Course description:

This course examines how digital communication technologies construct and constrain the formation of online 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. Our day-to-day activities shape and are shaped by the technology we use, from Google Maps and iTunes to Facebook and PlayerUnknown’s Battlegrounds. The purpose of this course, above all else, is to learn to think critically about these tools.

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. This focus means a lot of thinking about writing, and of course, a lot of writing—and a fair bit of watching, listening, and discussing as well.

Course learning outcomes:

The design of the content and schedule of the course is determined by our goals of scholarly engagement with the idea and practice of ‘digital lives,’ and of becoming stronger academic writers in a university setting.

Foundational Knowledge—by the end of the course you should be able to
- Identify the basic terms by which scholars study and theorize the Internet
- Write concise and persuasive short academic papers, supported by evidence
- Discuss how and why people engage with one another online

Application—over the course of the term you will
- Take notes from textbooks and other sources to understand, remember, and apply what has been learned to commonly used, popular culture digital artifacts
- Interpret texts using scholarly methods of analysis
- Frame persuasive arguments in writing

Integration—this course encourages you to
- Develop a clear, concise, and scholarly ‘voice’
- Write more professionally: conceive, research, draft, edit, and proofread your work
- Connect our reading and writing strategies to the larger project of your degree

This course is reading intensive, writing intensive, and participation intensive: I expect you to do the readings, take careful notes, show up, and take part.
Course meeting times

The course meets twice weekly, Monday and Wednesday from 4:00-5:20 pm, in Hagey Hall 150.

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 1 business day, and I will respond within 2 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 and Recommended texts

The following text is required for the course. Bring it to class.


The following game is required for the course. Play it by the appointed date.

Roberts, Jason. *Gorogoa*. Available on Apple App Store, Steam, GoG.com, Nintendo Switch. Note: Gorogoa is about $10 cheaper on the App Store than other locations. It’s entirely unfair, and absolutely something we’ll be discussing in class, but be aware of the difference.

We have a course website: it is available through UW-LEARN. You must access this site regularly: this site is where links to readings not in the textbook are located, as well as copies of all handouts.

Object Texts

In each subsection of the course, we will examine a different medium in detail via an ‘object text’; these digital media artifacts will 1) familiarize you with the medium in question and 2) provide a common ground for in-depth discussions. All of the object texts will be made available through LEARN. Some may require just 5 minutes of your day; others will require active participation for as much as an hour or more.

Assignments and Mark Distribution

The following are the graded components of the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Feb 7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resp. Paper, edited and resubmitted</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Feb 26th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic and Thesis statement</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Mar 7th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participation and Attendance. Students will receive a portion of this mark for being present in class, and a portion for active and helpful participation. Grading for the participation portion will be done considering the following:

- **Excellent:** With few, if any, exceptions, the student is making frequent, substantive, useful and original contributions to class discussions; the student consistently engaged and participating, and attends all peer review sessions and classes.
- **Good:** The student is a regular contributor to discussions; the student is consistently engaged, and attends all peer review sessions.
- **Satisfactory:** The student demonstrates occasional contributions and inconsistent engagement.
- **Marginal:** Minimal contributions and/or significant lack of engagement.
- **Failure:** Repeated disruptive, inappropriate or unethical behaviour; behaviour disrespectful to others; consistent lack of commitment and/or effort.

Detailed descriptions that explain what is expected of you from each assignment will be posted on LEARN as we approach the assignment deadline; please read these carefully and refer to them as you complete the assignments. All assignments are to be submitted to LEARN dropboxes.

Absence and Late Policy

Attendance is vital to your success in this course. If you choose not to attend, you will be missing in-class exercises upon which some of your grades will depend. There are no 'makeups' for this work.

Assignments are due as noted on the assignment sheets and on the LEARN calendar; **unless prior arrangements are made late assignments will lose 10% per day late, for every school day.** Assignments more than three days late will not be accepted without documentation or explanation.

Rights and Responsibilities

Every member of this class—instructor as well as students—has rights and responsibilities to ensure a pleasant and productive experience for all. We are all answerable to University policies governing **ethical behaviour** (Policy 33) and **academic integrity** (Policy 71), as well as to those outlining **grievance or dispute procedures** (Policy 70). Please consult these documents, available from the website of the university secretariat.

Here are some more specific expectations for this course:

**You will:**

- know the university policies that govern your behaviour
- attend all scheduled classes
• arrive prepared: with assigned reading and writing completed, and with appropriate materials in hand
• participate actively in your own learning, while respecting the rights of others to learn as well: this means active listening as well as active speaking
• give thoughtful consideration to instructor feedback on written and oral work

I will:

• adhere to the university policies that govern my behaviour
• attend all scheduled classes
• make myself available for consultation in person and over email
• return assignments within 2 weeks
• provide helpful and respectful feedback on your work

On academic dishonesty: it is a serious offense to appropriate the intellectual labour of another to yourself. Plagiarism consists of using the words or ideas of another without proper attribution. I expect that the work you submit in this course will be the product of your own labour, and that your research sources will be scrupulously documented. If you have any concerns or questions about appropriate practice, you are sincerely encouraged to come discuss this with me—I would really like to help.

The Writing and Communication Centre
The Writing and Communication Centre works with students as they develop their ideas, draft, and revise. Writing and Communication Specialists offer one-on-one support in planning assignments, synthesizing and citing research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence. You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writingand-communication-centre. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available. Please note that communication specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not change or correct your work for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.

Accessibility Statement
If you want to talk about an accommodation, please write me so we can meet and discuss your needs. If you can, let me know at the beginning of the term so that we can make arrangements to support you throughout the term. But of course sometimes you don’t know an accommodation would be helpful, or something about your situation changes, and in either case please don’t hesitate to write and we’ll set up a meeting to work out accommodations.

Students may also wish to register with the AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 1401). AccessAbility Services 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, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.
Counselling Services
Counselling Services may be of assistance and their information is available online: https://uwaterloo.ca/counselling-services/. If you ever need help finding contact information for these resources you can always come talk to me during office hours or email to set up a time to chat.
(Note: you should come to class having read the listed readings, and be prepared to discuss them. Updates to the reading list will be announced in class)

### Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Getting Started/Social Media Platform/Facebook Networks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 3</strong></td>
<td>- Introductions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Read: NM introduction and abbreviations  
- Writing Skills: "Study Skills" & "Critical Thinking and Reading." |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Introduction to New Media/Internet Radio/CBC Radio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Jan 10** | - NM Chapter 1 "Introduction to New Media," to end of Internet History section (1-14)  
- Writing Skills: "Academic Writing" |
| **Jan 15** | - Finish NM Chapter 1 "Introduction to New Media" (pp 14-27)  
- Writing Skills: "Argument"  
- Podcast [TBD] |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Approaches to New Media/Tetrad/Webcomics and Podcasts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Jan 17** | - NM Chapter 3, "Approaches to New Media" (pp 56-78)  
- Writing Skills: "The Writing Situation" and "Cluster Criticism" |
| **Jan 22** | - NM Chapter 2,"The History of New Media," to end of Telephone section (pp 29-43).  
- Writing Skills: "Thesis and Organization" and "Drafting"  
- Podcast [TBD]  
Draft a thesis statement for response paper |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mobile Networks/smart phones and photo distribution / selfies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Jan 24** | - Finish NM Chapter 2, "The History of New Media" (pp 43-55)  
Morrison, Aimee. "The pre-Digi Selfie." [LEARN] |
| **Jan 29** | - NM Chapter 4, "Mobile New Media" (pp 79-105)  
- Chivvis, Dana. "Monkey in the Middle." This American Life #631, Act 1 [LEARN]  
Jan 31 - Writing Skills: "Revising and Editing" and "Paragraphs"  
Draft workshop for response paper (bring response drafts to class with you) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Networks &amp; Participatory Culture/Social Network redux/Facebook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Feb 5** | - NM Chapter 5, “Social Networks and Participatory Culture” (pp 106-134)  
- Film [in-class] |
| **Feb 7** | - Film [in-class] + discussion  
Response Paper due |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Creative Industries/Data mining/Science Fiction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Feb 12** | - NM Chapter 7, "Creative Industries" (pp 160-187)  
- Black Mirror |
| **Feb 14** | - Writing Skills: "Working with Sources," "Avoiding Plagiarism and Documenting Sources," and "MLA Documentation and Format" |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internet Cuteness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Feb 26** | - Writing Skills: "Reading and Writing about Literature"  
- Lecture on Library Resources  
Revised Response Paper due |
| **Feb 28** | - Writing Skills: "Research Strategy" and "Finding Sources" |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Technology, Industry, Culture /Participatory Game Culture/Gorogoa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Mar 5** | - NM Chapter 6, "Games: Technology, Industry, Culture" (pp 134-159)  
Jason Roberts. *Gorogoa* [Appstore, STEAM, GOG.COM, Nintendo Switch] |
| **Mar 7** | - Bogost, Ian. "Videogames are better without Stories." [LEARN]  
- Costikyan, Greg. "Analyzing Games." From Uncertainty in Games. [LEARN]  
Topic and Thesis Statement due |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Twine Tutorial/Game Authorship/Twine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Mar 12** | - NM Chapter 8, "The Global Knowledge Economy" (pp 188-214)  
*Known Unknowns* by Brendan Patrick Hennessy. Built in Twine. [LEARN]  
"Harmonia" by Liza Daly. Built in Windrift. [LEARN]  
Mar 14 - Twine tutorial [guest speaker]  
Annotated Bibliography due |

<p>|  | Internet Law/Networks/Net Neutrality |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 19</td>
<td>NM Chapter 9 “Internet Law, Policy, and Governance” (pp 215-248)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mar 21 | **Writing Skills:** “Writing the Paper”  
| Mar 26 | **Writing Strategies**  
- Writing Skills: “Appropriate, Exact Words,” “Completeness,” and “Conciseness” |                                            |
| Mar 28 | **Writing Strategies**  
- Writing Skills: “Emphasis,” “Parallelism,” and “Variety; Details” | Draft Workshop (bring essay drafts to class with you) |
| Apr 2  | **Conclusions**  
- NM Chapter 10 “Conclusion” |                                            |
| Apr 4  | **Conclusions**  
- Research Paper due, beginning of class |                                            |