English 293: Introduction to Digital Media Studies

Instructor: Michael Hancock
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Lecture: MWF 10:30-11:20 AM, DWE 3522A
Office hours: 12:00-2:00 F, Office PAS 2212

Course Description
A study of theories of digital media, including critical, rhetorical, and semiotic approaches, and of the interpretation and creation of digital media artifacts.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the course, students will have been introduced to and be expected to successfully demonstrate some of the following skills:

- To define and explain basic methodologies for analyzing digital media and texts regarding digital media
- To be able to recognize and critically analyze the significant topics relating to and discussing digital media
- To apply these definitions and engage in the close reading of a digital media artefact for the purposes of critical discussion, and debate
- To present an informed discussion of an essay related to a topic concerning digital media
- To articulate a rhetorical analysis of the topics discussed in class, integrating research to justify and support an argument
- To create and/or implement a project that engages with the topics concerning digital media, and to discuss that project critically.

Course Materials

Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>once each topic</td>
<td>1 post, 1 response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>over the term</td>
<td>20 min. presentation, discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 21, 2011</td>
<td>6-8 Pages, due in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>every class</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital Media Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Nov 28th-Dec 2nd</td>
<td>20 min. presentation (group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>two weeks after</td>
<td>6-8 pages (individual)</td>
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Blog Participation – 10%

The course blog can be found at the address http://engl293introtodigitalmedia.wordpress.com/ (there’s a link on the UW-ACE page). For each topic, students are responsible for one blog post and one response to another student’s post or response. The blog post must be posted by the start of
the presentation class (as noted on the syllabus), and the response must be posted by the end of the week (Sunday night). The blog post must engage directly with the topic, and it must contain the following features: a link to a video/webspace/blog/comic (where applicable), must be approximately 100 words, must be original (cannot use the same sole topic twice), and must comment on a specific aspect of the topic, for example, the use of remediation on the dating site www.eharmony.ca. The response must be critical (rather than descriptive), and engage directly with the artefact or topic, and can be posted in response to either a post or another response. Grades are earned based on the quality of posts, responses, and questions. Material posted on the blog may be, and are encouraged to be, the focus of further analysis in assignments. Students must email the instructor with their blog username before their first post.

Presentation – 20%
On “presentation” days, a student will prepare a presentation based on the selected readings. The presentation should cover key points in the reading, specialized terms (important words), and points of contention or discussion. This is not simply a summary of the reading, although the student must give a comprehensive overview of the text; instead, the goal of the presentation is to “translate” the reading so that it is relevant within the context of previous and future course discussions. The student should make use of audio/visual materials of their choice to enhance the quality of the presentation. Don't just present the text -- engage your colleagues. Presentations should be approximately 20 minutes with an additional discussion time, though going a little under or over is fine.
You will be graded on the following:
Comprehensiveness (did you cover the most important parts of the article?)
Relevance (did you relate the reading to other course readings or current events?)
Innovation (did you make an effort to use A/V materials or other methods to enhance the learning experience?)

Paper #1 – 20% - Six to Eight Pages ---- Due October 21, in class
Students will be required to submit their first essay on October 21st. For the essay, the student will select one or two topics that have been discussed in class and address them in a critical manner. This essay is meant to include a close engagement with the topics and students are expected to go into greater depth than the discussion in class or on the blog (though these discussions may be referred to, if properly cited). The use of sources not discussed in class is not mandatory, but will be allowed (and encouraged). However, students must reference at least one essay from the syllabus or textbook that discusses their topic of choice. The essay must follow proper essay format; in particular, there must be a thesis, a developed argument, and proper MLA citation. Additionally, the essays are to be double-spaced, use 12 point Times New Roman font, and have 1 inch margins. Students are encouraged to submit essays with original and well organized arguments which should engage in a close study of the topic within the framework of the thesis of the essay. Further, if the student is experiencing any difficulties with the essays, they are encouraged to seek the guidance of the instructor. Issues of formatting and composition will be addressed in classes prior to October 21st.

Digital Media Project (15%) & Final Essay (25%)
Students will work in small groups (2-3 people) or by themselves to create a digital media project. This project may take a variety of forms: a video clip, a website, a podcast, a PowerPoint slam, an
augmented reality game, or some other digital artifact. It must, however, engage with some form of digital media and should directly respond to some of the topics discussed in class. Students will be expected to have a chosen a topic and project idea **AT LEAST two weeks (Nov 14th)** before the project is due. During the final full week of classes, students will present their projects to the class. This presentation will be approximately 20 minutes long, followed by a question session. Students may directly demonstrate their project (if it is a video clip, for example) or discuss its composition and creation, or do both. The project will be marked on the basis of three factors:

- **Presentation** (did you present it to the class in a structured, coherent manner?)
- **Relevance** (did you relate the reading to other course readings or current events?)
- **Innovation** (is the concept behind the project and the project itself creative and engaging?)

In addition to the group project, everyone will be required to write an individual essay (6-8 pages) regarding their project. While some overlap is to be expected, this is NOT a collaborative essay, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. The essay will discuss how the project engages with various essays we have covered in class, as well as the course topics the digital project addressed. It is expected that it will explore these issues in greater detail than in the presentation of the project. The same requirements of the first essay (thesis, argument, citation, etc.) apply here as well. Again, outside sources are not mandatory, but permitted. The essay is due two weeks after the group’s presentation, and may be submitted in paper or electronic form.

**Late Penalties**
The first essay must be submitted in class. Late papers may be submitted in the English Department Drop Box, HH2016E (beside HH228). Late papers will be penalized at the rate of 2% per day. No extensions or exceptions. A doctor’s note or a note from the registrar is required to avoid a late penalty. Given the final paper’s proximity to the end of term, it is particularly crucial that students submit it on time.

**Schedule**

September 12 - Introduction to course

**Topic: Historical Background**

http://www.bobostertag.com/tcs/001/MenMachinesWorld.pdf
Vannevar Bush, “As We May Think”
Marshall McLuhan “The World is a Global Village”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeDnPP6ntic&feature=related

**Topic: Theory & Methods**

September 21—Application. The *Myst* series and Wikipedia.
September 23 – Presentation. “Digitextuality and Click Theory: Theses on Convergence Media in the Digital Age” by Anna Everett
“Making Meaning of Mobiles: A Theory of Apparatgeist” by James E. Katz and Mark A. Aakhus

Blog Post #1 due

**Topic: Space, Place, and Community**

September 26 – Lecture. Ch 7: “Post-Sedentary Space,” W. J. T. Mitchell; Ch 9: “Asphalt Games: Enacting Place Through Locative Media” by Michele Chang and Elizabeth Goodman


September 30 – Presentation. Ch 8: “The End of Geography, or the Explosion of Place?: Conceptualizing Space, Place, and Information Technology.” Stephen Graham;

Blog Post #2 due

**Topic: Race in/and Cyberspace**


Ian Shanahan.

"Not Just Rappers and Athletes," Adams, Ernest. *


“Saving the Universe and Seducing Blue Women: a Discussion of Race and Choice in Mass Effect.” (presentation)

October 7 - Presentation. Ch 12: “Thinking Through the Dispora: Call Centers, India, and a New Politics of Hybridity.” Raka Shome.

Blog Post 3 due

**Topic: Game Studies**


October 12 – Essay discussion.


Blog Post #3 due
“A New Taxonomy of Gamers.”
Mitch Krpata. Blog Post 4 due

October 19
http://www.computerandvideogames.com/161570/blog/galciv-2-war-report-final-entry/?site=pcg
Jim Rossignol. “A Deadly Dollar.”

Topic: Posthuman

http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html
http://humanityplus.org/learn/transhumanist-declaration/
October 26 – Presentation. Ch 2: “What Does it Mean to be Posthuman?”. N. Katherine Hayles.
Or

Topic: The Social Media

October 31 – Application. Blogs of students’ choice or The Saga of Boatmurdered.
http://lparchive.org/Dwarf-Fortress-Boatmurdered/
Or

Blog Post 6 Due

Topic: Online Activism


Gender, Sex, and Sexualities


November 16 Presentation. Ch 17: “Race, Gender, and Sex on the Net: Semantic Networks of Selling and Storytelling Sex Tourism.” Peter A. Chow-White. Or
Ch 31: Dynamics of Internet Dating.” Helene M. Lawson & Kira Leck. Blog Post 8 due

Bodies, Embodiment, Biopolitics

November 21 Application. TBD.
November 23 Presentation. Blog Post 9 due

November 25: Final Project check-up.

November 28th – December 2nd: Project Presentation

December 5th: Wrap-up.

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 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.
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, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm

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, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm

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, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm

Academic Integrity website (Arts): http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Academic Integrity Office (UW): http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), 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 OPD at the beginning of each academic term.