Cultures of New Media
Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism
University of Southern California
SPRING 2015 | COMM 340
Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30-10:50 am | ASC G34

Instructor: Meryl Alper
Email: malper@usc.edu
Office Hours: Monday 10-11 am (Except 1/19 & 2/16), Thursday 11am-12p (Except 3/26) and by appointment
Office Hours Location: ASC G6 (Basement level under Annenberg Building West Lobby)

Course Description
The two images above (on the left, the Sony Sports Walkman, and on the right, the Apple Watch Sport) both represent mobile media devices marketed to people with an “active lifestyle,” yet they came to market 30 years apart. This convergence and divergence reflects the central question guiding this course: How can the past (e.g. the Sony Walkman) help us better understand and critically analyze the present and future of our cultural practices with modern media and technology (e.g. the Apple Watch)? This class will help you develop some answers to that question, as well as generate new questions concerning a variety of “old” and “new” media and communication technologies. Accordingly, we will place a slight emphasis on sound as a form of expression, but will cover a wide array of media and technology, including photography, television, film, video, web, music, literature, magazines, phone, and mail. The course will draw on a broad range of theory from communication, sociology, cultural studies, and anthropology. As a recurring theme throughout the class, we will trace the regulation, production, consumption, representation, and identity work done through media technologies. In addition, we will study the ways in which multiple cultures and aspects of human difference (e.g. gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, disability) shape and are shaped by new media. You will also gain basic practical skills in the creation of new media: developing and delivering compelling visual presentations, participating in a crowdsourcing platform, and using other digital tools such as the Adobe Creative Cloud.

Learning Objectives
• To develop analytical tools for understanding today’s cultural landscape of media and technology
• To understand how cultural shifts in communication technologies are changing along with economic, social, and political transformation
• To compare and contrast contemporary media practices to historical examples
• To gain hands-on experience with digital content creation tools and platforms

Required Readings
Paul du Gay et al., (2013). Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman. London: Sage. All other readings will be made available as PDFs on our class Blackboard site or on the web.

Course Requirements
Attendance and Participation 50 points 10%
Class Note Taking 25 points 5%
Unit Response Papers 100 points 20%
Ignite Talk 75 points 15%
Midterm 100 points 20%
Final Project 150 points 30%

TOTAL 500 points
Grade Distribution
Final grades will be assigned to the following point ranges:

500-467 = A  
415-400 = B-  
349-333 = D+

466-450 = A-  
399-384 = C+  
332-316 = D

449-433 = B+  
383-367 = C  
315-300 = D-

432-416 = B  
366-350 = C-  
299-0 = F

Attendance and Participation (50 points)
Introduction Survey (5 points)
After the first day of class, I’ll email out a link to a Google Survey for you to complete so that I can learn a bit more about each of you, the reasons you’re interested in this class, and the skills and topics in which you’d like to become more proficient. You must complete the survey by 5 pm on Wednesday, January 14 in order to receive credit.

Discussion (30 points)
I expect everyone to participate regularly in class discussion. You should come to each class prepared to discuss the readings with me and with one another, in large and small groups.

Attendance (15 points)
I will take attendance daily. You can miss one class without an excuse, no questions asked. 2-5 unexcused absences will impact your grade. Six or more unexcused absences will result in your automatic failure of class.

Class Note Taking (25 points)
You will sign up for two (2) class meetings in which you will serve as one of 2-3 class note takers (I’ll email you the sign-up sheet Google Doc after the first day of class). Class note takers can choose to take notes via a laptop computer or by hand. In either case, by signing up, you agree to: 1) attend class that day, 2) take notes to the best of your ability, and 3) email your typed up notes via Blackboard to me and to the class in a .doc or .docx file by 5 pm the next day in order to receive full credit. I will not be grading how “well” you take notes, just that you complete the task on time.

Unit Response Papers (4 papers x 25 points each = 100 points total)
These four (4) short papers will consist of you providing the following:

- 3 key terms of your choosing from the unit’s readings with short definitions of each term *in your own words* (75 words per key term, 10 points total)
- 2 thoughtful questions you have in response to the unit’s readings (5 points total)
- 1 paragraph of critical reflection on the readings (200 words, 10 points total)

Your responses should be 1 page, single-spaced, and in 12 point font. You do not have to discuss readings from each day of the unit, but you do have to discuss readings from more than one class session. Please make sure to both print these papers/bring them to class AND submit them to Blackboard before class. I will be grading them by hand.

As a guide, here are some examples of satisfactory versus good questions:

Satisfactory—too broad; doesn’t demonstrate deep reading of material; answers itself:

- Does culture affect people’s technology use?

Good—illustrates close reading; keeps the conversation going; shows rich grasp of material:

- In her book chapter, Banet-Weiser argues that brands build relationships with consumers, just as in a relationship between two people. In what ways do you think this is true, and in what ways does this seem false?
Ignite Talk (75 points)
In Week 5 (February 10 & 12), you will each be delivering a 5-minute Ignite Talk (70 points) on a topic in which YOU are the experts—youth media culture. Your mock audience will be a group of adults, but you get to pick the specific audience of adults (e.g. a marketing firm, a group of parents, the USC administration). An Ignite Talk is a compact presentation in which the presenter speaks using 20 highly visual slides that automatically advance every 15 seconds (20 slides x 15 seconds = 5 minutes). Your talk must answer the following 3 questions:

1) What is an aspect of youth media culture that your audience should know more about?
2) Why is it important?
3) What should your audience do with this information (also known as a call to action)?

More detailed instructions and a grading rubric will be provided on Thursday, January 22. You will workshop your talk (including an outline and drafts of slides = 5 points) with your peers on Tuesday, February 3. No matter which day you present, all slides will be due as separate JPEGs by 5 pm Sunday, February 8 in a Dropbox folder that I will provide.

Midterm (100 points)
The midterm exam will be held in-class during Week 7 on Tuesday, February 24. It will consist of true-false, fill-in-the blank, and a choice of short answer questions. The exam will cover course material from Units 1 & 2.

Final Project (150 points)

Digital Project (80 points)
For your final project, I am asking you to learn a new digital creation tool/platform OR further develop an existing digital skill, and create something *simple* that responds to concepts in the class readings and discussions. Other than that, you have freedom and ownership over what you create. No prior experience with digital creation is required for successful completion of the project. I want you to build something that is personally meaningful to you and/or is part of your own career development and portfolio of work. You may work independently or in pairs; however, if you work in pairs, I expect commensurate work.

Final project ideas include (but are not limited to):
- Make a podcast in Audacity
- Make a video for a song or rap in iMovie
- Make the wireframes for an app in Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator
- Make an infographic in Infogr.am
- Make a pitch for an advertising campaign in Keynote

You will upload your projects (or an online link to your project) prior to class on Tuesday, April 28 to a Dropbox folder that I will provide. In class on April 28, we will have a Final Project Gallery Show where you will display your work and talk about it with your classmates, like at a science fair. We can discuss whether or not we want to open this up to visitors (e.g. your friends, other Annenberg professors).

Please note that any student with a major or minor in Annenberg, or any student taking at least one Annenberg class per semester, has access to the Adobe Creative Cloud (so, that includes you!). For technical support, I encourage you to visit the spiffy new Annenberg Digital Lounge (http://www.annenbergdl.org/) in the Wallis Annenberg Hall, Room 301 (Hours of operation: Monday-Thursday, 9 am–10pm; Friday, 9am–5pm; Support starts at 10 am).
Final Project Proposal (25 points)
Anytime before class on **Tuesday, March 31**, please email me a paragraph that includes the following: 1) A brief description of your chosen project topic, 2) Your chosen digital medium, 3) A timeline for how you plan to complete the project. The instructor must approve all Final Projects. You will receive full credit as along as you email your Final Project Proposal by the due date. We will also workshop projects during class on **Thursday, April 9**.

Project Statement (45 points)
In addition to the Digital Project, you will submit a 1200 word Project Statement. You must explicitly reference at least three (3) of the assigned readings, one (1) of which must be a chapter from *Doing Cultural Studies*. If you work in pairs, you will submit one statement of 2400 words with at least 6 references. Your Project Statement must be uploaded to Blackboard by **5 pm Thursday, May 7**. The Project Statement should answer the following questions:

1) **How** did you complete the project? (e.g. technical details, project timeline)
2) What **motivated** you to do this project? (e.g. a conversation with a friend, a news article)
3) **What** were you trying to **communicate**? (Think of this like the thesis for a written paper)
4) **How** does this project relate to **topics covered in this class**? (Discuss your project in conversation with the readings and explain its connection to contemporary economic, social, and/or political issues in culture, media, and technology. Please note, that the bulk of your Project Statement should address this question.)

A grading rubric for the Digital Project and Project Statement will be provided on **Tuesday, March 24**.

Class Policies and Procedures
1. You must do all of the **assigned reading** before class. Please also bring our course textbook to class when applicable.

2. Even though this is a class about media and technology, our use of digital media in the classroom will be conscientious.
   a. **No phones in class.** Turn your phone to silent (or preferably off all together).
   b. **No social media use during class.** You may use your laptop to take notes, access the readings, or work on digital projects during designated times. During class, I suggest turning your wi-fi off. I reserve the right to call on you at random to discuss required readings.

3. In order to facilitate your engagement with the class material, we will have 2-3 **note takers** for each day of class (Sign ups will happen right after the first day of class). It is my hope that, through this process, you learn how to be more effective note takers and develop new ways of processing information by seeing the notes of others. I will also post slides on Blackboard following class.

4. Please be **respectful** in your communication with your classmates. Disagreements about ideas are expected and encouraged, but personal attacks or intimidation will not be tolerated.

5. Unless there is a valid, documented medical/family reason and you have communicated with me **before** the due date, **late assignments** will not be accepted without penalty. If an assignment is submitted late, I will subtract one partial letter grade (e.g. from an A- to a B+) for every 24 hours that the assignment is late. No assignment will be accepted more than 72 hours past the due date unless you have discussed it with me **before** the original due date.
6. Please make sure that **your school email address** is working. Sometimes student email accounts are over quota, leading to pesky bouncebacks. It is critical that your email is functional.

7. When **sending me an email**, please include **COMM 340** in the subject line. I check email regularly during the day M-F, and less frequently after 7 pm on weekdays, on weekends, and during holidays. If you have an urgent matter, please also include **URGENT** in the subject line. If you have a longer question that would be better served by talking in person, I’m happy to meet with you during my office hours or by appointment.

8. Though you are not required to do so, I would appreciate your feedback in **course evaluations** at the end of the semester. In addition, because I want the course to fit our shifting needs as the semester progresses, I’ll also have you fill out informal mid-semester feedback forms.

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism—presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words—is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in **SCampus** in Section 11, **Behavior Violating University Standards** (https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in **SCampus** and university policies on scientific misconduct (http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the **Office of Equity and Diversity** (http://equity.usc.edu/) or to the **Department of Public Safety** (http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us). This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community—such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member—can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The **Center for Women and Men** (http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/) provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage (sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

**Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the **American Language Institute** (http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The **Office of Disability Services and Programs** (http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, **USC Emergency Information** (http://emergency.usc.edu/) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**Classmate Contacts**

(Scan information with a couple of your fellow classmates—you are one another’s best resource)

Name ________________________ Email: ________________ Phone: ______________

Name ________________________ Email: ________________ Phone: ______________
Schedule
Please note that the schedule and readings described below may change as the semester progresses. If it does, I’ll be sure to give you plenty of notice, mention the changes in class, and send you an email summarizing the changes.

UNIT 1 | Introduction to Cultures of New Media

Week 1
TU, 1/13 | Class Introductions and Course Overview
TH, 1/15 | Defining Culture
DUE by 5 pm on Wednesday 1/14: Introduction Survey
Raymond Williams (1976). “Culture.” In Keywords (PDF)

TU, 1/20 | The “New”
Nancy Baym (2010), “Making New Media Make Sense.” In Personal Connections in the Digital Age (PDF)

TH, 1/22 | Media History
DUE IN CLASS via paper & Blackboard: Unit #1 Response Paper (Covers 1/15-1/22)
In class: Ignite Talk assignment discussed and grading rubric distributed
Raymond Williams (1976). “Media.” In Keywords (PDF)

UNIT 2 | Representing and Selling Culture

Week 3
TU, 1/27 | Corporate Branding

TH, 1/29 | Self-Branding
Theresa Senft (2012). “Microcelebrity and the Branded Self.” In J. Burgess & A. Bruns (Eds.), Blackwell Companion to New Media Dynamics (PDF)
Alice Marwick & danah boyd (2011). "To See and Be Seen: Celebrity Practice on Twitter."
Convergence, 17(2), 139-158 (PDF)

Week 4
TU, 2/3 | Creativity and the “Crowd” (Part 1): Crowdfunding
DUE IN CLASS: Draft Ignite Talk Materials (Outline and Slides)
In class: Peer review of draft Ignite Talk Materials
TH, 2/5 | Creativity and the “Crowd” (Part 2): Crowdsourcing and Crowdplay
http://readwrite.com/2014/12/19/twitch-pokemon-crowdplaying-video-games-kill-screen

**DUE by 5 pm Sunday 2/8 via Dropbox: Final Ignite Talk JPEGs**

**Week 5**

TU, 2/10 | Youth Culture (IGNITE TALKS, DAY 1)

TH, 2/12 | Youth Culture (IGNITE TALKS, DAY 2)

**Week 6**

TU, 2/17 | Memes
*In class: Guest lecture, Kate Miltner (Ph.D. Student, USC Annenberg)*

TH, 2/19 | Taste: Hot, Cool, and “Trending”
**DUE IN CLASS via paper & Blackboard: Unit #2 Response Paper** (Covers 1/27-2/19)
Raymond Williams (1976). “Taste.” In *Keywords* (PDF)

**Week 7**

TU, 2/24 | MIDTERM (Covers Units 1 & 2)

**UNIT 3 | Production, Consumption, and Identity**

TH, 2/26 | Physical Production and Creative Labor

**Week 8**

TU, 3/3 | Hacker and Maker Culture

SPRING 2015 | COMM 340 | Cultures of New Media
TH, 3/5 | Gaming and Gamer Culture

*In class: Guest lecture, Alex Leavitt (Ph.D. Candidate, USC Annenberg)*


Leigh Alexander (2014). “‘Gamers' don't have to be your audience. ‘Gamers' are over.” *Gamasutra,*
http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/224400/Gamers_dont_have_to_be_your_audience_Gamers_are_over.php

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**Week 9**

 TU, 3/10 | Activism, Media, and the Civic Imagination

*In class: Guest lecture, Neta Kligler-Vilenchik (Ph.D. Candidate, USC Annenberg)*


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TH, 3/12 | Diversity on Web/TV

*In class: Guest lecture, Dayna Chatman (Ph.D. Candidate, USC Annenberg)*


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SPRING BREAK, 3/16-3/21

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**Week 10**

 TU, 3/24 | Global/Local Cultures

*In class: Final Project discussed and grading rubric distributed*


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TH, 3/26 | MERYL OUT OF TOWN (NO CLASS)

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**Week 11**

 TU, 3/31 | Cultures of Digital Disability

DUE IN CLASS via paper & Blackboard: Unit #3 Response Paper (Covers 2/26-3/5)

DUE (BEFORE CLASS) via email to Meryl: Final Project Proposals

*In class: Workshop on captioning video*


UNIT 4 | Privacy, Public Life, and Regulation

TH, 4/2 | Mobile Media Cultures

Week 12

TU, 4/7 | Privacy and Surveillance Culture

TH, 4/9 | Ephemeral Media and Self-Destructing Culture
In class: Final Project workshop
   http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/pics-and-it-didnt-happen/

Week 13

TU, 4/14 | Photography, #Selfies, and Visual Culture
Raymond Williams (1976). “Image.” In Keywords (PDF)

TH, 4/16 | Voice and Oral Culture

Week 14

TU, 4/21 | Algorithmic Culture

TH, 4/23 | Bots as Culture Makers
DUE IN CLASS via paper & Blackboard: Unit #4 Response Paper (Covers 4/7-4/23)

Week 15

TU, 4/28 | Final Project Gallery Show
DUE BEFORE CLASS via Dropbox: Final Projects

TH, 4/30 | Course Review
DUE by 5 pm Thursday 5/7 via Blackboard: Final Project Statement