Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the growing field of digital media studies, with a focus on theory, including critical, rhetorical, and semiotic approaches. We will engage with the central critical conversations and debates in the digital humanities to examine a wide range of new media objects and texts ranging from smart technologies to contemporary videogames, to augmented reality, and more. This course aims to introduce students to the ways in which “objects-to-think-with” can be applied to new media studied in the humanities.

Course Evaluation

Attendance and Participation: (20%)

Three Blog Responses (300-400 words): Uploaded to LEARN (various dates): (3x10% = 30%)

AR Project Proposal (300 words): Uploaded to LEARN by March 1st at midnight (5%)

AR Project Group Blog: Maintained throughout the term: (10%)

AR Project Group Presentations: In class, April 3rd (15%)

Final Paper (5-7 pages): Uploaded to LEARN by April 17th at midnight (20%)

Required Texts

Since this is a digital media course, I have compiled all of the readings online and made them available to you, to minimize on textbook costs.

Course Readings: All required readings and videos are accessible via links provided on this syllabus, or on LEARN where indicated.

Telltale's The Wolf Among Us: Available for PS4, PS3, and Steam

Ex Machina: Available on Netflix

Schedule

This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion, as needed.
Week 1: Introduction

January 4th
First day of class: Introduction and syllabus review (no readings)

Week 2: Digital Humanities and History

January 9th
Vannevar Bush, “As We May Think”
Watch: “The World is a Global Village”

January 11th
Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message"
Watch: "The Medium is the Message Lecture"

Week 3: Technology and New Media

January 16th
Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

January 18th

Week 4: Digital Infrastructures

January 23rd
John Perry Barlow, “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace”
Andy Greenberg, “It’s Been 20 Years Since This Man Declared Cyberspace Independence”

Response #1 Due at midnight

January 25th
Danny Kimball, “Net Neutrality is a Struggle over Control of Communications Infrastructure”

Week 5: Online Communities and Identity

January 30th
Watch: “Henry Jenkins TEDx Talk”

February 1st
Beth Coleman, “What Is An Avatar?”
Lisa Nakamura, "Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet"

Week 6: Story-Driven Games 1

February 6th
Janet Murray, “From Game-Story to Cyberdrama”

February 8th
Henry Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling 101”
Play: Telltale’s The Wolf Among Us episode 1-2

Week 7: Story-Driven Games 2

February 13th
Play: Telltale’s The Wolf Among Us episodes 3-5
February 15th

Group Assignment Overview and Demo

Read and explore website: Augmented Reality Guide

Response #2 Due at Midnight

Week 8: N/A

February 20th

Reading week, no class

February 22nd

Reading week, no class

Week 9: Cyborgs Old and New

February 27th

Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto” (LEARN)

March 1st

Watch: Amber Case, *We are all cyborgs now*  
Andy Clark, “The Naked Cyborg” (LEARN)

Project Proposal Due at Midnight

Week 10: Robotics and Posthumanism

March 6th

Rodney Brooks, “Flesh and Machines: How Robots Will Change Us” (LEARN)  
Watch: *Ex Machina*

March 8th

N. Katherine Hayles, “What Does it Mean to be Posthuman?” (LEARN)  
Read and explore website: H+, “Transhumanist Declaration”

Week 11: Smartphones and Screen Culture

March 13th

Kenneth Gergen, “Cell Phone Technology and the Challenge of Absent Presence” (LEARN)  
Daniel Affsprung, “Narrative Identity and the Data Self”

March 15th

Sherry Turkle, “The Flight from Conversation”  
Nathan Jurgenson, “Fear of Screens”

Week 12: Augmented and Virtual Reality

March 20th

Frank Biocca et. al, “The Vision of Virtual Reality”

March 22nd

Elliot Edge, “How VR Gaming Will Wake Us Up to Our Fake Worlds”  
Watch: “Playtest” Black Mirror

Response #3 Due at Midnight

Week 13:

March 27th

AR Workshop
March 29th: AR Workshop

Week 14

April 3rd: Group presentations

**Detailed Course Breakdown**

**Reading Responses (300-400 words each): (3x10% = 30%)**

Everyone will complete three blog responses over the course of the semester and post them to the Dropbox on LEARN. Blog postings should reflect on: at least one reading leading up the due date of the blog, and at least one prompt. Bonus points for mentioning ideas discussed in class as well. The idea with these blogs is not only to make sure you are doing the readings, but also that you are taking the time to reflect on ideas that you and your peers come up with in class.

**Augmented Reality Group Project (30%): Proposal, Group Blog, Group Presentation**

Before Reading Week, I will divide the class into small groups and introduce the Augmented Reality group project component of the course. An Unreal Engine 4 developer will demonstrate possible project ideas in class to help introduce the AR tools we will be using. This course component will be ongoing, and we will devote time at the end of the term to workshop these ideas and help each group create something.

*Proposal (5%)*

Each group will be responsible for submitting a short proposal (300 words) outlining what they would like to create using the AR tools we will be working with. Groups are free to come up with multiple ideas, or ideas that are not fully formed. This is a brainstorming assignment that will help everyone determine what they can do with the AR tools.

*Group Blog (10%)*

Each group will be responsible for maintaining an informal blog to document research surrounding their creation as the course develops. Students will be expected to post about current events related to their topic, in the form of articles, images, videos, etc. These spaces should also be used for group communication and informal notes. This blog will be graded individually based on the quality of the posts, their relevance to the project's development, and references to the course readings. Each student in each group is responsible for their own posts and must identify themselves when posting.

*Group Presentation (15%)*

On the last day of class, each group will give a presentation detailing the development of their creation. More details to follow.
Final Paper (5-7 pages): (20%)

The final paper will involve the selection of one “object-to-think-with” that students will use to write a strong argumentative essay. This object can be a variety of things, including physical objects, media, apps, technological devices (we will discuss this more in class, with examples). As supporting evidence for their argument, students must select one reading from the course, and must also find at least one external reading on their own.

The essay must be in MLA format, and must include a Works Cited list at the end. Refer to this guide for instructions on how to use MLA formatting for your essay and for proper referencing. http://www.easybib.com/guides/citation-guides/mla-format/

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Attendance and participation make up a large portion of your grade, to insure that we have engaging discussions during each class. In my experience, English courses are the most successful when students are actively engaged and asking questions, rather than just letting the instructor do all the talking.

Participation is encouraged and will be rewarded, so you must come to class having done the readings for that day. Every week on Monday and Wednesday evenings before we meet for classes the next day, I will post several prompts/questions to LEARN, which you should all take note of as you do the readings. These prompts will help you think of ways to apply and talk what you have read, as each class will be a combination of my lecturing and an informal discussion about the prompts.

I will take attendance every class, and it is important to show up, as we will delve deeply into the readings and discuss assignments and expectations. Students who miss more than 3 classes without medical documentation will automatically lose their entire participation grade (20%). Students who miss more than that with no documentation risk failing the course.

Course Policies and Other Information

Late Policy:

My late policy is simple: if your assignment is 1 day late, I will deduct 3%. On the second day and every day after that, including weekends, I will deduct 5%. This is so that you can take one extra day to make sure you are satisfied and totally finished with your work, without losing too much of your grade. This policy is in place for students that need a bit of extra time to improve already existing work, or if something unexpected has happened, but is less forgiving for students who procrastinate or hand in work very late.

Extensions:

The only reason I will grant extensions without any late penalty is if students request them at least 24 hours before the due date, and can provide documentation that supports a medical justification for the extension request. Students who require extra time for assignments should
register with Accessibility Services at the beginning of term, but must still request extensions from me.

**Electronic Devices:**

Since this is a digital media course, students are highly encouraged to bring laptops or tablet computers to class; we will be using them on a regular basis. However, students who abuse this privilege by spending class time on websites, social networks, games, etc. unrelated to the weekly topic will be asked to turn off their computers and will be docked participation marks. Please be respectful to your peers, as web browsing and other online activities can be distracting to people sitting near you.

**Contacting the Instructor**

I encourage students to contact me about the course with any questions via e-mail. If you want to receive more thorough feedback for your question, you should come to my office and speak with me in person during my office hour, or by appointment. I will answer short e-mails and check my messages regularly, but always assume it will take at least 48 hours for me to respond and plan accordingly. If you wish to dispute a grade because you believe I have made an error, please contact me via e-mail and we will discuss it.

**Academic Integrity**

The Faculty of Arts requires that I make you aware of the following: "Students are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. Students who are unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who need 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 Assistant Dean.

For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy #71, Student Academic Discipline, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm)

Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve: refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance: [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm)

**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 OPD at the beginning of each academic term.
The Writing Centre

The Writing Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices, and write in the style appropriate to their disciplines. Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, 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/writing-centre. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.