



JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY

COURSE CODE: "COM 311-1"
 COURSE NAME: "Digital Media Culture"
 SEMESTER & YEAR: Spring 2022

SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR: Alberto Micali
EMAIL: amicali@johncabot.edu
HOURS: TTH 10:00 AM 11:15 AM
TOTAL NO. OF CONTACT HOURS: 45
CREDITS: 3
PREREQUISITES: Prerequisite: COM 220
OFFICE HOURS:

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides students with a number of theoretical approaches to critically assess how digital media function and their expanding and expansive role in contemporary culture. The course further investigates digital media convergence in order to develop a critical lexicon that can both chart its development and engage in intellectual interventions in its use within the transformations occurring in more traditional cultural forms such as television, film, popular music, print, and radio. Special emphasis will be placed on the specific cultural, political, economic, and social issues raised by digital media forms.

SUMMARY OF COURSE CONTENT:

The course will attempt at first to define the domain of Digital Media, proposing it as the amalgamation of different traditional media forms into new digitally based varieties. Subsequently the course will analyze the various forms which Digital Media has assumed and concentrate on the specific issues –cultural, political, economic, technological and social—that the various forms raise.

This is a lecture and discussion course. We will shift back and forth between discussing theoretical and practical issues in relation to digital media culture media and their relation to society. Lectures and discussions will be supported with several multi-media content. Students are strongly encouraged to propose their own choice of media material for the class.

Readings include texts by influential media and cultural thinkers such as: Donna Haraway, Franco Berardi, Manuel Castells, Gabriella Coleman, Jodi Dean, Lev Manovich, Lawrence Lessig, Geert Lovink.

All reading materials will be distributed in advance through the class moodle page and will be available in digital format online. Other course material could be handled in class during specific learning activities.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

1. understand and analyze the corresponding influences that traditional media and digital media are having upon each other.
2. understand and analyze how digital media use contributes to shape personal identities and social relationships.
3. recognize the influences that digital media is expressing in the cultural, social, economical and political spheres.
4. learn some key concepts such as digitality, interactivity, hypertextuality, virtuality, internetworking, mediation and remediation, web 2.0., digital labor, algorithmic culture, remix culture, hacking and hacktivism, cybernetics, etc., and apply them to understand contemporary digital media cultural expressions.

5. advance one's ability to work in team, critically analyze contemporary digital societies, and produce qualitative research reports and reflection papers.

TEXTBOOK:

Book Title	Author	Publisher	ISBN number	Library Call Number	Comments
Digital Culture. Expanded Second Edition	Charlie Gere	Reaktion Books 2008	978 1 86189 388 8		

REQUIRED RESERVED READING:

NONE

RECOMMENDED RESERVED READING:

NONE

GRADING POLICY**-ASSESSMENT METHODS:**

Assignment	Guidelines	Weight
Attendance and Participation	Class participation consists of your contribution to class discussions and other activities. Students are required to come to class having completed the assigned readings. Remote students are required to add up to 250 words about the readings to their weekly reflections. For attendance policy see below.	10%
Participation to COM Seminars	Students are required to attend at least 3 of the 4 seminars that will be organized by the Department during the semester.	5%
Digital Media Piece	Students are required to choose a contemporary example of a digital media phenomenon to serve as the principal focus of research and assignment work throughout the course.	30%
Digital Media Piece (Group work)	Students will work in groups (3-4), and topics will be selected from a list. The assignment consists in the production and development of a digital media 'piece' (wiki, blog, set of digital images, web page, edition of a digital newspaper, data map, software, video essay, research movie, etc.) to be completed in group, concerning with the phenomenon in question and aligning with the individual skills of each student.	(15%)
Digital Media Piece (Individual)	Students are required to weekly submit short reflections on the topics, and related readings, that are introduced in class (due on the Sunday evening that ends the week). The relevant ideas, concepts and themes that are studied have to be applied to the research focus, in order to individually progress on its development before the midterm and final assignments. Individual contribution will be assessed with one point per submission for each week of teaching (12; midterm is out; 0.5 for late submissions); three extra points for those who submit 12 reflections.	(15%)
Midterm Exam: Presentation	In week 7, students will present to peers their midterm reflections and findings on the research project (as well as submitting the midterm development of their digital media 'piece'). Short presentations will be structured around the group work, and followed by feedback and discussion. These will assist you in the progress of your ideas.	20%
Final Research Paper	Students are required to write an individual research paper between 3500-5000 words, following their own engagement in the group research.	35%
Final Research Paper (Final Exam: Research Paper Outline Presentation)	The final exam consists in a short presentation of a summary of your paper, and groups' overview and discussion of the Digital Media Piece outcome.	(5%)
Final Research Paper (Final Submission: Research Paper)	Students have to analyze the chosen phenomenon by applying concepts, concerns and contexts introduced in the course. Papers will be graded according to their clarity, originality, style, adherence to the course topics, coherence of the argument, attention to diversity of sources, correct formatting of citations, ability to develop from feedback and alignment with the group project and its digital media output.	(30%)

-ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

AWork of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

BThis is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

CThis is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

DThis level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

FThis work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

-ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:**ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS AND EXAMINATION POLICY**

Please note that frequent absences automatically lower your participation grade.

Also please consider that you will lose one half-letter grade for any absence over 4 (e.g. 5 absences, half letter grade lost). Anything above 8 absences will result in failing the course.

If you have a serious health problem, which causes you to miss more classes than this class allows, you can ask the Dean's Office to consider whether you may warrant an exemption from this policy.

If unexcused, students more than 10 minutes late are marked as absent. Late arrival (less than 10 minutes) is marked as such, and 3 late arrivals are counted as one absence.

Class procedure: Use of cell phones affects your participation grade and is strictly forbidden during class. Please make sure that your cell phone is turned off (and not just muted) when class starts.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING OR OTHER DISABILITIES

John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 - INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OVERVIEW: DIGITAL | MEDIA | CULTURE

1. What are digital media? What is culture? Can we speak of a distinctive 'digital culture'?

Reading:

Gere, C. (2008) 'What is digital culture?', Introduction, *Digital Culture*, London: Reaktion Books; pp. 11-20.

SECTION 1: Studying and defining digital media cultures

WEEK 2 HOW TO: THEORIZING AND STUDYING DIGITAL MEDIA CULTURES

2. The 'practice' of theory: the critical study of digital media

Readings:

Mills B., and Barlow D. M. (2009) 'What is Theory', Chapter 2, *Reading Media Theory: Thinkers, Approaches and Contexts*, London: Routledge; pp. 7-21.

Kearney, M. C. (2018) 'Introduction, or how to cook an artichoke', Introduction in Kackman, M. and Kearney, M. C. (eds.) *The Craft of Criticism. Critical Media Studies in Practice*, New York – London: Routledge; pp. 1-8.

Suggested Reading:

Merrin, W. (2009) 'Media Studies 2.0: upgrading and open-sourcing the discipline', *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture*, 1 (1), pp. 17-34.

WEEK 3 FEATURES AND DEFINING CONCEPTS

3. Digital media: defining concepts I

Readings:

Lister, M., Dovey, J., Giddings, S., Grant, I., and Kelly, K. (2009) '1.2 The characteristics of new media: some defining concepts', *New Media. A Critical Introduction. 2nd edition*. London and New York: Routledge; pp.13-44.

Manovich, L. (2002) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; selected extracts.

WEEK 4 FEATURES AND DEFINING CONCEPTS

4. Digital media: defining concepts II

Readings:

Bolter, J. and Grusin, R. (1999) *Remediation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; selected extracts.

Manovich, L. (2013) *Software Takes Command*. New York – London: Bloomsbury; selected extracts.

SECTION 2: Histories of the Digital

WEEK 5 THE BEGINNINGS OF DIGITAL CULTURES

5. Histories of the Digital I

Readings:

Gere, C. (2008) ‘The Beginnings of Digital Culture’, Chapter 1, *Digital Culture*, London: Reaktion Books; pp. 21-50.

Castells, M. (1996) ‘The Information Technology Revolution’, Chapter 2, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Second Edition, 2010), Malden: MA – Oxford: Blackwell; pp. 28-69.

WEEK 6 THE RISE OF THE DIGITAL

6. Histories of the Digital II

Readings:

Curran, J. (2012) ‘Rethinking internet history’, Chapter 2, in Curran, J., Fenton, N. and Freedman, D. (eds.) *Misunderstanding the Internet*, London – New York: Routledge; pp.34-65.

Van Dijck, J. (2009) *The Culture of Connectivity. A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press; selected extracts.

WEEK 7 GROUP PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 8 DIGITAL EVERYWHERE

8. Histories of the Digital III

Readings:

Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York – London: New York University Press; selected extracts.

SECTION 3: Digital Societies

WEEK 9 REMIX CULTURES

9. Digital Societies I

Reading:

Lessig, L. (2008) *Remix. Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. London: Bloomsbury; selected extracts.

WEEK 10 HACKER CULTURES

10. Digital Societies II

Readings:

Coleman, G. (2013) 'Introduction: A Tale of Two Worlds', in *Coding Freedom*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; selected extracts.

Stallman, R. (2010) *Free Software, Free Society: Selected Essays of Richard M. Stallman*, 2nd edition. Boston: Free Software Foundation; selected extracts.

WEEK 11 CYBORG CULTURES

11. Digital Societies III

Readings:

Haraway, D. (1991) 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', Chapter 8, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge; selected extracts.

Miller, V. (2011) 'The Body and Information Technology', Chapter 9, *Understanding Digital Culture*, London – Thousand Oaks – New Delhi – Singapore: Sage; pp. 207-223.

SECTION 4: Digital Politics

WEEK 12 DIGITAL MEDIA POLITICS

12. Politics of the Digital I

Readings:

Dean, J. (2009) *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies. Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham – London: Duke University Press; selected extracts.

Berardi, F. (2009) 'The Soul at Work', Chapter 2, *The Soul at Work. From Alienation to Autonomy*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e); pp. 74-105.

WEEK 13 DIGITAL MEDIA POLITICS

13. Politics of the Digital II

Readings:

Hands, J. (2011) *@ is for Activism*. London: Pluto Press; selected extracts.

Beer, D. (2009) 'Power through the algorithm? Participatory web cultures and the technological unconscious', *New Media & Society*, 11(6), pp. 985-1002.

WEEK 14 RECAP OF MAIN CONCEPTS AND FINAL GROUP PROJECTS OVERVIEW

