

Digital Communication Theory & Research
COMM 602: Fall 2011
Thursdays, 7:10-9:50PM BAL 3056

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursdays 10-12, and by appointment

Course Overview:

To call new media "new" is something of a misnomer; the Internet as we know it (meaning primarily the world wide web) has been around for over a dozen years, and that's only one of the more recent network protocols invented for computer-based communication. Still, the last twenty years have brought us an astonishing array of digital technologies and with them, a bewildering variety of new media forms. Web pages, multi-player online games, CD-ROMs, PDA's, cell phones – together, many argue, these and other forms of new media technologies are reshaping our understandings of how we live and work and of what it means to be human.

This course will serve as an introduction to the study of digital media. We will survey contemporary theories of the impact of digital media on the individual, the community and the state. Do digital media fundamentally alter the nature of the human self, as many claim? How do they alter the landscape? Our notions of what it means to be "at home"? The ways we do business? The ways we govern ourselves?

To answer these questions, we'll explore the dynamics of digital media and at the same time, the ways in which those dynamics shape – and have been shaped by – ongoing processes of social change. By the end of the course, you should have a sense of just what is and isn't "new" about new media. You should be able to critique and synthesize the ways others have characterized the social impact of digital media. And most important of all, you should have begun to build your own theories of how digital media and social life interact. Some of what we'll read will seem a bit dated, as the Internet has developed quickly over the last decade-plus, but all of it remains important for a well-grounded understanding of the development both of network technologies and of scholarly thought about those technologies.

ASSIGNMENTS

- 1) **Attendance & participation:** It goes without saying that you are expected to attend every class, be here on time and stay until the end. If you will be absent, late or you must leave early, you should consult with me in advance. These cannot be regular occurrences. Moreover, every student is expected to actively contribute to class discussions through A) in-class participation and B) weekly blog posts that critically address class materials and answer larger conceptual questions. I will provide weekly prompts to help guide the conversation. Blog posts should happen by 5PM Thursday prior to class. I will use your posts in shaping class discussions of materials. For both modes of participation, you are being graded on substance, not quantity. Blackboard posts will begin the week of September 8 and will run through December 1. Every student is expected to post 10 times throughout the semester. Every student may select two class sessions to not post responses
- 2) **Research Paper:** an 18-25-page research paper on a topic of your choosing will be the major assignment for this class. The project is divided up in to several stages in order to help ensure that the final product is well-developed and something you might potentially consider presenting at a conference or attempt to publish. An initial research question will be due on November 10. A first draft of your essay is due December 1. A final draft of your work will be due on December 15. For each delivery you will receive feedback from me by the following class date. Critical thinking and argumentation are processes that develop over time and often through collaboration and revision. The end result will hopefully be something you are very proud of and can use constructively in your graduate careers.
- 3) **Virtual World Self-Ethnography:** Each student will join a virtual community of their choosing (this can be second life or an MMPOG or a fan/brand community or a social network site like Facebook) and create an avatar/profile by September 8 (you can choose a site that you are already active on, but you must still go through the process of updating your profile/info). You cannot troll. You must be an active, engaged member of the community, so choose wisely. Your assignment is to evaluate how you construct and project “identity” within this “community” and how you forge “relationships” within it. Incorporating class materials, you will submit an 8-10 page self-ethnography on November 3.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Class attendance, participation & blackboard responses = 40%

Final paper = 40%

 Research question = 5% (Due 11/10)

 Lit Review = 15% (Due 12/01)

 Final draft = 20% (Due 12/15)

Self-Ethnography = 20% (Due 11/03)

Grades:

The following grade scale applies to all written work:

A = 94-100
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 67-69
D = 64-66
D- = 60-63
F = 0-59

An “A” paper will have an argument to make on the approved topic, a logical structure in which to make it, reasons/evidence to support all claims, and no significant errors in spelling, grammar or general presentation.

A “B” paper will make an argument on the approved topic and have a structure and reasons/evidence to support claims. But it may have sections where the structure becomes confusing or ineffective, or the evidence to support claims is deficient, in addition to a few errors in spelling, grammar or general presentation.

A “C” paper will have an argument to make on the approved topic, with some viable claims. But there may be serious deficiencies in the evidence provided and a notable absence of structure, as well as several errors in spelling, grammar and general presentation.

A “D” paper will have no real argument and deficiencies in every area.

An “F” paper has no argument and fails to do the minimum requirements or is a paper never turned in at all.

If you would like to discuss how to improve your grades, please come see me during office hours (I don’t discuss graded work in the hallway or after class). I also require a 24-hour pause or moratorium between the time you receive a grade and when I am willing to discuss it with you.

Writing Basics

Remember to include or address the following items. Failure to address these will result in grade deductions.

1. Page numbers
2. Title of your work (give it some name that invites the reader to be interested, something beyond the name of the assignment)
3. Proof read your work for spelling and grammar (do NOT rely solely on spellcheck!)
4. Sign and Date all work (make certain your name and the date you handed in the assignment are typed clearly at the top of every page in the header).
5. Citation style = I have no preference between APA, MLA, Chicago or other style guides. I do however expect you to cite your sources and be consistent in your choice of citation styles.

Editing

It is highly recommended that you ask someone to edit your writing prior to submission. Every article, book, news story, etc., that you see in print is the product of several sets of eyes. Students should develop the habit of having someone mark their papers for grammatical errors or awkward syntax and phrasing. Learn to give and take criticism productively.

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance:

Excused absences include only the following:

- Illness that requires medical treatment (must provide written documentation from a doctor)
- Death in immediate family (must provide obituary)
- Official college sponsored activity (must provide note from college personnel)

Similar policies apply for arriving late or leaving class early.

Documentation of the absence must be provided on the first class meeting after your return. In other words, I need some piece of paper to prove the legitimacy of your absence. It is best to contact me prior to the absence.

E-mail account activation

As a participant in this class, you are required to have an active ODU e-mail account. This is important for class communication, as well as required for you to access Blackboard and to fill out the teaching evaluations at the end of the semester.

Student Evaluations of Teaching

As a participant in this class, you are required to fill out a student evaluation of teaching performance on-line at the end of the semester.

Paper Submission and Late Papers:

Papers are due at the beginning of class (as they are designed to help you formulate your ideas prior to class discussion). Papers will be deducted one letter grade per calendar day they are late (note: calendar day, not class day). Papers over 5 calendar days late will receive a failing grade. I do not accept papers via E-mail. You are responsible for printing your work yourself.

All assignments must be complete to receive a passing grade in this class. This means that even if you are over 5 calendar days late in submitting an assignment and you will receive a failing grade for it, you must still submit it in order to pass the class.

All of this said, if you have a legitimate reason for turning work in late, you should speak with me well in advance of the due date to discuss other options.

Blackboard Readings

A substantial amount of reading is posted in .pdf files (readable with Adobe Acrobat) on Blackboard. If your computer does not have Adobe (most do), it can be downloaded for free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.

Student Progress and Withdrawing from the Class

The last day to drop this class is November 9, 2010 (you should double check this date as it can change from semester to semester).

Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations are provided for students with disabilities. Students should present me with the appropriate documentation from the Office of Disability Services and contact me as soon as possible to discuss the appropriate accommodations.

Disruptive Behavior

The Office of Student Judicial Affairs has published a guide on College Classroom Conduct. In short, you should refrain from:

- Arriving late!
- Holding private conversations during a lecture
- Answering a cell phone (or allowing it to ring by not turning it off)
- Leaving without permission; packing to leave before class is finished
- Sleeping or studying unrelated materials in class
 - Surfing the net or instant messaging

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is one example of violating copyright law. Furthermore, there are no acceptable instances in written language of using someone else's words with quotation marks, including your own. For this class, submitting materials written by you for another class without prior authorization and without proper citation will also count as plagiarism. If you plagiarize, you will receive a hearing through the judicial affairs division of the Office of Student Services. More likely than not, you will be suspended or expelled in addition to receiving the grade of F. It is my belief that at least half of student plagiarism cases occur because students do not know what it is or how to avoid it. Please see the handout, and take it upon yourself to learn the proper means of citing someone else's words and ideas.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

The following books must be purchased for the course. These books are **NOT** available at the ODU bookstore. You should purchase them through one of Amazon.com's vendors. This will be far more affordable for you.

All other readings are either available online or will be scanned and uploaded as PDF documents to Blackboard.

Edward Castronova, *Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games*, University of Chicago Press, 2006

Ilana Gershon, *The Breakup 2.0: Disconnecting over New Media*, Cornell University Press, 2010

Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, NYU Press, 2006

Lawrence Lessig, *Code: And Other Laws of Cyberspace, Version 2.0*, Basic Books, 2006

Lisa Nakamura, *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*, Routledge, 2002

Daniel J. Solove, *The Future of Reputation: Gossip, Rumor, and Privacy on the Internet*, Yale University Press, 2008

Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers*, Walker & Company, 2007

T.L. Taylor, *Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture*, MIT Press, 2009

David Trend (ed.), *Reading Digital Culture*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2001

Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (eds.), *The New Media Reader*, MIT Press, 2003

Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Googlization of Everything: (And Why We Should Worry)*, University of California Press, 2011

Michele White, *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship*, MIT Press, 2006

Schedule of Classes (subject to change):

09/01: INTRODUCTIONS

- Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers*, Walker & Company, 2007

09/08: WHAT ARE "DIGITAL" MEDIA?

- Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*: "What is New Media?" pp.19- 61 (BB)
- Kevin Kelly, "The Computational Metaphor," http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2006/02/the_computation.php
- J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: understanding new media*. (CH. 3) (BB)
- George Landow, *Hypertext and Critical Theory*, 98-108 (RDC)
- Janet Murray, "Inventing the Medium" (NMR)
- Lev Manovich, "New Media from Borges to HTML" (NMR)

09/15: IMAGINING THE INTERNET

- Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths" (NMR)
- Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think," (NMR).
- Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (NMR)
- Norbert Wiener, "Men, Machines, and the World About" (NMR)
- J. C. R. Licklider, "Man-Computer Symbiosis" (NMR)
- Theodor H. Nelson, "A File Structure for The Complex, The Changing, and the Indeterminate" (NMR)
- Paul Edwards, "The closed world: systems discourse, military policy and post-World War II US historical consciousness." *Cyborg Worlds: The Military Information Society*. Eds. Les Levidow and Kevin Robins. London: Free Association Books, 1989. 135-158. (BB)

09/22: MEDIA CHANGE

- Marshall McLuhan, Two Selections (NMR)
- Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media" (NMR)
- Jean Baudrillard, "Requiem for the Media" (NMR)
- Raymond Williams, "The Technology and the Society" (NMR)
- Theodor H. Nelson, from *Computer Lib / Dream Machines* (NMR)
- Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Nicholas Gane, "Friedrich Kittler: An Introduction," *Theory, Culture & Society* 2006, Vol. 23(7-8): 5-16 (BB)
- Friedrich Kittler, "There is No Software," in John Johnston, ed., *Friedrich A. Kittler: Essays. Literature, Media, Information Systems*, Amsterdam , G+B Arts International, 1997, pp. 147-155. (BB)

09/29: NEW BODIES: CYBORGISM AND GENDER

- Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (*NMR*)
- Tim Lenoir, "Fashioning the Military-Entertainment Complex," online at: http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/TimLenoir/Lenoir_FashioningMEC.pdf
- Chris Hables Gray, "The Cyborg Soldier: The US Military and The Post- Modern Warrior" in *Cyborg Worlds*, 43-71 (BB)
- Michele White, *The Body and the Screen*

10/06: NEW IDENTITIES 1

- John Perry Barlow, "Being in Nothingness"
http://w2.eff.org/Misc/Publications/John_Perry_Barlow/HTML/being_in_nothingness.html
- Julian Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyberspace; or, How an Evil Clown, a Haitian Trickster Spirit, Two Wizards, and a Cast of Dozens Turned a Database into a Society" (*RDC*)
- Sherry Turkle, "Who Am We?" (*RDC*)
- Laura Miller, "Women & Children First: Gender and the Settling of the Electronic Frontier" (*RDC*)
- Steve Silberman, "We're Teen, We're Queer, and We've Got E-mail" (*RDC*)
- Cameron Bailey, "Virtual Skin: Articulating Race in Cyberspace" (*RDC*)
- Brenda Laurel, "Computers as Theater" (*RDC*)
- Poster, Mark. *The second media age*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1995: Ch. 2, "Postmodern Virtualities." Online at: <http://www.humanities.uci.edu/mposter/writings/internet.html>

10/13: NEW IDENTITIES 2

- Lisa Nakamura, *Cybertypes* (CH 1, 2, 5, CONC)
- Jonathan Sterne, "The Computer Race Goes to Class" in Nakamura, et al. *Race in Cyberspace* 191-212 (BB)

10/20: NEW RELATIONSHIPS

- Ilana Gershon, *The Breakup 2.0*
- Daniel J. Solove, *The Future of Reputation* (CH1-4)

10/27: NEW COMMUNITIES

- Howard Rheingold, "The Virtual Community" (*RDC*)
- Guillermo Gomez-Pena, "The Virtual Barrio @ the Other Frontier" (*RDC*)
- Avital Ronell, "A Disappearance of Community" (*RDC*)
- Danah Boyd, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites"
<http://www.danah.org/papers/WhyYouthHeart.pdf>
- Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (INTRO, CH 1, 2, 6)

11/03: PLAY 1

- Edward Castronova, *Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games*, Chapters 1, 2, 6-11
- De Peuter, Greig, Dyer-Witheford, Nick (2005). A playful multitude? Mobilising and counter-mobilising immaterial game labour. *Fibre Culture* 5.
<http://five.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-024-a-playful-multitude-mobilising-and-counter-mobilising-immaterial-game-labour/>

11/10: PLAY 2

- T.L. Taylor, *Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture*

11/17: WORK

- Weber, Steven. "The political economy of open source software." Tracking a transformation: e-commerce and the terms of competition in industries. Ed. BRIE-IGCC E-economy Project. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2001. 406-434. (BB)
- Tiziana Terranova, "Free labor: producing culture for the digital economy." *Social Text* 18.2 (2000): 33-58. (BB)
- Tetzlaff, David. "Yo-ho-ho and a server of warez: internet software piracy and the new global information economy." In Herman and Swiss, eds. *The world wide web and contemporary cultural theory*. New York and London: Routledge, 2000. 99-126 (BB)
- Mark Andrejevic, "The work of being watched: interactive media and the exploitation of self-disclosure." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. June (2002): 230-248 (BB)
- Julian Dibbell, "The Unreal Estate Boom," *Wired* 11.01, January, 2003, online at: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.01/gaming.html>
- Howard Rheingold, *Smart mobs: the next social revolution* (CH5) (BB)

12/01: RIGHTS

- John Perry Barlow, “The economy of ideas: a framework for rethinking patents and copyrights in the digital age (everything you know about intellectual copyright is wrong).” *Wired* 2.03 March, 1994: 84-90, 126-129. Online at: http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.03/economy.ideas_pr.html
- Lawrence Lessig, *Code: and Other Laws of Cyberspace Version 2.0* (CH 1, 6, 7, 10)
- Cass Sunstein, “The Daily We” *The Boston Review*, Summer, 2001. Online at: <http://bostonreview.net/BR26.3/sunstein.php>
- Inrona, Lucas D., and Helen Nissenbaum. “Shaping the web: why the politics of search engines matters.” *The Information Society* 16.3 (2000): 169-186 (BB)
- Rebecca Tushnet, “Copyright Law, Fan Practices and the Rights of the Author” in *Fandom* (BB)
- Daniel J. Solove, *The Future of Reputation* (CH5-8)

12/08: SEARCH ENGINE SOCIETY

- Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Googlization of Everything*