ENGL 293: Intro to Digital Media Studies

Winter 2021

Instructor: Ashley Irwin
Email: From Learn: Select “Connect,” then “Classlist,” click on “Irwin, Ashley”
Office Hours: Email to make a one-on-one appointment

Territorial Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land promised and given to Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

Black Body Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge that Canada has a 200 year-long history of enslaving Black people and that this past has reverberations in the present. I recognize that my Black students are discriminated against in terms of access to housing, education, employment, and justice under the law. I commit myself, as an educator, to fighting systemic racism within and beyond the walls of our educational institution.

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the emerging field of digital media studies. We will consider historical, theoretical, critical, and practical approaches in order to determine how we engage with and are shaped by digital media. We will be examining the affordances and limitations of digitally produced music, social media, gaming and VR, and electronic literature. Our class will be joined by digital media experts who will be leading engaging lessons on a variety of related topics. Together we will explore the impact that digital media has on ourselves as individuals and as members of a global community. The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the wide range of possibilities within the realm of digital media in hopes that you will find your niche in this new and exciting field of study!

Course Outcomes

- Describe historical and theoretical contexts of digital media
- Discover several genres of digital media
- Analyze and review various genres digital media outputs
- Exercise creativity, critical thinking, and writing and research skills in a variety of assignments

Course Format

Your course will be held remotely and asynchronously. This means that you can study from anywhere, as long as you have stable internet connection, and that you do not need to log into Learn at any particular time to attend lessons. Your lessons will be recorded and uploaded to
weekly folders on Learn. Please note that you will be required to abide by assignment deadlines and that your assignments are always due by 11:59pm EST on the date specified.

**Required Materials**

All of your readings are provided *FREE OF CHARGE* on your Learn site. They will be uploaded in PDF form or will be hyperlinked and stored in your Weekly Folders. Occasionally you will be asked to watch YouTube videos and listen to MP3s. I will also provide suggestions for supplemental readings in case you want to explore a topic further on your own time.

**Course Assignments and Requirements**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Blog Posts</td>
<td>Multiple due dates (Please see course schedule below)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>Friday, March 5</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>Friday, March 26</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Research Project</td>
<td>Wednesday, April 14</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Participation 20%-Ongoing**

Participation is one key to success in this course. Students will participate in weekly discussions on Learn and the occasional chat on Discord which can be downloaded for free on your digital device from any app store. Participation includes not just making an original post on weekly Discord channels but responding to posts made by your classmates. A minimum of one engaging post and three thoughtful responses are required each week in order to receive full participation marks. Students will also pose at least one thoughtful question to guest lecturers over Discord. You will also comment on your classmates’ blog posts on the Course Blog discussion board. It is very important that you treat classmates and guests with respect, reading and listening carefully, and responding in a generous manner. Sexist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, and racist comments of any kind will not be tolerated. All discussions will count towards your participation grade.

**Blog Posts 30%-Ongoing**

You are responsible for writing two blog posts, worth 15% each, on a topic related to course material. You will write a blog that reviews a digital media production, like an album or a game, a device like a smart phone or a laptop, a social media platform like Facebook or Twitter, etc. You will also produce a blog post that analyzes a digital media production like a song, a character in a game, an electronic poem, etc. Your blog posts are to be between 500-800 words and will be posted on the Course Blog discussion board as well as in the Dropbox.
Final Project 50%

Your final project will be scaffolded, meaning that it will be comprised of several components due over the final month of the course. You can choose to submit a research essay (30%) or a digital media project that explores a topic related to the course. Both options require you to submit a proposal (5%) and an annotated bibliography (15%).

If you choose to produce a research essay (30%), you will write a 4-5 pages on a topic of your choice. You will use reputable sources to support your thesis. You may wish to build upon one of your blog posts or you can write on something else entirely! If you choose to produce a digital media project (25%), you will make something (like a small game, a podcast, a YouTube video, a song, etc.) that explores a theme or issue related to course material. In addition to your digital media project, you will submit a 2-page reflection (5%) that explains your creative process and your choices and considers how your research sources and course material influenced your project.

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numeric Grade Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>75-76</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>70-74</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>65-67</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>60-64</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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Resources for Students

Accommodations

We will all need some accommodations in this class because we all learn differently. If you need specific accommodations, let me know. Your success in this course is important to me, and I will work with you to ensure that you have the means of accessing class information, ways to take part in class activities, and avenues for fair assessment of your coursework. The University of Waterloo has a long-standing commitment to support the participation and access to university programs, services, and facilities by persons with all types of disabilities. 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 to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

Mental Health

Your mental health is extremely important, and we all experience varying degrees of mental health concerns at some point in our lives. University is a very stressful environment, and if you are feeling unwell, please know that you are not alone. I am not, by any means, an expert, but if you approach me with a mental health concern, you can be sure that I will take your issue very seriously and will point you in the direction of help. The following is a list of resources available for students experiencing mental health difficulties:

On Campus

Due to COVID-19 and campus closures, services are available only online or by phone.

- **Counselling Services**: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
- **MATES**: one-to-one peer support program offered by the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and Counselling Services

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: 519-749-4300 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 on the Faculty of Arts website

Download UWaterloo and regional mental health resources (PDF)

Download the WatSafe app to your phone to quickly access mental health support information
Access the Mental Health widget on Learn

**Chosen/Preferred First Name**

Do you want professors to call you by a different first name? Take a minute now to verify or tell us your chosen/preferred first name by logging into WatIAM.

Why? Starting in winter 2020, your chosen/preferred first name listed in WatIAM will be used broadly across campus (e.g., LEARN, Quest, WaterlooWorks, WatCard, etc). Note: Your legal first name will always be used on certain official documents. For more details, visit [Updating Personal Information](https://uwaterloo.ca/updating-personal-information).

**Important notes for name changes:**

- If you included a preferred name on your OUAC application, it will be used as your chosen/preferred name unless you make a change now.
- If you don’t provide a chosen/preferred name, your legal first name will continue to be used.

**Writing and Communication Centre**

The Writing and Communication Centre (WCC) 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. 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. To book an appointment, please visit [www.uwaterloo.ca/wcc](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/wcc).

**Student Success Office**

The Student Success Office provides academic and personal development services, resources for international students, as well as study abroad and exchange support. They aim to create a vibrant student experience and help students achieve personal and professional goals. For more information, please visit [https://uwaterloo.ca/student-success/student-success-office-sign](https://uwaterloo.ca/student-success/student-success-office-sign), or reach them by phone at 519-888-4567 ext. 84410.

**Course Policies**

**Contacting Me**

Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss your writing, to seek assistance or clarification, or to raise questions/concerns pertaining to coursework. If you have a question that you expect your other classmates may have, I recommend that you post your question to the “Ask Your Prof” channel on Discord. If you have a question of a personal nature, I am readily available via email through our Learn site. Although I will be checking the discussion boards and my email
often, I do require 24 hours to respond. If you would like to arrange a virtual meeting, please
send me an email and we’ll arrange a time and date.

**General Assignment Guidelines**

Your written work must follow MLA guidelines. For an excellent MLA style guide visit The
Owl at Purdue website. Please utilize 12-point Times New Roman font, and double space your
work. Assignments must be submitted online via Learn and inserted into their corresponding
Dropboxes in PDF or DOC. **Please note: I cannot open any other file type on my computer.**
Your blog posts will also have to be uploaded onto the course blog discussion board. **All of
your assignments are due on Fridays before midnight with the exception of the Electronic
Literature Blog Post and the Final Project which are due on Monday, April 12 and
Wednesday, April 14 before midnight.** All assignments that I receive after these due dates will
be subjected to late marks unless an extension has been granted. Please see below for more
information.

**Late Work**

Late work will be accepted without penalty if prior permission has been granted. If you fear that
you will not be able to submit your assignments on time, **please ask me for an extension-I am
very flexible with deadlines as long as you contact me in a timely manner.** If an extension is
needed, please contact me, at the latest, 72 hours prior to the submission deadline. Extensions
will only be granted more than 72 hours prior to the submission deadline if proof of an
extenuating circumstance is provided. Otherwise, late work will be penalized 5% per day,
including weekends.

**University Policies**

**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. Check the Office of
Academic Integrity website for more information.

**Discipline**

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an
academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. [Check the Office of Academic
Integrity for more information.] 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 instructor, academic
advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences 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 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. 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 he/she/they has/have a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals.

**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.

**Course Schedule**

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>TO DO LIST</th>
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| Week 1 (Jan 11-15) | • Course Overview  
• Intro to Digital Media | • Explore your Learn site  
• Sign up for Blog Posts |
| Week 2 (Jan 18-22) | • History of Digital Media  
• Writing in Digital Media | • Read Nissenbaum: Keeping Track and Watching Over Us |
<p>| Week 3 (Jan 25-29) | • Technology and Surveillance | • Read Nakamura: Measuring Race on the Internet, Letters for Black Lives 2016, and Letters for Black Lives 2020 |
| Week 4 (Feb 1-Feb 5) | • Race and Digital Engagement: The Myth of the Model Minority | • Read Nelson: Introduction to Future Texts |
| Week 5 (Feb 8-12) | • Race and Digital Engagement: Afrofuturism | • Read Lonvik: Reflections on the MP3 Format and Cross: Let’s Have a |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Reading Week</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Week 6</em></td>
<td>READING WEEK</td>
<td>• Submit Device Blog Post by Friday, Feb 12 by 11:59pm EST</td>
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<td><em>Week 7 (Feb 22-26)</em></td>
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<td>• Digitally Produced Music &lt;br&gt; • MP3s &lt;br&gt; • Interview with Arthur Yeung</td>
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<td>• Read Macguire: Hoaxing Instagram &lt;br&gt; • Read <a href="#">How #Fitspiration Makes You Weak</a> &lt;br&gt; • Watch <a href="#">Addicted to Working Out</a></td>
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<td><em>Week 8 (March 1-5)</em></td>
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<td>• Social Media and Gender &lt;br&gt; • #Instagirlhood &lt;br&gt; • #Fitso</td>
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<td>• Readings TBD &lt;br&gt; • Submit Music Blog Post on Friday, March 5 by 11:59pm EST &lt;br&gt; • Submit Proposal for Final Project on Friday March 5 by 11:59pm EST</td>
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<td><em>Week 9 (March 8-12)</em></td>
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<td>• Social Voting and Reddit &lt;br&gt; • Guest Lecture by Devon Moriarty</td>
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<td>• Readings TBD</td>
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<td><em>Week 10 (March 17-19)</em></td>
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<td>• Queer Gaming &lt;br&gt; • Guest Lecture by Elise Vist and Betsy Brey</td>
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<td>• Readings TBD &lt;br&gt; • Submit Social Media Blog Post on Friday, March 19 by 11:59pm EST</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Week 11 (March 22-26)</em></td>
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<td>• VR/Gaming and Indigeneity &lt;br&gt; • Guest Lecture by Justin Carpenter</td>
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<td>• Read Hayles: <a href="#">Electronic Literature - What is it?</a> &lt;br&gt; • Submit Annotated Bibliography on Friday, March 26 by 11:59pm EST</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Week 12 (March 29-April 2)</em></td>
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<td>• Electronic Literature in Theory</td>
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<td>• Explore <a href="#">Project Rebuild</a> &lt;br&gt; • Submit Gaming Blog Post on Friday, March 26 by 11:59pm EST</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Week 13 (April 5-9)</em></td>
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<td>• Electronic Literature in Practice</td>
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| Week 14 (April 12-14) | • Conclusion | • Submit Electronic Poetry Blog Post on Monday, April 12 by 11:59pm EST  
• Submit Final Project on Tuesday, April 14 by 11:59pm EST |