Instructor Information
Instructor: Nicholas Hobin
Office: Games Institute, EC1-1247C, Tues 1:30-2:30
Email: nhobin@uwaterloo.ca

Course Description
This course examines how digital technologies construct and constrain the formation of identities and social spaces. More specifically, we will explore the technical, cultural, and social forces that make digital lives both familiar and unfamiliar, traditional and subversive.

In addition to studying the who, what, where, why, and how of “digital lives,” this course is focused on helping you develop your skills as an academic reader and writer in the discipline of English.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, you will:

A. Understand theoretical, critical, and popular discourses concerning the who, what, where, why, and how of “digital lives”.
B. Analyze cultural, material, and immaterial practices, objects, and artifacts of digital lives.
C. Apply core concepts of new media theory to your own digital life and engage critically with wider digital culture.
D. Speak and write confidently and knowledgeably about digital media, civic life online, and the rendering of human and nonhuman forms of life in digital environments.

Course Meeting Times
The course meets twice weekly, Tuesday and Thursday from 11:30-12:50, in Hagey Hall 139.

Feel free to contact me with any concerns or questions you have about the class, the readings, or the assignments. I will be in my office during the hours noted, and I’m happy to have you drop by during these times, or by appointment at other times. Beyond office hours, contact is best initiated via email.

Email policy: Email is fast, but it is not instant. I will read your emails within one business day, and I will respond within two business days. I do not address major questions of substance (“Can you explain what the chapter was about, because I missed class?”) in emails, but will use it to make appointments with you, or to clear up questions of fact (“Can you meet with me on Wednesday to talk about the chapter?”).

Required Texts

This book is required; you can expect to be required to read a chapter each week, with occasional additional or supplementary readings. It is available at the UWaterloo Bookstore, but you are also able to seek out digital copies if you prefer.

Additional readings, and a schedule for their completion, will be made available on Learn.
Course Requirements and Assessments

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<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection Activities</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Each Monday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Platform Autobiography</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Draft and Peer Review</em></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Thurs Feb 6th, in class</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Final Submission</em></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Thurs Feb 13th</td>
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<td>Research Project</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Proposal</em></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Thurs Feb 27th</td>
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<td><em>Annotated Bibliography</em></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Thurs Mar 12th</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Draft and Peer Review</em></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Thurs Mar 26th, in class</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Final Submission</em></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Thurs Apr 2nd</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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**Participation**
Your participation grade will be awarded to you as a percentage at the end of term. Half of this grade comes from your attendance; the rest reflects your observed engagement with the course and its material. A strong grade will result from participating actively in discussions, arriving punctually for every class, and arranging necessary absences in advance. Facilitating conversation, integrating your own research into your reflections, and asking questions which clarify course material are all ways in which you can raise your score in this category.

Personal electronic devices are permissible in class, but their will result in a lower participation grade, as will disrupting the class environment or being chronically absent.

**Reflections**
At the beginning of each week, you will write a one-page reflection on the readings for the two upcoming classes. You have a broad amount of freedom with the content of these reflections, but they should at minimum demonstrate your familiarity with the readings. You will receive points for completion, with additional points being awarded for submissions which show critical engagement with the texts.

**Drafts and Peer Review**
There are two peer review sessions scheduled in class during the term, one for the platform autobiography on Feb 6th, and a second for the final project on Mar 26th. You are required to bring a complete or near-complete draft of your assignment to this session; you will have the opportunity to give and receive feedback. Half of your score will come from the completeness of your draft, and the other from the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of the feedback you give.

*You are required to be in class on theses dates.* Because this is a time-sensitive group activity, accommodating lateness or absence will not be possible without prior, documented arrangement.

**Platform Autobiography**
You will select an element of your digital life that you use on a regular basis and document your experiences with it. The autobiography will include a short description of the platform, an explanation of who uses it and how you use it, an account of your engagement with the platform, and remarks on the platform’s affordances.

All research must be correctly documented. The platform study will be evaluated on your level of engagement with the chosen platform, demonstrated knowledge of its uses, clarity of writing, and mechanics (spelling, grammar, formatting, etc.).
Final Project
As your capstone for the course, you will complete a project which showcases your ability to conduct effective research and analysis on the practices, objects, or artifacts of digital lives. By default, this will consist of a research paper in which you develop, research, and pose an answer to a question about digital lives, with appropriately documented sources.

At your option, however, you may substitute the essay with another option:

Conference Paper: You will present your topic and argument to the class; this will require a short slide presentation and brief Q&A period.

Creative Essay: You will deliver your argument in a video essay, a podcast essay, or another creative format.

Critical Media Project: You will make something – a small game, a podcast, a let’s play video, an RPG module, a poem or a short piece of fiction – that investigates a theme or issue or topic related to this course. You will then write a critical reflection on your experiences and/or on the creative intent of your project, and what your project argues about that particular theme/issue/topic.

Other Options: You may propose a final project to me, as long as shows your critical engagement with the subject, your ability to apply course concepts, and your facility at researching and forming arguments.

You must submit a proposal for your final project by Feb 27th, containing your tentative thesis and an outline of your argument. By Mar 12th we will complete an annotated bibliography, in which you will outline key arguments of relevant sources and how they support your thesis. On Mar 26th, you will be expected to bring to class a largely-complete draft for peer review.

The final submission will be due at midnight after our last class. There are no written exams in this iteration of the course.

Submission Dates
Assignments are required to be submitted to Learn in .pdf format unless specified otherwise. Assignments submitted late or incorrectly will be penalized 5% for each day late, and may also not receive the same level of commentary and feedback. Submissions more than one week late will not be accepted, and the student will receive a 0 on the assignment. Late or incomplete weekly reflection activities, or missed peer review activities will not be marked without prior accommodation, which may require documentation.

If you are having difficulty meeting deadlines for any reason, let me know. I am willing to accommodate a broad range of circumstances provided they are discussed with me sufficiently in advance.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: The AccessAbility Services office, located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Other Important Information
Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

More information is available at Academic integrity (Arts) and Academic Integrity Office (UWaterloo).

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who...
needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4.

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

**Mental Health Support**
All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health supports if they are needed.

**On Campus**
- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 xt 32655
- MATES: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek form Student Life Centre

**Off campus, 24/7**
- Good2Talk: Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-433 ext. 6880
- Here 24/7: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- OK2BME: set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Full details can be found online at the Faculty of ARTS website. You can also download UWaterloo and regional mental health resources (PDF), or the WatSafe app to your phone to quickly access mental health support information.

**Academic freedom at the University of Waterloo**
Policy 33, Ethical Behaviour states, as one of its general principles (Section 1):

> The University supports academic freedom for all members of the University community. Academic freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base teaching and research on an honest and ethical quest for knowledge. In the context of this policy, “academic freedom” refers to academic activities, including teaching and scholarship, as is articulated in the principles set out in the Memorandum of Agreement between the FAUW and the University of Waterloo, 1998 (Article 6). The academic environment which fosters free debate may from time to time include the presentation or discussion of unpopular opinions or controversial material. Such material shall be dealt with as openly, respectfully and sensitively as possible.

This definition is repeated in Policies 70 and 71, and in the Memorandum of Agreement, Section 6.

**Territorial Acknowledgement:**
We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.