THURSDAY 11.30 - 2.30pm
M/C D508

INSTRUCTOR: M. HAND
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OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday 12.30 - 3.00pm

OUTLINE

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 OBJECTIVES

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%

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

COURSE READING

The required reading listed for each week will be provided for students.

For pertinent research articles you might try the following journals to begin with, available electronically via the library:

- *Information, Communication & Society*
- *New Media & Society*
- *Media, Culture & Society*
- *Convergence*
- *Theory, Culture & Society*
- *Cultural Studies*
- *Sociology*
- *The Sociological Review*
- *Sociological Research Online*
- *Technology & Culture*
- *First Monday*
- *The Information Society*
- *Information Technology and People*
- *Canadian Journal of Communication*
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 8th  Introduction: just what are new media?

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 particular course. As the second half of the course is to be partly negotiated among our group, we will need to discuss the range of interests and expertise available within the group in order to formulate the topics in a way that is beneficial and equitable to all members. The arrangements for reading, assessment, and the expectations of assignments and participation will be clearly articulated.

January 15th  Infrastructures and Flows: networks, information, and knowledge

Reading:


January 22nd  Processes: digitization, mediation, and remediation

Reading:


**January 29th  Materials: devices, formats, and software**

Reading:


• Van Dijck, J. (2013) *The Culture of Connectivity: a critical history of social media*. Oxford: OUP. Chapter 4: Twitter and the Paradox of Following and Trending


**February 5th  Practices: culture, context, and the dynamics of change**

Reading:


**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:**

12th February
26th February
5th March
12th March
26th March