

University of Waterloo
Stratford Campus
GBDA 203
Introduction to Digital Cultures
Fall 2017
Tu 9-11.50am or 1-3.50pm, room DMS2022/2024

Instructor Information

Instructor: Christine McWebb
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TA (Section 001):

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TA (Section 002):

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I. Course Description

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 that will enable them to think, speak, and write critically about technology in an historical and global context. Students will also continue to develop their professional skills.

II. Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

- Students will develop an understanding of “culture” and some of the most vital issues facing “digital culture.”
- Students will acquire methodological and conceptual tools to engage in-depth analysis of digital technologies and cultures.
- 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.
- Students will develop their capacity to construct and communicate arguments in written and multi-modal form.
- Students will develop their capacity to think critically and to analyse complex theoretical concepts.
- Students will further develop their professional skills (teamwork, oral and written communication, problem solving).

Required Texts:

- Miller, V. (2013). *Understanding Digital Culture*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Gere, C. (2008). *Digital Culture*. London: Reaktions Books.
- Courseware package (available at the bookstore)
- i-Clicker

UW LEARN

Please note that all information and other readings pertaining to this course will be posted to the course LEARN site. Additional readings may be assigned. Please check the site regularly. It is the students’ responsibility to remain informed about due dates, upcoming readings, assignments, tests, etc.

Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Attendance/Participation	Ongoing	10%
2 Reading quizzes	Oct 3, Oct 30	20% (10% each)
Mid-term exam	Oct 17	20%
Essay (drafts 1 & 2)	Nov 7, Nov 21	20%
Final Exam	tbd	30%
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Total		100%

Assignments:

1. Participation

Date Due: Assessed Daily + in-class exercise

Participation accounts for your contributions to discussion, group activities and the general classroom atmosphere, which in turn are vital in determining what knowledge and skills you take from this course. Showing up on-time having properly prepared for whatever is planned according to the class calendar or prior announcements is the bare minimum requirement. Asking thoughtful questions, offering reasoned answers, and facilitating others’ opportunities to contribute will be taken into account in the assessment. Students who do not attend class will receive no participation credit for missed days. A respectful attitude towards your classmates is required. At the same time, engaging debates and discussions are encouraged. Punctuality is important. Late arrivals will not be able to sign the attendance sheet.

2. Analytical Paper Draft 1

Date Due: Nov 7

You are expected to write a 5 page analytical paper on a specific topic.

The primary purpose of this assignment is 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. A secondary purpose is for you to demonstrate your understanding of methods introduced in the course and their application to the contemporary, mediated world. The tertiary purpose is for you to practice constructing well-rounded and firmly supported arguments in a professional writing style. Your paper will be evaluated on the basis of these criteria.

There are also a number of thoughtless mistakes that can detract from your writing and your ability to demonstrate your understanding. Please use the following checklist to ensure you do not commit one of these mistakes.

Research Checklist:

- Argument is grounded in and cites from at least 2 class readings
- No encyclopedia/Wikipedia cited
- Citations are correctly formatted in Chicago Author-Date 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” (not included in 5 page count)
- 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

Students who have indicated on their Draft 1 that they will complete Analytical Paper Draft 2 will receive feedback from their peers. Otherwise, Draft 1 will be considered your final paper.

3. Analysis Paper Peer Workshop

Date Due: Nov 7

On the same day that Analytical Paper Draft 1 is turned in, we will have a peer workshop during class, and you will workshop papers with 2-3 classmates. A workshop guide will be provided. 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 writing, and it helps you to better understand writing as an ongoing process of creation and revision. Feedback must be returned to your peers by the end of the class period and completion will be verified by either the instructor or TA.

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

4. Analysis Paper Draft 2 – Final Draft

Date Due: Nov 21

A thorough revision of Analysis Paper Draft 1 that develops the paper based on feedback from peers. All marked copies of Analysis Paper Draft 1 MUST accompany Analysis Paper Draft 2 when it is turned in. One criteria for grading this assignment will be the strength of revision from the first draft to this one.

5. *Two Reading Comprehension Tests on Assigned Readings* *Date Due: Oct 3, Oct 31*

You will write two short comprehension tests on assigned readings. Short answer questions will be on content only; no analysis will be required.

6. *Midterm Exam* *Date Due: Oct 17*

The midterm exam will be a mix of short answers and multiple choice questions.

7. *Final Exam* *Date Due: TBD by Registrar*

The final exam will be scheduled by the Office of the Registrar. It will be a mix of short answer and short essay questions. Length: 2.5 hours.

Course Outline

Week	Date	Topic	Readings + Assignments Due
1	Sept 12, 2017	Introduction: What is culture? What is digital culture?	Readings: 1. Miller - Introduction
2	Sept 19, 2017	Socio-historical and cultural context of (digital) media	Readings: 1. Gere – Chapter 1 2. Miller – Chapter 1
3	Sept 26, 2017	Cybernetics A primer on semiotics	Readings: 1. Gere – Chapter 2
4	Oct 3, 2017	Guest lecture: Greg Smith, Stratford Campus Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction	Readings: 1. Benjamin (on Learn) Reading Comprehension Quiz 1 (on readings of weeks 1-3)
5	Oct 12, 2017 (Thursday)	The Digital Divide – Domestic and Global In-class activity for Microtile Wall: Infographic on Digital Divide (5% of	Readings: 1. McLuhan (coursepack) 2. Gere – chapter 4

Week	Date	Topic	Readings + Assignments Due
		participation mark) The Medium is the Message Digital Counter Culture	
6	Oct 17, 2016	<i>Mid-term exam in class (2 hours)</i>	No Readings
7	Oct 24, 2017	<i>Preparation Workshop for e-portfolio</i>	No Readings
8	Oct 31, 2017	Digital Identity Social Media and the Problem of Community	Reading Comprehension Quiz 2 (readings of weeks 4-8) Readings: 1. Miller – chapter 7 and 8
9	Nov 7, 2017	Analytical Peer Review Session	No Readings Analytical paper Draft 1
10	Nov 14, 2017	The Body and Information Technology	Readings: 1. Miller – chapter 9, Conclusion 2. Gere – chapters 6 and 7
11	Nov 21, 2017	The Future – The Singularity Principle In-class activity: The Singularity Principle represented creatively (possibly for Microtile wall)	Readings: 1. Kurzweil (coursepack) Analytical Paper Final Version
12	Nov 28, 2017	tbd Review	No readings

Course Modification Warning

The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course during the term. Please note that due dates will be consistent with our clients' time schedules, as such there may be changes to due dates and deliverable outputs. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her uWaterloo email and course website on LEARN daily during the term and to note any changes.

Late Work

Unless a physician's note or suitable documentation is provided, 2% per business day will be taken off for a late assignment submission.

Electronic Device Policy

Students are expected to use classroom, lab, and project time productively. Student use of laptops, mobile phones and tablets for any purpose other than approved coursework during classroom, lab, and project time is prohibited. This includes social media, instant messaging, personal correspondence and surfing for unrelated content. Mobile phones must be turned off and put away during class. Students shall not unduly interfere with the study, work or working environment of their peers.

Failure to comply with the Code of Professional Conduct will result in disciplinary measures befitting the infringement of this policy and in compliance with the appropriate University policy or policies.

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

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.

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>).

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>).

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.

