

IML 535: Tactical Media

Units: 4

Semester: Fall 2023

Meet: Tuesday, 1:00pm – 3:50pm

Instructor: Dr. Aisling Kelliher | akellihe@usc.edu

Office: MAP offices, 101g

Office Hours: Thursday, 11:00am – 2:00pm (or by appointment at other times)

1. Course Description

In 1997, media artists and activists David Garcia and Geert Lovink defined tactical media as “media of crisis, criticism and opposition¹.” Over twenty years later, tactical media could also include corporate astroturfing, espionage bot farming, and mediated data nihilism for the lulz. Disentangling intentions and outcomes, tactics and strategies, and mediators and marks will be a key goal of the course. In this praxis class, students will interrogate academic and popular texts, social media, audiovisual material, and computational and physical artifacts bridging both historical and emerging areas of contemporary inquiry related to the topic. We will encounter and then use a variety of theoretical, philosophical, and pragmatic lenses to study, analyze, create, and write about course material. Throughout the semester, students will complete diverse media prototype assignments and produce a final tactical media product and accompanying text.

2. Prerequisites

Graduate students from all disciplines. If you are an undergraduate and/or a non-SCA student, please contact the instructor (akellihe@usc.edu) in advance.

3. Learning Objectives

- Learn to critically read, interpret, and discuss relevant history, literature, and works of scholarship
- Gain and demonstrate knowledge of prior and related tactical media practices, computational interventions, and socio-technical history, theory, influences, and emerging themes
- Develop an understanding of the relevant cultural, aesthetic, theoretical, and critical issues
- Intentionally practice diverse interrogative, speculative, and tactical media methodologies
- Gain practical experience in designing and realizing prototypes, interventions, and mediated experiences
- Develop critical evaluation/critique tools and frameworks

¹ David Garcia and Geert Lovink. 1997. *The ABC of Tactical Media*.

4. Instructional Methods

Classes will involve lectures, discussions, movie viewings, in-class workshops, presentations, critique sessions and in-person and online guest presentations. Students will participate in and lead in-class and online discussions/presentations. Bringing examples from outside of the syllabus to class discussion is important. Required readings will be available either as links or as downloadable pdfs from the google classroom. In carrying out the readings, students must consider who the author(s) of the work is, the time in which the piece was written, and the venue and audience. It is highly likely that the discussion of each article will begin with the instructor asking the students to describe who the author(s) is, who the intended target audience is, and to speculate as to why the article was written, commissioned, or published.

5. Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes. In the case of anticipated absence, please inform the instructor before class. Missing more than 30 minutes of class will be considered an absence, with more than two absences impacting final grades. Active participation in class and online will be 15% of the overall grade.

6. Required Texts

There are no required texts for this class. Digital and photocopied reading/viewing material will be provided by the instructor and available on the class website.

7. Regular Assignments and Semester Projects

There will be five letter-graded project assignments during the course and grades for in-class presentations, participation, and online discussion. Assignments will be described in full on the course website and discussed in class to ensure clarity regarding instructor expectations, student time commitment, and assessment and evaluation approach. The use of AI tools is permitted in completing the practical project-based elements of course assignments. Students will be expected to acknowledge, justify, and explain the function of the AI tools within the context of their assignment response. The use of AI tools is not permitted for completing online commentary, project reports, and/or project papers.

8. Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the quality of their active, productive participation in classroom and online discussions. Project assignments will be evaluated for theoretical relevance, creative innovation, conceptual clarity, technical development, and design aesthetics. Students will receive written feedback and grades on assignments/participation at regular intervals during the semester and standard overall grades at mid-term and at the end of the semester. Students are expected to attend instructor office hours at least twice during the semester to discuss course

materials, their progress in the class, career goals and opportunities, and/or anything else related to academic progress and general wellbeing.

9. Grading Policy

Active Participation (15%)

3 Tactical Interventions (40%)

 “Ripped from the Headlines”

 “Design for Disability”

 “Prototypes for Disinformation”

1 Final Project (25%)

1 Final Paper (20%)

10. Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

A 95-100

A- 90-94

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76 MINIMUM PASSING GRADE FOR MEDIA ARTS + PRACTICE MAJORS

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62 MINIMUM PASSING GRADE FOR USC

F 59 and below

11. Course Structure

Unit 1: Introduction

Interrogative Design. 1994. Krzysztof Wodiczko.

Digital Resistance: Explorations in Tactical Media, Introduction

Digital Resistance: Explorations in Tactical Media, Chapter 4, Observations on Collective Cultural Action.

Disobedient Electronics - Protest. 2017. Garnet Hertz

Interrogative Design - Selected works Dis-Armor.

Unit 2: Participatory Conditions

The participatory condition in the digital age. Sterne, Jonathan, 1970-
editor. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press; 2016

Introduction - available through the USC library.

The practice of everyday life. Michel de Certeau. 1984. Chapter 13, Believing and making people believe. pp 177 - 189

Unit 3: Disability and Access

Whittaker, Meredith, Meryl Alper, Cynthia L. Bennett, Sara Hendren, Elizabeth Kaziunas, Mara Mills, Meredith Ringel Morris, Joy Lisi Rankin, Emily Rogers, Marcel Salas, and Sarah Myers West. "Disability, Bias & AI Report." AI Now Institute, November 20, 2019.

Jennifer Mankoff, Gillian R. Hayes, and Devva Kasnitz. 2010. Disability studies as a source of critical inquiry for the field of assistive technology. In Proceedings of the 12th international ACM SIGACCESS conference on Computers and Accessibility (ASSETS '10). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 3-10.

Graham Pullin. Introduction and Chapter 2, Design Meets Disability, MIT Press, 2009.
Graham Pullin: Studio Ordinary And On Not Transforming Lives (short video)

Unit 4: Humor, Hacking, and Online Culture

Gabriella Coleman. From Internet Farming to Weapons of the Geek. Current Anthropology. 2017

Caroline Busta. The Internet didn't kill counterculture - you just won't find it on Instagram. Document. 2021

Claudia Schwarz and Theo Hug. Media Activism in search of 'truth?' Questioning the mission to restore sanity. Activist Media and Body Politics. 2012.

Unit 5: Tactical Media Redux

Rita Raley (2009). Introduction: Tactical Media as Virtuositic Performance. In *Tactical Media* (pp. 1–30). University of Minnesota Press. Available through the USC library.

Carl DiSalvo (2012). Chapter 1. Design and Agonism. In *Adversarial Design* (pp 1-26). MIT Press. Available through the USC library.

Manuell Castells (2008). The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 616, 2008, pp. 78–93. JSTOR

Land Acknowledgement Statement:

We acknowledge our presence on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Kizh and Chumash peoples. Please visit Native-Land.ca to learn more, and to discover the Original People of your home.

SCA Diversity and Inclusion Statement:

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Statement on Fair Use:

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. MA+P projects are produced with fair use doctrines in mind using its four pillars: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. Generally speaking, this means you must only use as much of a copyrighted work as is necessary to make your point, and you must cite your sources accordingly.

Citation Guidelines:

We assert that work produced in our classes is covered under the Doctrine of Fair Use. In order to make this claim, however, all projects must include academically appropriate citations in the form of a References section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The References section is either included in the project itself or as a separate document, as appropriate. For citation purposes, we follow *Kairos Journal of Rhetoric, Technology and Pedagogy* style guide; Kairos uses [APA format](#), which is slightly modified and whose general guidelines and specific examples may be found here: <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/styleguide.html#apa>

Computer Code:

Computer code is often shared and reused. This is appropriate in a MA+P course unless otherwise directed by the assignment. If you do use code, you should attribute it. Please follow these protocols from MIT which call for placing a comment in one's code with a URL to the original source, a note if it was adapted, and the date of retrieval: <https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/writing-code>

PLEASE NOTE:

FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

<https://sites.google.com/usc.edu/counseling-mental-health>

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

<https://988lifeline.org/>

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

<https://sites.google.com/usc.edu/rsvpclientservices/home>

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

eeotix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776

osas.usc.edu

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340 or otfp@med.usc.edu

<https://chan.usc.edu/patient-care/faculty-practice>

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance