

## CA 459: New Media and Society

Fall 2014, M/W 2:30pm – 3:45pm, 2252B Helen C White

### Course Instructor

Jeremy Morris  
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Office Hours: Thursday 2pm – 4pm  
6132 Vilas (other meeting times by email)

**Course Website:** Learn@UW

### Course Description

The unparalleled rate at which digital and “new” media are emerging makes the study of digital culture highly exciting and intensely challenging. This course seeks to slow this pace down by turning a critical eye towards how new media color our experiences of communication, culture, politics, and contemporary social life. Acknowledging that all media were at one point new media (Gitelman 2008, Marvin 1988), this course uses “newness” as a frame through which to examine the practices, uses and meanings surrounding current media technologies. Weekly readings will address the aesthetics of interfaces, the politics of information, the history of computers and how the design of media and technology afford or restrict the cultural practices that emerge around them. By the end of this course, students should be able to question newness and relate basic theories of digital media to the devices, media and interfaces they encounter everyday.

### Course Objectives

1. Question the idea of newness and link new media to their precedents.
2. Introduce students to theories and methodologies for studying old and new “new” media and the near past, and to the salient features of various new media (cloud computing, mobility, user-generated content, etc.).
3. Help students critically examine their own experiences of new and not-so-new media.

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Link key terms and course concepts to contemporary debates on technology and new media.
2. Use a “new” media technology, while reflecting on the adoption process.
3. Document the history and adoption of a new media technology, paying attention to its cultural implications.

### Course Evaluation

Participation:	15%
Role Reading:	15%
Mid-term Exam:	20%
New Media History Portfolio Outline:	10%
New Media History Portfolio:	20%
Final Exam:	20%

## **Assignments**

*I will provide assignment sheets and grading rubrics with further details for each assignment.*

### *Participation (15% discussion)*

Students are expected to attend class, contribute to discussions and to complete readings and assignments. More than two absences from class without due cause will negatively affect your participation grade. I will also be conducting periodic surveys either before class or during and your full participation in these exercises contributes to your grade.

### *Role Reading – (15%)*

This assignment is designed to help develop students' critical reading and writing skills. Students will respond to weekly readings by posting to learn@UW. For each reading, there will be a SUMMARIZER (i.e. who summarizes the main points of the author's argument and formulates 3 questions to kick off discussion) a CRITIC (i.e. someone who critiques the author's argument), and an OBJECT FINDER (i.e. someone who brings in a link to a news article, video, or media object and explains how it relates to the assigned reading). Students will play each role once (for a total of 3 posts) throughout the term.

### *Mid-Term Exam (20%)*

A mix of short essays, definitions, and relational reading about the first half of the course.  
In-class: **Wed. Oct. 29**

### *New Media History Portfolio*

Since this class is about the act of doing new media history, students will critically explore the history and development of a particular "new media" and adopt it into their daily practices. How did this technology come about? What are its antecedents? What are the critical features of its history that have shaped its current meanings, uses and expectations? This project will take the form of a "portfolio" that documents your adoption of a new media technology (e.g. something "new" to you, that you haven't used before). Portfolios can be as simple as a diary or scrapbook or can involve multimedia. There will also be a written component, reflecting on the materials in your portfolio.

*Outline (10%)* – You should provide a short two-page summary that outlines the details of the portfolio. It should signal what new media you will research and adopt, what types of material you will include, and a general "argument" your project will make. **DUE: Wed. Oct. 1**

*Final Portfolio (20%)* - The final portfolio will provide a personal and social history of the new media or technology you have adopted. It should balance descriptive, personal observations with critical analysis that borrows from the course material. The portfolio should include at least **12 entries** and should and make use of at least 3 readings/concepts from the course and 3 additional sources. **DUE: Wed. Nov. 12**

### *Final Exam (20%)*

A mix of short essays, definitions, and relational reading about the second half of the course. **FINAL EXAM: DEC. 10, In-class**

NB: All readings are stored as PDF files on the course site at Learn@UW

## **SECTION I: WHAT'S "NEW" ABOUT NEW MEDIA?**

### **Week 1: Introductions**

#### **W – Sep. 3 – Introducing the New**

“Media We Do Not Yet Know How to Talk About”

### **Week 2: Understanding New Media**

#### **M – Sep. 8 – What is New Media**

Peters, J.D. (2008) “The Oldness of New Media”. B. Aubrey Fisher Memorial Lecture at the University of Utah (2008)

Marvin C. (1988) Introduction. *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press,

#### **W – Sep. 10 – Doing Media History**

Gitelman L. (2006) Introduction: Media as Historical Subjects. *Always Already New: Media, History And The Data Of Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1-22.

### **Week 3: Technologies of the Self**

#### **M – Sep. 15 – Shutting off the Self**

Turkle, Sherry. “Alone Together” and “Alive Enough” in *Alone Together* New York: Basic Books, 2011. pp. 1-20, 35-52.

#### **W – Sep. 17 – Extending the Self**

Rainie L. and Wellman B. (2012) "The New Social Operating System of Networked Individualism". In: *Networked: The New Social Operating System*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 3-21.

### **Week 4: Technology as Actor**

#### **M – Sep. 22 – Delegation**

Latour B. (1988) Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together - The Sociology of a Door-Closer. *Social Problems* 35(3): 298-310.

Slack, J.D. and Wise, G. (2005). “Agency” in *Culture + Technology: A Primer*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, pp. 115-123

#### **W – Sep. 24 - Everyday Technologies**

Norman DA. (1988) The Psychopathology of Everyday Things. *The Design of Everyday Things*. New York: Doubleday, 1-33.

Winner L. (1986) The Whale And The Reactor: A Search For Limits In An Age Of High Technology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 19-39.

## SECTION 2: THE MATERIALS OF NEW MEDIA

### Week 5: Computers

#### **M – Sep. 29 – Computer History**

Friedman, T. (2005). “The Many Creators of the Personal Computer” in *Electric Dreams: Computers in American Culture*. New York: New York University Press. pp. 81 – 101.

Ceruzzi P. (1991) When Computers Were Human. *Annals of the History of Computing* 13(3): 237-244.

#### **W – Oct. 1 – Remediation**

Bolter, Jay David and Richard Grusin. (2000) “Introduction” and “The Remediated Self” *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 3-15 & 230-241

### OUTLINE PAPERS DUE OCT. 1

### Week 6: Interfaces

#### **M – Oct. 6 – Interface-lifts**

Brignull (2013) Dark Patterns: Inside the Interfaces Designed to Trick You. *The Verge*. 29 August.

#### **W – Oct. 8 – Algorithms**

Steiner, C. (2012) “The Bot Top 40” In *Automate This: How Algorithms Came to Rule Our World*. New York: Penguin: 75-111.

Madrigal, A. (2014) “How Netflix Reverse Engineered Hollywood.” *The Atlantic*. Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/01/how-netflix-reverse-engineered-hollywood/282679/>

### Week 7: Materiality

#### **M – Oct. 13 - Micromateriality**

Mearian L. (2010) “A Brief History of the Hard Drive.” *Computerworld*. 30 December.

#### **W – Oct. 15 – Let’s Get Physical**

Davis J.S. (2007) Going Analog: Vinylphiles and the Consumption of the ‘Obsolete’ Vinyl Record. In: Acland CR (ed) *Residual Media* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 222-238.

### Week 8: Immateriality

#### **M – Oct. 20 – Labour in the Digital Age**

Dyer-Witherford N. and de Peuter G (2005) Immaterial Labour: A Worker’s History of Videogaming. *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 3-34.

#### **W – Oct. 22 – Immaterial Commodities**

“Mike Daisey and the Apple Factory”. *This American Life*

### Week 9: Formats

#### **M – Oct. 27 – Format Theory**

Sterne J. (2012) The MP3 as Cultural Artifact. *New Media and Society* 8(5):5: Duke University Press: 825 - 838

#### **W – Oct. 29 – MIDTERM EXAM**

## **SECTION 3: NEW MEDIA USERS AND USES**

### **Week 10: User-Generated Content**

#### **M – Nov. 3 – Users Like You?**

van Dijck J. (2009) Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-Generated Content. *Media, Culture & Society* 31(1): 41-58.

Burgess J and Green J. (2009) The Entrepreneurial Vlogger: Participatory Culture Beyond the Professional Amateur Divide. In: Snickars P and Vonderau P (eds) *The YouTube Reader*. Stockholm, Sweden: National Library of Sweden, 89-107.

#### **W – Nov. 5 – Users Like Who?**

Everett A (2012) Have We Become Postracial Yet? Race and Media Technology in the Age of President Obama. In *Race After the Internet* Nakamura L and Chow P. (Eds) New York: Routledge, 146-167.

### **Week 11: Surveillance and Reputation**

#### **M – Nov. 10 – Info Caches**

Andrejevic M. (2006) The Discipline of Watching: Detection, Risk, and Lateral Surveillance. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23(5): 391-407.

#### **W – Nov. 12 – About.Me**

Marwick A. (2013) Self-Branding: The (Safe for Work) Self. *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 205 – 244.

**\*\*\*\*\*FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE NOV. 12\*\*\*\*\***

### **Week 12: Privacy, Rights and Commerce**

#### **M – Nov. 17 – Digital Rights Management**

Gillespie, T. (2006) “Designed to ‘Effectively Frustrate’: Copyright, Technology and the Agency of Users.” *New Media & Society* 8(4): 651-669.

#### **W – Nov. 19 – Commodifying the New**

Striphas T. (2010) The Abuses of Literacy: Amazon Kindle and the Right to Read. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7(3): 297-317.

## **SECTION 4: NEW MEDIA EVERYWHERE**

### **Week 13: Everywhere**

#### **M – Nov. 24 – Ubiquitous Computing**

Dodge M and Kitchin R. (2009) Software, Objects and Home Space. *Environment and Planning A* 41(6): 1344-1365.

#### **W – Nov. 26 – Cloud Computing**

Jaeger PT, Lin J, Grimes JM, et al. (2009) Where is the Cloud? Geography, Economics, Environment and Jurisdiction in Cloud Computing. *First Monday*, 14(5). Available at <http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2456/2171>

**(THANKSGIVING BREAK)**

## **Week 14: Mobility and Circulation**

### **M – Dec. 1 – Culture on the Move**

Bull M. (2005) No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening. *Leisure Studies* 24(4): 343-355.

### **W – Dec. 3 – When New Media Gets Old**

Grossman E. (2006) The Underside of High Tech. *High Tech Trash: Digital Devices, Hidden Toxics, and Human Health*. Washington, DC: First Island Press, 1-16.

## **Week 15: Always Already New**

### **M – Dec. 8 – Moving Forward**

Turkle S. (2011) Necessary Conversations. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology And Less From Each Other*. New York: Basic Books, 279-297.

### **W – Dec. 10 – FINAL EXAM IN-CLASS**

## **Course Policies**

### *Grading Scale*

I will be using the following grading scale for this course and all its assignments

A: 93-100%

C: 70-77.9%

AB: 88-92.9%

D: 60-69.9%

B: 83-87.9%

F: 0-59.9%

BC: 78-82.9%

### *Extensions and Late Work*

If you are unable to meet the due date for the mid-term paper or other assignments, extensions will be granted only in rare and unavoidable circumstances (at the instructor's discretion). Late papers will be penalized 2% for each day the assignment is late. All assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of class or deposited in my mailbox outside the department's main office.

### *Plagiarism and Academic Integrity*

Plagiarism – passing off the work of someone else as your own without proper citation or reference – is unacceptable. Please adhere to UW's policy on the matter: <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html>. Abuses of this policy will be reported to the Dean of Students and given a failing grade.

### *Illness and Missed Classes*

Not attending classes will negatively impact your participation mark and your overall performance in the class. However, it is flu season and neither your instructor nor your classmates want to get sick. If you have to miss a class or discussion due to illness please notify the instructor as far in advance as possible. If your absence results in a missed assignment I will do our best to make alternate arrangements for making up missed work, provided I know in advance that you will be absent. Students with influenza-like illness

(ILI: fever of 100 degrees F or higher, with a cough and/or sore throat) should not participate in face-to-face instructional activities until fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medications.

#### *Accommodations*

Your instructors hope to foster a safe and comfortable learning environment for all students. We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, ethnic or national origin, civil status, religion, creed, political convictions, language, sex, sexual orientation, social condition, age, personal handicap or the use of any means to palliate such a handicap. Please let us know if and how we can improve the class environment.

If you have a disability and require special testing or classroom modifications for religious or other reasons, please contact me to discuss your situation within the first two weeks of class. UW also offers resources through the McBurney Disability Resource Center: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>

#### *Communication Policy*

Your instructor is here to help you meet the high expectations of you. I encourage you to make use of my office hours or to set up additional times with me to discuss your progress in the course, or any aspect of the class that concerns you. I will endeavor to respond to you as quickly as I can and to have your papers/assignments/quizzes/ exams graded in a timely fashion, though please allow for extra time during periods of the semester when I may have many students looking to meet with me (i.e. around assignment due dates, before exams, etc.).