FMS 351
EMERGING DIGITAL MEDIA

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Email: victoria.meng@asu.edu
Course URL: http://www.asu.edu/courses/fms351vm/
Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will attempt to define, study, and explore a moving target – emerging digital media. First we will attempt to answer some basic questions and to approach the subject conceptually. What does the term “digital media” mean, and what makes it “emergent?” What needs and desires have driven media change in the past? How might our history with media use inform our current and future relationships with media? Having covered these topics on media functions, we will next consider digital media forms. Specifically, we will engage four characteristics that are commonly associated with digital media – automation, interactivity, modularity, and layering – and analyze how they affect our experiences and shape our evolving sense of “high-tech” style. Finally, we will discuss the social dimensions of digital media, especially in terms of how it changes the modes of identification and power dynamics among individuals and groups.

At the end of this course, you will be able to: 1) describe the utilitarian and imaginative drives that current media technologies embody; 2) reflect on some of the methods and frameworks that scholars have used to study digital media; 3) analyze the characteristic forms of digital media and their implications; and 4) recognize yourself as a mediated subject whose identity and social relationships are informed by the technologies that you and your communities use.

Although this course is web-delivered, it is neither automated nor self-paced. You are expected to engage in all learning tasks. To access the class website, you can use your personal computer, one in the library, and/or computer labs at ASU.

Reading: You will be reading a number of articles, all of which are available on the course web site. To access the readings, go to the Learning Tasks section, click on the desired lesson number at the bottom of the screen, and then click on the article title. We will email you the password before the first day of class. To honor copyright law, we ask that you neither share nor distribute these documents. Read the articles carefully and on time – before class time for each lesson – as they form the basis of the online discussions and the three major graded assignments. You need to keep up with the readings to pass the exams, write the critical analysis, and pass the course.

Screenings: You are responsible for screening approximately one film per lesson. The titles are listed under Learning Tasks on the class website and in this syllabus. If you are taking this course via distance learning, you can rent them at your local video store or
purchase them from an on-line distributor. Several are available at the ASU Library. A fast and effective way to get the films is to open a Netflix account. Do not watch these films for entertainment; watch them for study. Take notes and view them numerous times. The screenings also form the basis of online discussions and the three major graded assignments.

**Plagiarism Policy:** In the “Student Academic Integrity Policy” manual, plagiarism is defined as “…using another's words, ideas, materials or work without properly acknowledging and documenting the source. Students are responsible for knowing the rules governing the use of another's work or materials and for acknowledging and documenting the source appropriately.” You can find this definition by clicking here. Academic dishonesty, including inappropriate collaboration, will not be tolerated. There are severe sanctions for cheating, plagiarizing, and any other form of dishonesty.

**GRADED WORK**
We expect every student to leave this course with a clearer understanding of the functions, forms, and social impact of contemporary digital media.

**Participation (100 Points):** You are responsible for participating in the threaded discussions that take place on the electronic bulletin board (eBoard). All posts for each week’s lesson are due by 11pm (Arizona time) on the day of the Lesson (This applies to any lessons that fall on a holiday.) You must post one substantive comment per Lesson.

Students whose last names begin with A-M will post a response to the weekly prompt for Lessons 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13, and will post a response to any post made by another student for Lessons 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14.

Students whose last names begin with N-Z will do the opposite. They will post a response to the weekly prompt for Lessons 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14, and will post a response to any post made by another student for Lessons 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13.

All students will post a response to the prompt for Lesson 15.

A "substantive" post is one that is thoughtful, developed and connected to the Lesson topic; it is precisely, concisely, and grammatically composed. Typically, substantive posts are more than three sentences long. Posts must keep up with the progress of the course. You cannot, for example, go back to the eBoard and post to a Lesson after it has been completed and expect for the posts to be counted toward your participation grade. There are no exceptions to this rule! The teaching team will keep track of your participation, including assessing the value of what you bring to this interactivity. Refrain from flaming or ad hominem comments. Be rigorous but constructive.

**Midterm (100 Points):** The midterm covers material from Lessons 1-5. It will mainly consist of short answer questions, but might also contain true/false, multiple-choice, identification, fill-in-the-blank, and essay questions. Grammar and writing mechanics count. The midterm will be made available to you in the form of a downloadable Word document at 5pm Arizona time on 7/14/10; it will be due as an email attachment at 5pm.
Arizona time on 7/15/10. Late exams receive zero points. Take care to think through the various concepts outlined in the readings, screenings, lectures and websites as you study for the exam and answer the questions.

**Critical Review (100 Points):** This assignment asks you to critically analyze a digital media work that shows how its digital format affects human activity. Check the website for a list of the works you may analyze. You must analyze a work from the list. Your grade will be based on the clarity and relevance of your thesis statement, clear and concise writing, strong use of evidence and examples, logical organization and development, and adherence to the assignment guidelines. Your paper must be double-spaced, include one-inch margins all-around, contain 600-750 words, and include:

1. A thesis statement in the paper’s first paragraph. It should answer the following question: How does [site] affect the way we do [type of activity]?” For example, if Wikipedia were an assigned site (which it is not), this would be a possible thesis: “While Wikipedia greatly enhances our access to information, it also reduces our ability to question the reliability of a source or to find sources ourselves.” The rest of the introduction should be concise.

2. The second paragraph should briefly and clearly explain one term or concept from Lessons 1-5 (for example “the medium is the message,” “technological determinism,” “I-Media-World,” etc.). It must show how the term can be applied to the specific site and activity that you are writing about. Support your use of the concepts with citations from the readings, correctly formatted in MLA style. Remember that your definition of the term must be used correctly, and your analysis must support your thesis.

3. The third paragraph should briefly explain one kind of digital form covered in Lessons 6-10 (for example automation, layers, databases, etc.) It must show how the form is in evidence in the site that you are writing about; use specific examples from the website and include web links where relevant. Do not describe the site as a whole – refer to specific pages to make your argument more convincing. Use MLA style to format all citations. Remember that your analysis must support your thesis.

4. If length permits, a brief concluding paragraph that suggests avenues for further research or acknowledges possible limitations of your thesis.

5. Papers must be submitted as email attachments in Word ’97-2004. You should turn on “Read Receipt” to ensure we received it. Double check to make sure you attach the correct paper in the correct format. We do not accept excuses for missed deadlines or papers sent in the wrong format.

**IMPORTANT:** Save your paper as follows: “Last Name, First Name, 351CR.doc.” Make sure it does not use the .docx extension.

The critical review must be received by 7/27/10, at 5:00pm Arizona time.
Final Exam (100 points): The final exam covers material from Lessons 1-15. Greater emphasis is placed on Lessons 11–15. It will mainly consist of short answer questions, but might also contain true/false, multiple-choice, identification, fill-in-the-blank, and essay questions. Grammar and writing mechanics count. The final exam will be made available to you in the form of a downloadable Word document at 5pm Arizona time on 8/6/10; it will be due as an email attachment at 5pm Arizona time on 8/7/10. Late exams receive zero points. Take care to think through the various concepts outlined in the readings, screenings, lectures and websites as you study for the exam and answer the questions.

Grading Scale: 0 to 400 Points

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LEARNING TASKS

This course is comprised of 15 lessons. Each lesson includes all or some of these tasks:

1. Reading: Read a Chapter from the Assigned Book
2. Reading Review: Reconsider Key Concepts from the Readings
3. Screening: Study Films Screened for Class
4. Website/Montage: Surf Websites or Engage Interactive Montages
5. Lecture: Listen to Streaming Audio/Visual Lectures
6. Film Clips: Review Scenes Referenced in Readings & Lectures
7. eBoard: Pose and Answer Questions on the Electronic Board

Unit I: Imagination and Practice

Lesson 1: Defining Digital Media (Tuesday, 7/6)
Reading: “What’s New About ‘New Media’?” (Flew, 2005)
“New Media as Cultural Technologies” (Flew, 2005)
Reading Review
Website: “Histories of the Internet” <http://www.isoc.org/internet/history/>
Lecture: Course Introduction: What is this class about? How can we study a moving target?
Film Clip: Did You Know? 2.0 (Fisch and McLeod, 2007) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMcfrLYDm2U>
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

Lesson 2: “Old” and “New” Media (Wednesday, 7/7)
Reading: “Introduction” and “Lord Burleigh’s Kiss” (Murray, 1999)
“The Medium is the Message” (McLuhan, 1964)

Reading Review
Screening: “I Robot…You, Jane” Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Season 1, disc 2, Whedon, 1997)
Website: “New Media and Old Storytelling” (Bordwell, 2007)
Lecture: Post-Book: Does media form affect experience?
Film Clips: Medieval Help Desk with English Subtitles (Nærum, NRK, 2001)
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

Lesson 3: Imag(in)ing New Media (Friday, 7/9)
Reading: “The Technology and the Society” (Williams, 1974)
“There Will Come Soft Rains” (Bradbury, 1950)
Reading Review
Screening: Blade Runner (Scott, 1982)
Websites: “Tweeting the Dialectic of Technological Determinism” (Friedman, 2009)
Top Dystopian Movies of All Time
Lecture: Utopia/Dystopia: Does technology determine culture?
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

Lesson 4: Media as Tools (Monday, 7/12)
Reading: “The Screen and the User” (Manovich, 2001)
“Adam and Galileo” (Ihde, 1990)
Reading Review
Screening: “A Grand Day Out” and “Cracking Contraptions” in Wallace & Gromit in Three Amazing Adventures (Park, 2001)
Website: Google maps <http://maps.google.com/>
Lecture: Extended Abilities: Where is the body/world boundary?
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

Lesson 5: Media and (Self-)Perception (Wednesday, 7/14)
Reading: “The Scene of the Screen” (Sobchack, 2004)
Reading Review
Screenings: A Scanner Darkly (Linklater, 2006) and
“Final Flight of the Osiris,” “Beyond,” and “Matriculated” from The Animatrix (Chung et al., 2003)
Website: 83 Optical Illusions & Visual Phenomena <http://www.michaelbach.de/ot/>
Lecture: Our Media, Our Selves: How do the media affect who we are?
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

Midterm: Due as an email attachment on Thursday 7/15, at 5pm Arizona time.

Unit II: Forms and Styles

Lesson 6: Automation and “Creative Media” (Friday, 7/16)
Reading: “What is New Media?” (Manovich, 2001)
“Computing Machinery and Intelligence” (Turing, 1950)
Lesson 7: **Interactivity/Immersion** *(Monday, 7/19)*
Reading:
- “A Critical History of Virtual Reality” (Hillis, 1999)
- “Transforming Mirrors” (Rokeby, 1995)

Reading Review
Screening: *Tron* (Lisberger, 1982)
Website: animotion <http://www.addictinggames.com/animotion.html>
Neave Games <http://www.neave.com/games/>
Lecture: Remote Communications: What is the nature of media interactivity?
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

Lesson 8: **Modularity/Multiplicity** *(Wednesday, 7/21)*
Reading:
- “The Multiple” (Friedberg, 2006)
- “The Database” (Manovich, 2001)

Reading Review
Screening: *Timecode* (Figgis, 2000)
Lecture: Everything is Exchangeable: How do the whole and its parts relate in digital media?
Website: YouTube <http://youtube.com>
You Are I Am <http://avoision.com/experiments/youare/>
rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr <http://rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr.ytmnd.com/>
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

Lesson 9: **Layers, Composites, and Simulations** *(Friday, 7/23)*
Reading:
- “Simulacra and Simulations” (Baudrillard, 1988)

Reading Review
Screening: *Forrest Gump* (Zemeckis, 1994)
Website: Morph Thing <http://www.morphthing.com/>
xtranormal <http://www.xtranormal.com/>
Lecture: Relative Reality: How do digital media affect our expectations for verisimilitude?
Film Clip: *The Polar Express* (Zemeckis, 2004)
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

Lesson 10: **Edge and Polish** *(Monday, 7/26)*
Reading:
- “The Eye of the Frog” (Tudor, 2008)
- “I’m Sorry Dave, I’m Afraid I Can’t Do That” (McCLean, 2007)

Reading Review
Screening: *Space Odyssey 2001* (Kubrick, 1968)
Lecture: High-tech, Low-tech: What do “emerging digital media” look and sound like?
Film Clips: *How to Kill a Mockingbird* (Scodary and Benitez, 2004)
<http://www.albinoblacksheep.com/flash/mockingbird>
Veronica Mars opening credits, seasons 1 and 3 (2004, 2006)

**Critical Paper #2**: Due an email attachment on Tuesday, 7/27, at 5pm Arizona time.

**Unit III: Identity and Community**

**Lesson 11**: The Underprivileged and Activism (Wednesday, 7/28)

**Reading**: “Photoshop for Democracy” (Jenkins, 2006)
“The Promise and the Peril of Social Action in Cyberspace” (Gurak, 1999)

**Reading Review**

**Screening**: An Inconvenient Truth (Guggenheim, 2006)

**Websites**: MoveOn.org Interactive Timeline <http://pol.moveon.org/10years/>
Haystack <http://www.haystacknetwork.com/>

**Lecture**: David’s Slingshot: Do digital media help the underdog?

**eBoard**: Discuss with Classmates

**Lesson 12**: Branding and Business (Friday, 7/30)

**Reading**: “Access Denied” (Lax, 2007)
“Just Do It” (Lury, 2007)

**Reading Review**

**Screening**: You’ve Got Mail (Ephron, 1998)

**Websites**: Amazon.com <http://www.amazon.com/>
Phoenix Craigslist <http://phoenix.craigslist.org/>

**Lecture**: “Spending” Time: Is there balance between mass production and customization?

**Film Clip**: EPIC 2015 (Sloan and Thompson, 2005)
<http://www.albinoblacksheep.com/flash/epic>

**eBoard**: Discuss with Classmates

**Lesson 13**: Intellectual Property and Our Global Neighbors (Monday, 8/2)

**Reading**: “Internet Law and Policy” (Flew, 2005)
“Hollywood’s Global Rights” (Miller, 2005)

**Reading Review**

**Screenings**: The Hunt for Gollum <http://www.thehuntforgollum.com/>
(Bouchard et al, 2009)
Dr. Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog <http://www.drhorrible.com/>
(Whedon et al, 2008)

**Website**: Creative Commons <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>
Engrish Two Towers Subtitles <http://www.angelfire.com/rings/ttt-subtitles/>

**Lecture**: Makers, Keepers: Does information want to be free?

**Film Clips**: A Fairy Tale Use Tale (Faden, 2007)
<http://cyberlaw.stanford.edu/documentary-film-program/film/a-fair-y-use-tale>
Indian Thriller with English Lyrics!
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtJRNyPK-Ic>

**eBoard**: Discuss with Classmates

**Lesson 14**: Fans and Gamers (Wednesday, 8/4)

**Reading**: “Slashing the Romance Narrative” (Kustritz, 2003)
“The Video Game as a Medium” (Wolf, 2001)
Reading Review
Screening: *The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters* (Gordon, 2007)
Websites: FanFiction.net <http://www.fanfiction.net/>
Television Without Pity <http://www.televisionwithoutpity.com/>
Lecture: Super-Participation: Why should we care about fans and gamers?
Film Clips: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, “Once More with Feeling,” “Going through the Motions” (Whedon, 2001)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M56ypIiVjcM>
“Going through the Motions” (Anay86, 2007)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3D8wfReCRjA>
“Going through the Motions” (debosimtastic, 2007)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RH7KMfCwpk4>
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

**Lesson 15:** Identity and Community (Friday, 8/6)
Reading: “Crisis and Internet Networks” (Kivikuru, 2007)
“Virtual Cultures” (Flew, 2005)
Reading Review
Screening: *South Park*, season 14, episode 4, “You Have 0 Friends” (Parker and Stone, 4/7/2010)
Website: Post Secret <http://postsecret.blogspot.com/>
Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/>
“Automatic Flatterer” (Netropolis Design, date unknown)
<http://www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~geoffo/humour/flattery.html>
Lecture: I and We: How do digital media situate us in space and time?
eBoard: Discuss with Classmates

**Final Exam:** Due as an email attachment Saturday, 8/7, at 5pm Arizona time.