SOCY931 New Media Cultures
Winter 2019

Thursdays 11.30 - 2.30pm
Mac-Corry A416

Instructor

Dr. Martin Hand
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Office Hours: Friday 9.30-11.30am

Description
This advanced course examines the sociocultural implications of ubiquitous digital media. We will situate concerns with new, emergent, and ambient media within some broader theoretical frameworks in social theory. This will require an engagement with some of the major contemporary commentators on relationships between media and culture, as we work through a series of key ideas and problems focused around intersections of theory, practice, and method. The course is organized in two parts. Part One focuses on four key dimensions of theorizing new media: infrastructures and flows; processes; materials; practices. Part Two is constructed around several broad themes, providing scope to engage with aspects of theory, forms, contexts, and practices that exemplify contemporary debates about new media in cultural sociology.

Aims
The course seeks to engage with current debates in the study of relations between new media and culture. It aims to provide an advanced forum for critical analysis of key theoretical ideas about the form, content, meaning and effects of new media in society. Students will have the opportunity to pursue specific substantive interests related to the central themes.
Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course students should have a good understanding of:

- The historical, philosophical and sociological character of debates about the ‘revolutionary’ nature of new media;
- Theoretical, conceptual and methodological differences in new media research;
- Issues of materiality, immateriality, and vitality in relation to digitization;
- Relationships between media theory and media technologies;
- Substantive issues related to digital imaging, music, and software, among others.

Assessment

The assessment for the course is as follows:

- Seminar Participation (knowledge of reading and communication of ideas): 30%
- Seminar Presentation (30 minutes plus discussions): 30%
- Final Paper (25 pages on a course topic): 40% Due April 18th

More detail on these assessments will be given at the beginning of the course.

Grading

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Course Average (Range)</th>
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<td>A+</td>
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Submission

Assignments are to be submitted in OnQ. **There will be a penalty of 5% per day on all late assignments, where the following do not apply:**

The Senate Policy for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities was approved at Senate in November 2016 (see [https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/files/policies/senateandtrustees/ACADACCOMMPOLICY2016.pdf](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/files/policies/senateandtrustees/ACADACCOMMPOLICY2016.pdf)). If you are a student with a disability and think you may need academic accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the **Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS)** and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website at: [http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/](http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/)

Queen’s University is committed to providing academic consideration to students experiencing extenuating circumstances that are beyond their control and are interfering with their ability to complete academic requirements related to a course for a short period of time, not to exceed three months. Students receiving academic consideration must meet all essential requirements of a course. Arts and Science undergraduate students can find the Faculty of Arts and Science protocol and the portal where a request can be submitted at: [http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/accommodations](http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/accommodations). Students in other Faculties and Schools who are enrolled in this course should refer to the protocol for their home Faculty.

If you need to request academic consideration for this course, you will be required to provide the name and email address of the instructor/coordinator. Please use the following:

**Instructor/Coordinator Name: Dr. Martin Hand**
**Instructor/Coordinator email address: handm@queensu.ca**

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is constituted by the six core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see [www.academicintegrity.org](http://www.academicintegrity.org)). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities [http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities](http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities)).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic
Regulation 1. [http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1](http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1), on the Arts and Science website (see [http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity](http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity)), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen’s. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

Reading and Other Resources

The required readings are in OnQ. It is essential that you are familiar with them prior to each seminar. The material on the website is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in SOCY931. The material on this website may be downloaded for a registered student’s personal use, but shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in SOCY931. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate’s Academic Integrity Policy Statement.

Course Structure

The course is in two parts. The first part looks at relatively recent theorizing of new media; in particular, we look at work incorporating cultural studies and contemporary philosophy with empirical studies of emerging media. We explore different theoretical perspectives and methodologies of new media research, related to issues of continuity and change.

**Part One: Theoretical Issues**

**January 10th  Introduction: what difference do media make?**

This introductory session raises the question of what it is we think we are going to study and how we might do it. It will be argued that much social theory today addresses what are taken to be the results of new media, but without due attention to new media themselves. This will involve a whirlwind history of approaches to new media, and a rationale for, and explanation of, the thematic structure of this course. The arrangements for reading, assessment, and the expectations of assignments and participation will be clearly articulated.
January 17th **Infrastructures and Flows: networks, information, data, knowledge**

Reading:


Supplemental:


January 24th **Processes: mediation, mediatization and deep mediatization**

Reading:


January 31st **Materials: devices, algorithms, and platforms**

Reading:

### February 7th Practices: culture, contexts, and the dynamics of change

**Reading:**


**Supplemental:**


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### Part Two: Substantive Explorations

The second half of the course is relatively broad. We need to explore a variety of substantive topics and themes in relation to the ideas discussed so far. In the first week, I will provide interesting potential topics (as I see it) with suggestions for research foci both theoretical and substantive.

**Part 2 Dates:**

14th February  
28th February  
7th March  
14th March  
21st March  
28th March  
4th April