





Computer Science (COMP) 650

Social Computing (Revision 1)

Status: Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode: [Grouped study](#) 

Credits: 3

Area of study: Information Systems

Prerequisites: To gain the full benefit, it would be desirable (but not essential) to have a background in web-based programming, especially in JavaScript. Everyone taking this course must be technically adept and conversant with standard Internet tools, particularly web browsing and email. Knowledge of HTML would be very beneficial. The course also requires well-developed communication skills and the ability to critically explore complex social, ethical and legal issues.

Precluded: None

Faculty: [Faculty of Science and Technology](#) 

Notes:

This is a graduate level course and students need to apply and be approved to one of the graduate programs or as a non-program **School of Computing and Information Systems** [↗](#) graduate student in order to take this course. Minimum admission requirements must be met. Undergraduate students who do not meet admission requirements will not normally be permitted to take this course.

Instructor:**Dr. Jon Dron** [↗](#)

Overview

The aim of this course is to provide graduate students of MSc, Information Systems, with a rich, in-depth knowledge and critical understanding of the affordances and dangers of social technologies from a variety of perspectives, including the technical, the social, the ethical, the legal, the political, the commercial, and the educational. It is as much about the soft processes of social systems as it is about the software that enables them to occur.

Outline

The course is presented in the form of a menu, containing sub-courses, some of which are optional. These are:

- **The Bread basket:** requiring the student to stay up to date with current developments and breaking news (spread throughout the course).
- **The Starters:** four required items giving an overview and introduction to each area. These are:
 - **Introduction to the teaching method.** Learning here is quite different from many other courses that you may be familiar with—it is vitally important that you are involved with this item and perform the tasks.

- **History and definitions.** This item involves defining and characterizing social software and exploring the range, and the limits of that range, of available solutions.
- **Theoretical models.** Although social computing is an emerging discipline, there have already been a number of attempts to provide a theoretical framework. This item is intended to help discover some of those theories and to cast a critical eye on their benefits and weaknesses. It may also help you to identify the other optional parts of the course that you might want to explore.
- **Creating mashups and blends.** This item gives you a chance to actively experiment with some technologies in order to produce something useful. There are many ways to achieve the intended outcomes, from full-blooded programming through to visual assembly of components.
- **The Main courses:** a menu of options from which four will be selected by the cohort (4 weeks)
- **The Desserts:** putting the lessons into practice by building a social software artifact. Programming experience is not required, but would be highly desirable here to increase the range of options available. (4 weeks)
- **The Side orders:** virtual field trips, two of which are required and one of which may be chosen by the cohort (3 weeks, scattered throughout the course at 3-4-week intervals).

Learning outcomes

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Produce and/or assemble and/or manage original social applications, critically applying appropriate theories and effective practices in a reflective and creative manner
- Reflectively use a wide range of social technologies in a responsible and effective manner
- Critically analyse social software in terms of its technical, social, legal, ethical and functional features or affordances
- Independently research social applications applying effective methods and techniques

- Encourage the development of effective communities through the design, use and management of social software

Evaluation

To **receive credit** [↗](#) [↗](#) for COMP 650, you must achieve a cumulative course grade of **B- (70 percent)** [📄](#) or better. Your cumulative course grade will be based on the following assessment.

Activity	Weight
Blog 1 (formally assessed as part of portfolio)	30%
Mashup (formally assessed as part of portfolio)	10%
Artifact (formally assessed as part of portfolio)	40%
Engagement with community (formally assessed as part of portfolio)	10%
Portfolio assembly (formally assessed as part of portfolio)	10%
Total	100%

Important links

- › [Future Course Offerings](#) [↗](#)
- › [Important Dates and Deadlines](#) [↗](#)
- › [MSc IS Contact Information](#) [↗](#)

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their

individualized study counterparts.

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