

Digital Diversity
American Studies/Digital Technology/English 475
Summer 2016 - Monday — Friday Noon - 1:15pm Bryan Hall 305

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Everybody is a Genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

— Albert Einstein

Pessimism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; it reproduces itself by crippling our willingness to act. Revolutionary change does not come as one cataclysmic moment (beware of such moments!) but as an endless succession of surprises, moving zigzag toward a more decent society”

—Howard Zinn

The future is already here — it’s just not evenly distributed.

—William Gibson

It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have.

—James Baldwin

Course Overview

This course explores the field of critical cyberculture studies. Sometime also called digital culture studies, this is the academic arena that analyzes the social impact of new media like the Internet and video games. Especially with the enhanced interconnection of various digital media (iPods, cams, smartphones, etc.) in Web 2.0, the World Wide Web has become the center of digital culture, and it will be the prime focus of this course.

One of the most important and most researched areas of cyberculture studies surrounds questions of the “digital divide” and what we call “digital diversity” – questions about the ways in which the Web increases or decreases social inequalities. These diversity issues will be the lenses through which we raise general questions about digital cultures.

We will be asking questions like these: To what extent and in what ways is the Web merely a mirror of the wider cultures of which it is a part? In what ways and to what extent is the Web a unique, transformative space? How do such important social differences as those of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, age, dis/ability, and geographical location (rural/urban/suburban, overdeveloped/less developed world, etc.) play out in digital cultures? Does the Web primarily exacerbate or help lessen cultural and social inequalities? What new opportunities for social change are made possible by unique qualities of various new technologies? What barriers to change may limit the potential of these new means of digital communication?

Our approach to these issues will reflect the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of the field. That means we will be reading analyses from an array of academic areas including communication, ethnic studies, rhetorical studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, women's studies, and cultural studies, among others.

We will learn these approaches through readings, discussions, assignments, and teaching them to each other. Teaching them to others may include of publishing your work on the World Wide Web itself via our class web space.

You will not be graded, however, on your technical expertise, and support for any of the technology-based work done in the course will be provided upon request. I also expect that students will be generous in assisting each other in these matters, and team projects will be an important part of the class.

Course Goals

By the end of the course students should:

- Know more about the history and evolution of the Web
- Know and be able to apply key concepts in cyberculture studies
- Be better able to evaluate evidence for competing claims about digital cultures
- Be better able to synthesize relevant academic research from several fields
- Be able to analyze key diversity issues in digital cultures
- Be able to apply all of the above in digital diversity research projects
- Know how to work actively for greater digital diversity.

Text and Resources

Readings are either links to web articles, eReserve articles, or articles in the WSU library Search It database. Each set of readings and site visits is accompanied by a set of study questions to help guide students to the most important concepts in the articles. You DO NOT have to buy any books to take this class!

Course Work

Active Participation in Class discussions [Grade value 33%]

This is a discussion class in which your active participation is an essential part of your grade. And the best way to feel confident to talk contribute in class is to come be prepared, having read and thought about the assigned readings. Additionally your attendance is reflective upon the amount of points you can accumulate. At the end of each week you will tweet a short response to a prompt I send out on Friday. Each prompt is worth 5 points each and you must constrain your response to 1 tweet using links and other media; engaging with other classmates can result in extra credit.

Mid-Term Paper [Grade value 33%]

A 4-5 page, double-spaced essay drawing upon course readings as models for analyzing aspects of diversity as manifested in a web site of your choosing. We will be practicing the skills required for the essay (primarily visual and textual analysis) throughout the class. Details of the midterm paper will be posted on the course site. Your paper will be worth a total of 100 points. Mid-term papers must be uploaded to the course site by the deadline indicated on the course schedule.

How to Analyze a Website (helpful guide): posted on Blackboard

Final Project [Grade value 34%]

The final project can take the form of 1) a traditional **research paper** on some aspect of digital diversity; or 2) a **website** treating an issue raised in the course. Details of the final paper/project will be posted on the course site. You will present your work for 15-20 minutes in class during the final week of class.

Each student will produce a **thesis statement/outline** of final project that must be uploaded to the course site by the date and time indicated on the course schedule to allow time for feedback from the instructor, and your fellow students. These preliminary outlines will include a brief list of books and articles (online and off) that will inform your research, a description of the site or sites you will study for your project, and an outline of the method you will use to do your research.

Final projects must be uploaded to the course site by the date/time indicated on the course schedule. If you have done a web site, you just need to send the URL. No late projects will be accepted.

Grading

Course Work	Points	Percent of Final Grade
Discussions/Participation	100	33%
Midterm Paper	100	33%
Final Project	100	34%
Total	300	
Extra Credit (3 @ 10 pts each)	30	

A 93–100% A- 90–92% B+ 87–89% B 83–86% B- 80–82% C+ 77–79% C 73–76%
C- 70–72% D 69-60% F Below 60%

Late Work Policy

No late assignments will be accepted without a documented medical excuse.

Academic Regulations

Students enrolled in online courses are subject to the same University academic regulations as on-campus students. For the most accurate and up to date information go to <http://registrar.wsu.edu/academic-regulations/>.

Class Conduct

Students are expected to arrive prepared to class at the scheduled time. Respectful interactions are also required in all spaces of dialogues. Please have cell phones on silent during class and no private use (visible earbuds or headphones) of iPods, etc (1st time will result in a warning, 2nd time may result in being asked to leave the class for the day). Sleeping or otherwise “tuning out” is not acceptable; class requires engagement from all members of the community. You should not come to class with the sole intent of sucking up the classroom oxygen while you sleep. **ALWAYS bring materials to class.**

Keys to Success

Email: It is your responsibility to check email and check often. I will communicate weekly via email as well as through course twitter feed. Announcement, reminders, and highlights from lecture will be sent via email. It is imperative that you not only check email and READ THEM, but also have a working email address listed for zzusis/MyWSU. Make sure your most up-to-date email is listed there and that you are using your WSU email address. As a rule, you should understand your relationships to your instructors as professional relationships. When corresponding by e-mail, always include a salutation and a closing that identifies who you are. Please note that I will respond to emails from 8 am to 8 pm Monday through Friday. Do not hesitate to follow up with a second e-mail. PLEASE include “**Digital Diversity**” in the Subject Line or your email might get overlooked.

Class notes: When absent, sick or otherwise not able to attend class, it is your responsibility to find out what happened in class. While I am always happy to talk to you about class, course content, assignments or related themes, providing an individualized recap (particularly via email) for each class you missed is not going to happen. I will not be handing out lecture notes and or posting them online. It is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate (I encourage you to get email from several people in class) and watch any videos from while you were gone).

Office hours: This is a great time to check in about the class, to ask questions, and to otherwise expand the conversation from class. As I value this opportunity, and view it as a form of participation, I encourage you to take advantage of office hours.

Reading: YOU are responsible for completing readings prior to class. You are responsible for engaging these works, taking notes if that helps you, and otherwise understanding the readings before entering into the classroom. Class will focus on expanding, building upon, and supplementing the reading materials. It will engage the themes related to reading. We will NOT go over readings, page by page, but rather will build from the readings, with hopes that your reading will enhance your understanding of the lecture and elevate the discussion. Always bring reading materials to class.

Ethos

Urgency — critically examines the interlocking forces of domination that are rooted in socially constructed categories of gender, sexuality, class, and race. **Sophistication** — develop interdisciplinary, international, and comparative approaches, to challenge paradigms that systematically marginalize the experiences of diverse populations. In doing so, we bring to bear issues of power, privilege, and social justice pertinent to aggrieved groups in the United States and abroad. **Engagement** — especially committed to nurturing civic-minded and culturally informed students to critically engages with communities on and off campus in order to effect meaningful change in public policy and social life.

Key Realities

It is important that everyone arrives in class with an open-mind, with a critical gaze (a willingness to go beyond common assumptions) and most importantly a willingness and desire to read, attend class, and learn. Without preparedness and reading skills (as well as a desire to engage in those elements of learning) this class will be a struggle. For those students who want to improve these skills, this class will facilitate that process. For those who want a class that does not require thinking, that does not mandate completion of the reading, that sees attendance as unnecessary, and is in all ways easy on the mind, this may not be the class for you. For those who think discussions about race and inequality are all about opinions and that class is a space to replicate the opinion-based debates of modern TV culture, this is not the class for you. Please also note that while the course will work to promote discussions and interactive dialogues, the course isn't a place to haphazardly share opinions without regard for research, facts, and evidence (this is not a debate show that we might see on television). Conversations and opinions should be grounded in research and evidence; in order for productive exchanges, we must speak through research, and specific examples.

Key Realities about Pedagogy

Additionally, learning and teaching must take place at different venues to critically understand the many forms of pedagogy we are consciously and unconsciously subjected to daily. Some days we might be in class, outside, in the library, working as groups or watching an assigned documentary at home; this is to make us more cognizant of the multiple ways learning happens beyond a desk and a powerpoint, to understand every place as a place of teaching and learning and to stimulate our own curiosity for critically analyzing our everyday lives.

General Information

University Writing Resource Centers

Please consult campus resources available to you for additional resources and guidance. As college-tuition paying students, you should take advantage of any/all resources the university is able to fund because of your tuition checks. The WSU Undergraduate Writing Center provides walk-in tutoring sessions for students, located at CUE 403. Similarly, WSU Multicultural Student Services (MSS) provides valuable mentorship and additional resources for undergraduate students, located at the fourth floor of the CUB. Please consult their web sites, respectively, for more information:

<http://universitycollege.wsu.edu/units/writingprogram/units/writingcenter/undergrad/>
<http://mss.wsu.edu/services/academic-enrichment-center/>

Purdue Online Writing Lab

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University houses writing resources and instructional material, and we provide these as a free service of the Writing Lab at Purdue. Students, members of the community, and users worldwide will find information to assist with many writing projects. Teachers and trainers may use this material for in-class and out-of-class instruction.
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

WSU Library

Washington State University Libraries have more than two million books and over 30,000 journal and magazine subscriptions. Media, maps, microforms, government publications, ebooks, ejournals, manuscripts, archives, and special collections additionally support WSU's teaching and research programs. Approximately 35,000 volumes are added to the collection annually. WSU Libraries are a member of a consortium of 37 other libraries in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, with access to an additional 28 million items. The Libraries also offer access to the full text of over 25,800 digital resources, including current journals, books, documents, and more.
<http://libraries.wsu.edu>

Academic Integrity Policy

In all instances, you must do your own work. Otherwise, you are being dishonest. There is no excuse for plagiarism, or for submitting another's (including fellow students') work, ideas, or wording as your own. In simple terms, plagiarism is the act of using another person's words or work without giving them credit for it. Relatedly, academic dishonesty involves not doing the work you are supposed to do on your own. If you do not understand the seriousness of plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty, and the importance of avoiding those behaviors, you are encouraged to read WSU's Academic Integrity Policy (conduct.wsu.edu). Plagiarism and academic dishonesty, whether intentional or unintentional, may result in a grade of "F" for the assignment in question, or a grade of "F" for the entire course, at my discretion. Your failure to follow these basic instructions, to respect the classroom, to take the easy route, to be in the business of pretending to learn, think, analyze, and otherwise be a student, is not acceptable in any regard.

Reasonable Accommodation

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Access Center (<http://accesscenter.wsu.edu>). All accommodations MUST be approved through the Access Center (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a specialist.

Campus Safety

In the interest of campus safety and emergency procedures, please become familiar with the information available on these WSU-provided websites.

- Campus Safety Plan <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu>
- Emergency management web site <http://oem.wsu.edu>
- WSU Alert site <http://alert.wsu.edu>

Grade Problems

During the semester use my office hours to talk to me about any problems you are having with your progress and/or evaluations for our course so we can try to fix any bad situation early, before it's too late. You must communicate any problems you may be having that are affecting your coursework early on so that I am aware of the situation as I continue to evaluate your work. Any explanations for poor performance, relevant or not, will not be accepted at the end of the semester and will have no effect on your final grade. Please do not come to ask me to change your grade after you have failed our course.

Class Schedule

Dates	Topic	Readings	Important Info
<u>Week 1</u>	Course Introductions & Mapping the Web	<p>June 20: Syllabus, Netiquette</p> <p>June 21: Introductions & What is #AMST475</p> <p>June 22: <i>Documentary</i> - Digital Nation</p> <p>June 23: Finish Digital Nation & Discussion</p> <p>June 24: Drori - Global E-Litism: Introduction (New Global Geography - Optional)</p>	Twitter Extra Credit 1: Create a Twitter profile and introduce yourself to the class using #AMST475 #HelloDigitalDiversity
<u>Week 2</u>	From Digital Divides to Technology for Social Inclusion	<p>June 27: Warschauer, "Whither the Digital Divide?"</p> <p>June 28: Mehra, Bharat, Merkel, Cecelia, Peterson Bishop, Ann. "The internet for empowerment of minority and marginalized users."</p> <p>June 29: Crawford, "The New Digital Divide"</p> <p>June 30: Nealon & Giroux - Culture</p> <p>July 1: Diamond - Liberation Technology</p>	Twitter Extra Credit 2: Tweet as you read "Liberation Technology" #Liberation Technology —minimum 7 tweets and 2 replies to classmates
<u>Week 3</u>	Key Concepts in Cyberculture Studies	<p>July 4: NO CLASS</p> <p>July 5: (On Your Own) Key Concepts in Cyberculture Study</p> <p>July 6: <i>Documentary</i> - Secrets of Silicone Valley</p> <p>July 7: The Core: Work and the Struggle to Make a Living without Dying</p> <p>July 8: Writing Day - Final Project Thesis</p>	Submit your proposed final <u>project thesis</u> statement on July 8 by 5pm

<u>Week 4</u>	Webs of Toxicity	<p>July 11: Beyond Silicon Valley: The Social and Environmental Costs of the Global Microelectronics Industry</p> <p>July 12: E-Waste Videos, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition</p> <p>July 13: Dori - Measuring from the bottom up E-Waste</p> <p>July 14: Dori - Measuring from the bottom up E-Waste</p> <p>July 15: Writing Workshop Day - Final Project Research</p>	<p><u>Midterm Paper</u> due on July 12 in class</p> <p>Twitter Extra Credit 3: Tweet about your E-Waste. Use pictures, links and other media. 7-10 tweets and 3 responses to classmates</p>
<u>Week 5</u>	Contemporary Issues	<p>July 18:</p> <p>July 19:</p> <p>July 20:</p> <p>July 21:</p> <p>July 22:</p>	<p>We will create this section of course readings as a class!</p>
<u>Week 6</u>	Final Project Presentations	<p>July 25:</p> <p>July 26:</p> <p>July 27:</p> <p>July 28:</p> <p>July 29:</p>	<p>Sign Up for Presentation Dates and Times. Three Students Per Day</p>

*Your continued enrollment in this course indicates you have read and understand the information contained within this syllabus, and that you agree to comply with the procedures and rules expressed within.