

**Stratford School of Interaction Design and Business
University of Waterloo**

**GBDA 203 - 001
Introduction to Digital Cultures
Fall 2018
Tu 9-11.50am - DMS2022/2024**

Instructor Information

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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.
- Readings in *Perusall* (no purchase required)

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 2, Nov 6	20% (10% each)
Perusall engagement	Ongoing	10%
Essay (drafts 1 & 2)	Nov 6, Nov 20	30% (10%, 20%)
Final Exam	Tbd	30%
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 6

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 6

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 20

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 criterion 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 2, Nov 6

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

6. *Engagement with readings (Perusall) - ongoing*

In addition to in-class discussions, you will be required to engage with the readings outside of the classroom through the app Perusall (<https://perusall.com>), where you will be able to ask and answer questions and to comment on readings.

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 11, 2018	<i>Introduction:</i> What is culture? What is digital culture?	Readings: 1. Miller – Introduction (required text book) 2. McLuhan - The Medium is the Message (on Perusall)
2	Sept 18, 2018	<i>Communication Technologies Then -</i> The case of the printing press and its aftermath during the European Renaissance	Readings: 1. Gere – Chapter 1 (required text book) 2. Miller – Chapter 1 (required text book) 3. Fang – Chapter 2 (Perusall)
3	Sept 25, 2018	<i>Communicating the Self – Then</i> The medieval monk and the miniaturist <i>Communicating the Self - Now</i> Your (participating) Digital Identity – Selfies and beyond	Readings: 1. Rettberg – Chapter 1 (Perusall) Viewing: 1. Black Mirror Season 3, Episode 1 “Nosedive,” Netflix

4	Oct 2, 2018	<i>Communicating the Self – Now – Continued</i>	Readings: 1. Rettberg – chapters 2 and 3 (Perusall) Reading Comprehension Quiz 1 (on readings of weeks 1-4)
5	Oct 11, 2018 (Thursday)	<i>The Digital Divide – Domestic and Global</i> In-class activity for Microtile Wall: Infographic on Digital Divide (5% of participation mark)	Readings: 1. Gere – chapter 4 (required textbook)
6	Oct 16, 2018	<i>Communicating (to) the masses – Then</i> In class exercise: timeline of mass communication	Readings: 1. Fang – “What are Information Revolutions?” (Perusall)
7	Oct 23, 2018	<i>Communicating (to) the masses – Then</i> Pitching session for Essay topics	Readings: 1. Fang – Chapter 3 (Perusall)
8	Oct 30, 2018	<i>Communicating (to) the masses – Now</i>	Readings: 1. Fang – “Summing up” (Perusall) 2. The Future is Here – the iphone (Perusall)
9	Nov 6, 2018	Analytical Peer Review Session	No Readings Analytical paper Draft 1 Reading Comprehension Quiz 2 (weeks 5-8)

10	Nov 13, 2018	The Body and Information Technology	Readings: 1. Miller – chapter 9, Conclusion (required textbook) 2. Gere – chapters 6 and 7 (required textbook)
11	Nov 20, 2018	<i>The Future – The Singularity Principle</i> In-class activity: The Singularity Principle represented creatively (possibly for Microtile wall)	Readings: 1. Kurzweil (Perusall) Analytical Paper Final Version
12	Nov 27, 2018	<i>The Future – The Singularity Principle Continued</i> Exam 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 \(https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/\)](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.