Arts and Sciences 1137.xx

“Being Digital”

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Draft Syllabus

1. Introduction

This interdisciplinary freshman seminar explores the ways in which digital technologies shape the ways we live our lives. Drawing on work in the fields of comparative cultural studies and science and technology studies (STS) it explores new ways of producing knowledge; of being political; of constituting selves and others; of producing and consuming texts, music, and images; and of living together and apart. In a more general sense, the course serves as an introduction to interdisciplinary scholarship, to reading critically, and to developing questions that can open up new ways of thinking about things we take for granted.

2. Requirements

This course meets once a week for 55 minutes. Students are expected to be engaged readers and active participants in seminar discussions. For most classes, students will be expected to prepare 3 written questions, due on Carmen the night before class, that demonstrate a thoughtful engagement with an assigned text and that help to frame our conversations. Three other weeks have informal “ethnographic” assignments that require students to collect and bring to class evidence of the ways digital technologies shape their everyday experiences of the world and of other people. Each of these assignments is worth up to 10 points, for a total possible 150 points (75% of the final grade). Oral participation is worth another 50 points (25%) for a total of 200.

Grades will assigned as follows: A: 186-200 points; A-: 180-185, B+: 172-179, B: 166-171, B-: 160–165, C+: 154–159, C: 146–153, C-: 140–145, D: 120–139, E: below 119.

3. Schedule of Readings

Part I: Technology, Culture, and Politics

Week I: Living with Technology

Read: Langdon Winner, “Technologies as Forms of Life,” in *The Whale and the Reactor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 3–18

Week II: Media and Mediation

Read: Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message,” in *Media and Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994 [1964]), 7–21

Week III: Does the Internet Have a Politics?

Read: Langdon Winner, “Mythinformation,” in *The Whale and the Reactor,* 98–117

Week IV: Digital Media and Political Change

Read: Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017) (excerpt)

Week V: “Fake News”

Project: Collect and bring to class three stories from websites that claim to be sources of news. Choose one story you believe to be true, one you believe to be false, and one you cannot decide whether to believe or not

Part II: Watching, Listening, Spending: On Consuming Digitally

Week VI: After the Cinema?

Read: Anne Friedberg, “The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change,” in *The Film Theory Reader: Debates and Arguments*, ed. Marc Furstenau (New York: Routledge, 2010), 438­–452

Week VII: From Vinyl to MP3s (and Back Again)

Read: Jonathan Sterne, “Format Theory,” in *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 3–31

Week VIII: The Digital Image

Read: Hito Steyerl, “In Defense of the Poor Image,” *e-flux* 10 (November 2009)

Week IX: Digital Economies

Project: David Golumbia, *The Politics of Bitcoin: Software as Right-Wing Extremism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016) (excerpt)

Week X: “There’s an App for That”

Project: Collect and bring to class information on a phone app that, in your judgment, has enabled an important new form of cultural consumption

Part III: Digital Selves and Others

Week XI: “Second Selves” and Virtual Communities

Read: Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997) (excerpt)

Week XII: Being “Alone Together”

Read: Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in the Digital Age* (New York: Penguin, 2015) (excerpt)

Week XIII: Hooking Up

Read: Stefanie Duguay, “Dressing up Tinderella: Interrogating Authenticity Claims on the Mobile Dating App Tinder,” *Information, Communication and Society* 20 (2017)

Week XIV: What is Social about Social Media?

Project: By talking with friends and family, compile and bring to class a list of the ten most important rules of texting etiquette

Week XV: Digital Futures?

4. Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

5. Disability Services

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options.  To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services.  After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.