

DMS 101
Introduction to Digital Media Studies
T/R 9:40–10:55
Rettner 307

Instructor: Eric Loy
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Office Hours: W 10:30–12:30 and by appointment

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Location: Rettner “Treehouse”

Course Description:

In this class we will critically think about the creation, production, distribution, consumption and reception of digital media. Readings and class discussions will focus on the theory, history, and practice of digital media and its application in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and our world. Students will produce individual research in the form of written responses, as well as collaborative digital projects. The course's goals are to prepare students to thoughtfully critique our digital world, create scholarly digital projects, and understand the multifaceted importance of media in today's society.

Course Organization:

The course is organized into three sections: digital media history and background; current topics in DMS; digital media production. Our goal will be to historicize and think critically about key moments in the development of digital media as well as media studies as an academic discipline. Specifically, we will consider how the technological components of media contribute to their diverse artistic and political functions as well as situate the production of visual culture and media practices within a framework of theoretical and philosophical reflection. In other words, we will think about how we have shaped digital media and how, in turn, digital media has shaped us.

Course Texts & Materials:

Neuromancer by William Gibson (available via Amazon for ~\$8)

All other readings (or viewings) will be provided by the instructor, distributed via Blackboard either by PDF file or web link. Hard copies (DVD or Blu-Ray) of films will be on reserve in the Art & Media Library, but most can be found streaming online.

Students may also opt to buy a Google Cardboard kit (or comparable VR system). The official kit currently sells for \$15 on Amazon. There are also various VR options on campus that we will cover in more detail in class.

Grading & Assignments

Final Project: 40%

Midterm Exam: 30%

Short Writing Assignments (Slack Posts): 20%

In-Class Participation: 10%

Grading Format: Final Projects and Midterm Examinations will be graded on 100-point scales, using the standard conversion system to assign letter grades (e.g. A 95–100, A- 90–94, B+ 87–89, etc.) Slack Posts and Participation will be graded on a Check, Check+, Check– system, which will be weighted and applied to final course grades.

Late/Missed Assignments

All assignments are due **before** the start of class on the dates indicated by the course schedule. Because of this course’s rigorous schedule, it is imperative to keep up with assignments and not fall behind. In general, **late work will not be accepted and will receive a zero/incomplete**. Last-minute accommodations will be made for extreme circumstances (hospital visits, family emergencies, etc.). Intellectual crises and the extraordinary pressures of work are not grounds for such accommodations.

Attendance and Participation

Because this course depends on discussion as well as the collaborative nature of producing and understanding digital media, attendance is required and participation is graded. Grades for participation will be assigned on the check, check-plus, check-minus format, and will be assigned holistically for the entire semester. (Because of participation’s 10% value for final course grades, you can think about it this way: a check-minus may lower a standing grade, a check will maintain it, and a check-plus may raise a standing grade.)

As such, students are expected to attend all classes and be prepared with the day’s readings and assignment(s). Keep in mind that participation is not limited to talking frequently in class; it also includes active listening, asking questions, reading aloud, sharing responses, completing in-class writing/activities, etc.

Missing class affects your ability to participate; therefore, missing more than three classes may adversely affect your grade. I make no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences—so, no need to get an absence “approved.” If you anticipate missing more than three classes, please see me and make arrangements and discuss options as soon as possible. Accommodations will be made for religious observances, illnesses, sports participation, etc. **Regardless of attendance, each student is responsible for both the lessons of that class day and assignments that may be due.**

Classroom Policies:

To better facilitate discussion, you must bring the day’s reading(s) with you to class, either in print or electronic form. Laptops and tablets are permitted (sometimes required) for relevant class work. If you don’t own a laptop or tablet, please see me to make other arrangements.

Contacting Your Instructor

I am happy to discuss any aspect of this course and its assignments with you. To do so, please attend office hours or email me to schedule an appointment. For the sake of efficient communication, assignment topics and grades will not be discussed over email.

University email is the best way to reach me. In general, you may expect a response within 24 hours, and typically you may receive one much sooner than that. Emails received after 8pm will not be read and responded to until the following day.

Academic Honesty

The following statement is The College's official position on academic honesty / plagiarism:

[Plagiarism is] the representation of another person's work as one's own, or the attempt "to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source." (Council of Writing Program Administrators, January 2003, <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9>). More specifically, [it is] the use of an idea, phrase, or other material from a written or spoken source without signaling the source at the place of use in a work for which the student claims authorship.

Examples include: the misrepresentation of sources used in a work for which the student claims authorship; the improper use of course materials in a work for which the student claims authorship; the use of papers that are purchased and turned in as one's own work; submission of written work such as laboratory reports, computer programs, or papers, which have been copied from the work of other students, with or without their knowledge and consent.

Students can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating the source of any idea or wording that they did not produce, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, and in a list of references (e.g., bibliography or works cited page). Sources must be given regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarized in the student writer's own words. Direct quotes must always be placed in quotation marks in addition to the other citation information that is required.

In all cases of suspected plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, the College's procedures and policies governing academic honesty will be followed. This pertains to all work in writing courses, including (but not limited to) rough drafts, final drafts, presentations, multimodal projects, and informal writing assignments. As required by College policy, all instances of academic dishonesty are reported to the College Board of Academic Honesty. For the complete College honesty policy, see <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/index>

Schedule Policy:

Course schedule (below) is subject to change, with sufficient notice.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Thursday, Jan. 18

Course Introduction

[DIGITAL] MEDIA HISTORIES & STUDIES

Tuesday, Jan. 23

Read: Walter Isaacson, Intro and Ch. 1 from *The Innovators* (PDF)

Surf: [Jacquard Loom \(wiki\)](#); [Analytical Engines \(wiki\)](#)

Watch: [Jacquard Loom Demo](#); [Babbage Engines](#)

Thursday, Jan. 25

Read: Tom Standage, from *The Victorian Internet* (PDF)

Watch: [Telegraph Demo](#); [Samuel Morse & the Telegraph](#)

Tuesday, Jan. 30

Read: Isaacson, Ch. 2 from *The Innovators* (PDF)

Surf: [Turing Machine \(wiki\)](#)

Watch (optional): *The Imitation Game* (2015) (on reserve in Art/Music Lib.)

Thursday, Feb. 1

Read: [Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think"](#)

Surf: ["Mathematical Theory of Communication" \(wiki\)](#)

Watch: [Claude Shannon: Father of the Information Age](#)

DUE: Slack Post #1

Tuesday, Feb. 6

Read: Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message" & "Playboy Interview" (PDF)

Read: Lisa Gitelman, "Media as Historical Subjects" from *Always Already New* (PDF)

Thursday, Feb. 8

Read: N. Katherine Hayles, Chapter 1 from *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* (PDF)

Read: N. Katherine Hayles, "Print is Flat, Code is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis" (PDF)

Tuesday, Feb. 13

Read: [Paul Ford, "What is Code?"](#)

Watch (optional): *Steve Jobs* (2015) (on reserve in Art/Music Lib.)

Watch (optional): *Silicon Valley* (S1) (HBO)

Thursday, Feb. 15

Read: Andrew Blum, from *Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet* (PDF)

Surf: [History of the Internet \(wiki\)](#)

Watch: *Lo and Behold, Reveries of the Connected World* (2016) (Netflix)

DUE: Slack Post #2

TOPICS IN DMS

Tuesday, Feb. 20**DATABASE**

Read: Lev Manovich, "Database as a Symbolic Form" (PDF)

(DATABASE CONT'D)

Read: N. Katherine Hayles, "Narrative and Database: Natural Symbionts" (PDF)

Thursday, Feb. 22

HYPERTEXT

Read: George Landow, "Hypertext: An Introduction" from *Hypertext 2.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization* (PDF)

Play: A [Twine](#) (choose one): [The Uncle Who Works for Nintendo](#); [Eidolon](#); [Queers in Love at the End of the World](#); [Depression Quest](#); [Open Sorcery](#)

Tuesday, Feb. 27

REMEDIATION

Read: Bolter & Gursin, from *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (PDF)

Surf: [The William Blake Archive](#)

Thursday, March 1

INTERFACE

Read: Johanna Drucker, "Reading Interface" (PDF)

Read: [Matthew Kirschenbaum, "So the Colors Cover the Wires: Interface, Aesthetics, and Usability"](#)

Surf: [Graphical User Interface \(wiki\)](#)

DUE: Slack Post #3

Tuesday, March 6

GAMING

Read: Ian Bogost, from *How to Do Things with Videogames* (PDF)

Play: Your favorite mobile videogame (Don't have one? Try one!)

Thursday, March 8

GAMING Cont'd

Read: Ian Bogost, from *How to Talk About Videogames* (PDF)

Play: Your favorite console videogame (Don't have one? Try one!)

*Note: Art & Music Library has consoles and games available for checkout

Tuesday, March 13 & Thursday, March 15

No Class—Spring Break

Tuesday, March 20

AR/VR

Watch: *Black Mirror*, "Playtest" (S3E2) (Netflix)

Read: from *The New Yorker*, [VR & Art](#) / [VR & Cinema](#) / [VR & Gaming](#)

Play: Free Cardboard VR Apps (choose one or find your own): [NY Times VR](#); [Official Google Cardboard](#); [Expeditions](#); [War of Words VR](#);

Play: Free AR Mobile Apps (choose one or find your own): [Pokemon Go](#); [IKEA Place](#); [Google Translate](#); [Stack AR](#); [INKHUNTER](#);

OR: a VR/AR system of your choosing (Rettner Lab has new kits)

Thursday, March 22

AR/VR Cont'd

Watch: [HYPER-REALITY](#)

(start reading *Neuromancer*)

DUE: Slack Post #4

Tuesday, March 27

CYBERPUNK

Read: William Gibson, *Neuromancer*

Thursday, March 29

CYBERPUNK Cont'd

Watch: *Blade Runner (The Final Cut)* (1982) (on reserve in Art/Music Lib.)

Watch: *The Matrix* (1999) (on reserve in Art/Music Lib.)

Tuesday, April 3

POSTHUMANISM / TRANSHUMANISM

Watch: [Neil Harbisson, "I Listen to Color"](#)

Read: N. Katherine Hayles, from *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literatures, and Informatics* (PDF)

Read: Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (PDF)

DUE: Slack Post #5

Thursday, April 5

AI & THE SINGULARITY

Read: [Luciano Floridi, "Should We Be Afraid of AI?"](#)

Read (optional): Isaac Asimov, "The Last Question" (PDF)

Surf: [Technological Singularity \(wiki\)](#)

Watch: *Transcendent Man* (2009) (on reserve in Art/Music Lib.)

Tuesday, April 10

AI & THE SINGULARITY Cont'd

Choose 1 film below:

Watch: *Black Mirror*, "Be Right Back" (S2E1) (Netflix)

Watch: *Ex Machina* (2015) (on reserve in Art/Music Lib.)

Watch: *Her* (2013) (on reserve in Art/Music Lib.)

DUE: Slack Post #6

Thursday, April 12

Exam

PRODUCTION / GROUP PROJECTS

Tuesday, April 17

Group Work Day

Thursday, April 19

Group Work Day

Tuesday, April 24

Group Work Day

Thursday, April 26

Group Work Day

Tuesday, May 1

Last Day of Class

DUE: Final Group Projects

In Class: Short Presentations