

Social Connections and well-being in the Digital Era (second edition)

Lake Como School of Advanced Studies - July 31 - August 4 2023

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Mission

The summer school *Social connections and well-being in the digital era* will bring together academics from social psychology and related disciplines to explore the impact of recent advances in digital technology on human social relationships. Students will be able to join and learn with internationally renowned scholars.

General topic

The advent of digital technologies has profoundly changed human life, from study to work to communication, information, politics, transport, migration, entertainment, and social interactions. For several decades, psychological literature has placed the innate and universal need for sociality of human beings at the center of its knowledge. In this sense, the advent of digital technologies has brought new opportunities for social connections and community-building because of its capacity to foster interactions between individuals and groups, regardless of economic possibilities and physical distance. However, the spread of digital technologies has also introduced new challenges to human well-being, and its impact on the need for sociality appears much more multifaceted than initially imagined. While in some circumstances, the ability of technologies to connect people socially is unquestionable, in others, it seems to produce greater social isolation, accentuating social disintegration and hostility, and societal frictions and fragmentation. The social distancing linked to the Covid-19 pandemic further catalyzed these effects, underlining the potential and limitations of the role that digital technologies can play on social connections even more strongly. Studies concerning social inclusion and exclusion increasingly focus on the evolution of technological development, which, through new communication devices and online environments, has changed people's lives and social norms and has generated new ways of social connections.

Goals

The summer school *Social connections and well-being in the digital era* will delve into the intricacies of social connections in a world increasingly dominated by digital technology. It pursues four primary goals:

The summer school's **first goal** is to explore and understand the existing literature and recent advances in the associated research fields. More specifically, in the course of the summer school, the students will gain a better understanding of the interplay between social connections and digital (communication) technologies, and explore the fringes of research in both fields of inquiry. The summer school will be a unique opportunity for those interested in the impact of technology on human social relationships.

The **second goal** pertains to providing impact for society. Using an innovative teaching approach, the students are invited to pick one pre-defined practical challenge related to the summer school's main topic. The challenges may ensue from various societal corners, including, policy-making, teaching, or the industry (see examples below). Throughout the week, the students will develop ideas and approaches for tackling their challenges. This practice-oriented thinking will yield output that may be useful for stakeholders in the respective areas, and at the same time help students understand and reflect on the content more deeply.

The **third goal** pertains to methodology, in that part of the lessons will be dedicated to methodological approaches that can help students develop research projects in the context of the summer school's main topic, such as ecological momentary assessment.

The summer school's **fourth goal** is to facilitate networking, primarily among the group of talented young scholars, but also with the invited research scholars. We expect the summer school to be a strategic nucleus for future collaborations, and a network structure that students can benefit from in the years to come. Experience tells that aside from learning new content and methodology, summer schools have the unique potential to create communities of like-minded excellent young scholars, and that often members of minority groups benefit from these offers the most.

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Program

Social influence in the digital era (Paolo Riva, Marco Marinucci, & Joshua Zonca)

- Principles and mechanisms of social influences in the digital age
- Feeling connected online: how can digital connections respond to the need to belong?
- Why do people socialize online? Considering the similarities and differences between online and offline relationships and social interactions
- Non-human agents as a source of influence and well-being
- Connecting with non-human agents: when humans feel connected to an artificial agent (e.g., chatbot, social robot)
- How Virtual Reality can improve attitudes towards disadvantaged social groups

Social exclusion, aggression, and antisocial practices online (Kipling D. Williams, Luca Pancani, & Federica Spaccatini)

- Social exclusion: theories and methods
- Digital overuse and emerging social phenomena related to digital technologies
- Digital ostracism in everyday life: the case of phubbing
- Relationalational dissolution strategies: ghosting in romantic and friendship relationships
- Cyberbullying as a growing social concern
- Stereotypes and discrimination online, with a focus on gender issues

Social norms and morality in digital contexts (Selma Rudert & Stefan Janke)

- Social norm emergence in digital environments
- Moral Judgments in the online world
- Cheating and dishonesty in online contexts (online exams)
- Interaction with digital agents/artificial intelligence

Fake news and interpersonal trust in the digital era (Rainer Greifeneder & Fanny Lalot)

- How did the digital era change the fake news game?
- Why is truth important for democratic societies?
- How can trust be restored once it has been betrayed?
- Opportunities and challenges of homogeneous news feeds.

Practical challenges (see goal #2)

Examples include (written in collaboration with Chat-GPT)

- Online identity: How do digital technologies shape our sense of self and identity? What is the impact of social media, online gaming, and other digital platforms on the construction and maintenance of self- and/versus social-identity?
- Cyberbullying: How can we prevent and address cyberbullying? How can the different forms of cyberbullying be dealt with? What kind of strategies can, for instance, a school use to promote positive online interactions and prevent cyberbullying?
- Digital divide: What are the implications of unequal access to digital technologies? How does the digital divide affect social and economic inequalities?
- The impact of social media on politics: How has social media changed the way we engage with politics? What is the role of social media in political campaigns, the impact of algorithms on political polarization, and the potential for social media to promote civic engagement?
- Search algorithms and well-being: How can search algorithms yield accurate results and foster well-being? What are the social psychological opportunities that companies compiling search algorithms may consider?



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	Sunday, July 30	Monday, July 31 Day 1	Tuesday, Aug 1 Day 2	Wednesday, Aug 2 Day 3	Thursday, Aug 3 Day 4	Friday, Aug 4 Day 5
		Social influence in the digital era	Social exclusion and antisocial practices online	Social norms and morality in digital contexts	Fake news and interpersonal trust in the digital era	Group presentations
9 AM		Welcoming				
9:30		PAOLO RIVA	KIPLING WILLIAMS	SELMA RUDERT & STEFAN JANKE	RAINER GREIFENEDER, FANNY LALOT & LISA VAN DER WERFF	Group presentations Session 1
10 AM		Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break
10:30						
11 AM		MARCO MARINUCCI	LUCA PANCANI	PAUL CONWAY	Q&A and discussion session	Group presentations Session 2
11:30		Students' blitz #1	Students' blitz #2	Students' blitz #3	Students' blitz #4	
12 PM						
12:30						
1 PM		Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Closing Lunch & Greetings
1:30						
2 PM						
2:30		JOSHUA ZONCA				
3 PM		Q&A with Kipling Williams	FEDERICA SPACCATINI	Group Work	Discussing frontiers in trust research	
3:30		Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	
4 PM						
4:30		Group Work	Group Work	Discussing morality and artificial intelligence	Group Work	
5 PM						
5:30						
6 PM						
6:30	Recommended arrival for overnight stay	Welcome cocktail	Social trip to Torno by public boat	Social trip to Brunate		
7 PM					Social dinner in Como	
7:30						





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Speakers

List of speakers (in progress):

- Conway Paul, University of Southampton (UK)
- Greifeneder Rainer, University of Basel (Switzerland)
- Janke Stefan, University of Mannheim (Germany)
- Lalot Fanny, University of Basel (Switzerland)
- Marinucci Marco, University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy)
- Pancani Luca, University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy)
- Piccoli Valentina, University of Trieste (Italy)
- Riva Paolo, University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy)
- Rudert Selma, University of Koblenz-Landau (Germany)
- Spaccatini Federica, University of Perugia (Italy)
- van der Werff Lisa, Dublin City University (Ireland)
- Williams Kipling, Purdue University (USA)
- Zonca Joshua, University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy)

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Addressees

The call for participation will be distributed through the listservs of scientific organizations in Europe (e.g., European Association of Social Psychology; Italian Psychology Association). PhD students in the summer school's primary fields of inquiry are eligible for application. We aim to invite 30 PhD students. We will encourage the enrolment of students with different backgrounds, including the geographical areas of origin (e.g., students from countries with limited economic capacity) and disciplines (e.g., social and community psychology, sociology, communication, and computer science).



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Contacts

For enquiries about the **venue** of the school, **travel**, **accommodation**, and **registration** procedure, please contact Chiara Stefanetti (chiara.stefanetti@fondazionealessandrovoltait; +39.031.579815) at Fondazione Alessandro Volta, Como.



Fondazione
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Italian Association of Psychology (AIP) – Social Psychology Section
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