University of Waterloo, Stratford Campus
Global Business and Digital Arts
GBDA 203
Introduction to Digital Culture
Fall 2014
Tuesday 9-12 or 1-4; DMS 2022

I. Instructor and T.A. Information
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Email	T.A. 1 Email	T.A. 2 Email
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Office Hours	T.A. 1 Hours	T.A. 2 Hours

II. 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 your Professor: "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.

III. Course Goals and Learning Outcomes
1. Students will develop a nuanced understanding of "culture" and differentiate between and discuss the merits and shortcomings of various conceptions of "digital culture."
2. Students will understand the complexity of the relationship between digital technologies and the communities of practice that employ those technologies and shape the scale and nature of their diffusion through society
3. Students will acquire theoretical and conceptual tools to engage in-depth analysis of digital technologies and cultures
4. Students will develop their capacity to construct and communicate arguments in written form.

IV. Required Texts Available on LEARN

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.

- Sloop & Olsen - "Cultural Struggle"
- Friedman - "Civilization and its Discontents"
- Terranova - "Network Dynamics"
- Crary - *24/7*
- Jenkins - "Cultural Logic of Convergence Culture"
- Andrejevic - "Watching TV without Pity"
- Levy - "Collective Intelligence: A Civilization"
- McGonigal - "Why I Love Bees"
- Terranova - "Communication Biopower"
- Pearce - "Virtual Worlds, Play Ecosystems and the Ludosphere"
- Pearce - "Emergence in Cultures, Games and Virtual Worlds"

V. Course Requirements and Assessment

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:

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Participation	Every Class Meeting	15%
Reading Quizzes	Every Class Meeting	20%
Paper Workshop	October 21	5%
Term Paper	November 25	35%
Final Exam	TBD	25%
Total		100%

1. Participation
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
At the start of each class period (where a reading is due) you will take a short quiz (averaging 5 questions). Over the course of the semester, there will be a total of 40 reading quiz questions. The maximum marks recorded for reading quizzes is 20. This is because reading quizzes are not easy.

3. Peer Workshop of Term Paper
On the same day that 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. 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.

If you do not turn in a paper draft, you will not be able to participate in the peer workshop.

4. Term Paper
Utilizing the theoretical perspectives and analytical tools developed in the course, you are expected to write a ~6 page paper on one of the following topics:

A. Critical Product Review Select a digital technology (approved by professor) and review the product applying the theories, ideas and arguments developed in the course readings and discussions. You may direct your critical product review to the audience of your choice:

educational, government, enterprise, consumer, etc. Your objective is to evaluate the product in a broader context than its avowed application and consider the product's merits, dangers and emergent properties or applications; in short, its implications for society, culture and the political-economic system broadly.

B. Community Manifesto Select a community (approved by professor) organized around/by the use of a digital technology and make an argument about how the community should use the technology, applying the theories, ideas and arguments developed in the course readings and discussions. Your audience should be the community in question and you objective is to persuade the community to alter their practices in light of the social, cultural and the political-economic implications of their use of the technology.

The primary purpose of this assignment, whichever prompt you choose, is twofold. First, for you to practice applying the theories and 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 technology and related cultural practices. (Make sure your paper has a clear thesis or focus, that every paragraph supports your central argument and that the paper demonstrates you can engage in a sustained analysis.)

☐ Each paper's argument is informed by theory and modes of analysis introduced in class. (Make sure you outline and explain the theory and analytical practices you apply, demonstrating your understanding of class material. You are expected to cite at least 3 course readings as well as 2 scholarly sources and 2 journalistic sources from your own research.)

☐ Each paper's analysis is grounded in specific references to the technology and related cultural practices that support your claims. (Make sure you support your argument by referring to and talking about specific aspects of the media and its actual usage.)

☐ 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 relationship between the technology and 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 at least 3 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 journalistic (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 correctly formatted in one consistent style (MLA, APA or Chicago, which is preferred).
- 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," (10 points) and "final draft" (25 points) stages because 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. I 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.

5. Final Exam
Short answer and short essay questions.

VI. Additional Policies

1. Late Work
Late work will only be accepted if the student can provide evidence of sudden, unexpected incapacitation in the form of a medical emergency, incarceration or psychological trauma. Students who miss class for doctor's appointments, job interviews, family outings and etc. may turn in work early to receive credit.

2. Electronic Device Policy
Please do not use electronics in the classroom expect for the purpose of taking notes. It is rude and disrespectful. That said, you are all adults and if you want to be defined by self-centered

absorption and disregard for your own betterment/education then so be it.

However, if your use of electronics in the classroom becomes a distraction to other students I will insist that you put away your device or leave class for the remainder of the day. If you choose to leave class you will also forfeit your marks on your reading quiz.

3. Attendance Policy
Rather than mark down for absences, my philosophy is to make attending class an imperative, such that non-attendance is detrimental to one's ability to perform well on essays and exams. Further, if you do not attend class you cannot receive participation credit and will not be allowed any opportunity to "make up" these marks.

4. 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 Integritity Webpage (https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) and the Arts Academic Integrity Office Webpage (http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/current-undergraduates/academic-responsibility) for more information.

5. 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/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70). When in doubt please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

6. Discipline
A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing academic offenses and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (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. 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). For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties (http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm).

7. 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 (http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm).

8. 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.

VII. Course Outline/Schedule

Week 1 Sept. 9	**Introductions: You, Me and Digital Culture** Discuss **Reading:** Sloop & Olsen - Cultural Struggle Lecture: Culture and Digital Culture in Everyday Life
Week 2 Sept. 16	**Cyborgs** Discuss **Reading:** Friedman - Civilization and its Discontents Introduction and Overview: Term Paper
Week 3 Sept. 23	**Networks** Discuss **Reading:** Terranova - Network Dynamics Workshop: Ideation and Research
Week 4 Sept. 30	**Attention I** Discuss **Reading:** Crary - 24/7, Chapters 1 -2
Week 5 Oct. 7	**Attention II** Discuss **Reading:** Crary - 24/7, Chapters 3-4
Week 6 Oct. 14	**Surveillance** Discuss **Reading:** Jenkins - Cultural Logic of Convergence Culture Discuss **Reading:** Andrejevic - Watching TV without Pity
Week 7 Oct. 21	**Paper Workshop** Workshop: Peer Review of Term Papers

Week 8 Oct. 28	**Intelligence** Discuss **Reading:** Levy - Collective Intelligence: A Civilization Discuss **Reading:** McGonigal - Why I Love Bees
Week 9 Nov. 4	**Politics** Discuss **Reading:** Terranova - Communication Biopower
Week 10 Nov. 11	**Possibilities** Discuss **Reading:** Pearce - Virtual Worlds, Play Ecosystems and the Ludosphere Discuss **Reading:** Pearce - Emergence in Cultures, Games and Virtual Worlds
Week 11 Nov. 18	**Independent Work Day**
Week 12 Nov. 25	**Conclusions** **Term Paper Due (Final Draft + First Draft w/ Comments + Peer Review Sheets)** Play: The Final Exam Review Game
TBA	**Final Exam**