Speaking at South by Southwest several years ago, I joked that "Web 2.0 was fandom without the stigma." By this, I meant that sites like YouTube, Flickr, Second Life, and Wikipedia have made visible a set of cultural practices and logics that had been taking root within fandom over the past hundred-plus years, expanding their cultural influence by broadening and diversifying participation. In many ways, these practices have been encoded into the business models shaping so-called Web 2.0 companies, which have in turn made them far more mainstream, have increased their visibility, and have incorporated them into commercial production and marketing practices. The result has been a blurring between the grassroots practices I call participatory culture and the commercial practices being called Web 2.0.

Fans have become some of the sharpest critics of Web 2.0, asking a series of important questions about how these companies operate, how they generate value for their participants, and what expectations participants should have around the content they provide and the social networks they entrust to these companies. Given this trajectory, a familiarity with fandom may provide an important key for understanding many new forms of cultural production and participation and, more generally, the logic through which social networks operate.

So, to define our three terms (at least provisionally): fandom refers to the social structures and cultural practices created by the most passionately engaged consumers of mass media properties; participatory culture refers more broadly to any kind of cultural production which starts at the grassroots level and which is open to broad participation; and Web 2.0 is a business model that sustains many web-based projects that rely on principles such as user creation and moderation, social networking, and "crowdsourcing."

That said, the debates about Web 2.0 are only the most recent set of issues in cultural and media studies which have been shaped by the emergence of a field of research focused on fans and fandom. Fan studies:

- emerged from the Birmingham School's investigations of subcultures and resistance
- became quickly entwined with debates in Third Wave Feminism and queer studies
- has been a key space for understanding how taste and cultural discrimination operates
- has increasingly been a site of investigation for researchers trying to understand informal learning or emergent conceptions of the citizen/consumer
• has shaped legal discussions around appropriation, transformative work, and remix culture
• has become a useful window for understanding how globalization is reshaping our everyday lives.

This course will be structured around an investigation of the contribution of fan studies to cultural theory, framing each class session around a key debate and mixing writing explicitly about fans with other work asking questions about cultural change and the politics of everyday life.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

• trace the history of fandom from the amateur press associations of the 19th Century to its modern manifestations
• describe the evolution of fan studies from the Birmingham School work on subcultures and media audiences to contemporary work on digital media
• discuss a range of theoretical framings and methodologies which have been used to explain the cultural, social, political, legal, and economic impact of fandom
• arbitrate the most common critiques surrounding the Web 2.0 business model
• situate fan practices in relation to broader trends toward social networks, online communities, and remix culture
• develop their own distinctive contribution to the field of fan studies, one which reflects their own theoretical and methodological commitments

Assignments:

• Students will be expected to post regular weekly comments reacting to the readings on the Blackboard site for the class. (20 percent)

• Students will write a short five-page auto-ethnography describing their own history as a fan of popular entertainment. They will explore whether or not they think of themselves as a fan, what kinds of fan practices they engage with, how they define themselves a fan, how they became invested in the media franchises that have been part of your life, and how their feelings about being a fan might have adjusted over time. (15 percent) (Due Tuesday, Jan. 24th)

• Students will develop an annotated bibliography which explores one of the theoretical debates that have been central to the field of fan studies. These might include those which we've identified for the class, or they might also include other topics more relevant to the student's own research. What are the key contributions of fan studies literature to this larger field of inquiry? What models from these theoretical traditions have informed work in fan studies? (20 Percent) (Due Tuesday, Feb. 28th)
• Students will read Tim O'Reilly, "What is Web 2.0" [http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html] and Tim O'Reilly and John Battelle, "Web Squared: Web 2.0 Five Years On" [http://assets.en.oreilly.com/1/event/28/web2009_webssquared-whitepaper.pdf] and write a five-page response which discusses what you see as the most significant similarities and differences between fan practice (as we've read about it in the class) and the business models associated with Web 2.0. (15 percent) (Due Tuesday, March 20th)

• Students will write a 10-15-page essay on a topic of your own choosing (in consultation with the instructor) which they feel grows out of the subjects and issues we've been exploring throughout the class. The paper will ideally build on their annotated bibliography created for the earlier assignment. Students will do short 10 minute presentation of their findings during the final week of class. (30 percent) (Due Wednesday, May 2nd)

Books:
Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture (New York: Polity, 2009)
Seth, Wimbledon Green (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2005)

Statement for Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity
USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review
DAY 1: Tuesday, Jan. 10th  
From Subculture to Fan Culture, From Fan Culture to Web 2.0  

DAY 2: Tuesday, Jan. 17th  
Fan Studies and Cultural Resistance  

DAY 3: Tuesday, Jan. 24th  
From Engagement to Participation  
Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, “The Value of Media Engagement” (Ch. 4) and “What Constitutes Meaningful Participation?” (Ch. 5), *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012)  

Auto-Ethnography Assignment Due

DAY 4: Tuesday, Jan. 31st  
Tracing the History of Participatory Culture  


**DAY 5: Tuesday, Feb. 7th**

**Logics of Fan Production and Reception**


Alan McKee, "Which is the Best Doctor Who Story?: A Case Study in Value Judgment Outside the Academies," *Intensities* 1, 2001


**DAY 6: Tuesday, Feb. 14th**

**Vidders and Fan Filmmakers**

Joshua Green and Jean Burgess, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (New York: Polity, 2009)


**DAY 7: Tuesday, Feb. 21st**

**Fans or Pirates?**


Ted Striphas, "Harry Potter and the Culture of the Copy," *The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture from Consumerism to Control* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)


**DAY 8: Tuesday, Feb. 28th**

**The Logics of Circulation**

Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, “Why Media Spreads (Ch. 1), “Random Acts of Circulation” (Ch. 6), “Courting Supporters of Independent Media” (Ch. 7), Thinking Transnationally (Ch. 8), and Conclusion, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012)

Annotated Bibliography Assignment Due

**Day 9: Tuesday, March 6th**

**Collectors**


Jason Sperb, “Reassuring Convergence: Online Fandom, Race, and Disney’s Notorious Song of the South.” *Cinema Journal* 49(4), 2010

**DAY 10: Tuesday, March 20th**

**Fan Labor, Moral Economy, and the Gift Economy**


Mirko Tobias Schäfer, “Claiming Participation” (Ch. 2), “Bastard Culture” (Ch. 4),
and “The Extension of Cultural Industries” (Ch. 5), *Bastard Culture: How User Participation Transforms* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011)

**Web 2.0 Assignment Due**

**DAY 11: Tuesday, March 27th**

**Producers and Lead Users**


**DAY 12: Tuesday, April 3rd**

**Fan Expertise and Mastery**


**DAY 13: Tuesday, April 10th**

**Fan Activism**

Henry Jenkins, “‘Cultural Acupuncture’: Fan Activism and the Harry Potter Alliance,” *Transformative Works and Cultures*, forthcoming


**DAY 14: Tuesday, April 17th**
The Case of the Otaku

Day 15: Tuesday, April 24th
Student Presentations

Final Essay Due on Wednesday, May 2nd