Fall 2013 – Introduction to Digital Culture
(3 hours)
T 9:00 AM – 11:50 AM or T 1:00 – 3:50 PM

Instructor: Dr. Gerald Voorhees
Office: Stratford 2008 & ML 254D
Office Hours: M 10:00 – 11:30 AM & W 10:00 – 11:30 AM
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I. Course Description

From the Catalog: This course provides students with an historical overview of various digital technologies and their impact on society and the human condition. Students will be introduced to research methods and theoretical concepts from media theory and cultural studies which will enable them to think, speak, and write critically about technology in an historical and global context.

From Gerald: "Digital Culture" is a misnomer, though a convenient one on two levels. "Digital Culture" both reduces the complexity of many cultural formations and suggests a bright-line between culture that is digital/online/virtual and analog/offline/real. That said, there some truthiness to the idea of "Digital Culture;" there are numerous ways that digital technologies constrain and thus give shape to cultural forms and formations. Lessons from this class will enable you to think critically about the social implications of the media you produce by considering the impact of both the medium and the prior cultural context.

II. Required Materials:

In addition to standard materials for taking a course, including notebooks, pens, folders, etc., and access to a computer and printer, you will need to acquire the following materials. You may acquire a physical or electronic copy, as long as you bring it to class.

Ted Friedman. Electric Dreams: Computers in American Culture. NYU Press. 2005.

Tiziana Terranova. Network Culture: Politics in the Information Age. London: Pluto Press. 2004.

Readings on LEARN:

Mark Andrejevic. Watching TV without Pity: The Productivity of Online Fans. *Television & New Media* 9.1 (2008): 24-46. Print.

Nichole S. Cohen. The Valorization of Surveillance: Toward a Political Economy of Facebook. *Democratic Communique* 22.1 (2008): 5-22. Print.

Henry Jenkins. Cultural Logic of Convergence Culture. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7.1 (2004): 33-43. Print.

Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford & Joshua Green. "Introduction." *Spreadable Media: Creating value and Meaning in a Network Culture*. By Jenkins, Ford & Green. NYU Press. 2013. 1-46. Print.
Pierre Levy. Collective Intelligence: A Civilization. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 18 (2005): 189-198. Print.

Lev Manovich. "What is New Media?" The Language of New Media. Boston: MIT Press, 2001.

Lev Manovich. Inside Photoshop. *Computational Culture: A Journal of Software Studies* 1 (2011): < http://computationalculture.net/article/inside-photoshop>

Jane McGonigal. Why *I Love Bees*: A Case Study in Collective Intelligence Gaming. *The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*. Edited by Katie Salen. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 2008. 199–228. Print.

Celia Pearce. "Play, Communities and Emergent Cultures." *Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds*. Boston: MIT Press. 2011. Print.

Elana Shefrin. *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars* and Participatory Fandom: Mapping New Congruencies between the Internet and Media Entertainment Culture. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 21.3 (2004); 261-281.

Sherry Turkle. "On the Internet." *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. NYC: Simon & Schuster. 1997. Print.

III. Course Requirements and Evaluation:

I will do my best to communicate my standards and expectations for each particular assignment. However, you are both *encouraged* (because I want you to succeed in this class) and *expected* (because you are adults) to request clarification whenever you have questions.

A. Please wait at least 24 hours after you have received a grade before discussing it with me. However, if you want to discuss a particular grade you must do so no more than one week after the grade is returned. I'm happy to address questions and concerns; I'm not interested in negotiating point values once you've done the math for how an assessment will impact your overall grade.

B. ALL assignments and exams must be completed in order for a student to pass this course with a C grade or higher. Any student receiving a grade of D or lower on any assignment is strongly encouraged and expected to discuss the matter with me in office hours.

C. I will be using a standard A through F scale (A ≥ 92.5%, A- ≥ 90, B+ ≥ 87.5, B ≥ 82.5, B- ≥ 80, C+ ≥ 77.5, C ≥ 72.5, C- ≥70, D+ ≥ 67.5, D ≥ 62.5, D- ≥ 60, F < 60). The following is a brief sketch of what qualities correspond to each letter grade in this class:

- Cs are the average; they are not what you get for blowing off this class. A grade of C indicates that you *met all of the criteria* on a given assignment. C's are not cause for alarm—they mean that you are doing fine.
- Bs shows that you have done *more than what is required*. It may mean that you have done extra research and contributed regularly to class discussion, and that you have produced a paper that is stylistically innovative, interesting, and exceptionally solid.
- An A performance is a superior performance in this class. To get an A, you must expend increased effort to seeing and thinking beyond the surface level in your reading, research, and speaking as well as show particular skill in composing your work. An A performance includes being a *leader* in class activities and demonstrating *critical* thought in both class discussion and your assignments.
- To get a D, you will not have completed all assignments in a sufficient and *timely* manner. Also, a D will be given if it is clear that *sufficient effort and time is not being spent on reading, your major assignments, and class participation*.
- An F will be given in cases where a student's work is *seriously lacking*. Plagiarism will also result in a grade of F.

D. Grades are based on the distribution of 400 points. Those points breakdown as follows:

Participation	50	points	12.5	%
Reading Quizzes	50	points	12.5	%
Group Presentation	75	points	19.75	%
Term Paper	100	points	25	%
Peer Workshop	25	points	7.25	%
Exams	100	points	25	%

1. **Participation (50 Points)**. Your contributions to discussion, group activities and the general classroom atmosphere will be vital in determining what knowledge and skills you take from this course. This means that you are expected to show up on-time having properly prepared for whatever is planned according to the class calendar or prior announcements. You should ask questions, offer answers, listen, facilitate others' opportunities to contribute, and respect your classmates' opinions. Students who do not attend class will receive no participation credit for missed days. A respectful attitude towards your classmates is required.

2. **Reading Quizzes (50 Points).** At the start of each class meeting, we will have a short reading quiz covering the readings due for that day. Reading quizzes are 2-4 short answer questions (that means about 3 sentences, average) that assume you've done the reading and require you to think about, challenge and apply the ideas from the reading. You will not be permitted to take a reading quiz late for any reason.

3. **Group Presentation (75 Points).** In groups of 5, you will select a Media Environment and analyze it, and the Cultural practices common to it, in terms of the 3 theories of Digital Culture developed in this class. Each presentation should last approximately 12 minutes and contain the following:

    a. Introduction to the Media Environment and the Cultural practices common to it. Using visual aids, handouts, or short clips (do not play more than 1 minute of audio or video) introduce the media text to your audience. Make sure you pay particular attention to conveying aspects that will be relevant to the analysis.

    b. Theoretical Framework. Both drawing from the course materials and using your own words, explain the theories of Digital Culture and review the elements of each theory (concepts, assumptions, methods, etc) pertinent to your analyses of the Media Environment and the Cultural practices.

    c. Analysis. Explain how the Cultural practices identified can be better understood/explained through each of the theories of Digital Culture. Remember, theory should be used to increase our understanding of media and culture by helping us move from the particular (the application, environment, practices, etc) to the general (the theoretical entailments and implications).

    How, in what order and by whom these elements are presented is up to each group to decide. That said, upon completion of the assignment, each group member will complete a Group Assignment Checklist as well as a Group Peer Evaluation Form.

4. **Term Papers (100 Points: First Draft = 10 Points, Second Draft = 10 Points & Final Draft = 80 Points).** Utilizing at least one of the perspectives developed in the course, you are expected to write a ~6 page paper on the following topic:

    Discuss the nature and significance of a single formation of cultural practices germane to contemporary digital media.

    The primary purpose of this paper is twofold. First, for you to practice applying the concepts introduced in class to analyze the meaning or social significance of a set of Cultural practices. Second, for you to demonstrate your understanding of course materials and their application to the contemporary, mediated world. A secondary purpose is for you to practice constructing well-rounded and firmly supported arguments in a professional writing style. With this in mind, your paper will be graded on the following substantive criteria:

    Each paper is centrally concerned with making a theoretically valid argument about the significance of a specific set of Cultural practices. (Make sure your paper has a clear thesis or focus, that every paragraph supports your argument that the practices say/are/do what you claim, and that the paper demonstrates you can engage in a sustained analysis.)

Each paper's argument is informed by at least one theory introduced in class. (Make sure you outline and explain the theory or theories you apply, demonstrating your understanding of class material.)

Each paper's analysis is grounded in specific references to the Cultural practices that support your claims. (Make sure you support your argument about the Cultural practices by refereeing and talking about specific aspects of the media text – scenes, images, dialogue, etc.)

The paper demonstrates that you know how to communicate in a professional voice and style. (Make sure to demonstrate a mastery of basic English spelling, grammar and composition.)

While you will be graded primarily upon your ability to muster course-based knowledge and outside research to substantiate your argument about the cultural practices you have decided to study, there are a number of silly mistakes that can detract from your writing and your ability to demonstrate your understanding. Please use the following checklist for each paper to ensure you do not commit one of these silly mistakes.

Research Checklist:

Argument is grounded in and cites from class readings

Cites at least 2 outside scholarly, peer-reviewed sources (journal articles, books or book chapters). Use the library databases to search for or, go to the library and browse the journals.

Cites at least 3 popular or trade press sources.

No encyclopedia/Wikipedia cited

Does NOT cite lecture. (Cite the reading that lecture materials are based on, or if the point I made in lecture is not in the readings, ask me from where I got that information.)

Citations are in MLA style

Sources are properly cited internally, in-text

Sources are properly cited externally on a separate "References" page

Format Checklist:

Paper is typed

Paper is double-spaced

Paper has one inch margins

Paper is in 12 point (size) Times or Times New Roman font

Paper is stapled together, with a separate "Title Page" and "References" attached

First page of text begins on the first line

Paper is organized by a thesis statement that previews the paper's argument and roadmaps how the paper makes that argument

Paper has a recognizable introduction, body and conclusion

This paper is being graded at "first draft," "second draft" and "final draft" stages because we believe that it is important to learn the best processes for academic writing at the University level, and this means learning how to develop, revise and polish your work. Jay

Dolmage will help you at all of these stages. The most important goal of this paper assignment is that you learn strategies for academic writing that you can use again and again throughout your University work and your career.
Some students will need more help with the basics of writing than others. If you feel you need extra instruction, you will be given many opportunities, and you should take advantage of them. This assignment will reward students who work hard.

4. **Peer Workshop of Term Paper (25 Points).** Once first drafts are turned in, we will have a peer workshop during class. You are expected to provide comments (formative feedback and compelling questions) to help your peers improve their papers.

   If you do not turn in a paper draft, you will not be able to participate in the peer workshop. Giving feedback to your peers helps you to further develop your own thinking and composing, and it helps you to better understand writing as an ongoing process of creation and revision.

5. **Exams I-III. (100 Points/33 Points each).** Mixed format of multiple choice, true/false, matching, short answer and short essay.

E. Turning in Work. All assignments are due at the time directed by the professor and in the format required for that assignment. All work must be received by the instructor in the manner requested (i.e., paper copy, DVD, etc.). Simply emailing files within the deadline period will not meet this requirement. *Exams and Reading Quizzes will NOT be administered late!!! Presentations will NOT be re-scheduled!!!*

IV. Academic Integrity

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. 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.

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.

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.

Other sources of information for students:
Academic Integrity website (Arts)
Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo)

V. Students with Disabilities.

The Accessability Services office, 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 AS office at the
beginning of each academic term.

VI. Decorum in the Classroom.

Cell phone use in class is strictly prohibited. This includes voice, text, video, data or any other
current or future transmission technology. If your phone rings or you respond to a message, I will
ask you to turn it off and place it on my safe-keeping for the remainder of the class.

Computers may be used for note-taking purposed only. If you use a computer for any other
purpose, I'll ask you to turn it off and place it on my safe-keeping for the remainder of the class.

Any behavior that disrupts the learning environment or impinges on the dignity of a classmate will
result in the offending student being asked to leave the classroom for the day and perhaps for
good.

VII. Schedule

Week 1 Sept. 10	Introductions: You, Me and Digital Culture
	Discuss: Digital Culture in Everyday Life and Talk Watch and Discuss: Frontline - Digital Nation

Week 2 Sept. 17	Computational Culture I
	Discuss Reading: Friedman - Electric Dreams (Introduction-5)

Week 3 Sept. 24	Computational Culture II
	Discuss <u>Reading: Friedman - Electric Dreams (5-Conclusion)</u> Introduction and Overview: Term Paper (with Jay Dolmage)

Week 4 Oct. 1	Computational Culture III
	Discuss <u>Reading: Manovich - What is New Media?</u> Discuss <u>Reading: Manovich – Inside Photoshop</u> Workshop: Research Process (with Jay Dolmage)

Week 5 Oct. 8	Participatory Culture I
	Exam 1 - Computational Culture Discuss <u>Reading: Jenkins - Cultural Logic of Convergence Culture</u> Discuss <u>Reading: Shefrin - Participatory Fandom</u>

Week 6 Oct. 15	Paper & Presentation Workshop
	Workshop: Peer Review of Term Papers (with Jay Dolmage) Workshop: Group Presentations

Week 7 Oct. 22	Participatory Culture II
	Discuss <u>Reading: Pearce - Play, Communities and Emergent Cultures (1-3)</u> Discuss <u>Reading: Turkle - On the Internet (7-10)</u>

Week 8 Oct. 29	Participatory Culture III
	Discuss <u>Reading: Andrejevic - Watching TV without Pity</u> Discuss <u>Reading: Cohen - Valorization of Surveillance</u>

Week 9 Nov. 5	Network Culture I **Exam 2 - Participatory Culture** Discuss <u>Reading: Terranova - Network Culture (Intro - Ch 2)</u>

Week 10 Nov. 12	Network Culture I Discuss <u>Reading: Levy - Collective Intelligence: A Civilization</u> Discuss <u>Reading: McGonigal - Why I Love Bees</u> **Term Paper Rough Drafts Due Nov. 15**

Week 11 Nov. 19	Network Culture III Discuss <u>Reading: Terranova - Network Culture (Ch 3 - Ch 5)</u> *One-on-one consultations with Jay Dolmage (by appointment; Hagey Hall 324)

Week 12 Nov/ 26	Conclusions **Exam 3 - Network Culture** **Presentations** *One-on-one consultations with Jay Dolmage (by appointment; Hagey Hall 324)

Final	**Term Paper due Dec. 10**