Digital Cultures, Spring 2015
JMC:6800:0001
Tuesdays 2 p.m. – 4:50 p.m., W332 AJB

Instructor: Dr. Brian Ekdale, brian-ekdale@uiowa.edu, E324 AJB
Office Hours: Wed. 2-3 p.m., Thurs. 2-4 p.m., or by appointment

DEO: Dr. David Ryfe, david-ryfe@uiowa.edu, E305B Adler Journalism Bldg.

Course Description: This graduate seminar explores concepts and theories related to digital and social media. We will take a cultural approach to topics such as community, networks, participatory culture, exploitation, digital mediawork, the public sphere, global inequities, privacy and more. Weekly discussions, student presentations on current digital media scholarship, and a final paper will be used to evaluate course performance.

Objectives:
- To examine the social, cultural, economic, and political significance of digital media
- To recognize how social relations are reimagined in the digital era
- To consider the dynamic relationship between productive audiences and powerful institutions
- To discover cutting edge research, engage with its implications, and share your findings with others
- To produce original scholarship concerning the cultural significance of digital media

Required Text:

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation (15%): The success of a graduate seminar depends on the participation of its students. Therefore, you will be graded on your attendance, preparedness, contribution, and cooperation.
- Attendance means showing up. Simply put, you should be in class. If you have a legitimate reason for arriving late, leaving early, or missing class, please contact me before the start of class.
- Preparedness means completing all assigned readings prior to the start of class. While I encourage you to bring up your individual experiences and areas of expertise, our discussions will be centered on the theories and concepts explored in the weekly readings.
- Contribution means sharing your ideas. Each of you brings a unique perspective and understanding; therefore, it is important that each of you share your ideas, opinions, and reactions during discussion.
- Cooperation means working well with others. Seminar should be a place where students feel comfortable sharing their views, even if those views are uncommon or unpopular. At the same time, each of you should always be aware of how your words and actions affect those around you. Intolerance, antagonism, and demagoguery have no place in the healthy exchange of ideas.

Reading Responses (10%): To get you thinking critically about the assigned readings, you must turn in a total of five reading response papers during the course of the semester. These papers should be brief (about 300-500 words). You should use these responses to discuss connections between all of the assigned readings for the week. What are the main arguments? Are they persuasive? What are the areas of commonality and difference across the readings? Are you left with unanswered questions? These responses should demonstrate that you understand the readings, you’ve grappled with their arguments and evidence, and you are able to clearly communicate your thoughts. Upload your reading responses to ICON at least an hour before the start of class.
Technology Research Presentation (25%): It is a challenge to keep up with the latest scholarship on digital media. Therefore, the technology research presentations provide an opportunity for us to learn about the newest research on digital technologies and cultural phenomena. Each of you will work with a partner to:

- **Review recent research** on a digital media technology. You should collect research published in books and scholarly journals, submitted as theses or dissertations, and presented at academic conferences. Although you may review one or two “seminal” studies that are more than 5 years old, you should focus on research published/submitted/presented within the past few years. The following list of journals and conferences that encourage research on digital media may be useful to reference when you are collecting research.
  - **Conferences:** Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication, International Communication Association, National Communication Association, Association for Internet Researchers, Society for Cinema and Media Studies

- Produce an **annotated bibliography** of 8-10 studies reviewed above. For each entry, you should summarize the theoretical approach, the methods, the major findings, and how the research relates to other entries in your bibliography. You also should include a brief critique that addresses any flaws, oversights, or questionable assumptions. Each annotation should be approximately 250 words long. Annotations must reflect your original work – do not copy the official abstract. You may include direct quotations, but direct quotations must be brief and cited appropriately. I will post a copy of your annotated bibliography to the course ICON so everyone will have access to this document.

- **Share the findings of your literature review in a 15-minute in-class presentation.** In the presentation, you should summarize the main themes of the research you reviewed. Do not discuss each article in depth – we can reference your full annotated bibliography to find detailed information on each article. You will want to highlight a few exemplary articles while speaking more broadly about research trends pertaining to your assigned technology.

- **Assign one article or book chapter** for your classmates to read in advance of your presentation day. Following your presentation, you will lead class discussion about your technology and assigned reading. You must distribute your reading by noon on the Friday before your presentation day.

Research Project (50%): Each of you will develop an original research project that explores a topic of your choosing. This scholarship should demonstrate your ability to apply digital media theories and concepts to your own research agenda. For this project, you have two options:

1. **Produce a complete research study of media content.** This paper should include a review of relevant literature; a description of your research puzzle, question(s), and/or hypotheses; an explanation of your methodology; and a findings/analysis/discussion section that identifies the significance of this research. This paper should be approximately 20-pages long (suitable for a conference or journal submission).

2. **Propose a “field ready” study that involves human subjects.** This proposal should include an introduction, a literature review and a description of your research question(s) and methodology. This proposal should be approximately 10-pages long. In lieu of a findings/analysis/discussion section, you must submit a HawkIRB application for human subjects review, including full data collection instruments (e.g. interview protocols, surveys, etc.). Approved status is not required for completion of the research project, but the application must be under official review.

In addition to turning in your research project at the end of the semester, you must also:

- Submit a 500- to 750-word research proposal. In this proposal, you should describe your research topic and justify its significance. To do so, you will need to identify your theoretical perspective, briefly review relevant literature (2-3 studies), pose one or more research questions, and propose methods for answering these questions. The proposal is due Tuesday, February 24th.
• Share your research with your peers in a formal, in-class presentation. This 10- to 12-minute presentation will approximate a presentation at an academic conference. I will cut off any presentation longer than 12 minutes, so make sure that you practice your presentation in advance. We will have a brief Q&A session following each presentation.

Grading Scale:

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SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Introductions

Week 2 – Histories

Week 3 – Affordances

Week 4 – Participatory Culture and Fandom

Week 5 – Exploiting Digital Labor

Week 6 – Code & Coding
• Research Proposal Due

Week 7 – Data and Research
• Technology Research Presentation

Week 8 – Privacy
• Fuchs, C. (2012). The political economy of privacy on Facebook. Television & New Media, 13(2), 139-159.
• Technology Research Presentation
SPRING BREAK

Week 9 – Memes

Week 10 – Production Studies
- Technology Research Presentation

Week 11 – Journalism
- Technology Research Presentation

Week 12 – Digital Politics
- Kreiss, D. (2014). Seizing the moment: The presidential campaigns’ use of Twitter during the 2012 electoral cycle. New Media & Society. (OnlineFirst)

Week 13 – TBA

Week 14 – Research Project Work
- Individual meetings with Brian to discuss your final projects

Week 15 – Research Presentations
- Presentations on your Research Project

Finals Week
- Research project due during assigned final exam period

POLICIES
**Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism and academic misconduct happens when students present work that is not their own. It is academic fraud. Clear evidence of academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly the course. Per college policy, I am required to report academic misconduct to the departmental DEO.

According to the University of Iowa Academic Policies, academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Presenting ideas from sources that you do not credit
- Using direct quotations without quotation marks and/or without credit to the source
- Paraphrasing information and ideas from sources without credit to the source
- Failing to provide adequate citations for material obtained through electronic research
- Downloading and submitting work from electronic databases without citation
- Submitting material created/written by someone else as one’s own, including purchased term/research papers, artistic works, photography, and electronic media.

Students are responsible for understanding this policy. If you have questions, please ask for clarification.

**Administrative Home:** The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at [http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook).

**Electronic Communication:** University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences ([Operations Manual, III.15.2](#), k.11).

**Accommodations for Disabilities:** A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See [www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/) for more information.

**CLAS Final Examination Policies:** The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

**Making a Suggestion or a Complaint:** Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident ([CLAS Academic Policies Handbook](#)).

**Understanding Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

**Reacting Safely to Severe Weather:** In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the [Department of Public Safety website](#).