet is Doing to You. Faber & Faber.
- Rosen, Larry et al. (2012): iDisorder: Understanding our Obsession with Technology and Overcoming its Hold on Us. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schneier, Bruce (2015): Data and Goliath: The Hidden Battles to Collect Your Data and Control your World. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Turkle, Sherry (2012): Alone Together – Why we expect more from technology and less from each other. Basic Books.
- Whitty, Monica and Adrian Carr (2006): Cyberspace Romance: The Psychology of Online Relationships. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Whitty, Monica and Adam Joinson (2009): Truth, Lies and Trust on the Internet. Routledge.