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 uses of new and emerging digital media platforms, especially as they facilitate digital culture and as they continue to disseminate more widely as channels of communication. Students will explore specific themes such as identity, community, and virality through the lenses of 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 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 12:30pm. 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 work 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 and class-related research 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.
» For the purposes of citation, please follow American Psychological Association (APA) Style Guide. For reference, see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

**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. April 11, 2014, 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:
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

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

Grade Distribution:
» Attention & Participation (5%): 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%): Early in the semester, we will create a online forum for us to use for communicating and sharing information pertinent to the course. In some cases, students will be asked to respond to specific questions or to post specific sorts of material, but students will also be expected to engage with one another more generally. Emphasis will be placed on quality of posts (over quantity) and one’s ability to contextualize concepts from readings and class discussions (making responses relevant to the broader concepts being studied).
» Individual Projects (15%): At three points throughout the semester small projects related to course 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 take-home midterm exam covering topics from the first half of the semester will be distributed on March 5 and due 48-hours later via Blackboard on March 6.
» Final Exam (20%): A take-home final exam covering topics discussed over the entire semester will be distributed on May 2 and must be submitted 5 days later via Blackboard on May 6.
» Final Project (total of 35% of final grade): As a member of a small group, you will design a digital ethnography project that will serve as your culminating work for the class. The general expectations for the components of this project will be discussed prior to their due dates.
  » Final Project Proposal (5%): Due via Blackboard on February 13.
  » Final Project Outline and Annotated Bibliography (5%): Due via Blackboard on March 20.
  » Final Project Presentation (5%): Presentations take place in class during Weeks 13 and 14.
  » Final Project Submission (20%): The final project will be submitted on May 1.
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 Jan 23 – Introductions

Week 2 – Computers and Culture
T Jan 28 – Nicholas Carr, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”; Course syllabus (you are reading it now)
R Jan 30 – Intelligence Debates Podcast “When It Comes to Politics, The Internet Is Closing Our Minds”

Week 3 – Theorizing and Studying Communities Online
T Feb 4 – Amber Muller, “Virtual Communities…”; Howard Rheingold, “Introduction” and “Daily Life in Cyberspace,” from The Virtual Community

Individual Project 1 must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Feb 4.

Week 4 – Digital Distribution Networks and P2P
T Feb 11 – David Lowery, “Meet the New Boss, Worse than the Old Boss” and “Letter to Emily White at NPR All Songs Considered”; Emily White. “I Never Owned Any Music to Begin with”
Final Project Proposals must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Feb 13.

Week 5 – Digital Aesthetics
T Feb 18 – Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, Excerpts from Remediation
R Feb 20 – Anna Everett, “Digitextuality and Click Theory”; selected webisodes TBD

Week 6 – Video Games and Gamers

Individual Project 2 must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Feb 25.

Week 7 – Midterm Exam and Group Project Work Week
T Mar 4 – Midterm Exam distributed via Blackboard at 2pm. No class meeting.
R Mar 6 – Midterm Exam must be submitted via Blackboard by 2pm. No class meeting; use time to meet with groups to work on final projects.

Spring Break: No class meetings on T Mar 11 or R Mar 13.

Week 8 – Social Media I: Social Networking and Identity
R Mar 20 – Eden Litt, “Knock, Knock. Who’s There? The Imagined Audience”
Final Project Outline and Annotated Bibliography must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Mar 20.
Week 9 – Social Media II: Theories of Participatory Media Culture
R Mar 27 – Excerpts from Lawrence Lessig, Remix

Week 10 – Social Media III: Virality and Memes
T Apr 1 – Henry Jenkins, "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?"; The Janissary Collective, "Participatory Culture and Media Life: Approaching Freedom"
R Apr 3 – David Gurney, "Recombinant Comedy, Transmedial Mobility, and Viral Video"

Week 11 – Social Media IV: Collective Action

Individual Project 3 must be submitted via Blackboard before class on Apr 8.
R Apr 10 – David M. Faris and Patrick Meier, “Digital Activism in Authoritarian Countries”; Brooke Gladstone, “My Stolen Face (Interview with Neda Soltani).”

Week 12 – Social Media V: Marketing and Publicity
T Apr 15 – Stuart Elliot, “When the Marketing Reach of Social Media Backfires”; Paul Levinson, “Twitter”
R Apr 17 – Anne Helen Petersen, “Decoding the Beyonce Tumblr”

Week 13 – Presentations and Preparation
T Apr 21 – Group Project Work Day (no official class meeting).
R Apr 24 – Final Project Presentations

Week 14 – Presentations
T Apr 29 – Final Project Presentations
R May 1 – Final Project Presentations

All Final Projects Due by the Beginning of Class on May 1.
Take-Home Final Exam will be distributed upon completion of class on R May 1.

Week 15 – Final Exam
T May 6 – Take-Home Final Exam must be submitted via Blackboard by 2pm on T May 6.