Honors 113, Spring 2018:  A Hyperconnected World.  Wednesday, 12-3 pm
Professor Rogers Brubaker  http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/brubaker/

This course will explore the social, political, economic, psychological, and cultural dimensions of our hyperconnected world.  This is a world into which today’s college students were born, though it has changed dramatically during their lives.  Since students today are digital, internet, and social media “natives,” having been socialized into online forms of life already as young children, it is not easy for them to grasp the novelty and distinctiveness of this world, or to think critically about it.  This course seeks to help students develop the tools to understand the distinctiveness and even peculiarity of a social world whose basic structures and forms of life they tend to take for granted.  It also seeks to cultivate the skills, perspectives, and habits of mind needed to think critically about the social, political, and economic forces that shape this world – and shape the people that inhabit it.

Enrollment in the course is by essay.  If you would like to be considered for the course, please submit to brubaker@soc.ucla.edu, in an essay of no more than 400 words, an account of your intellectual background and of your interest in the course.  Please use “Hyperconnected World” in the subject line, and be sure to include your name, student ID, year at UCLA, and actual or anticipated major.  The essay should be submitted no later than Friday, March 2.

Please note this will be a demanding course, with a substantial amount of reading, a research paper, and some shorter written memos and reports as well.  If you are not committed to working hard and participating fully, you should not apply for admission to the course.

Topics will include the following:

Always on" (1): psychological perspectives. "Social overload"; multitasking; FOMO; envy; “Facebook depression”; addiction

“Always on” (2): social relationships. Self-presentation; identity construction; transformations of family life, friendship, dating, intimacy

Surveillance and privacy (1): self-surveillance and social surveillance; panopticism; the quantified self; parental surveillance; partner surveillance

Surveillance and privacy (2): big data; government surveillance; corporate surveillance; “predictive policing” and “situational crime prevention”; workplace surveillance; “sousveillance”

Culture and knowledge: digital abundance; algorithmic gatekeeping; information vs knowledge; customized content; cultural populism

Economics, law, and technology: the attention economy; winner-take-all markets; intellectual property and copyright; from the open web to “walled gardens”

Politics: social media and political protest; “fake news” and “alternative facts”; “slacktivism”; politics by referendum; the limits of transparency