Professor: Raquel Benbunan-Fich (rbfich@baruch.cuny.edu)
Office: NVC 11-258; Phone: (646) 312-3375; Office Hours: By appointment

Course Objectives and Description
This course examines the theories and methodologies used in the study of virtual teams and virtual communities. Virtual teams (groups of people working together but distributed in time and/or place) have become increasingly widespread for both managerial and technical collaboration and for decision making. These teams are transforming the nature of work and reshaping organizations. Online Communities are larger groups of people with common interests or goals that meet through Computer-Mediated Communication Systems. Some of these communities are cooperative and involve specific contributions from its members for their sustainability.

The main objective of this course is to expose doctoral students to diverse theoretical approaches, methods, levels of analysis, and perspectives used to research virtual teams and virtual communities. Students are expected to gain a thorough understanding of the current research literature as well as the challenges in these areas.

Since it is a doctoral seminar, this course entails extensive reading and discussion of the recent research literature on this topic. Active student participation is essential. Classes will follow a seminar style, with student presentations, active student participation and debates. Thus, students are expected and required to come to class fully prepared to discuss all the assigned readings. Class participation grades will be allocated on the basis of the quality, quantity and regularity of contribution.

Grading
The final grade in the seminar will be based upon the following weights:
In-class presentations and participation 20%
Assignments 20%
Written Exam 30%
Term Paper 30%

Presentations/Participation: Students should read the papers before coming to class and be ready to discuss all of them. In each session, students will present and summarize one paper and the rest of the participants will act as discussants. Aside from prior preparation, each student should actively participate in the critical evaluation of all the papers contribute with useful insights to the discussion.

Assignments: Every student is expected to prepare ahead of class a set of discussion questions integrating all the assigned papers. In addition, there will be other individual assignments (such as critiques of theory and/or empirical sections of papers, and immersion in an online community) where students will develop further their critical thinking and writing skills.
**Written Exam:** At about two thirds of the semester, the students will take a written examination to demonstrate their knowledge of the assigned readings and the research challenges in this area as well as the integration of the material covered in the seminar.

**Term Paper:** Throughout the semester, the students will work with the professor to prepare a literature review paper summarizing the current papers on this topic. Milestones and deadlines will be assigned throughout to guide the students in the data collection, analysis and synthesis of the selected papers. The term paper must be submitted during the final exam week. Late papers will not be accepted.

**Readings**
Electronic copies of all the articles assigned as readings will be posted on Blackboard along with any other relevant material for the course.

**Weekly Schedule**

The following is an overview of the topics and the corresponding readings for each week. These readings include a selection of articles published recently in IS journals. Additional references on each topic are available upon request for students interested in a deeper knowledge of a particular area. This is a tentative plan, subject to revision as opportunities and the interests of the group evolve.

**Week 1 (1/30): Introduction – VT and OC in IS**


**Week 2 (2/6): Virtual Team Theories**


**Week 3 (2/13): Virtual Team Theories and Reviews**
Week 4 (2/20): Online Communities - Theories and Reviews


Week 5 (2/27): Virtual Team Performance


Week 6 (3/5): Virtual Team Communication and Collaboration


Week 7 (3/12): Team Processes and Members’ Perceptions


Week 8 (3/19): Contribution in Online Communities


Week 9 (3/26): Dynamics of Participation in Online Communities


Week 10 (4/2): Communication and Conflict in Virtual Teams


Spring Break (from 4/8 to 4/16) – No classes

Week 11 (4/23): Sustainability of Online Communities


Week 12 (4/30): Written Examination

Week 13 (5/7): Student Presentations and Feedback

Week 14 (5/14): Course Wrap-up and New Research Directions