

LCC 3206-D: Communication and Culture

Meeting Times: T, Th 1:35 - 2:55pm

Location: Skiles 002

Instructor: Fred Leighton

email: fred@artsdigital.com

Office hours: Thursdays at 3:00pm or by appointment

Office: Skiles 328

Overview

In this discussion- and project-based course, we will explore the phenomenon of social media. We will use both cultural studies theory and ethnographic techniques to study new digital forms, such as blogs, MMOs (Second Life), social computing sites (Facebook, Google+), media-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), and other manifestations of so-called remix culture. Lectures and discussions will cover topics that range from the history of media and cultural studies of media to methods of qualitative analysis and specific analyses of the various social media mentioned above. Much of the course will be devoted to reports and discussion of hands-on work by students in studying social sites.

Course objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Have a basic knowledge of the types and genres of social media and new digital forms on the Internet
2. Be able to use some appropriate tools from the humanities or social sciences to analyze the cultural significance of these new forms.
3. Be able to communicate their analysis effectively in writing and oral presentation.

Course Reading

There is no textbook for this course. Readings and other media for research and discussion will be from a variety of sources, online in adobe acrobat (pdf) format provided by the instructor through email or T-Square.

Schedule

* this syllabus and course schedule will located on T-Square. The schedule is subject to changes which will be announced in class. Check the course schedule on T-Square frequently to be up to date on the the current version of the schedule.

Week 1 Introduction to course

Tuesday August 21

introduction to course: what are social media?

Thursday August 25

Different views: Clay Shirky, Stephen Marche.

Read Stephen Marche, Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/05/is-facebook-making-us-lonely/308930/>

Watch Shirky Ted talk:

http://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_cognitive_surplus_will_change_the_world.html

Week 2 Theories of Communication and IRB

Tuesday August 28

Pew project, mashable.com, boyd and ellison

Thursday August 30

Theory of Communication; Twitter sample paper

Week 3 Research, visual culture, performance studies

Tuesday September 4

IRB materials

Thursday September 6

Humanities approach; YouTube sample paper

Week 4 The project

Tuesday September 11

project pitches and group formation

Thursday September 13

Schechner; Goffman

Week 5 MMOs

Tuesday September 18

Discussion of T.L. Taylor, Castronova, Bainbridge

Thursday September 20

group project pitches

Week 6 Visual Cultural Studies

Tuesday September 25

Sturken and Cartwright

Thursday September 27

Sturken and Cartwright

Week 7 Reading test; YouTube

Tuesday October 2

Reading test 1

Thursday October 4

Group work day

Week 8 YouTube and Remix

Tuesday October 9

Horwatt, Remix

Thursday October 11

YouTube Reader, excerpts

Week 9 Mid term project presentations and discussion

Tuesday October 16

Fall break - no class meeting

Thursday October 18

Preliminary group presentation; bibliography due

Week 10 Social gaming: Alternate Reality Games

Tuesday October 23

McGonigal

Thursday October 25

group meeting day

Week 11 Textual media: Wikipedia, Google, Blogs, ebooks Google books project...

Tuesday October 30

History of writing and encyclopedias: wikipedia and ebooks

Thursday November 1

Twitter

Week 12 Intellectual property

Tuesday November 6

Lessig, Free Culture

Thursday November 8

Lessig, Free Culture

Week 13 Political dimension of social media

Tuesday November 13

Political change in the digital age

Thursday November 15

Wikileaks. Christian Caryl and Anonymous

Week 14 Project day

Tuesday November 20

group project day

Thursday November 22

Thanksgiving – no class meeting

Week 15 Mobile technology – Second reading test

Tuesday November 27

Mobile technology: Castells

Thursday November 29

Reading test 2

Week 16 Final project presentations

Tuesday December 4

Final Project presentations

Thursday December 6

Final Project presentations

Exam Week

Tuesday December 11

Final Papers due (5 pm)

Policies

1. Attendance policy: You are asked to come to class whenever possible and to participate in the discussions and group work. Attendance will not be taken and will not directly affect your grade. However, attendance is part of class participation, which will be worth 10% of your overall grade.

2. Information about ADAPTS: Learning support services for students with disabilities is provided. Please see <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>.

3. Honor code: You are asked to abide by the GT honor code in this class. Please read and follow the injunctions describe here: <http://www.honor.gatech.edu>.

Assignments and Grading

They will be two term tests on the reading. These are individually graded. Likewise the blog/class participation will count for part of each individual's grade. (Percents are indicated below.) The other 50% will come from the group project as indicated:

Individual

term test 1 _____ 20%
term test 2 _____ 20%
blog/class participation _____ 10%

Group Project

bibliography _____ 10%

final oral presentation_____10%
final written paper_____30%

Each group project will be a substantial investigation (using any of a variety of research methods) of a social media site or practice. The investigation will combine a topic and a theme. The final result will be a presentation, bibliography, and group paper detailing the results of the study. The paper should be 2500 words or longer.