DIGITAL AND GAMING CULTURE
JMC:3122:0001
FALL 2017
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30-10:45AM
E120 Adler Journalism Building
Prof. David Dowling
Office: E334 Adler Journalism Building
david-dowling@uiowa.edu
Office hours: T/Th. 1:30PM-3PM, or by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

This course examines digital and gaming culture from immersive multimedia narratives to Rockstar Games, the company that produces the Grand Theft Auto video games. We will cover Disney-owned ESPN’s adaptation to digital and the race for mobile audiences despite the rise of ad-blocking technology. Topics include the culture, commerce, and controversies surrounding role-playing games, YouTube celebrities, and television’s digital revolution. Two midterms and a final paper are required along with brief assessments, participation in in-class multimedia activities, and debates.

Required Texts Available at University Bookstore

- Steven Johnson, *Everything Bad is Good For You: How Popular Culture is Making Us Smarter* $9.28 ISBN 978-1594481949

SJMC Learning Outcomes

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. You can find more information about these learning outcomes here: http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment. We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.
This course contributes to these learning outcomes in the following areas:

- **Media Law and Ethics**
  Students will demonstrate an ability to explain their ethical approaches and reasoning about a particular dilemma in terms that can be understood by a diverse group of people. (Learning Objective 4.)

- **Media Literacy**
  All objectives under media literacy, including understand the principles of media literacy and develop the skills necessary to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages across multiple media domains.

- **Multiculturalism**
  To demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups (including communities defined by gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion and sexual orientation) in a global society in relationship to communications.

- **Media History**
  Understand the history of media in the context of industries and identify transformations in audiences, engagement, and business practice over time. Grasp the significance of advances in mass communication technology for cultural production in domestic and global media markets.

**Policies:**

- **Please stay focused;** power down phones, laptops and any other electronic devices. Come to class on time and remain for the full class period. Do not pack your bags until class is over.

- **Attendance** is essential to your performance on the exams. In addition to readings, exams cover a great deal of material presented in class only. PowerPoint slides will appear in class only and will not be released. Research shows a direct correlation between attendance and GPA, as well as broader measures of academic success such as time to graduation. Your success depends on solid attendance.

- **Missed exams and assignments** without forewarning automatically fail. If a calamitous event occurs that prevents you from taking an exam at the scheduled time, please contact me before the exam; documentation must be provided 48 hours after the exam. A record of your clinic visit on MyChart will be acceptable.

- **It is the student’s responsibility to obtain the content of classes missed through classmates who were in attendance.** Exchange contact information with a partner who will agree to give you the class notes in case you are absent.

- **No email submissions.** Submit your written assignment to Canvas only
Assignments and Grades

- Participation: 60 points
- 7 Knowledge Checks: 20 points each/140 total
- 2 Midterms: 100 points each/200 total
- Final Paper: 100 points

Total: 500 points

7 Knowledge Checks I will assess your preparation through a series of Knowledge Checks on key concepts drawn from the reading material. KCs, as we call them, will occur on Tuesdays and consist of 2-5 items you will be asked to identify and discuss in writing. Each of the 7 KCs is worth 20 points for a total of 140 points possible. Tuesday’s KCs will be drawn from a longer list provided for you in class the previous Thursday.

Two midterms will be in-class. A review sheet will be available for you to construct on a Google Doc before each exam. To help you prepare, the class period before the first exam will be a midterm review. Many questions cover material presented in class only and that does not appear in the reading. Each midterm is worth 100 points.

Final Paper In lieu of an in-class final exam, students will complete a 7-10 page paper that draws upon course concepts to examine a form of media. Selecting from topic areas of digital publishing, YouTube celebrities, online youth culture, digital communities, video games, and TV’s digital revolution, you will explore in-depth a specific form of media applicable to what has been covered in the course. The purpose is to provide an account of your selected topic’s significance to digital and/or gaming culture. Your paper is due on the last regular meeting of class. This final project is worth 100 points.

Grading Scale

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% and above</td>
<td>(461 points and up)</td>
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<td>90-92%</td>
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<td>80-82%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>(299 points and under)</td>
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COURSE CALENDAR

Weeks 1-3: DIGITAL PUBLISHING

Week 1: Getting Started

(Aug. 22): Introduction

(Aug. 24): The Multimedia Feature


Week 2: The Digital Magazine

Third Session (Aug. 29): Knowledge Check (KC1); Exploring Narratively

Fourth Session (Aug. 31): Amplifiers and Aggregators

Week’s Reading:


https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285596977_Story_First-Publishing_Narrative_Long-Form_Journalism_in_Digital_Environments


Week 3: Business Models

Fifth Session (Sept 5): Ad Blockers and Content Marketing

Sixth Session (Sept 7): Branding and Multimedia Features

Week’s Reading:


• Atari Teenage Riot (2012) 

• zGames’ Pong World (2013) 
Weeks 4-9: THE AUDIENCE

Week 4: Participatory Culture

Seventh Session (Sept 12): KC2; Youth Culture

Eighth Session (Sept 14): Media Consumption

Week’s Reading:

Week 5: Online Communities

Ninth Session (Sept 19): KC3; Commercial Culture

Tenth Session (Sept 21): Political Activism

Week’s Reading:
- Jenkins, H., et al. (2016). *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era*, Chapter 5 (6, & 7 are optional).

Week 6: Recap

Eleventh Session (Sept 26): Review

Twelfth Session (Sept 28): Midterm I (100 points)

YouTube Celebrities

Week 7: Fame Online

Thirteenth Session (Oct. 3): YouTube Celebrities

Fourteenth Session (Oct. 5): Fashion, Humor, GamerGate

Week’s Reading:
Week 8: From Small Screen to Big Screen

Fifteenth Session (Oct. 10): Amateur Videographers

Sixteenth Session (Oct. 12): Hollywood Producers Discover Vine

Week’s Reading:
  http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/15/hollywood-vine
  http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/02/03/outside-the-box-2

Week 9: Immersive Gaming

Seventeenth Session (Oct. 17): KC4; Open world game narratives

Eighteenth Session (Oct. 19): No Man’s Sky

Week’s Reading:
  http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/05/18/world-without-end-raffi-khatchadourian
- Bogost, I. (2017) Video Games are Better Without Stories, Atlantic

Weeks 10-12: GAMING’S COSTS AND BENEFITS

Week 10: The Culture of Gaming

Nineteenth Session (Oct. 24): KC5; Role Playing Games

Twentieth Session (Oct. 26): Survivor
**Week’s Reading:**
- *Immersive Gameplay*, 95-103; 147-166.

**Week 11:** Social Media and Gaming

Twenty-first Session (Oct. 31): **KC6; Social Media**

Twenty-second Session (Nov. 2): Mobile Gaming

**Week’s Reading:**
- Johnson, *Everything Bad For You is Good*, 17-62
- Watch *Digital Nation*,
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuHLYUZPzCo

**Week 12:** Popular Culture’s Benefits

Twenty-third Session (Nov. 7): **Midterm II (100 points)**

Twenty-fourth Session (Nov. 9): TV, Internet, Film

**Week’s Reading:** Johnson, *Everything Bad For You is Good*, 116-136

**Weeks 13-15: ROCKSTAR GAMES AND TV’S DIGITAL REVOLUTION**

**Week 13:** Rockstar Games

Twenty-fifth Session (Nov. 14): **KC7; The Formation of Rockstar Games**

Twenty-sixth Session (Nov. 16): GTA’s Origins

**Week’s Reading:** Kushner, D. (2012). *Jacked: The Outlaw Story of Grand Theft Auto*, prologue-Ch. 12

*Thanksgiving Break: Nov. 19-26*

**Week 14:** Rockstar Games II

Twenty-seventh Session (Nov. 28): Cinematic Convergence

Twenty-eighth Session (Nov. 30): Legal and Ethical Pressure

Week 15: Debate Week

Twenty-ninth Session (Dec. 5): Prepare video game debate

Thirtieth Session (Dec. 7): Debate (factored into participation grade); Final Papers Due online at midnight

Maintaining a Professional Environment

- Be courteous and professional in your correspondence for this course, using proper grammar and proper modes of address.
- Come prepared and be ready to contribute. Do not skip class meetings. Focus on the material when in class. Power down devices unless they are required for the activity.

Media scholarship is founded upon the use of evidence and logic to formulate forceful and convincing claims. Insights and comments will be judged strictly on the merit of their content and use of textual support without regard to the individual who asserts it. The assertion of any personal, or “editorial” values beyond the scope of the course content is not required, and should be made only at the student’s discretion.

In addition to respecting one and other in class, students will approach the course’s readings and films as academic material for active study rather than passive entertainment. The study of journalism and mass communication, like the work of anthropology, involves examining texts to discover how a culture thinks about itself. In an exciting, safe classroom environment, in which the student’s social class, ethnic background, gender orientation or other personal attributes will not come under scrutiny or judgment, satisfaction will derive from finding profound meaning in the world of mass communication. It is in this spirit of mutual respect for classmates, professor, and subject matter that we begin our intellectual journey.

CLAS Teaching Policies & Resources

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 https://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**
The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which includes but is not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See [https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/](https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/) for information.

**Nondiscrimination in the Classroom**
The University of Iowa is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, diversity@uiowa.edu, or visit diversity.uiowa.edu.

**Academic Honesty**
All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).
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 Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator 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.