THE CULTURE OF NEW MEDIA

SCOPE OF COURSE
This is a course that focuses on the development of inquiry into digital public culture. The aim of the course is to develop strategies of critical inquiry into interactive spaces providing venues of public participation, rhetorical movement, and social change. The course networks a dozen nodes of discussion in order to interlace topics of critical inquiry. As fitting for the subject, the course is composed of numerous, short readings (rather than singular in-depth theories). The aim is to engage discussion in topics related to communicative practices but given new visibility, trajectories, circulation and strategic power due to location in virtual space.


COURSE THEMES: The course will feature two themes. First, each class will feature discussion of new tools for internet exploration, production and criticism. Second, the assignments will feature exploration of the virtual UK, sites which translate British government, NGOs, cultural sites, memory, sports, and entertainment. Themes will be developed through student interest, site availability, interest in tool acquisition. The course offer an opportunity to blend virtual and actual learning and participation in an adjacent culture.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students should come to class prepared to read topics identified in the syllabus. Each session one or two students will be assigned to examine rhetorically a UK web site(s), blog(s), or games and critically engage the design/discourse/visual composition. Priority for reading preparation will be identified for seminar work. Not all readings will get equal emphasis, but core readings trajectories will evolve. A final paper (10 pages plus bib is due that breaks ground in criticism of new media relations to cultural spaces. A take-home final will be given two weeks before the end of class.

OFFICE HOURS: Office time will be established before class. Contact through gtg@usc.edu. Consulting on project designs available; please send research question, thesis, plan of inquiry, and bibliography including primary and secondary sources.
1. THE RHETORICAL ARTS GO DIGITAL  The rhetorical practices of invention, arrangement, memory, style and act are beginning places to address critical explanation, appraisal, and intervention into a visual/design/niche networked world.

2. NEW MEDIA LITERACY: What becomes of argumentation and critical thinking in a multi-media, digital environment? What are the critical challenges to creating media literacy for participatory cultures?

3. THE DIGITAL COMMONS: What are the creative spaces offered in the virtual world. Is the Internet the realization of the marketplace of ideas or something altogether different? How do these spaces recapitulate and depart from traditional public practices?

4. CYBERDEMOCRACY? The Web is thought to be transforming the capacity of the public sphere to engage in deliberative politics. This section presents a range of views as to whether the internet creates or discourages deliberative democracy. The section concludes with Warnick's analysis on Bush.


http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol7/issue1/dahlberg.html


5. **PERSUASION GOES DIGITAL:** Kenneth Burke and Stephen Toulmin constitute two traditional authors that ground contemporary rhetorical inquiry. This session examines Warnick's effort to transfer these theories to the digital world. Barbara Warnick’s call for WWW studies by redeploying these theorists. Particular emphasis is given to a unique issue: trust.

Barbara Warnick, “Chapter 1. The Internet and the Public Sphere,” in *Rhetoric Online: Persuasion and Politics on the World Wide Web*.


6. **PERSUASION GOES DIGITAL:** One-to-One, One-to-Many, Many-to-Many

Barbara Warnick, “Chapter 4: Interactivity.” 68-90, in *Rhetoric Online*.


7. **PERSUASION GOES DIGITAL**

Lawrence Lessig, additional chapters

8. ACTIVISM ONLINE
The session outlines Cathcart’s Rhetorical Movement Theory, then investigates how traditional social movement theory needs to be adapted to virtual spaces, opportunities, and constraints.
Wyatt Galusky, “Identifying with Information: Citizen Empowerment, the Internet, and the Environmental Anti-Toxins Movement, in Cyberactivism, 185-208.

9. COUNTERPUBLICS OF A DIGITAL AGE? Is the World Wide Web a space where counterpublics can gather in privacy, safety, consciousness sharing, and support? Or is it a space that transforms the politics of difference?
Dorothy Kidd, “Indymedia.org: A New Communications Commons, in Cyberactivism 47-70.

10. THE BLOGOSPHERE
John Kenny, "Pride of Place: Mainstream Media and the Networked Public Sphere," In Media Re:Public, Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, 2008. http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Pride%20of%20Place_MR.pdf


11. **BLOGS & INTERESTS:** *Websites and blogs are strategies that businesses and conservative think tanks use to ground and disseminate messages in self-defense of activities and interests. This session will examine the practice of blogging and web-presence among select modern institutions.*

Suw Charman, “Blogs in Business: Using Blogs behind the Firewall,” in *Uses of Blogs* 57-68.

12. **FROM IVORY Towers TO SOCIAL NETWORKS**
*The dividing lines between conventional and fictional worlds are stressed through blogs in the digital age. The course concludes by discussing three vectors of social change. How will scholarship, the remediation of community, and the elaborating engagement of fictional worlds generate ever more complex social spaces?*

Angela Thomas, “Fictional Blogs,” in *Uses of Blogs*, 199-211.

13. **MEMES AND MIMESIS:** *The Internet is a space where 2.0 rhetoric invites imitation and innovation. This session traces the generative qualities of internet pictures, graphics, and argument games.*

14. COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE  The Internet may be viewed as the culmination of the ‘market place of ideas’ where collective intelligence is realized through memes. Audiences exchange views across communities. Howard Rhinegold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*, 1-112.


15. INFORMATION CASCADES  What is the connection between the Internet and issues of collective intelligence? Does the Internet provide a space for critical discussion where the market place of ideas tests the value of viewpoints or assertions, or is the Internet a space for epistemic bubbles and information cascades? Howard Rhinegold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*, 113-211.