ENGL 494
Topics in Media & Critical Analysis: Race and New Media
Meets Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:30 am -12:50 pm in EV3 3406

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Office Hours: Thursdays 2:30 - 4:30 pm and by appointment

Course Description

This course considers the new media landscape through the lens of race and other intersections of identity. We will explore how real-world issues around race manifest and matter in digital spaces. The objectives of this course are to 1) critically examine the ways in which race shapes, and is shaped by, digital technologies 2) uncover hidden norms, values, and assumptions imbedded in digital technologies that reinforce racial ideology and 3) examine the limits and possibilities of challenging racial inequality through the use of digital technologies.

Note: Given the extent to which we engage with various kinds of digital content, students may encounter language and/or images that are disturbing.

Textbook: There is no required textbook for this course. Readings will be posted on LEARN as pdfs or links. Here are some recommended books:
“Critical Race Theory: An Introduction” by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic
“Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet” by Lisa Nakamura
“Race After the Internet” Edited by Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White.

Evaluation Breakdown

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autoethnography</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>June 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Review (x2)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>July 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead Discussion</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentations</td>
<td>15%</td>
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| Research Paper           | 35%    | July 24 (draft due July 17)

Participation (10%)

Discussion will shape the format and dynamics of this seminar-style course; it is vital that you come to class prepared to contribute meaningfully to our conversations about the readings. Moreover, as senior English majors in a capstone course, you will be expected to share, reflect, question, write, and research at an advanced level. Evaluation in this category is based on a combination of attendance, completion of in-class activities, occasional pop reading quizzes, and consistent, thoughtful engagement in the class.

Peer Review (10%)

For this assignment, you will provide detailed feedback on drafts of the final research paper; you will do this for two of your peers. Your response should be typed and at least 250 words each (not including marginal comments). More details to follow.
Autoethnography Essay (15%)

Autoethnography is an approach to research that privileges the self (auto), or personal experience, as the means to understand culture (ethno); the suffix -graphy refers to writing/describing/representing etc.

For this assignment, you will write an essay about how your racial identity (and its intersections) impacts your experience and engagement with digital spaces/technologies. While you are encouraged to write on any area that speaks to you, keep in mind that a well-executed autoethnography must demonstrate how one’s personal experience is socially and culturally significant. Your experiences—and your reflexive thinking about those experiences—should be in conversation with ideas outside of your experience e.g. theories, writings, interviews, social/political/historical contexts etc. An excellent essay will demonstrate a clear thesis and coherent narrative; specific, compelling examples to support claims; thoughtful, critical questioning (about self and culture) along with an attempt to answer the questions you are grappling with; and finally, clear, well-organized writing.

Note: This essay can be submitted as a traditional essay (1200-1700 words) or a digital essay i.e. narrated visual content submitted on an online platform such as WordPress, Tumblr etc. (min. 950 words). Other types of creative projects will be considered—please talk to me.

Leading Group Discussion & Written Reading Response (15%)

For this assignment, you will come to class prepared to facilitate the discussion on one of the assigned readings. Your presentation should be approximately 45 mins (includes time for class discussion) and should include: an oral summary of the article and salient themes; a discussion of ideas you thought were particularly interesting, provocative, generative, and/or problematic; one or more contemporary examples that illustrates a theme in the article; questions for the class to prompt discussion and conversation; and a 750-1000 word reading response to the article.

Groups Presentations (15%)

Working in pairs, students will choose a new media artifact or phenomena to analyze; broadly speaking, you are asking, what does this object suggest about racial ideology? The readings in this course, and their critical approaches, should inform your approach. Your analysis should include at least two scholarly sources, a clear theoretical lens, and a 1-2 page written outline.

Time requirements: 10-15 mins plus 5-10mins for discussion/questions.

Research Paper: 30% (2500-3500 words, approx. 10-12pgs; min. 7 scholarly sources)

In this final essay, you will do an in-depth critical analysis of an artifact/phenomena related to race (and/or other identity categories) and digital media. While there is freedom to choose any topic of interest, you want to make sure your analysis includes careful consideration of the offline contexts in which the object of analysis is situated—what historical, social, cultural, and/or political dimensions shape what you are seeing online? You must also draw on a critical framework of some kind to inform your analysis. In this class we have focused mostly on CRT, but there are other approaches you might find more apropos (e.g. queer theory, critical discourse analysis, feminist theory, critical disability studies, post-colonial theory etc.). More details to follow.
Policy for Late Assignments & Absences

Assignments submitted after the midnight of the due date will result in a 5% per day penalty.

Exceptions and/or extensions may be requested if there is a medical issue for which you have a doctor’s note; all other circumstances will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. When possible, prompt communication in advance of an absence is appreciated. While advance notification demonstrates professional courtesy, it does not guarantee your absence, tardiness, or late work will be excused.

Submitting Assignments

All assignments must be submitted as a hard copy in class and on LEARN dropbox. Do not slide any work under my office door unless you have permission to do so. You may submit assignments electronically until midnight of the due date. If you go this route, I must still receive a hard copy of the exact file submitted online by the next class. If I do not receive a hard copy, then you will lose 1% off your assignment grade.

Please ensure your assignments adhere to the following requirements:

- Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri (or a similar) font
- 11 or 12 pt
- 1.5 or double spacing
- 1-inch margins
- Stapled

• First & Last Name
• Date
• Word count (not including works cited)
• MLA or APA citations (in-text & works cited)

Grading Scale

“A” work (83-100%) is earned when student produces work that is creative, original, and exceeds expectations. Writing is compelling, persuasive, and mostly error-free. Student frequently advances class discussion through thoughtful, substantive insights grounded in a strong understanding of the material; student fosters a positive classroom environment that encourages peer engagement.

“B” work (72-82%) is earned when student produces work that meets expectations. Student consistently applies principles introduced in class, with good results. Writing in this category may demonstrate a more predictable/conventional approach, limited in its originality and depth; occasional errors do not undermine the overall integrity of the work. Student regularly contributes to class discussion and fosters a positive classroom environment.

“C” work (62-71%) is earned when student produces work that is adequate, meeting minimal expectations. Writing tends to be thin and underdeveloped; writing indicates minimum effort to apply principles introduced in class; a moderate number of errors may undermine the overall integrity and/or comprehension of the work. Student participates inconsistently and may engage in behavior that is distracting to his/her peers.

“D” or “F” work (0-61%) is earned when student produces work that does not meet minimal expectations. Writing demonstrates little effort to apply principles introduced in class; writing tends to be unclear, confusing, and poorly organized; a frequent number of errors undermine the overall comprehension of the work. Student rarely/never contributes to class discussion, often comes to class unprepared, and may foster a distracting classroom environment on a regular basis.
Electronic Device Policy

Students may use electronic devices (laptops, tablets, phones etc.) for class-related activities only (i.e. note-taking, group projects, conducting research, LEARN etc.). Electronic devices used for any other purpose is not permitted. The instructor reserves the right to request electronic communication to be turned off and put away at any time. Repeat instances of inappropriate use of electronics in the classroom will negatively affect your participation grade. Recording or photographing any part of a classroom lecture/activity is not permitted unless you’ve been given special permission. All power point slides will be available on LEARN.

Email

Important announcements and course information will sometimes be sent via email or posted on LEARN. It is the students’ responsibility to ensure that they are checking their email and LEARN site frequently for course updates.

I aim to answer all email inquiries within 24hrs on a weekday and 48hrs on the weekend. If I do not respond within this time frame, then feel free to follow up with a second email.

Learning Accommodations

If there are any accessibility concerns or accommodation requests you might have, please speak with me at the beginning of the term or whenever you become aware your needs.

For more formal arrangements, and access to a range of other services, contact the AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall (NH 1401, ph. 519-888-4567 ext. 35082). 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 the AS office at the beginning of each academic term. For more information visit their website at https://uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/

Academic Integrity

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage and the Arts Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

A note about plagiarism. According to UWaterloo policy definitions, plagiarism is presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others (whether attributed or anonymous) as one’s own in any work submitted whether or not for grading purposes.

Plagiarism includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include, but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, material on the internet, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, and computer code/software.
Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- Using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
- Submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own
- Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks
- Submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else
- Failing to cite oneself when permission has been given to make use of one’s earlier work

**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. 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 (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/guidelines-assessment-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 (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70). 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 has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72).

**The Writing and Communication Centre**

The Writing and Communication Centre works with students as they develop, draft, and revise their ideas. 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/writing-and-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.

**Counselling Services**

From transition to university life, to changes in expectations, to relationships, there are a lot of reasons you might seek help for your mental health. 1 in 5 Canadians experience a mental health concern in their lifetime. You are not alone.

Counselling Services offers a variety of confidential services at no charge to University of Waterloo students who are currently registered or are on a co-op term. Mental health professionals are here for you and interested in helping you through whatever you are experiencing. Their regular hours are Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m; they are located in Needles Hall Addition on the 2nd Floor. Our phone number is 519-888-4567 ext. 32655. **Individual appointments:** Emergency appointments are available during our regular hours and are provided to any student who is at immediate risk of self harm or harming someone else, or has recently experienced a trauma. Regular booked appointments can be made and scheduling depends on the urgency of your needs. When you meet with a counsellor they will listen to your concerns and develop a plan that suits your individual situation and needs. Walk-in appointments are available each Wednesday and Thursday between 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. These appointments are 90-minutes in length and are focused on finding you practical solutions for your most pressing concern.

**Coping Skills seminars:** Coping Skills seminars are 1-hour seminars that focus on cultivating resilience, challenging thinking, managing emotions, and changing behaviour. They are offered a variety of times per term and can be registered for on LEADS. You can also view them online.

More information about all of our services can be found at: https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-wellness

**Student Success Office**

The Student Success Office provides a range of academic and personal development services, resources for international students, as well as study abroad and exchange support. They work closely with campus partners to create a vibrant experience for students from their first days at Waterloo, right to convocation. The SSO is located in South Campus Hall, second floor. Office hours are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; and Tuesday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Their services include:

* **Academic Skill Building Workshops:** Register for an activity-based workshop to learn how to take better notes, improve your time management skills or explore new study strategies.

* **Success Coaching:** Connect with a success coach and book a one-on-one appointment to explore new learning strategies and resources that you can use to achieve your academic goals.

* **Student Leadership Development:** Explore and enhance your leadership abilities in this series of workshops. Complete all 12 before convocation to receive an e-certificate sign by the University president and associate provost, students.

* **International Student Advising:** An experienced and dedicated team of advisors are happy to assist you during your time at the University of Waterloo. All of our International Student Advisors are Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultants with the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council. All consultations with the International Student Advisors are confidential.