

DIGITAL CULTURES: COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

SYLLABUS

ELLEN GRABINER, L 322
COMM 323, T-TH, 2-3:20
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RATIONALE

“New ‘new media’” is about the advent and impact of media newer than “new’ media—as different from the classic new media of email and Web sites as those new media are different from old media such as newspapers and television. “

- *Paul Levinson, New New Media*

Whether we borrow Levinson’s moniker, “new, new media,” or grab onto the ubiquitous “social media,” communicators are confronted by an unprecedented need to develop literacies and competencies in what currently resembles a whirlwind of perpetually emerging communication technologies. While the specific hardware and software comes and goes, it is critical for those serious about their engagement with the disciplines of communication to be literate and competent participants in our digital futures. The cultures of our news, entertainment, business, and democracy,—to name a few arenas—are being transformed by the changes in digital media. By examining these emerging communication technologies through the lenses of more traditional theorists: think McLuhan along with contemporary new-er media voices like Clay Shirky, Henry Jenkins, Lev Manovich, and Danah Boyd, we may begin to better understand our “moment of media change.”

DESCRIPTION

In this course we will trace the historical trajectory of digital media and the resultant participatory or “social” cultures. We will investigate the impact that both production and consumption of these are having on our meaning making practices. With a hands-on experience of the current modes of participatory/social media as both pedagogical vehicles and the object of our study, we can begin to effectively engage in the long-standing debates in media and cultural theory. We can also begin to ask the important questions as we gain key insights about the newly blurred boundary between consumer and producer, about the impact of the asynchronous nature of these “new new media”, about the intrinsically social nature of social media, and ultimately about the ethical choices raised by becoming literate and active participants in our emerging media culture.

The intersection of multiple areas of thought provides a rich and fertile ground for our inquiry. These might include, but are not limited to human-computer interaction, communication studies, media studies, literacy studies, rhetoric, sociology, business, learning sciences, and journalism.

GOALS FOR LEARNING

- A deep understanding of contemporary contexts for media use, production, and circulation.
- A working knowledge of digital and social media tools and applications.
- To think in new ways about how information and culture are shared and organized.
- Make meaningful assessments of the formation of and participation in virtual communities.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This course will be rigorous. There will be much reading, writing, viewing; participation - the essence of this active learning experience – both off and on-line is *required*. Students will be required to develop and become engaged in an on-line community, creating wikis, blogging, uploading files/video/audio, participating in online discussions, tweeting, pinteresting, and whatever comes down the pike in 2013!!

Many of the readings are online files and are noted in the syllabus and in the class calendar. Our virtual home will be:

Note: Downloadable readings meet standards for copyright via Fair Use or a Creative Commons license. Some are personal copies shared by their authors.

ASSIGNMENTS WILL INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO

The creation and maintenance of *Personal Learning Blogs*: blogger, tumblr, wordpress, weebly: your choice

The creation and maintenance of a class *Twitter feed* that points to your blog, Pinterest, instagram, posts, marked by hash tags for #SCdigcult

Semester Long Paper/project based on your research in your affinity group

Group presentation based on book reading group: One of each of the required texts will be read by a small group of students who will design the relevant class based on what they have gleaned. This can include discussions, presentations, debates, multimedia evens, or experiential learning activities.

Student initiated modules

Nuts and Bolts: You will choose a social media tool of which you are particularly fond, and if you like, a partner and plan an extensive demo of the tool across multiple communications contexts, including a critical evaluation of the tool.

METHODS

In this course you will take a collaborative role determining what you learn and how you learn it. You will see-saw back and forth between in-depth face-to-face discussions and close reading;

virtual sharing and collaboration; deconstruction and analysis of social media and the creation/production of content to be shared.

CLASS BLOGS/TWITTER FEED

You will be responsible for completing all the readings (on time!) and for participating in class discussions. Your voice in class is critical to the success of this course!

You will be expected to complete your blog assignments, tweets, other posts, projects and presentations to the best of your ability and on time.

THOSE OTHER RULES

Any assignment that is not completed will receive a “zero” for a grade. If you absolutely must miss a class, you are responsible for making up the material. This does not mean expecting a private lesson about what was covered. It does mean finding a student in the class who is willing to share her notes and information with you, it does mean reviewing the posts, readings, it does mean finding out if assignments, tests, readings were handed out and making sure you either get them on line or from me. *You* are responsible for all the material presented in class, in the readings and presented virtually, whether or not you are in attendance. The heart of this course is what happens in class and within our virtual classroom. What is truly important is the dialog, discussion, debate that occurs during and after class time. For this reason, please be aware that if you miss more than six classes over the course of the semester, *you will not pass the course.*

A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM:

Don't. All the work you hand in must be your own. Your very own. If you cite other sources, and you certainly should because it gives credence to your assertions, and strengthens your arguments, use quotation marks if copying verbatim or just cite the source if you are paraphrasing. I will know it if you use other's words and don't give them credit. I will know it if you steal other's work from the web. I will know it if you copy out of a book. You will force me to involve the honor board which I am loathe to do, but have no choice. Don't do it.

(I would like to acknowledge the work of Alice J. Robison, Assistant Professor of English, Arizona State University, who was generous enough to designate her syllabus with a Creative Commons share-alike license. This syllabus will also bear that designation. By extension, Robison has built her syllabus on the works of [Nancy Baym](#), [Howard Rheingold](#), [Judith Donath](#), [Liz Losh](#), [Trebor Scholz](#), [Fred Stutzman](#), [Colin Lankshear](#) and [Michele Knobel](#) and credits them in her introduction to her syllabus.)

REQUIRED READING

The Social Media Reader, Edited by Michael Mandiberg, New York University Press, 2012

Personal Connections in the Digital Age, Nancy K. Baym, Polity Press, 2010

(SEE ON-LINE AND ON RESERVE READINGS LISTED IN CLASS CALENDAR)

RECOMMENDED READING

Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*, Faber & Faber, Inc., 2006

Nicolas Carr, *The Shallows*, W. Norton & Company, 2010

Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

Jason Lanier, *You Are Not A Gadget*, Vintage, 2011

Colin Lankshear, Michele Knobel, *Digital literacies: concepts, policies and practices*

Paul Levinson, *New New Media*, Penguin Academics, 2009

Paul Levinson, *Digital McLuhan*, 1999

Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*, Penguin Group, 2008

Clay Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus*, The Penguin Press, 2010

Bill Tancer, *Click: Unexpected Insights for Business and Life*, Hyperion, 2008

Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together*, Basic Books, 2011

David Weinberger, *Everything is Miscellaneous*, Time Books, 2007