University of Waterloo
Stratford School of Interaction Design and Business
GBDA203
Introduction to Digital Culture
Fall 2021

Instructor and T.A. Information

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Course Description

This course provides students with a 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.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

A. Develop an understanding of some of the key concepts and debates that shape digital culture.
B. Acquire methodological and conceptual tools to engage in in-depth analysis of digital technologies and cultures.
C. Analyze and remediate key concepts through online discussion and multimedia digital production.
D. Apply course concepts to critically analyze the social and cultural implications of digital technology.
E. Further develop professional skills (teamwork, communication, problem solving).

Required Text

- Misc. readings, posted to LEARN.

Course Requirements and Assessment

Information on course requirements and assessments.

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Beginning of Term Reflection	Oct 5	5%
Discussion Posts	Rolling Deadlines	30%
Digital Culture Production	Rolling Deadlines	40%
Podcast Assignment (Group Assignment)	Nov 1 / Dec 6	20%
End of Term Reflection	Dec 10	5%
Total		100%

Beginning of term reflection

This assignment is a blog post (max 500 words) in which you will respond to the following question: "How does digital culture impact my life?" This assignment should be possible to complete relatively quickly and without any preparation.

Discussion posts

These discussion posts (max 300 words) are a direct response to the assigned readings for that week. Once you finish reading the article(s) for that week, you will write a short, structured blog posts.

Digital Culture Production

The four digital culture production activities are a direct response to the lecture for the assigned week. It is an opportunity to express your perspective on the topics in a variety of formats.

1. Media Production: Download a 30-day trial version of http://comiclife.com/. Create a 1-page comic that communicates your interpretation of a key idea from Lecture 3. Write a 300-word rationale for the creative choices you made.
2. Autoethnography: Observe your own participation in a digital culture experience of your choice over the course of a single day. This should be something you already engage in. Some ideas include your use of a particular platform (Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.), or your use of a particular technology. Based on your observation data, create a 1-page visual representation of that experience with the software of your choice.
3. Interaction review: Download and play a video game for 1 hour. There are many free games on Itch.io and on Steam and other platforms, including many free demos. Choose a game that you are comfortable trying but that you would not normally play. Document key aspects of your 1 hour of play from the first loading screen. Create a 1-page chart or flowchart that details key interaction characteristics. Pay special attention to what knowledge is assumed by the game and what is expected of you, the player.
4. Design fiction: Create a 1-page presentation of a design fiction. This can be visual representation or advertisement for a product, service, tool, technology etc. that is set in the near future. Ask yourself questions like, What story am I telling? Who is this for? What is the
5. social/political/cultural context? What are the possible implications of this idea?

Discussion posts

These discussion posts (max 300 words) are a direct response to the assigned readings for that week. Once you finish reading the article(s) for that week, you will write a short, structured blog posts.

Podcast assignment (groups of 5)

In the same group of 5 as your discussion posts, you and your team will record and produce a podcast episode that offers an examination of course themes. As a team you must decide upon what course themes you wish to explore, and what format you want your podcast to adopt (e.g., interview,

discussion, debate, documentary). Your sources can include your own experiences, but must specifically refer to at least two lectures, and at least two course readings.

End of term reflection

This assignment is a blog post (max 500 words) in which you will reread your beginning of term assignment, and reflect on your learning over the course of the term by responding to the following questions: *Did you learn anything this year that you feel is valuable or will be valuable to you in the future? If so, discuss. If not, what do you think impeded your learning? What ideas did you find the most difficult to understand and/or accept? What ideas did you gravitate towards?*

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Sep 8	"Intro to Digital Culture"	(Optional) Chun, "Introduction: Habitual New Media, or Updating to Remain (Close to) the Same."
2	Sep 13	"Always Already Contingent"	"Gitelman, "Introduction: Media as Historical Subjects." Zuboff, "Setting the Stage for Surveillance Capitalism."
3	Sep 20	"Big Data is Watching You"	Boyd & Crawford, "Critical Questions for Big Data Zook et al., "Ten Simple Rules for Responsible Big Data Research"
4	Sep 27	"Looking Across a Digital Divide"	Miller, "Digital Inequality" Robinson et al., "Digital Divide 3.0: Emergent Inequalities in the Information Age"
5	Oct 4	"Sharing Social Change"	Harrison et al., "#BlackLivesMatter: Intersectionality, Violence, and Socially Transformative Art." Tufekci, "Censorship and Attention"
6	Oct 18	"When Technology Stops Being Magic"	Pink et al., "Design Ethnography for Screenless Interaction Style: hands-on and no-hands in early morning routines" Victor, "A Brief Rant on the Future of Interaction Design"
7	Oct 25	"Who do you trust: Bias, news, and fakes."	Alba, "How Russia's Troll Farm is Changing Tactics Before the Fall Election"

			Chomsky, "Manufacturing Consent" (Summary)
8	Nov 1	"Virtual Worlds, Physical Bodies"	Belisle and Roquet, "Virtual Reality: Immersion and Empathy" Cross, "Ethics for Cyborgs: On Real Harassment in an 'Unreal' Place"
9	Nov 8	"Economies of Influence"	Johnson, "Inclusion and Exclusion in the Digital Economy" Poster, "Racialized Surveillance in the Digital Service Economy"
10	Nov 15	"Designed that Way: Ethics and Unintended Consequences"	D'Ignazio and Klein, "What Gets Counted Counts" Hassan and Gezahegn, "Addressing Racial Bias in AI: A Guide for Curious Minds"
11	Nov 15	"Designing the Future"	Dunne and Raby, "A Methodological Playground: Fictional Worlds and Thought Experiments" Haraway, "The Camille Stories: Children of Compost"
12	Dec 22	"Digital Culture"	No Readings

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted if more than 7 days after the initial due date. All late work will be subject to a penalty of 5% per day, excluding weekends and statutory holidays.

All assignment due dates are final; yet, a serious issue (e.g., an illness or a personal/family emergency) may arise. If you are not able to complete your work well or within the final due date because of a serious issue, you may request an extension.

Process to request an extension:

1. Write to your section instructor as soon as you become aware of the issue, or at least within 72 hours of the final due date; and
2. Propose an alternative plan for when you can submit your work.

Requests for an extension on a case-by-case basis. If a serious issue arises, you may access any of the relevant student services here:

- https://uwaterloo.ca/future-students/student-life/student-services
- https://uwaterloo.ca/math/accommodations

Institutional-required statements for undergraduate course outlines approved by Senate Undergraduate Council, June 15, 2009 (updated June 2021)

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. See the Office of Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

Discipline
A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence and to take responsibility for his/her actions. Check the Office of Academic Integrity for more information. 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.

Grievance
A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. 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.

Note for Students with Disabilities
AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, 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 AcessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

Turnitin.com

Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit alternate assignment.

Faculty of Arts-required statements for undergraduate course outlines

Cross-listed Course (if applicable)

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.