

**New York University | Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
MCC-UE 10003: Introduction to Digital Media, Fall 2014**

MW 11-12:15pm, 7 East 12, Room 121

Instructor: Melanie Kohnen

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Office: East Building, 239 Greene St., Room 723

Office hours: Tuesday, 3:30-5:00pm and by appointment

Course Description:

This course introduces you to various approaches to understanding and analyzing the role of digital media in contemporary culture. Among the topics we investigate are anonymity and identification, creativity and control, infrastructures and interfaces, and copyright and fair use. As we investigate these tense relationships, our focal point will be the claim that in the age of Web 2.0, the user is at the center and in charge of digital media. Readings and case studies question and complicate this claim and will help you to understand your own relationship to digital media. The authors you will encounter approach digital media from technological, historical, legal, economic, and activist perspectives, and we will discuss how these perspectives shape the authors' arguments about digital media.

Course Goals:

By the end of course, you should have moved beyond 'common-sense' ideas about digital media and have developed a nuanced understanding of your own position in relationship to the infrastructures and institutions that shape the use and creation of digital media. Specifically, you should be able to articulate how hardware and technological infrastructure shape our access, control, and use of web content, and you should understand how legal, corporate, and activist interests shape our ideas of what the internet is and how we should use it.

Required Texts:

- All readings are available online or in the form of PDFs.

Assignments and Requirements:

Tumblr

We will use Tumblr to share news, art, and activism about and involving digital media. Everyone shares the same username and password—this means everyone also takes responsibility for curating the posts and reblogs that appear on our

tumblr account. Each of you will take primary responsibility for our Tumblr for a week, but you should also contribute at any other time.

Personal Media History Project

In this project, you will examine a few turning points in your personal interaction with digital media.

Midterm Project: Locate Yourself

For your midterm, you will analyze the material and institutional factors that shape your engagement with digital media. You will draw on ideas and concepts from the first half of the semester to analyze how you participate and manage the various possibilities and constraints of the digital infrastructures, hardware, software, and online platforms you use every day.

Digital Media Manifesto

In this final group project, you will create a manifesto on digital media that combines digital photography, video, audio, writing, and web design to critically engage with course readings. You will present your manifesto to the class.

Participation:

In-class discussions and group activities are important aspects of this course. Consequently, your participation in class is crucial to the overall success of the class. You are expected to keep up with the readings and come to class prepared for discussion.

This means you should not only have completed the readings, but be ready to discuss and engage the reading's major arguments. During class discussions, I will frequently ask you to suggest passages that we should examine in more detail; you should be able to identify these passages quickly by either underlining, marking the page, or taking notes in advance of class.

Good participation means contributing thoughtful comments and questions that refer to readings, screenings, and core concepts during our class discussion. The quality of your remarks is at least as important as the quantity of your remarks. In addition to taking part in class discussions, you will participate in a number of in-class activities and homework such as small group work, collaborative analyses carried out in shared Google docs, written responses to screenings, etc. Your performance during these activities counts toward your participation grade as well.

Assignment Schedule

If not specified otherwise, all assignments are due at 11:59PM on the due date.

Extensions are only available in the case of dire personal circumstances, and you must contact me at least 24 hours before the deadline. If you don't contact me 24hrs before the deadline and don't submit an assignment, you will not receive any points.

Late assignments are graded down half a letter grade. I do not accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late.

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Participation	Ongoing	100
Tumblr	Ongoing	100
Personal Media History	02/15/14	200
Midterm Project	03/25-03/30/14	200
Digital Manifesto Draft	04/22/14	100
Digital Manifesto Presentation	04/29/14	100
Digital Manifesto Final Draft	05/04/14	200
Total		1000

Grade Breakdown:

1,000 points = 100%

A = 94-100

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 65-69

Overall Evaluation Criteria:

A= Excellent

This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions and readings. Writing is clear, analytical, and organized. Arguments offer innovative insights, specific examples, and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade for participation are consistently prepared for class, synthesize course materials effectively, and contribute insightfully.

B=Good

This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly, but leans toward broad analysis rather than innovative perspectives. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C=Average

This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague, tangential and/or features significant grammar and spelling mistakes. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis, and feature misunderstandings of key concepts/theories. Classroom participation is inarticulate, superficial, and/or infrequent.

D= Unsatisfactory

This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material, and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared, and off-topic.

F=Failed

This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

Course Policies:

A Note on Laptops and Cell Phone Usage

You are encouraged to bring an internet-enabled device to every class--all of our readings are available in digital formats, after all. It is your responsibility to monitor your use of the internet, texting, etc. in class. You should be mindful of where your attention is during class time (hint: it should be focused on the discussion that's happening among the people in the room). You should feel free to look up information online that is relevant to in-class activities and share this information with the class.

Absences

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed two unexcused absences during the semester (if your unexcused absences exceed that limit, you put yourself at risk of failing the course). All other absences must be for valid, non-academic reasons, such as medical emergencies (confirmed by a doctor's note) or religious holidays. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the work we have done during class. Also note that showing up more than ten minutes late to class automatically translates into an unexcused absence for that class meeting.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you

- cheat on an exam,
- submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors,
- receive help on a takehome examination that calls for independent work, or
- plagiarize.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score, and/or other materials that are not your original work. You plagiarize when, *without proper attribution*, you do any of the following:

- copy verbatim from a book, an article, or other media;
- download documents from the Internet;
- purchase documents;
- report from other's oral work;
- paraphrase or restate someone else's facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; or
- copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

Please consult Steinhardt's policy for more information:
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity

Student Resources:

Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](#), 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

Reading Schedule

Please note that this reading schedule is subject to change—digital media is a fast-moving field and we might adjust the schedule to address current developments.

Week 1

09/02 Introduction and Course Overview

- [What is Web 2.0?](#) (video)
- [Last Week With John Oliver: Net Neutrality.](#) (video)
- Chun, Wendy. "Did Somebody Say New Media?" in: *Old Media, New Media* (2006), 1-4. (PDF)

Week 2 Histories of New Media

09/08

Wu, Tim. Introduction to *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*. Vintage, 2011: 3-15. (PDF)

09/10

- Nelson, Ted. Excerpt from *Computer Lib / Dream Machines* (1974), ca. 5 pages. (PDF)
- Manovich, Lev. "Introduction." In: *The Language of New Media*. MIT Press, 2001: 2-8. (PDF)

In-Class viewing:

[A Visualization of the Memex](#) (video).

[Online shopping, banking and email imagined in 1969](#) (video)

Steve Jobs' 1983 [Apple Keynote Address Introducing the "1984" Ad](#) (video)

Week 3 Creating the Web

09/15

Blum, Andrew. "A Network of Networks." in: *Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet*. Harper-Collins, 2012: 35-69. (PDF)

09/17

- Berners-Lee, Tim et al. "The World Wide Web." 1994. In: *The New Media Reader*. Ed by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort. MIT Press, 2003: 791-798.
- Gates, Bill. [The Internet Tidal Wave](#) (Microsoft Memo; p. 1-3 are most important; also take a look at the links listed in the index)

Personal Media History due on 9/19.

Week 4 Infrastructure

09/22

- Starosielski, Nicole. [Underwater Flow](#). *FlowTV* 15:01, 2011.
- Blum, Andrew. "Where Data Sleeps." In: *Tubes*, 227-262. (PDF)
- Mendehlon, Ben. [Bundled, Buried & Behind Closed Doors](#), 2011. (video)
- Posner, Miriam. [Reading Steve Jobs: Labor, Race, and Growing Up in the Bay Area](#). 2011.

09/24

- Kimball, Danny. [Net Neutrality is a Struggle Over Control Over Communication Infrastructure](#). Media Industries Project, 2014.
- Kohonen, Melanie. [Digital Distribution Beyond the Last Mile](#). Flow Conference 2014.

Week 5 Identity + Privacy

09/29

boyd, danah. Chapter 2, "Identity: why do teens seem strange online?" In: [It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens](#) (link to PDF). Yale University Press, 2014: 29-54 (FYI: page numbers listed here refer to the book, not the PDF).

10/01

boyd, danah. Chapter 3, "Addiction: what makes teens obsessed with social media?" In: *It's Complicated*, 77-100. (FYI: page numbers listed here refer to the book, not the PDF).

Week 6: Code + Control

10/06

- Stalder, Felix. "Between Democracy and Spectacle: The Front-End and Back-End of the Social Web." In: [The Social Media Reader](#): 242-257. (e-book available via the library)
- boyd, danah. [Tumblr Disappeared Me](#). April 2011.

10/08

Holt, Jennifer. "Regulating Connected Viewing: Media Pipelines and Cloud Policy." In: Jennifer Holt and Kevin Sanson (eds). *Connected Viewing: Selling, Streaming, and Sharing Media in the Digital Era*. Routledge, 2014: 19-40. (PDF)

Week 7 Locate Yourself

10/13 Fall Break

10/15 Locate Yourself (midterm workshop)

Week 8: Connected Viewing Project Week

10/20

Skype call with Karen Petruska, Project Lead for the [Connected Viewing Initiative](#), UC Santa Barbara

10/22

CVI Workshop

Week 9 War on Culture? Copyright and Fair Use

10/27

Rip! A Remix Manifesto (in-class screening)

10/29

- Aufderheide, Patricia and Peter Jaszi. Introduction, Ch. 1 (Long and Strong Copyright), Appendix D (Myth and Realities of Fair Use), Appendix E (Answers to Fair Use Questions) in *Reclaiming Fair Use: How to Put Balance Back in Copyright*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011. (25 pages) (PDF)
- Lessig, Lawrence. "Remix: How Creativity Is Strangled by the Law." In: [The Social Media Reader](#): 155-170. (e-book available via the library)

Week 10 Remix as Cultural Critique

11/03

Russo, Julie Levin, and Francesca Coppa. [Fan/Remix Video](#). *Transformative Works and Cultures*, Vol 9 (2012).

11/05

Remix Video Showcase.

Week 11 DIY Media: Web-Based TV

11/10

Christian, Aymar Jean. [Fandom as Industrial Response: Producing Identity in an Independent Web Series](#). *Transformative Works and Cultures*, Vol 8 (2011).

Skype Call with AJ Christian.

11/12

Web Series Showcase.

Week 12 Spreadable Media

11/17

Henry Jenkins, Joshua Green, and Sam Ford. Excerpts from *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. NYU Press, 2013. (PDF)

11/19

Manifesto Draft Meetings

Week 13

11/24

Skype call with Sam Ford.

11/26 No class—Thanksgiving

Week 14 Archives and the Future of Digital Media

12/01

Stern, Jonathan. "Out with the Trash: On the Future of New Media." In: Charles R. Acland (ed). *Residual Media*. University of Minnesota Press, 2007: 16-29. (PDF)

12/03

Chun, Wendy Kyong. "The Enduring Ephemeral, or The Future is a Memory." In: Huhtamo, Erkki and Jussi Parikka (eds). [*Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*](#). (e-book via Bobcat) University of California Press, 2011: 184-200.

Week 15: A Manifesto for Digital Media

12/08 Final Project Presentations

12/10 Final Project Presentations

Final Manifestos due on 12/12.