Instructor Information
Instructor: Jin Sol Kim (pronouns: she/her)
Office: N/A
Virtual Office Hours: T/Th 10:00-11:00 via Slack chat
Email: js2kim@uwaterloo.ca

Territorial Acknowledgement
I acknowledge that I am living, learning, 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.

Course Description
This course examines how digital communication technologies construct and constrain the formation of online identities and social spaces. We will explore the technical, cultural, and social forces that make digital lives both familiar and unfamiliar, traditional and subversive. Throughout the course, we will develop strategies and methods for studying media and digital platforms, online materials, and contemporary manifestations of “digital life.” We will use these critical tools to look at several themes that include auto/biography, social justice movements, gender, race, and more.

Our course is divided into three units:

Understanding Digital Media
In this unit of the course, we will be exploring the various theories and methods of analyzing media, generally, and digital media, specifically. In addition to the history of digital media, we will be learning about the affordances and constraints of media: how media shape content and users’ engagement with content. But we will also consider the ways users shape media and media usage, providing thematic and theoretical groundwork for the subsequent course units.

Digital Lives IRL (In Real Life)
After familiarizing ourselves with the theories and methods of analyzing the affordances and constraints of media, we will study the creation and performances of online identities on various (social) media platforms. In this section, we will consider the ways in which digital media often reinforce the status quo, and how the creation and performances of online identities may serve, in turn, as a form of resistance against various intersecting oppressions.
**Digital Life in the Age of COVID-19**

This final unit will ask you all to think critically about our contemporary situation of Digital Life in the Age of COVID-19, drawing from what you have learned in Units One and Two. In particular, as we collectively navigate this unprecedented time — not just in the sense of living through a global pandemic, but also in its overlap with digital culture — we will consider if and how digital environments have changed as a result of pandemic living. Together, we will explore new concepts such as Zoom fatigue as well as discuss topics like the Black Lives Matter/anti-racism movements online.

**Course Goals and Learning Objectives**

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.

**Knowledge**—*by the end of the course you should be able to:*

- **Identify** the basic terms by which scholars study and theorize (digital) media & online materials
- **Write** clear and persuasive short academic papers, supported by evidence
- **Discuss** the affordances and constraints of media, and the various cultural uses and imaginations of media

**Application**—*over the course of the term you will:*

- **Take notes** from various media and lectures to understand, remember, and apply new ideas
- **Interpret** texts using scholarly methods of analysis
- **Frame** persuasive arguments in writing

**Integration**—*this course encourages you to:*

- **Develop** a clear and concise 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, and take part.

**Pandemic Objectives**

1. To be patient and kind with ourselves and with each other.
2. To embrace the opportunity to learn in new ways and grow as students and citizens.
3. To do our best, knowing that this will probably look different than other terms.
4. To communicate openly and clearly about our expectations, concerns, and goals. Tell me what you need, and I’ll tell you how I can help.
5. To be flexible. This is a strange time. We’re all a bit anxious. Circumstances will likely change over the course of the term. Let’s work together to make this the best class possible, knowing that this may be a moving target.

**Required Text/Materials**

*Digital Media and Society*
by Simon Lindgren

Other readings and resources will be made available on LEARN.

**Course Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Weekly; see description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>October 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Digital Culture Project</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>See description and handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project Proposal</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>November 3 (rough draft); November 5 (final draft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>December 3</td>
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* Brief descriptions of the assignments follow; full details will be supplied closer to deadlines. I will return graded assignments to you within two weeks of their submission.

**Online Participation – 20%**

* Each Tuesday by 5:00pm EST** you are to upload a short 150-word post to the appropriate Discussion Board about what interests you the most about that week’s reading and why. I cannot stress this last part enough, as the point of this weekly posting is for you to think through and engage with the material; if you simply write “I found X interesting because I hadn’t thought about it in that way before” every week, you will not receive participation marks for the post. Select a concept, a sentence, a paragraph, an image, etc. from the readings and write on what interests you about that thing in relation to our course.

You must also reply to at least two of your classmates’ posts from that week by Thursday at 5:00pm each week. Each week’s engagement will be worth 2% of your participation marks: 1% for the post, and 1% for your replies on other posts (0.5% x 2).
**There will be no posts due on September 8, October 6, and November 5**

**Response Paper – 15%**
The response paper requires you to use your critical judgment to assess the material and to compare and contrast theories. More developed than the weekly LEARN posts you will be making, your response paper should be approximately 400 words in length, and focus on one or more assigned texts and your take on the ideas explored in these texts. In other words, the response paper asks you to go beyond “I found this interesting because...” to develop an opinion on the readings and topics at hand, and to persuade your reader of its rightness.

**History of Digital Culture (HDC) Group Project – 25% (15% project, 10% comments)**
In groups of 2-4 people, you will be required to make a video or a podcast about a particular moment in digital history or (pop) culture. The video/podcast should be 7-10 minutes long. There will be a sign-up period and a list of topics available to you in the first two weeks of class, and you will submit your completed video/podcast episode to LEARN on the date associated with your topic. This portion of the assignment is worth 15% of your final grade.

The other 5% of this project requires you to post a comment on other peoples’ projects in their discussion forum on LEARN. To get the full 10%, you must post a thoughtful comment on every group’s podcast/video.

**Final Project Proposal – 15% (10% proposal, 5% peer review feedback)**
For this assignment, you are required to write a 500-word (two-pages double-spaced) proposal on what your final project is. You must include 1) the type of final project you are doing (see Final Research Project description), 2) your main argument or thesis, 3) the rough outline of your project, and 4) a list of possible academic sources you will be using and why. You will not be committed to following through on your proposal for your final project, although it will benefit you to do so. The purpose of this assignment is to get you working on your final project early enough in the term that it will be a substantial production.

**Final Project – 25%**
The final project can either be a research essay, a creative essay, or a critical media project. Each of these options require 2-3 secondary academic sources that are not your textbook.

The research essay will require you to write a 1500-word (6 pages double-spaced) paper on a particular research topic of your choice. You must use your secondary sources to support your arguments.

The creative essay is similar to the research essay in the sense that you must construct an argument on a particular research topic of your choice. However, instead of a handwritten essay, you can make a video essay, a podcast essay, or a creative format that you propose to me. Since there is no page length for these formats, your submission must be 8-12 minutes. Secondary sources must still be included to support your arguments.
The **critical media project** is a creative project, supplemented by a 750-word (3 pages double-spaced) critical reflection. For a critical media project, you can make something (a small game, a podcast, a let’s play video, a poem or a short piece of fiction) that investigates a theme or issue or topic related to this course. You are then required to write a critical reflection on your experiences with and/or on the creative intent of your project, and what your project argues about that particular theme/issue/topic. More details will be given during the second unit.

**Course Outline**

**Unit 1: Understanding Digital Media**

**Week 1: Logging on**

September 8: Getting to know the course  
September 10: Getting to know each other on LEARN

**Week 2: “New” Media and the Birth of the Digital Frontier**

September 15: **Read:** *DMS*, Ch 1, pp. 3-15  
September 17: **Due:** Sign-ups for History of Digital Culture (HDC) Project closes

**Week 3: “The Medium is the Message”: Media as Environments**

September 22: **Read:** *DMS*, Ch 1, pp. 16-25  
September 24: Object text discussion

**Week 4: Cyber debates**

September 29: **Read:** *DMS*, Ch 3  
October 1: HDC Groups 1 & 2 Presentations; discussion

**Week 5: (Dis)Embodiment and Identity**

October 6: **Due:** Media as Environments paper; **Read:** *DMS*, Ch 4  
October 8: HDC Groups 3 & 4 Presentations; discussion

**Unit 2: Digital Lives IRL**

**Week 6: READING WEEK**

October 13: No “classes”  
October 15: No “classes”
Week 7: Automedia

October 20: **Read:** *DMS, Ch 2*
October 22: HDC Groups 5 & 6 Presentations; discussion

Week 8: Selfies

October 27: **Read:** *DMS, Ch 6*
October 29: HDC Groups 7 & 8 Presentations; discussion

Week 9: (Counter)Publics and Online Communities

November 3: **Peer editing:** Final project proposal draft; **Read:** *DMS, Ch 5*
November 5: **Due:** Final project proposal

**Unit 3: Digital Life in the Age of COVID-19**

Week 10: Digital Citizenship

November 10: **Read:** *DMS, Ch 8; watch SGN episode 1*
November 12: HDC Groups 9 & 10 Presentations; discussion

Week 11: Anti-racist Online Activism

November 17: **Read:** *DMS, Ch 10*
November 19: HDC Groups 11 & 12 Presentations; discussion

Week 12: A Digital Future and Algorithmic Justice

November 24: **Read:** *DMS, Ch 9*
November 26: HDC Groups 13 & 14 Presentations; discussion

Week 13: Logging Off

December 1: **Peer Editing:** Rough draft of final project
December 3: **Due:** Final project

**Accommodations/ Accessibility**

In our class environment, we will be mindful of the reality that everyone learns differently. If you have any concerns about accessing course content or accommodating your learning style, please let me know. You can also arrange for formal accommodations with AccessAbility Services by registering at the beginning of each academic term. AccessAbility services is currently operating online. Please call: 519-888-4567 ext. 35082 or email:
Late Work
All assignments are to be submitted in electronic copy via the various Dropboxes on LEARN on the due date noted on the class schedule and syllabus. Late essays will be penalized at a rate of 2% per business day. To avoid the deduction of late marks, prepare your work in advance (i.e. if you have any questions or concerns, I expect to hear from you well before the assignment due date).

Late marks will not apply for the two following reasons:
1) If you have notified me in advance about a concern or conflict, and we have come to an agreement on an alternate deadline.
2) If you invoke the “Shit Happens” clause (valid one time only, see below)

Shit Happens
Before I am your instructor and you are my students, we are first and foremost fellow humans, and I understand that sometimes we can’t prepare for the shit that happens in our lives (case in point, hello, COVID-19). If something comes up that you didn’t anticipate (in addition to the pandemic) and that you don’t have documentation for, you may invoke this clause as a “get out of late marks free” pass. You may use it on one assignment throughout the term and receive a three (3) day extension, no questions asked, though I do request that you contact me as soon as you think you might need it. This clause is my gift to you. Please use it wisely.

Communication Policy
Though we do live digital lives, I do not live 24/7 on Slack or email. Do not expect me to respond to your email instantaneously, but allow for 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends for me to get back to you. For quicker replies, please message me via Slack chat during the “office hours” indicated at the top of this syllabus – the link to the course Slack channel will be available on LEARN. If you feel the need to chat via video call, please email to arrange a Skype meeting.

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.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their 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. For typical penalties, check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their/her/his university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they/she/he has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals.

Mental Health Support
Life is hard, especially in 2020, and all of us need a support system. Below is a list of mental health support services you can access. I encourage you to use them as needed.

“On” Campus
• Counselling Services (online for Fall 2020): counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 ext. 32655

Off campus, 24/7
• Good2Talk: Free confidential helpline for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
• Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-4300 ext. 6880
• Here 24/7: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
• OK2BME: support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 ext. 213