COMM-3380_001 New Media and Communication

Fall 2012
Time: TR 11am-12:15pm
Room: Island Hall, Rm. 163

Professor David Gurney
Office: Bay Hall Rm. 326
Office Hours: T 12:30pm-1:30pm, W 10am-Noon, R 9am-11am & by appointment

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Course Description:
This course examines how new media technologies impact society and change communication practices. Particular emphasis placed on different modes of cultural expression and social interaction made possible through digital media and the Internet.

Course Detail:
This course explores contemporary instances of new and emerging media platforms, especially as facilitated through digital culture, as they continue to disseminate more widely as portals of communication. Students will explore specific themes such as identity, community, and virality through various culture theories. Readings, discussions, writing, and a new media research project will help students gain a greater understanding of networked digital media, its culture, and the relationships that exist between machines and humans, as well as those between society and technology.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
» Understand and critically evaluate many of the current scholarly topics and debates that occur within new media and digital media studies.
» Understand and articulate the current and potential future implications of digital media on culture, as well as the way in which pre-existing cultural conventions also impacts the advancement of Internet technology.
» Utilize contemporary cultural theories to analyze, describe, and further develop interpretive and evaluative arguments about the culture of digital media.
» Conduct a new media research project

Required Materials:
» All course readings will be provided on reserve at the library or through Blackboard

Course Policies:
» Attendance is required – both physically and mentally. Unexcused absences will have a direct effect on your final grade for this course, with each one equaling a five-point deduction (out of a possible total of 100 points). Attendance will be taken starting exactly at 11am. Arrivals after that time will be considered late. Late arrivals and departures prior to the finish of the class period will count as half-absences, meaning that two of either type will be counted as a full absence.
» You are allowed two fully excused absences throughout the semester. These are to be employed at your discretion, but they should be used to cover illness, religious holiday observances, or most any other events or circumstances that cause you to miss class. Only extreme hardship with back-up documentation (e.g. a doctor's note) will allow for consideration of any additional absences being excused. Classes missed due to university-approved activities (athletic teams, student government, etc.) will also be considered excused. For those absences, please make me aware, and, in addition, I will need official TAMUCC documentation. If appropriate, you may arrange to make up quizzes or exams missed due to excused absences, but it will be your responsibility to get any information from a missed class lecture from one of your classmates.
» All absences not fitting into the excused categories described immediately above, will be considered unexcused. Any work missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up.
Late work will be penalized by ten points (all assignments will be on 100-point scales) for each day it is late.
While in class, please make sure your cell phone is off and stowed away, unless we are using it for a class activity.
A note on competing media: Laptops are permitted for note taking purposes only, but please do not abuse this privilege. While you may personally feel capable of multitasking during class while still paying attention to lecture and discussion, your surrounding classmates will more likely find your in-class extracurricular activities distracting, so please, for the sake of your peers, respect this restriction.
Please remember to check your email regularly during the week and monitor the course Blackboard site for any course updates.
If you would like to discuss any course readings, lectures, or assignments outside of class, you should feel free to contact me via email or by arranging to visit me during my office hours. If you need to schedule a time to meet outside of office hours, please let me know.
All writing for this course must be composed using a standard, 12-point font size, and with standard 1” margins.

Academic Integrity:
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade (F) for the assignment, at the very least, or a report to the Chair of the Department of Communication and Theatre, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and the Office of Student Affairs.

Dropping a Class:
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the class be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. November 2, 2012, is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Classroom/Professional Behavior:
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Academic Advising:
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.
Notice to Students with Disabilities:
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Grade Appeal Process:
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

Grade Scale:
A  90-100
B  80-89
C  70-79
D  60-69
F  59 and below

Grade Distribution:
» Attention & Participation (10%): Each student is expected to be attentive toward lecture and willing to participate in class discussion and activities when appropriate. This grade will reflect how well you accomplish these goals. This grade does not account for attendance which is mandatory and can have a direct impact on your final grade as described in the Course Policies section above.
» Online Activity (10%): Regularly throughout the semester, students will be required to post a response to readings, discussions, and/or questions posed by the instructor in an online discussion forum. Students will also be expected to engage with one another on the discussion board. Emphasis will be placed on quality of writing (over quantity) and one’s ability to contextualize readings (making responses relevant to the broader concepts being studied).
» Mini-Projects (15%): Periodically throughout the semester small projects on our weekly topics will be assigned. These will take a variety of shapes and will be discussed in detail before they are to be done. The tentative due dates are noted in the Course Schedule section below.
» Midterm Exam (15%): A midterm exam covering all topics discussed in the first half of the semester will be given in-class on February 29.
» Final Exam (20%): A final exam covering topics discussed in the second half of the semester will be given on May 7.
» Final Project Proposal (5%): As a member of a small group, you will design a new media project that will serve as your culminating work for the class. The general expectations for this project will be discussed prior to the due date. The shape it takes will be determined by you and your group, but approved in advance by first submitting a written proposal. Due in class on February 17.
» Final Project Presentation (5%): Your group will present your project at a selected time during Weeks 14 and 15.
» Final Project (20%): The final project will be submitted in class on April 27.
Course Schedule:
Listed readings and podcasts are to be completed prior to the class meeting dates alongside which they are listed. They will be provided as library reserves or through hyperlinks to online articles or downloadable files on the course Blackboard page. Throughout the semester, other contemporary newspaper or magazine articles on our weeks' topics will be assigned as supplemental readings. The schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Week 1 – Introduction, Course Outline
R Aug 23 – Introductions and Review of Syllabus

Week 2 – Computers and Culture
T Aug 28 – Nicholas Carr, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”
R Aug 30 – Intelligence Debates Podcast “When It Comes to Politics, The Internet Is Closing Our Minds”
Mini-Project 1 must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Aug 30.

Week 3 – Communities and Regulation
T Sept 4 – Leiser Silva et al., “Exploring the Dynamics of Blog Communities”; Howard Rheingold, “Introduction” and “Daily Life in Cyberspace,” from The Virtual Community
R Sept 6 – Lawrence Lessig, “Free Speech” from Code 2.0

Week 4 – Reliability
T Sept 11 – Howard Rheingold, “Crap Detection 101”
R Sept 13 – Paul Starr, “Goodbye to the Age of Newspapers (Hello to A New Era of Corruption)”
Mini-Project 2 must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Sept 13.

Week 5 – Digital Distribution Networks and P2P
R Sept 20 – Chuck Tryon, "Desktop Productions"; Chris Anderson, "The Long Tail"

Week 6 – Digital Aesthetics
R Sept 27 – Anna Everett, “Digitextuality and Click Theory”; selected webisodes TBD
Final Project Proposals must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Sept 27.

Week 7 – Video Games and Gamers

Week 8 – Midterm Exam
T Oct 9 – Review for Midterm
R Oct 11 – Midterm Exam Given In-Class

Week 9 – Social Media I: Social Networking and Identity

Week 10 – Social Media II: Remix and Participatory Media
T Oct 23 – Excerpts from Lawrence Lessig, Remix
R Oct 25 – Henry Jenkins, "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?"
Week 11 – Social Media III: Virality and Memes
T Oct 30 – Axel Bruns, “The Future Is User-Led”; David Gurney, “Recombinant Comedy, Transmedial Mobility, and Viral Video”
Mini-Project 2 must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Oct 30.
R Nov 1 – Group Project Work Day (no official class meeting)

Week 12 – Social Media IV: Collective Action
R Nov 8 – Amir Hatem Ali, “The Power of Social Media in Developing Nations”

Week 13 – Social Media V: Marketing and Publicity
T Nov 13 – Stuart Elliot, “When the Marketing Reach of Social Media Backfires”
R Nov 15 – Nick Muntean and Anne Helen Petersen, “Celebrity Twitter”
Mini-Project 4 must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Nov 15.

Week 14 – Presentation Preparation
T Nov 20 – Group Project Work Day (no official class meeting)
No class meeting on November 22 in observance of Thanksgiving.

Week 15 – Presentations
T Nov 27 – Final Project Presentations
R Nov 29 – Final Project Presentations

Week 16 – Final Exam Review
T Dec 4 - Final Project Presentations
All Final Projects Due by the Beginning of Class on Apr 27

Finals Week (R Dec 6) – Final Exam
The final exam will be given from 11am-1:30pm.