IML 420: New Media For Social Change

Instructors

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Overview

IML 420: New Media for Social Change explores the nature of civic engagement in the 21st century and gives students the opportunity to strengthen their new media skills in the pursuit of real world change. The course offers students an interdisciplinary experience that combines media studies, media arts and practice, popular culture, storytelling, world building and civic action. The course will deepen students’ ability to reflect deeply and act thoughtfully in the age of digital civics. Students will explore the creative needs and opportunities of social action through the harnessing of the civic imagination and civic media. The will also apply participatory research approaches to surface, analyze and critique real world organizations and projects that harness media in new and compelling ways to foster sustainable civic engagement and social change.

Practically, the class is divided into three modules that each invite the students to explore a broad spectrum of approaches to new media for social change. The first module focuses on the ways in which our ability to imagine and communicate aspirational futures can be used to build community and mobilize towards action. The second module pivots towards real world issues and asks the students to investigate and research specific communities and issues with the objective of proposing thoughtful, research-based participatory approaches to social change. In the third, and final module, the students will develop a media for social change campaign proposal. The final deliverables of this campaign proposal will include an outline of the campaign, several media examples, background research on the selected field/topic, an elaboration of participatory elements as they connect to an articulated theory of change, and explanation of how success will be measured.
Background
The course builds on the research and outreach efforts of the Civic Paths Group as it integrates peer-based learning, popular culture, and media production. Civic Paths explores continuities between online participatory culture and civic engagement through outreach, creative work, research, and academic inquiry. With low entry barriers, participatory culture-based communities often encourage online participation and expression even as they promote expression, awareness, mentorship, and skill training. Premised on a dynamic understanding of citizenship, we analyze how participatory culture interactions encourage young people to create, discuss and organize to engage with specific civic issues and events. The goal of this course is to give students the tools to leverage the insights of Civic Paths into new forms of spreadable learning.

Originating in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the Civic Paths has been joined by the School of Cinematic Arts Division of Media Arts + Practice. Likewise, this section of IML 420 will be co-taught by representatives of the respective schools and members of the Civic Paths team, Gabriel Peters-Lazaro and Sangita Shresthova.

Required Readings
All readings will be provided electronically by instructors.

Grading Breakdown and Assignments

Participation - 20%
A key aspect of the course is its participatory nature. Students are expected to arrive ready to discuss readings and assignments, to engage in in class exercises and workshops and to provide constructive feedback to their colleagues.

Reflections and Reading Responses - 20%
Students will regularly reflect on readings and other class experiences using various media. All reflections will be posted to the class wiki and will be shared with other students and instructors. Students will also be expected to regularly respond to each others’ reflections. Instructors will provide prompts. The reflections should be a space to demonstrate and chart personal development and understanding.

Civic Imagination Remixed Story Writeup 15%

Civic Media Case Study 20%
Initial Writeup
Research Plan
Research Deliverables (choice of 2)
Research Report
Media Campaign for Social Change 25%
Proposal
Work in progress presentation
Final Deliverable
Final Presentation

Weekly Schedule

MODULE 1: Civic Imagination

Week 1 - Introduction
In-class media-making exercise
Overview of syllabus - plan for class
Introduction to key themes: civic media and civic imagination, by any media necessary
Assignment: Reading 1 - Chapter 1 of *By Any Media Necessary: The New Activism of Youth*
(due 1/18)
Assignment: Reading 1 Reflection

Week 2 - By Any Media
Discussion of assigned reading
In-class Think Critically, Act Creatively Workshop
Due: Reading 1 Reflection
Assignment: Reading 2 - Introduction to *Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in the Age of Fantasy* (reflection due 1/25)
Assignment: Reading 2 Reflection

Week 3 - Civic Imagination
Discussion of assigned reading
In class Civic Imagination Workshop (Part 1)
Due: Reading 2 Reflection
Assignment: Reading 3 “Superpowers to the People” article

Week 4 - Remix
Discussion of assigned reading
In class Civic Imagination Workshop (Part 2)
Due: Reading 3 Reflection on Superheroes
Assignment: Write up of Remixed Civic Imagination Stories
Week 5 - Harnessing the Civic Imagination
   Peer review of remixed stories
   Connection to Civic Imagination Atlas and Salzburg Academy/MOVE
   Due: Write up of Remixed Stories
   Assignment: Civic Media Reader (excerpt)

MODULE 2: Civic Media and Participatory Research

Week 6 - Introduction to Civic Media
   Overview of Civic Media, Case Studies
   Why participation matters
   Due: Reading 4 reflection
   Assignment: brief civic media case study (200-500 words)

Week 7 - Participatory Research
   Approaches to civic media research - methods, options, situating the researcher
   Due: brief case study summary
   Assignment: develop research plan for case study

Week 8 - Research Plan
   Share research plan, discuss execution strategies
   Due: research plan
   Assignment: Carry out at least 2 research plan elements

Week 9 - Application of Research Findings
   Discuss research findings, challenges faced, unexpected developments
   Fill in summary template, come up with recommendations/action steps based on findings
   Due: Draft research summary
   Assignment: Finalize research summary homework

Week 10 -

MODULE 3 - “By Any Media” Campaign

Week 11 - Youth Radio Campaign Brainstorm (Case Study)
   Brainstorm/ Rapid Prototyping workshop session
   Case study: Youth Radio
   Due: Finalized Research Summary
   Assignment: Reflection on workshop sessions, recommendations to Youth Radio
Week 12 - ‘By Any Media’ Campaign Proposal Introduction
Introduce “By Any Media” Campaign plans
Define working groups, select theme/topic, possible community/organization/network, initial narrative ideas, media options.
All groups share their tentative plans at the end of class
Due: Youth Radio Reflection
Assignment: meet with group and write a proposal

Week 13 - Project Work
Project Work
Due: Campaign Proposal Draft 1

Week 14 -
Work in progress presentations

Week 15 - 4/19
Project Work

Week 16 -
Final Presentations

Week 17 -
NO MEETING
Final Synthesis/Campaign Proposals due by the end of final exam period