

Communication 340: The Cultures of New Media

Fall 2016
T/Th 5:00 - 6:20 PM
ASC 231

Instructor: Evan Brody
Office hours: M/W 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM and by appointment.
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Course Description:

This course explores the intersection of culture and new media. As an industry, a site of cultural production, and a constant in our everyday lives, technology holds great sway over the way we live our lives – it is both produced by, and produces, practices of living. Using theoretical engagements and practical applications we will unpack what it means to study new media/digital technologies through the lens of culture and examine how relevant theories are deployed through critical, qualitative, historical, social-scientific, and ethnographic studies. Though we will employ a diversity of approaches to the topic, this class will emphasize cultural studies approaches to new media.

In particular, this course traces the representation, consumption, and regulation of identity work produced by media technologies and also studies the ways in which multiple cultures and aspects of human difference (such as race & ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, among others) shape and are shaped by new media. Furthermore, we will constantly ask how the past can help us better understand and critically analyze the present and future of our cultural practices with modern media and technology

In each of the empirical studies covered, we will pay attention to the findings of the study as well as the methods employed in understanding new media and consumption. Students will also put theory into practice by connecting academic work to new media technologies through case studies and their own final projects. To aid us in this goal, we will have guest speakers from both the academic and professional world who work on, and with, the cultures of new media

Ultimately, students should leave this class with a better understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of new media research, the diversity of approaches to culture and new media research, and the various ways that research on the cultures of new media have shifted based on understandings of production and reception and numerous cultural, political, and economic factors.

Learning Objectives

1. To develop analytical tools for understanding today's cultural landscape of media and technology.
2. To understand how cultural shifts in communication technologies are changing along with economic, social, and political transformation.
3. To compare and contrast contemporary media practices to historical examples.
4. To investigate how subjectivities are represented differently and adapt differently by new media and emerging technologies.

5. To better understand the civil and ethical responsibilities of the digital public sphere.
6. To provide a real time overview of digital media through collaborative research and presentation.
7. To be able to pitch your idea(s) verbally, textually, and visually to a variety of diverse audiences.

Required Texts

1. Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman. Paul Du Gay, et al. 2013. Second Edition. – **DCS**
2. Additional articles will be posted to Blackboard.

COURSE RESPONSIBILITIES

Course Requirements:

Class participation (15%):

Students are expected to come to class on time and prepared to discuss the assigned readings each week. This includes being able to respond to questions about the assigned readings and to offer opinions and insight into the topics addressed. Your final grade will reflect the degree to which you fulfill these requirements throughout the semester.

Because of this course's reliance on discussion, attendance at each seminar is crucial. Students who miss more than **two classes** will have their grades reduced and risk failing the course. There is no distinction between excused and/or unexcused absences (except in cases of severe illness, religious holidays or university sanctioned activities) – so please be judicious in how you manage this requirement. Keep in mind that you are responsible for the material covered during classes you miss (so make sure to get notes from a classmate and/or come to office hours).

Class Discussion Leader (10%):

You will be put into teams and tasked with leading class discussion once over the course of the semester. You will be given more specific instructions, but broadly you will be responsible for posing questions to your classmates, assigning and teaching a popular press article of your choosing, and exhibiting media examples which are relevant to that week's topic.

Blog posts (15%):

Students will be asked to produce 3 concise blog posts (approximately 2-3 pages in length) over the course of the semester. Posts will be graded based on the level of effort, clarity, and depth of engagement with course subject matter. All posts should be checked for grammar and spelling, demonstrate a clear writing plan and structure, focus

on specific and pertinent arguments, and use a consistent style manual with proper citation practices.

These posts are designed to have you think theoretically about issues of media consumption; while they call on you to utilize readings, they are not intended to be summaries of arguments presented in the course, but rather are an opportunity for you to think critically and academically and to combine theory and practice (you can think of them as extended versions of your class discussion points).

Papers are due in accordance with their due date and there are **no** late posts accepted. If you have an emergency that impacts your ability to turn your post in on time, you need to contact the instructor **before** the post is due. Some of these posts will be in response to prompts provided by the instructor while others will follow the below format.

For those posts that do not have a specialized prompt you should include **TWO Components (reading and media)**:

1. **Reading:** You should comment on, analyze, or offer a balanced critique of the reading for that week. Here, you must demonstrate that you have done the reading and thought about it. This should NOT be a summary but should bring new insight to the material (again, think of this as an extended discussion point from our class roundtable). You may choose to write on one assigned reading or more.
2. **Media:** You should describe and analyze a media artifact, experience, or consumptive practice and connect it to that reading(s) you have chosen to analyze (the artifact does not have to be one item but could be a collection of items or experiences that connect to the readings and the larger discussion of media studies). You have freedom in how you would like to approach this aspect of the assignment so feel free to comment on whatever you find interesting, engaging, hopeful, puzzling, disturbing, etc. But make sure to connect it to the theoretical and/or methodological part of your post.

Book Report (10%)

You will read and write an academic book report on a title of your choosing. This book should be relevant to your final project and is geared towards helping you to begin to identify relevant material for your final project.

Midterm (20%):

The midterm exam will take place during class on 10/20.

Final Research Project (30%):

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

Your final project will also include a written assignment. In this written assignment you must explicitly reference assigned readings. You will receive far more detailed information regarding this portion of the assignment. But broadly, 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.)

Class Discussion:

In order to ensure that our discussions are both helpful and enjoyable for all involved there are a few expectations to keep in mind:

1. Please come to class on time and prepared to participate. While it is assumed that you will do all the readings assigned each week, it will be most helpful for you to approach the material as an engaged reader. This means that you should come to discussion armed with questions and comments for our discussion. **Part of your grade is based on your active participation in discussions.** If you are someone who finds it more difficult to contribute in a “vocal” manner, please come and speak to me within the first week of class.
2. Not only does this class ask you to grapple with a lot of nuanced cultural theory, but it also expects you to engage with issues of race, sexuality, gender, ability, and class (to name a few). These can often times be polarizing and uncomfortable subject matters. While you should always feel free to express yourself and your opinions, they should be communicated in an articulate and non-hostile manner. We should interrogate ideas *not* individuals. Please

remember to show respect and encouragement towards your fellow classmates, even when you disagree.

3. I expect you to devote your attention to the course material for the full class period. This expectation should be taken very seriously. Violating this policy will result in a decreased participation grade. Furthermore:
 - All cellphones must be turned to vibrate or silent during class meetings and you should not be checking your phone during class.
 - Personal computers and wireless Internet are a key part of today's technological culture, but they can also distract you from the class discussion and dampen participation. Because this is a seminar course and reliant on class discussion I am asking that you please **NOT** bring laptops to class. If you are someone who relies on a laptop for note-taking please speak to me about accommodations; however, I reserve the right to request copies of your notes each week. Remember, this class is a chance to further your understanding of the material, develop your critical reasoning skills, and increase your knowledge about theories of media consumption – therefore I am not interested in your ability to google information.
 - If at any time during the semester you are struggling with the material or the course load ***please seek me out for assistance***. It's a great idea to be proactive and come to office hours. I want this to be a positive experience and will do my best to help in any way possible; however, this can only be accomplished if you come and speak with me before things get overwhelming. If you wait too long to seek out help it will be much more difficult, if not impossible, for me to help.

Grading:

It should go without stating that you are responsible for the material covered in class and in assigned readings. Broadly, you will be evaluated on your engagement level with the class materials, as demonstrated in your written work and class participation, your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in both articulate and well-written forms, and your ability to creatively explore the theories, methodologies and ideas presented during the semester. All of your work will be graded on how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class and how well it articulates and structures its argument. Further requirements and expectations will be distributed with each assignment; however, it is up to you to make sure you are not confused about any of these parameters.

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

Class participation	15%
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Class Discussion Leader	10%
Blog Posts	15%
Book Report	10%
Midterm	20%
Final Project	30%

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to pass the class. **Failure to complete ONE OR MORE of them will result in an F in the class.**

Course Grading Policy:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and enthusiastic work
B+/B	above average work, demonstrating good insight
B-/C+/C	needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow-through
C- and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A	= 100-93	C	= 76-73
A-	= 92-90	C-	= 72-70
B+	= 89-87	D+	= 69-67
B	= 86-83	D	= 66-63
B-	= 82-80	D-	= 62-60
C+	= 79-77	F	= 59-0

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must appeal it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, within one week of receiving the graded assignment; however, I ask that you wait 24 hours before appealing any grade. No late appeals will be accepted for review.

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. Website and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

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, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

Course Schedule

Please note that this course schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor

Week 1

Tuesday, 8/23: Introduction to the Course

Thursday, 8/25: Defining Culture

- Paul du Gay et al. (2013). "Introduction to the Second Edition" and "Introduction to the First Edition" - **DCS**
- Raymond Williams (1976). "Culture." In Keywords (PDF)
- Kyle Chayka (2014). "The Life and Times of _(\^)_/" The Awl.
<http://goo.gl/nN7EwD>

Week 2:

Tuesday, 8/30: Media History

- Lisa Gitleman: Chapter 4: New Media </Body>" from Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture

Thursday, 9/1: Media History Continued

- Shawn Wilbur – "An Archeology of Cyberspaces: Virtuality, Community, Identity." In *The Cybercultures Reader*.

Week 3:

Tuesday, 9/6: New Media

- Paul du Gay et al. (2013). "Chapter One: Making Sense of the Walkman." **DCS**
- Nancy Baym (2010), "Making New Media Make Sense." In Personal Connections in the Digital Age

Thursday, 9/8: New Media Continued

- Eugenia Siapera – Chapter 1: Understanding New Media" - **UNM**

Week Four:

Tuesday, 9/13: Representing and Selling Culture

- Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, & Joshua Green (2013). "Chapter 1: Where Web 2.0 Went Wrong." In Spreadable Media (pp. 47-84). New York: NYU Press (PDF)

Thursday, 9/15: Self-Branding

- Alice Marwick & danah boyd (2011). "To See and Be Seen: Celebrity Practice on Twitter." *Convergence*, 17(2), 139-158 (PDF)

Week 5:

Tuesday, 9/20: Crowdsourcing

- Sara Bannerman (2013). "Crowdfunding Culture." *Journal of Mobile Media*, 8(2)
<http://wi.mobilities.ca/crowdfunding-culture/>

Thursday, 9/22: Crowdsourcing Continued

- Christian Fuchs (2013). "Wikipedia: A New Democratic Form of Collaborative Work and Production?" in *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*

Week 6:

Tuesday, 9/27: Memes

- Limor Shifman (2013). "Defining Internet Memes" (pp. 37-54) In *Memes In Digital Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Media Commons – Meme Week – Various Authors -
<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/theme-week/2016/36/memes-september-12th-16th-2016>

Thursday, 9/29: Taste

- Paul du Gay et al. (2013). "Chapter Five: Consuming the Walkman" (pp. 78-102). **DCS**
- Megan Sapnar Ankerson, (2014) "How Coolness Defined the World Wide Web of the 1990s." *The Atlantic*.
http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/07/how-coolness-defined-the-world-wide-web-of-the-1990s/374443/?single_page=trueBandura.
- **Response Post #1 Due (Readings from: 8/23-9/22)**

Week 7:

Tuesday, 10/4: Youth Culture

- Selections from danah boyd – *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*
- Selections from Howard Gardner and Katie Davis – "App Generation"

Thursday, 10/6: Refusing (Media) Consumption

- Portwood-Stacer, L. "Media refusal and conspicuous non-consumption: The performative and political dimensions of Facebook abstention."
- Konnikova, Maria. "How Facebook Makes Us Unhappy."
<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/elements/2013/09/the-real-reason-facebook-makes-us-unhappy.html>
- Hamburger, Ellis. "Facebook isn't making you depressed, but the internet is."
<http://www.theverge.com/2013/8/22/4647916/facebook-isnt-making-you-depressed-the-internet-is>

- Selfie-Loathing: Instagram is even more depressing than Facebook. Here's why. http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/07/instagram_and_self_esteem_why_the_photo_sharing_network_is_even_more_depressing.html

Week 8:

Tuesday, 10/11: No Class: KOL NIDRE/YOM KIPPUR

Thursday, 10/13: Concerns over New Media

- Selections from Sherry Turkle – *Alone Together*

Week 9:

Tuesday, 10/18: **Midterm Review:** Come Prepared with Questions

Thursday, 10/20: **Midterm**

Week 10:

Tuesday, 10/25: Identity and New Media

- Buckingham, David. "Introducing Identity"
- Florini, Sarah. "Tweets, Tweeps, and Signifyin': Communication and Cultural Performance on 'Black Twitter'"
- Lisa Nakamura: Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Radical Passing on the Internet
- Aymar Jean Christian (2011). "Fandom as Industrial Response: Producing Identity in an Independent Web Series." *Transformative Works & Cultures*, 8. <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/250/237>

Thursday, 10/27: New Media and Asian-American Identity

Guest Lecture – Lori Lopez, Asst. Professor, University of Wisconsin

- Chapter 4: Asian American YouTube Celebrities Creating Popular Networks from Asian American Media Activism: Fighting for Cultural Citizenship
- Chapter 5: Utilizing Skills and Passion to Spread Online Activism

Week 11:

Tuesday, 11/1: Traditional Entertainment and Television's use of Social Media

Guest Lecture – Rachel Cooper – Senior Director of Digital Consumer Insights – VH1 Network

- Readings TBD

Thursday, 11/3: **NO CLASS**

- Paul du Gay et al. (2013). “Chapter Two: The Production of the Sony Walkman” (pp. 36-54). DCS
- **Book Review Assignment Due**

Week 12:

Tuesday, 11/8: New Media and the LGBT Community

- Selections from *Getting it On Online: Cyberspace, Gay Male Sexuality, and Embodied Identity* by John Edward Campbell
- “Outing PlanetOut: surveillance, gay marketing and internet affinity portals” John Edward Campbell – 2005
- Selections from *LGBT Identity and Online New Media*. Edited by Christopher Pullen and Margaret Cooper
- Nina Wakeford: “Cyberqueer”

Thursday, 11/10: New Media and the LGBT Community cont.

- Gray, Mary L. “Chapter 5: Online Profiles: Remediating the Coming-Out Story” from *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America*
- “Outing PlanetOut: surveillance, gay marketing and internet affinity portals” John Edward Campbell – 2005
- Selections from *Queer Youth and Media Cultures*. Edited by Christopher Pullen

Week 13:

Tuesday, 11/15: Politics and New Media

- Fuchs, C. – “Twitter and Democracy: A New Public Sphere” in *Social Media: An Introduction*

Thursday, 11/17: Politics, Activism, and New Media

- Jenkins, H., Gamber-Thompson, L., Kligler-Vilenchik, N., Shresthova, S. & Zimmerman, A. (forthcoming). Chapter 1: Introduction. In *By any media necessary: Mapping youth and participatory politics*.
- Kligler-Vilenchik, N. From wizards and house-elves to real-world issues: Informal political talk in fan spaces. *International Journal of Communication*.
- Bennett, et. al. “Changing Citizen Identity and the Rise of a Participatory Media Culture”
- **Response Post #2 Due (Readings from: 10/25 – 11/10)**

Week 14:

Tuesday, 11/22: Consuming Politics

- Couldry, Nick. “Media Consumption and Public Engagement.”
- Freedman, Des. “Who Wants to be a Millionaire? The Politics of Television Exports.”
- Gladwell, M. (2010) "Small Change: Why the Revolution will not be tweeted," *The New Yorker* at:
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell

- Wasik, B. (2012) "How Social Media Fuels Social Unrest" *Wired*
- Kellner, D. (2012) "Occupy Movements as Media Spectacle" from *Media Spectacle*

Thursday, 11/24: NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Week 15:

Tuesday, 11/29: Sports and New Media

- Marie Hardin - "The Power of a Fragmented Collective: Radical pluralist feminism and technologies of the self in the sports blogosphere"
- Jimmy Sanders and Jeffrey W. Kassing – "Tweets and Blogs: Transformative, adversarial, and integrative developments in sports media."
- Lindsey J. Meân: "Sport, Identities, and Consumption: The construction of sport at ESPN.com"
- Lance V. Porter, Chris Wood, and Vincent L. Benigni: "From Analysis to Aggression: The nature of fan emotion, cognition and behavior in Internet sports communities"

Thursday, 12/1: Final Presentations and Class Recap

- **Response Post #3 Due (Readings from: 11/15-11/29)**

12/8 - Final Project/Paper Due