

Syllabus

E58. 2130 – TOPICS IN DIGITAL MEDIA

Tuesdays 04:55pm-07:05pm @ Silver Building 402

Course Objectives:

- To develop the theoretical and methodological skills necessary for producing rigorous research on new and emerging media.
- To become familiar with the new media research tools and to develop a critical approach to the use and misuse of these technologies.
- To develop hands on experience and understanding of the current cultural changes in media production and consumption.
- To adopt 'power-user' skills.
- To be able to critique the present and somewhat predict the future on new media.

Course Format

This course meets once a week in person but takes place constantly through the week on the class blog. Classroom time consists of both assessment of student research and discussion of the weekly readings. Assignments are being given weekly and deadlines are set for both classtime and through the week (to be submitted on the blog).

Travelogues

The central focus of this course will be a set of field trips into new media environments and the creation of travelogues. Each topic is pursued over a three-week period. Upon completion of one topic a new topic is selected and the cycle repeats itself. The travelogues will be published in the form of a collaborative blog. The blog will serve both as a research tool and as a way to document the process and results of the field trips.

Discussion of research findings of the last week, engaging criticism and feedback posted on the blog by the students and the instructor. Over the course of the semester a collection of travelogues will accumulate based on the student work. These will remain online as public documents, accessible both to other students as well as the general public.

Weekly theme

Each week the students will be assigned material revolving around the weekly theme. The weekly list would consist of required and recommended items. These items can be articles book segments and blog posts, they might also be audio and video presentations or other audiovisual content. Once through the semester each student would be required

to summarize the assigned reading (both required and recommended) two days in advance of class, analyze the ideas expressed and engage them through the summary blog post. All students will be required to read the summary and comment on it towards the discussion in class lead by the assigned student.

Toolbox

Another focus of this course will be the toolbox – a growing collection of new media tools we will examine, use and critique in a format of a lab. Students will choose their tools based on this critical examination and will introduce new tools to the class to expand and advance our toolbox.

Course Requirements

All students are required to attend class and complete all assigned reading. Students are required to both post their own research blog posts and comment on other students work. Deadlines are rigid and posting late would not be appreciated.

New media travelogues:

Four different travels into new media lands are required. Each constructed of several blog posts. Each travelogue must include a set of blog posts aggregating and analyzing information from multiple sources and arriving at a critical conclusion. The posts may include text, audio, or visual material or reference other material on the web. Each post must be published as a blog post, and therefore will be subject to public viewing and possible response.

Critique Format:

Due to time and attention concerns, not all travelogues will be discussed in class every week. Students would choose the travelogues they would like to discuss in class, based on the comments they have made on the blog, and so more discussion provoking blog posts will win more student attention. We will try to assess what makes a post attractive and provoking and how to improve the blogging style based on that experience.

The New Media Embed Program

Towards the end of the semester we will work collaboratively on assembling a set of rules that will define guidelines for research into New Media environments.

Grade Formula

New Media Traveler's Log #1: 5%

New Media Traveler's Log #2: 15%

New Media Traveler's Log #3: 15%

New Media Traveler's Log #4: 15%

New Media Embed Program: 10%

Class and blog participation: 30%

reading discussion lead: 10%

Total: 100%

(No) Required Books

The readings in the class will be assigned by the students themselves while a recommended reading list will be provided for every class.

Schedule

Our schedule will be flexible and is bound to change based on the class's activity. The following is a framework we will refer to but by no means is this the exact class schedule.

Class 1 – Course Introduction

Toolbox: Wordpress, Social bookmarking service, rss aggregator

Content: How does the internet work?

Context: screening of Adam Curtis' *The Trap: Whatever Happened to our Dream of Freedom* (part 1 of 3)

Assignment: Travelogue-I: *The Trap*.

Class 2 – The Public Sphere and The Blogosphere

Jan 26th – Led by Alexandra

Critique: Travelogue-I

Required Reading/Viewing:

[Brooke, Clive and Ethan at Aspen](#) / Brooke Gladstone, Clive Thompson and Ethan Zuckerman [from 'On The Media']

[The death of the news](#) / By Gary Kamiya

Suggested reading:

[Bloggers vs. Journalists is Over](#) / Jay Rosen

Critique: Travelogue-II roundup

Experiment: A week without Google

Assignment: Travelogue-II.

Class 3 Identity as Property and Panopticon 2.0

Feb 2nd – Led by

Required reading:

[Nicholas Carr, *The Omnigoogle*](#)

Suggested reading:

[Cory Doctorow, *Scroogled*](#)

[Tom Owad, *Data Mining 101: Finding Subversives with Amazon Wishlists*](#)

Critique: A Week without Google, Travelogue II

Case study: Google Search, Gmail, Google AdSense, Google Adwords Happening

Assignment: Travelogue-II

Class 4 – Social Software, Publics and Communities

Feb 9th – Led by

Required reading for next week:

- Dana Boyd: [Social Network Sites: Public, Private, or What?](#) (available as audio as well on the same link)
- Clay Shirky: Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations ([Event Video/Audio](#))

Recommended Reading for next week:

- Clay Shirky: [A Group is it's Own Worst Enemy](#)

- Clay Shirky [Gin, Television, and Social Surplus](#)

Critique: Travelogue-II – final

Case study: del.icio.us, MySpace, FaceBook, Twitter

Toolbox: Open CMS Drupal, Joomla, Plone, Upgrade International

Assignment: Travelogue-III

Class 5 – Our Media?

Feb 16th – Led by

Required Viewing:

- [Steal This film 2](#)
- Lawrence Lessig's [Free Culture presentation](#)

Recommended Reading:

- Jenkins, Henry: [Taking the You Out of YouTube?](#)
- Dmytri Kleiner & Brian Wyrick – [InfoEnclosure 2.0](#)

Critique: Travelogue-III roundup

Case study: YouTube, Blip, Internet Archive, OurMedia, Bittorrent, The Pirate Bay

Toolbox: Where and how should we be hosting our videos online? How does podcasting work?

Assignment: Travelogue-III

Class 6 – Commons Based Peer Production and Open Source

Feb 23rd – Led by

Required reading:

- Watch: [The Wealth of Networks](#) – A presentation by Yochai Benkler.
- Read: [Excerpts from The Success of Open Source](#) – by Steven Weber

Recommended Reading:

- [Commons-based Peer Production and Virtue*](#) – by Yochai Benkler * Helen Nissenbaum

- [Property and the Problem of Open Source](#) – by Steven Weber (the extension of the excerpts above, so no need to read both)

Critique: Travelogue-III – final

Toolbox: Open Source, Version Control, Linux

Assignment: Travelogue-IV

Class 7 The cult of Wikipedia

Mar 2nd – Led by

Suggested reading:

Jaron Lanier – [Digital Maoism](#) + [responses to Jaron Lanier Digital Maoism](#)

Critique: Travelogue-IV – roundup

Toolbox: Wikipedia, Wikiality, MediaWiki

Class 8 – The Internet of Thing

Mar 9th – Led by

Suggested Reading:

Dan Hill, [The City As A Platform](#)

Required Reading: Brian Holmes – [Drifting Through the Grid: Psychogeography and Imperial Infrastructure](#)

Required Viewing: [Bruce Sterling's presentation](#) in the Innovation Forum.

Case study: Smart phones, RFID, GPS, Metrocard

Critique: Travelogue-IV

Assignment: Travelogue-IV

Class 9 – Interface as a conflict of Ideologies

March 23rd – Led by

Required Reading/Viewing:

- [Social networking, new governing](#) By ANDREW RASIEJ & MICAH L. SIFRY
- [ShiftSpace introduction video](#) By Mushon Zer-Aviv

Suggested Reading:

- Mushon Zer-Aviv, [Interface as a Conflict of Ideologies](#)

Assignment: Travelogue-IV

Class 10 – Representation, Simulation, Fun & filthy rich media

March 30th – Led by

[Book Excerpt: “A Theory of Fun for Game Design” – What Games Aren’t](#) / Raph Koster

[SIMULATION 101: Simulation versus Representation](#) / Gonzalo Frasca

Recommended Listening & viewing:

[The Core of Fun – Presentation at Etech](#) / Raph Koster

Class 11 – Network Theory

April 6th – Led by

- [Networks – The Science-Spanning Disciplines](#) / Anna Nagurney make sure to follow [her presentation slides too](#)

Recommended Reading:

- Part 1 of [The Principle of Networking](#) Geert Lovink: Multitude, Network and Culture (up to page 11)
- [Review of *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* \(2 reviews + 1 response\)](#)

Critique: Travelogue-IV – final

Toolbox: Napster, Bittorrent, Azureus, Tor

Assignment: New Media Embed Program

Class 12 – The Singularity, Transhumanism & Biomedica

April 13th – Led by

Reading:

- [Review of Eugene Thacker's Biomedica](#) / Nicholas Ruiz III
- [Decoding the Future with Genomics](#) / Juan Enriquez
- [Futurist Ray Kurzweil Pulls Out All the Stops \(and Pills\) to Live to Witness the Singularity](#) / Gary Wolf

Critique: The New Media Embed Program

Assignment: New Media Embed Program

Class 13 – E-ducation

April 20th – Led by

Required reading:

- [The Impending Demise of the University](#) by Don Tapscott
- [MyUniversity.com? Personalized Education and Personalized News](#) by Cass Sunstein

Recommended viewing:

- [My University.com, My Government.com: Is the Internet Really a Blessing for Democracy?](#) presentation by Cass Sunstein

Class 14 – The Digital Divide and the Postnational Web

April 27th – Led by

Required Listening/Reading:

Nicolas Negroponte, Participation Revolution: OLPC presentation at PopRech 2005:

[audio:<http://itc.conversationsnetwork.org/audio/download/ITC.PopTech2005-NicholasNegroponte-2005.10.21.mp3>]

- [Nicolas Negroponte, "Interview with Riz Khan" Al-Jazeera October 2007](#)
- [Give me rice, but give me a laptop too](#) / *Bill Thompson*
- [Dvorak – Thompson, OLPC critique](#) / Tom Carter weblog

Frost, Catherine Internet Galaxy Meets Postnational Constellation: Prospects for Political Solidarity After the Internet (a pdf will be emailed to you, please do not share.)

Critique: The New Media Embed Program / final conclusions

Case study: Savetheinternet.com, OLPC, Global Voices Online, Toot

***Optional Extra – Governance 2.0**

Required Viewing/Reading:

- [UsNow](#) – A film project about the power of mass collaboration, government and the internet
- [The Fog Machine](#) – Iran, Social Media and the Rise of Genetically Modified Grassroots Organizations By JACK Z. BRATICH

Recommended reading/viewing:

- Aneesh Chopra, Tim O'Reilly, "[A Conversation with Aneesh Chopra](#)"

Grading Rubric

A – Excellent. Student exhibits exemplary creativity through research and critical analysis. Research and writing is lucid and engaging with zero mistakes.

B – Good. References to the course material are well-selected and topical. Critical analysis is present, but largely rehearsed from class lecture and discussion. Student's style is clear and has very few mistakes.

C – Satisfactory. References to the course material are well-selected and topical, but student performs little or no historical or critical analysis. Problems exist in student's work. Work consists mostly of underdeveloped ideas, off-topic sources or examples, inappropriate research, or anecdotes.

D – Unsatisfactory. Student does not engage with the material and no historical or critical analysis is present. Substantial problems exist in student's work.

F – Fail. Student does not submit work, or work is below unsatisfactory level.