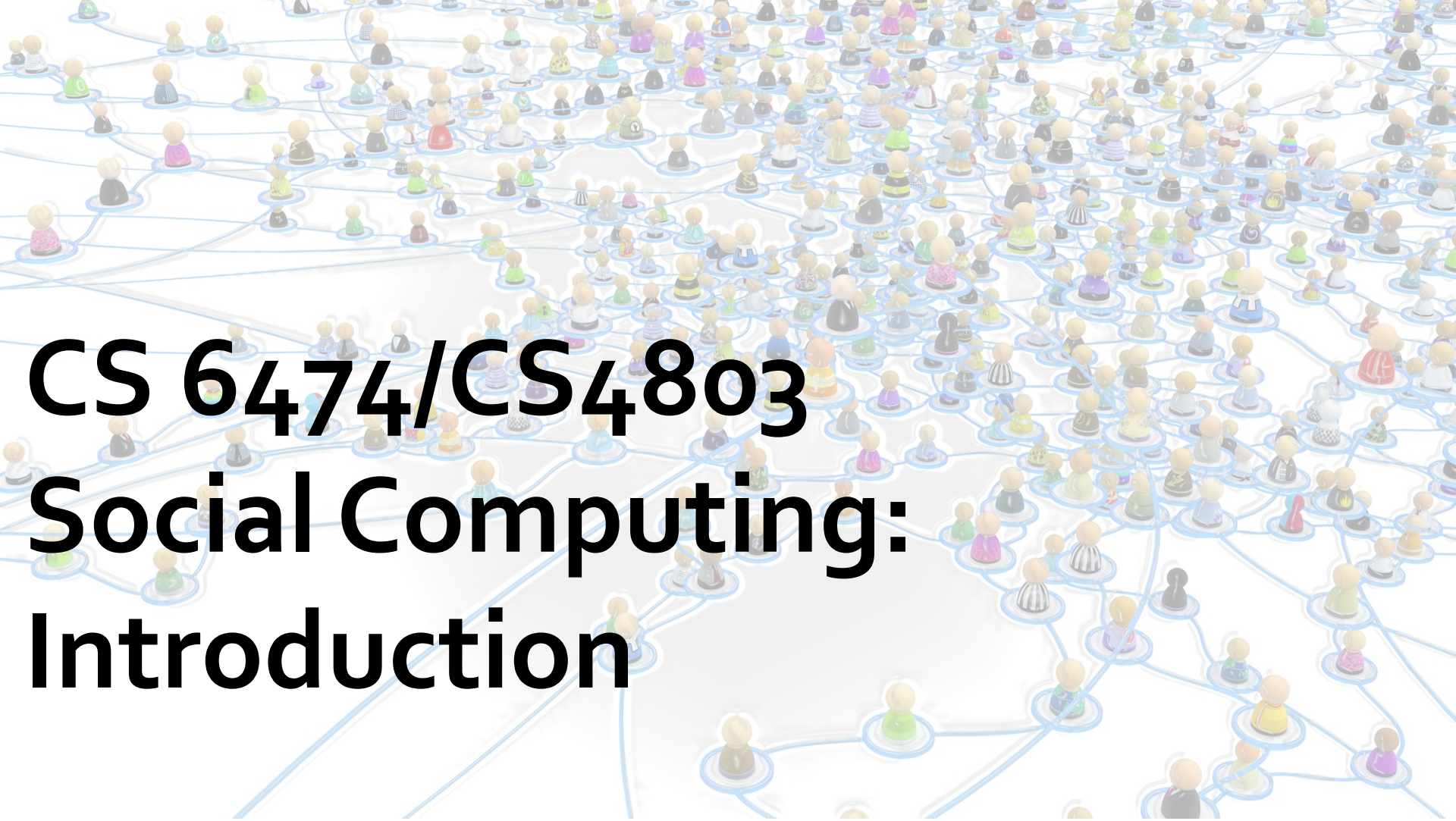

CS 6474/CS4803 Social Computing: Introduction

Munmun De Choudhury

munmund@gatech.edu

Week 1 | January 8, 2024

A Little Bit About Myself…

Social Dynamics and WellBeing Lab

Computational and AI artifacts for social good
Understand and improve wellbeing

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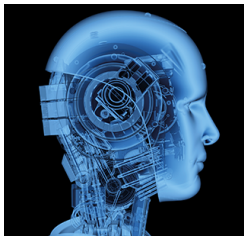

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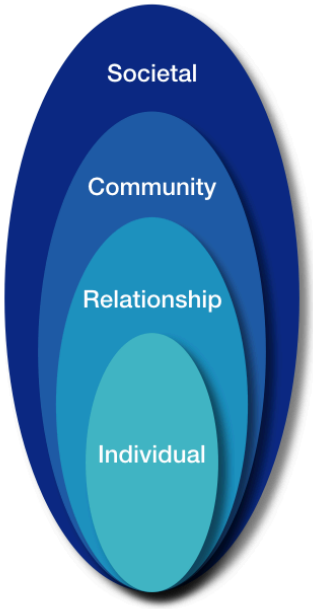


Social Media

Human/Stakeholder-Centered AI + Interdisiplinary

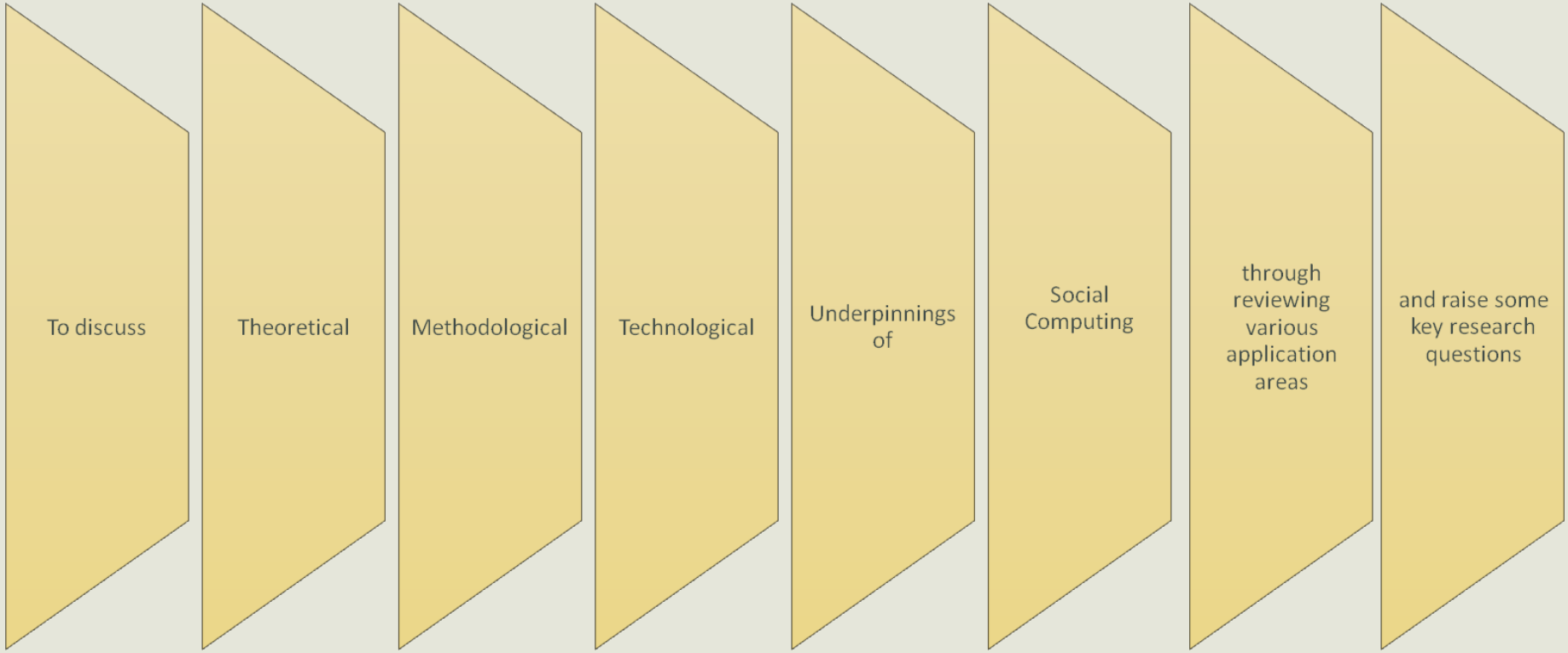
Theory Centered

Part I: Course Structure and Information

Learning Objectives

- Course Website: http://www.munmund.net/CS6474_Spring2024.html

- **Goal: How and why social computing works or does not work?**
- **Takeaways at the end of the course**


To discuss
Theoretical
Methodological
Technological
Underpinnings of
Social Computing
through reviewing various application areas
and raise some key research questions

Grading

- Reflection on Assigned Class Readings (any/best 10) - 25% (2.5% each)
- : Piazza link for submission of reading reflections
  : Piazza for asynchronous discussion
- Class Attendance/Participation - 10%
- Assignment I - 5%
- Assignment II - 10%
- Assignment III: 17%
- Term Project - 33%
- : Project Proposal - 7%
- : Project Proposal Presentations - 3%
- : Final Project Presentation - 5%
- : Final Report - 18%

Required Skills

- *Technical:* any object-oriented/scripting language like Python; some frontend development skills/web programming skills (e.g., javascript) if your project is about building a social tool

- *Statistics/machine learning:* preliminary knowledge of working with some data and using some analytical software (e.g., Python, R)

- *Reading/writing:* approximately two papers assigned for each class, mid-term and final term project report

Important notes about skills

- No programming will be taught – you are required to have fairly good working knowledge of data analytics
- Analytics review
- Some review of data analytics during the discussion of various readings, as appropriate

Course Materials/Logistics

Participation in Class Readings

- Write short blurbs on Piazza (under "reflections") about the readings assigned for a particular class
  - Blurbs can range from 300-600 words in length
- Sample reflections available on the course website
- Any/best 10 reflections out of ~18 topical classes
  - **Starts from next week (Wednesday, Jan 10)**
- **Piazza link for signup:** https://piazza.com/gatech/spring2024/cs6474a4803sc

Assignment I

- Questions will focus on your experience of exploring your own social media behavior(s).
- ***Insight focused questions***
- What to hand in?
  - A report
  - Submission on Canvas

Assignment II

- Questions will focus on the topics of the reading materials covered until the point the assignment is released.
- ***Design focused questions***
- What to hand in?
  - A report + screenshots of the design
  - Submission on Canvas

Assignment III

- Questions will focus on the topics of the reading materials covered until the point the assignment is released.
- ***Data analytic questions***
- What to hand in?
  - A report + code in a zipped folder/notebook
  - Submission on Canvas

Term Project

- Goals:
  - Group project: 3-4 people
  - You are free to pick your group – use Piazza to know and find like-interested classmates
  - Need to discuss your project idea with instructor/TA early on in the course, before proposals are due

Term Project

- Group effort
- Individual assessment – clearly articulate individual goals and contributions in the project proposal
  - In the final report, revisit the above list to indicate what you have done
- Peer assessment – indicate how each of your groupmate accomplished what they were supposed to do
  - Only required in the final report
  - Anonymous to teammates

Late Policy

- Reading reflections are due *at 11:59pm* on the **day before** the relevant class meeting.
- Assignments are due *at 11:59pm* on the date listed for that assignment.
- Term project report is due at 11:59pm on the date listed.
- Some work (only assignments, but not the project deliverables or reading reflections) submitted more than 15 minutes after the due time will be assessed a 25% penalty.
  - Each additional 24 hours of lateness will result in an additional 25% being taken off the grade for that assignment. After 2 days, the assignment will not be accepted and a grade of 0% will be entered.

Help and Resources

- Office hours: By Appointment; Virtual/Link on Canvas
- Email: munmund@gatech.edu

- Teaching Assistants:
  - Seunghyun (Matt) Kim (skim888@gatech.edu)
  - Sachin Pendse (sachin.r.pendse@gatech.edu)
- Office hours: Virtual/By appointment
- Email announcements will be made over the course page on Canvas

If you need to reach me or the TA…

- Questions should be directed via email to me or TA for fastest response
- For questions/concerns related to the assignments or project deliverables, reach us at least 2 days (48 hours) before the due date.

- Questions within 2 days (48 hours) of the due date should not be expected to be answered on time.

Part II: Defining “Social Computing” / Background

Why Social Computing?

Interact

- Expressions
- Gestures
- Spoken Word
- Written Word

Sensitive to the people around

Humans are Social

Make decisions shaped by social context

- Choosing a restaurant
- Crossing the street

Doing what others do and following what others say

Theoretical and Infrastructure Basis of Social Computing

Class Discussion

A) An example of a social computing system (that exists online)

Why?

B) An example of a non-social computing system (that exists online)

Why?

Social Computing Tools

BLOG

WIKI

Social Networks

RSS

Social Bookmarking

VOIP

Others

- Internet Forums
- Multimedia Sharing
- Virtual Reality

people creating
(blogs, user-generated content and podcasts)

people connecting
(social networks and virtual worlds)

people collaborating
(wikis and open source)

people reacting
(to each other: forums, ratings and reviews)

people organizing content
(tags)

people accelerating consumption
(RSS and widgets)

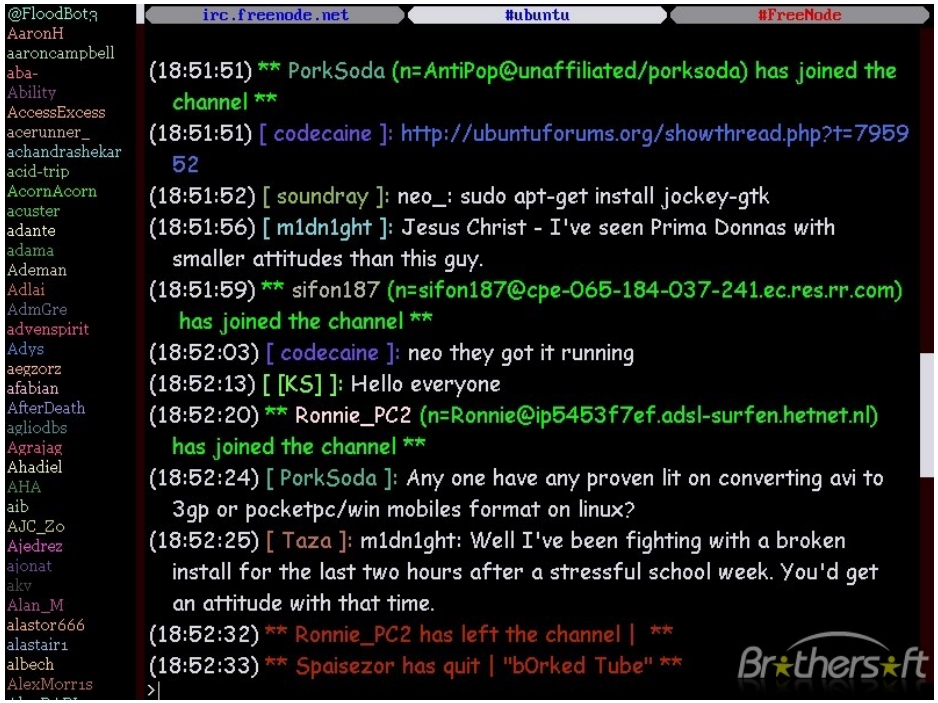
Source: Forrester Research (www.forresterresearch.com)

A Brief Historical Analogy

ARPANET and groupware

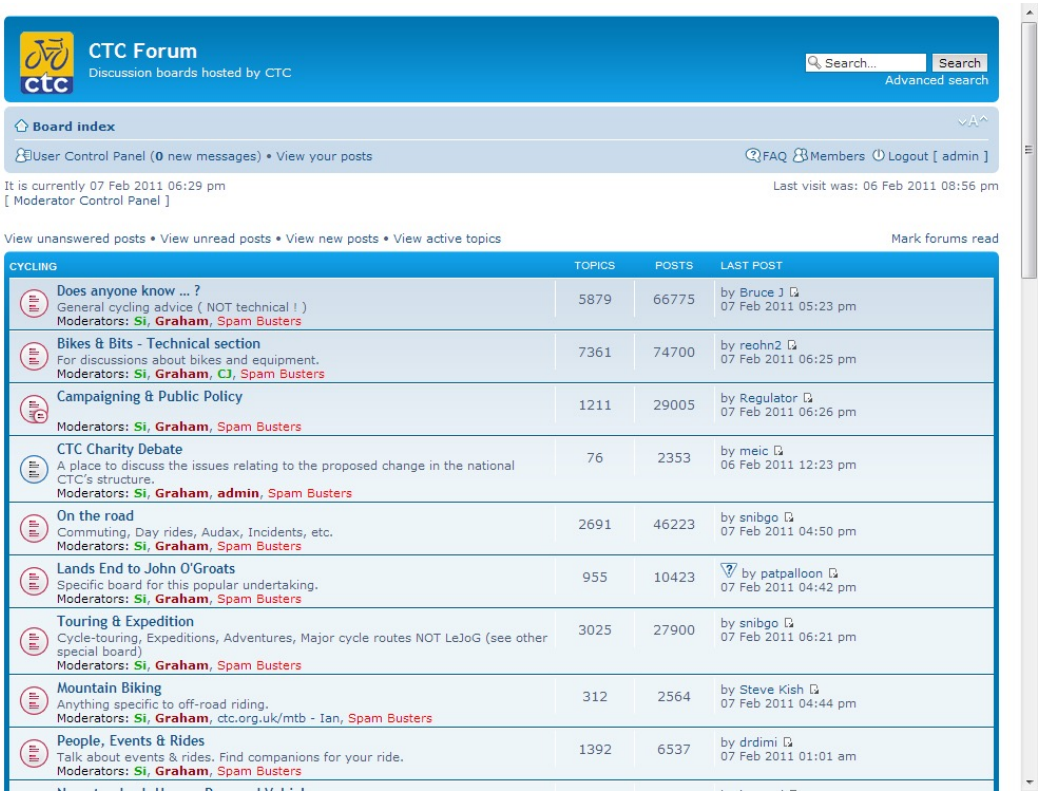
IRCs and forums were early "social"

- IRC – Internet Relay Chat, very early rudimentary application layer protocol that supported text based message exchange



IRCs and forums were early "social"

- Forums – message boards or an online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages



The advent of modern social computing came when digital systems began to process user-generated content and make use of it for their own purposes – which often involved producing new functionality and value for their users

What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people.

— William Whyte

The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces

- Whyte led the Street Life project in the 1970s, and began investigating the various dynamics of urban spaces.
- He focused on the city, and studied New York City's parks, plazas, and various informal recreational areas like city blocks -- a total of 16 plazas, 3 small parks.
- Goal: 1) *why do some city spaces work for people while others don't*, and 2) *what the practical implications might be about living better, more joyful lives in our urban environment.*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsVZxanrL7s

Part III: Introductions

- closest social computing project, if any
- what you want to learn from the class