

## Assignment 2 “Isolate and Contemplate” Social Media Variables

**Purpose:** Isolate key social media variables and contemplate their implications. (The variables might include items such as people, groups of people, content type, direction of communication, links between groups, etc.) Use your selected variables to highlight the underlying dynamics of three communication channels, two of which are social media platforms.

**Rationale:** Using a limited set of variables forces you to develop a deep understanding of the underlying dynamics of any system. It also helps you identify the potential choke points in the systems, the constraints of the systems, and the possibilities of the systems.

### Major Activities:

1. Select one communication channel from each column below.

Traditional Channels	SM Major Players	SM Niche Players		
Lecture	Facebook	Multiply	Live Journal	Digg
Teleconference	Twitter	MyLife	Deviant Art	Xanga
Videoconference	LinkedIn	Ning	Google Plus+	Badoo
Newspaper	Pinterest	Café Mom	VK	Xing
E-mail	Snapchat	Orkut	Meetup	Biznik
	YouTube	Tagged	Foursquare	Friendstr
	Instagram	Bebo	Tumblr	Meetup
	YouTube	Meetme	MySpace	Flickr
		Waze	Yelp	

2. For each of your channels, select three geometric shapes that best represent your variables (you can use the same geometric shapes/variables for your three channels – in fact, this is encouraged). Develop a diagram or schematic of how each of your three channels functions based on these shapes. Think of this as diagramming a football play. Each shape and variation is meant to symbolize some important feature of the channel. The following provides some examples and a potential starting point for your choices:

Basic Shapes	→	Circle	Line	X – Factor (Your choice)
Variation A		Size	Length	???
Variation B		Boldness	Arrow	???
Variation C		Color	Thickness	????
Variation D		???	???	???
Variation E		???	???	???

3. Provide your rationale for your choice of each shape/variation (e.g., Why is this attribute an essential feature that needs to be highlighted? What attributes of the channel did you choose NOT to highlight? Why?).
4. Use your diagrams to answer the following questions:
  - What are the critical differences between the three channels?
  - What potential barriers or bottlenecks do the schematics imply?
  - What communication tasks are best suited to each channel? What communication tasks are poorly suited to each channel?
  - What types of usage patterns are most likely to emerge in each of the channels?
  - How could you judge the effectiveness of communicators who use the channels?

**Requirements:**

- Professional group presentation (15 - 20 minutes) and cross examination (5 - 10 minutes)
- Written report (due 1 week after oral presentation)

**Evaluation:**

- Synthesis of key ideas – Does the report synthesize key insights from personal experience, research, and class readings?
- Utility of insights – Can the ideas in the report be applied to real-world problems?
- Depth of analysis – Does the report indicate that the team thought deeply about the issues? Have certain ideas been eliminated or honed through discussion?
- Quality of insights and rationale – Does the report go beyond the standard recommendations advocated by self-ordained “social media gurus”?
- Professional style - Does the report and presentation adhere to professional standards (e.g., well organized, one voice, proper design, well written, proper citations & appendices)?