

Digital Media & Society | Spring 2018

TTH 1:30-3:20pm, JRHH 245

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 12:30-1:30pm, Tuesdays 4-5:30pm, and by appointment

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Overview:

This course introduces you to various approaches to understanding and analyzing the role of digital media in contemporary culture. Among the topics we investigate are privacy and tracking, identity and control, infrastructures and interfaces. As we investigate these tense relationships, we will take the long view—that is, we will explore the history and structures of the internet to help us understand how we got to the current digital moment. Readings and case studies question and complicate the claim that we are in charge of our online experience and will help you to understand your own relationship to digital media. The authors you will encounter approach digital media from technological, historical, legal, economic, and activist perspectives, and we will discuss how these perspectives shape the authors' arguments about digital media.

Course Goals:

By the end of course, you should have moved beyond 'common-sense' ideas about digital media and have developed a nuanced understanding of your own position in relationship to the infrastructures and institutions that shape the use and creation of digital media. Specifically, you should be able to articulate how hardware and technological infrastructure shape our access, control, and use of web content, and you should understand how legal, corporate, and activist interests shape our ideas of what the internet is and how we should use it.

Assignments and Requirements:

Tumblr

We will use Tumblr to share news, art, and activism about and involving digital media. Everyone shares the same username and password—this means everyone also takes responsibility for curating the posts and reblogs that appear on our Tumblr account. Each of you will take primary responsibility for our Tumblr for a week, but you should also contribute at any other time.

Infrastructure Project

In this project, you will examine the macro- and micro-levels of internet infrastructure using Storymaps, a digital storytelling platform.

Locate Yourself

You will analyze the material and institutional factors that shape your engagement with digital media. You will draw on ideas and concepts from our readings to analyze how you participate and manage the various possibilities and constraints of the digital infrastructures, hardware, software, and online platforms you use every day. You present this analysis by designing an interactive analysis using Prezi, Storymaps, Scalar, or another platform of your choice.

Digital Media Manifesto

In this final group project, you will create a manifesto on digital media that merges scholarly writing with creative design to critically engage with course readings. You will present your manifesto to the class during our designated final exam time.

Participation:

In-class discussions and group activities are important aspects of this course. Consequently, your participation in class is crucial to the overall success of the class. You are expected to keep up with the readings and come to class prepared for discussion.

This means you should not only have completed the readings, but be ready to discuss and engage the reading's major arguments. During class discussions, I will frequently ask you to suggest passages that we should examine in more detail; you should be able to identify these passages quickly by either underlining, marking the page, or taking notes in advance of class.

Good participation means contributing thoughtful comments and questions that refer to readings, screenings, and core concepts during our class discussion. The quality of your remarks is at least as important as the quantity of your remarks. In addition to taking part in class discussions, you will participate in a number of in-class activities and homework such as small group work, collaborative analyses carried out in shared Google docs, written responses to screenings, etc. Your performance during these activities counts toward your participation grade as well.

Assignment Schedule

If not specified otherwise, all assignments are due at 11:59PM on Moodle the due date.

Extensions are only available in the case of dire personal circumstances, and you must contact me at least 24 hours before the deadline. If you don't contact me 24hrs before the deadline and don't submit an assignment, you will not receive any points.

Assignment	Deadline	Points
Tumblr	Ongoing	200
Participation	Ongoing	100

Infrastructure Project	02/18	200
Locate Yourself	03/23	200
Manifesto Proposal	04/10	Pass/Fail
Manifesto Draft	04/24	100
Manifesto Final	04/30	200
Manifesto Presentation	05/01	100

Course Policies:

A Note on Laptops and Cell Phone Usage: We will decide our technology policy together in the first week of class.

Absences: Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed two unexcused absences during the semester (if your unexcused absences exceed that limit, you put yourself at risk of failing the course). All other absences must be for valid, non-academic reasons, such as medical emergencies or religious holidays.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the work we have done during class. Also note that showing up more than ten minutes late to class automatically translates into an unexcused absence for that class meeting.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism: For information on what constitutes academic integrity, see the College's official policies here: <http://legacy.lclark.edu/dept/pathfind/academicinteg.html> If you haven't already done so, take the tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism available here: <http://library.lclark.edu/reference/plagiarism/index.htm>

Student Resources: Please come and speak with me if you are having difficulties with the course material, readings, or assignments. I am also very happy to work with students who are in need of special accommodations. If you anticipate needing special accommodations, contact the Student Support Services Office to discuss your situation. That office will contact me, and we can take appropriate action to make sure all your needs are accommodated.

Week 1

Please note that this reading schedule is subject to change—digital media is a fast-moving field and we might adjust the schedule to address current developments. The most up-to-date schedule is available on Moodle.

01/16 Introduction and Course Overview

- [Last Week With John Oliver: Net Neutrality](#). (video)
- [Five Myths About the Web](#). Washington Post, 2016.

01/18

- Chun, Wendy. "Did Somebody Say New Media?" in: *Old Media, New Media* (2006), 1-4. (PDF)
- Wu, Tim. Introduction to *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information*

Empires. Vintage, 2011: 3-15. (PDF)

- Hess, Amanda. [The Silent Film Returns—On Social Media](#). NYTimes, September 2017.

In-class Tumblr workshop

Week 2: Histories of New Media

01/23

- McPherson, Tara. "U.S. Operating Systems at Mid-Century: The Intertwining of Race and UNIX." In: *Race After the Internet*, 21-36.

01/25

- Blum, Andrew. "Prologue" and "A Network of Networks." in: *Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet*. Harper-Collins, 2012: 35-69. (PDF)
 - [A Networks of Networks Timeline](#)

Week 3: Creating the Open Web

01/30

- Nelson, Ted. Excerpt from *Computer Lib / Dream Machines* (1974), ca. 5 pages. (PDF)
- Berners-Lee, Tim et al. "The World Wide Web." 1994. In: *The New Media Reader*. Ed by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort. MIT Press, 2003: 791-798. (PDF)
- Bill Gates, [The Internet Tidal Wave](#) (Microsoft Memo; p. 1-3 are most important; also take a look at the links listed in the index)

02/01

- Wu, Tim. Chapter 20, "Father and Son." In: *The Master Switch*. 268-299.

Week 4: Infrastructure

02/06

- Blum, Andrew. "Where Data Sleeps." In: *Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet*. Harper-Collins, 2012: 227-262. (PDF)
- Mendelsohn, Ben. *Bundled, Buried & Behind Closed Doors*, 2011. (video)
 - Recommended:
 - Mattern, Shannon. Excerpts from *Code+Clay, Data+Dirt: Five Thousand Years of Urban Media*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017: vii-xii; 1-5; 29-41.

02/08

Storymaps workshop (library classroom)

Week 5: Project Week

02/13

LC Data Center visit.

02/15
Infrastructure Project

Infrastructure Project due on 02/18 at 11:55pm.

Week 6: Code, Control & Identity

02/20

- Stalder, Felix. "Between Democracy and Spectacle: The Front-End and Back-End of the Social Web." In: *The Social Media Reader*: 242-257.
- [Terms of Service: Didn't Read](#). (website)

02/22

- De Kosnik, Abigail. Excerpts from *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*. MIT Press, 2017: 1-4;11-12; 131-143 of Chapter 3, Queer and Feminist Archival Cultures (rest of the chapter is recommended reading).
- [History of the Organization for Transformative Works](#)

Week 7: Creativity & Control

02/27

Locate Yourself Overview and Prezi Workshop

03/01

- Newman, Michael. [In the GIF Space](#). Flow Journal, October 2017.
- Browse [Videlicet: A Vidding Zine](#) (definitely look through [A History of Vidding](#))

Week 8: We are Data

03/06

- Excerpts from: Cheney-Lippold, John. *We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves*. NYU Press, 2017.
- [FB Ads and Discrimination](#) (Twitter thread)

03/08

- Excerpts from: Noble, Safiya. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. NYU Press, 2018.

Week 9: Social Media and Identity I

03/13

- boyd, danah. Chapter 2, "Identity: why do teens seem strange online?" In: [It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens](#) (link to PDF). Yale University Press, 2014: 29-54 (FYI: page numbers listed here refer to the book, not the PDF).
- Further reading: [The SAGE Handbook of Social Media](#)

03/15
No class - SCMS

Week 10: Social Media and Identity II

03/20

- 03/01 boyd, danah. Chapter 3, "Addiction: what makes teens obsessed with social media?" In: *It's Complicated*, 77-100. (FYI: page numbers listed here refer to the book, not the PDF).

03/22

- In-class screening: *Twinsters*. Directed by Samantha Furman and Ryan Miyamoto, 2015.

Locate Yourself due at 11:55pm on 03/23.

Week 11

03/24-04/01 Spring Break

Week 12: Digital Manifestos

04/03

Manifesto Overview & Brainstorming

04/05

- Syme, Rachel. [Selfie: The Revolutionary Potential of Your Own Face, in 7 Chapters](#). 2015.

Week 13: Digital Manifestos II

04/10

Manifesto Proposal Meetings; proposals due in class.

04/12

- *Rip! A Remix Manifesto* (in-class screening)
- Lessig, Lawrence. "Remix: How Creativity Is Strangled by the Law." In: [The Social Media Reader](#): 155-170.

Week 14: Project Week

04/17

In-class project work

04/19

No class – Professor Kohnen attends the Media Industries conference in London

You are required to attend the Festival of Scholars. *The Festival of Scholars is a campus-wide celebration of student work. It is an opportunity to discuss research, to exhibit, perform, or appreciate art, and to cross disciplinary boundaries. The Festival will be held on **Friday, April 20, 2018**. I will recommend*

attendance of specific presentations, and will explain how attendance will contribute to your course grade.

Week 15

04/24

Manifesto Draft Meetings

04/26

In-class project work

Week 16: Manifesto Presentations

Manifestos due on 04/30 at 11:55pm.

Tuesday, May 1, 9:30-11:30am: Presentations