

COMN 3551 3.0 – ADVANCED ISSUES IN DIGITAL MEDIA AND CULTURE

Wednesdays 4-7 PM (HNE B17)

1) Instructor: Dr. Phil Rose, prose@yorku.ca. **Office:** 3038 TEL Building.
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30PM/or by telephone appointment.

2) The Course: This course investigates some of the transformative effects of digital communications technologies within realms of culture as diverse as politics, commerce, finance, contemporary warfare, and morality. Relevant to class discussions are phenomena such as world order transformation, robotics, interoperability, big data, information overload, networks, embedded microchips, surveillance, and the global positioning system. The course concludes by addressing questions concerning our digital future.

3) Learning Objectives:

1. To apply the rudiments of thinking about digital media to questions of broader social and cultural change.
2. To appraise current scholarly and non-scholarly discussions regarding digital communication and culture, and assess these debates with a special emphasis on how they pertain to navigating our personal and collective futures.

4) Expected Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

1. Describe and explain how digital technologies restructure and transform various spheres of cultural activity.
2. Identify, compare, contrast and critique digital cultural forms, especially as they relate to a number of important contemporary issues.
3. Successfully present theoretical scholarly arguments in both oral and written forms.

5) Required Texts:

Rose P. (2015) Course Kit. "Advanced Issues in Digital Media and Culture"
(AP/COMN 3551 3.0).

6) Assessment and Evaluation:

48% - weekly written responses (4 x 12%)

15% - seminar participation

17% - moodle item written response

20% - final written exam

7) Assignment Descriptions:

i) Written reading responses (48%) – Students are required to submit written responses of 1200-1500 words each for 4 items from the course syllabus. Each must belong to a separate week's readings, i.e. you cannot do 2 from the same week, unless one of those assignments is the 'moodle response' (see below). Those readings you choose must be at least 8 pages in length (disqualifying the Assange course item). Direct references to readings should include page number citations, and responses must include introductory and concluding remarks, be well organized, comprised of 5-7 well written paragraphs, typed, and should take the character of an article in an intelligent magazine. Students should use the following rubric as a guide, but are not to use them as subtitles:

- a) most interesting aspects? - Why?
- b) problematic aspects?
- c) author's oversights?
- d) confusing aspects?
- e) general thoughts/commentary/conclusions?
- f) at least 1 good question for further discussion which should be incorporated into the conclusion of your text.

Reading responses are due in class. Credit will not be rewarded to responses that are submitted late or submitted other than in person (i.e., via email, through the course drop box, or slipped under my office door). Nor will credit be given to any assignment submitted by students not attending class on the due date. Assignments are intended to prime students for participation in seminar discussions.

ii) Seminar participation (15%) – Students are required to come to each class prepared to discuss syllabus items allocated for that week. As noted, in addition to guiding your reading responses, the above rubric should provide the framework for your considerations in preparation for our seminar discussions of weekly readings/podcasts. While students can also receive credit by making contributions to our learning environment through Moodle, doing so will not entirely make up for physical absence from class. However:

IF A CLASS IS CANCELLED DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER OR THE LIKE, THAT WEEK'S CLASS WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE CONDUCTED ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUSLY VIA THE APPROPRIATE WEEK'S DISCUSSION SECTION ON MOODLE. STUDENTS MUST MAKE THEIR CONTRIBUTION(S) TO CLASS DISCUSSION BY 6PM ON THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING A MISSED CLASS.

iii) Moodle item response (17%) – due week 11 (March 25) – Students are required to analyse/engage one additional course reading/podcast using the rubric provided above, but also to discuss it in conjunction with two of the items posted on Moodle from the same week. This assignment should be between 1500-1800 words, and may involve some minimal further research. Responses should be well organized, comprised of 7-9 well written paragraphs, and typed. Direct references should be made to readings and must include page number citations. The reading you choose must be at least 8 pages in length (disqualifying the Assange course item).

iv) Final Exam (20%) – (Apr. 1) - in class

Students will be required to address how digital technologies continue to restructure earlier media artifacts and the environments they create, and help to transform various spheres of cultural activity. Students will likewise be required to critique digital media in relation to a number of important contemporary themes addressed throughout the course. Format to be announced.

8) Reading Schedule: (** items in course kit are marked with double asterisks)

Week 1 – INTRODUCTION - no readings (Jan. 7)

Week 2 – TECHNOPOLY AND WAR (39 pages) (Jan. 14)

Rose, P. (2012) “Divinising Technology and Violence: Technopoly, the Warfare State, and the Revolution in Military Affairs”, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 27:3, pp. 365-381. (16)

Singer, P.W. (2009) “A Robot Revolt: Talking About Robot Ethics” and “Conclusion: The Duality of Robots and Humans”, in *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century*. New York: Penguin Press, pp. 413-436. (23) **

Week 3 – WAYS OF SEEING (41 pages) (Jan. 21)

Stahl, R. (2010) “Becoming Bombs: 3D Animated Satellite Imagery and the Weaponization of the Civic Eye”. *Media Tropes eJournal*, 2:2, pp. 65-93. (23)
<http://www.mediatropes.com/index.php/Mediatropes>.

Michael, K. and M.G. Michael (2013) “The Future prospects of embedded microchips in humans as unique identifiers: the risks versus the rewards”, *Media, Culture & Society*, 35:1 pp. 78-86. (18)

Week 4 – INFORMATION OVERLOAD, BIG DATA, AND SURVEILLANCE (40 pages) (Jan. 28)

Postman, N. (1992) “The Broken Defenses”, in *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 71-91. (20)**

Mayer-Schonberger, V. and K. Cukier (2013) “Risks”, in *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, pp. 150-170. (20)**

Week 5 – NEW MEDIA AS POLITICAL FORMS (55 minutes, 14 pages) (Feb. 4)

Prpick, S. (2011) “The Great Library 2.0”, *Ideas*, Toronto: CBC Radio.
<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Ideas/ID/1826242021/?page=22&sort=MostRecent>

Auletta, K. (2010), “Chapter 17 – Where is the Wave Taking Google?”, *Googled: The End of the World as We Know It*. New York: Penguin, pp. 322-336. (14) **

Week 6 – DIGITAL LITERACY (36 pages) (Feb. 11)

Rose, P. (2011) “Digital (A)literacy”, *E-Learning and Digital Media: Special Issue*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 256-268. (12)

(over)

Mangen, A. and J. Velay (2010) "Digitizing Literacy: Reflections on the Haptics of Writing", in M. H. Zadeh (ed). *Advances in Haptics*. Vukovar, Croatia: In Tech, pp. 385-398. (14)

READING WEEK (FEB. 16-20)

Week 7 – DIGITAL IDENTITY (38) (Feb. 25)

Palfrey, J. (2008) "Identities", chapter 1 from *Born Digital: The First Generation of Digital Natives*, Basic Books, New York. pp. 17-39. (22)

Van Dijck, J. (2013) "You Have One Identity: Performing the Self on Facebook and LinkedIn", *Media, Culture, and Society* 35(2), pp. 199-215. (16)

Week 8 – DIGITAL FINANCE AND CYBERSPACE (55 minutes, 20 pages) (Mar. 4)

Corey, S. (2012) "Attack of the Algorithms", *Broadcast Briefing*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2012-09-09/4242538>

Deibert, R. (2013) "Chapter 2 - Filters and Chokepoints", in *Black Code: Inside the Battle for Cyberspace*. Toronto: Signal – McClelland and Stewart, pp. 29-49. (20) **

Week 9 – DIGITAL DISSENT AND ENCRYPTION (23 pages) (Mar. 11)

Zajacz, R. (2013) "Wikileaks and the problem of anonymity: A network control Perspective", *Media, Culture & Society*, 35:4, pp. 489-505. (16)

Assange, J. (2012) "Fighting Total Surveillance With the Laws of Physics", in *Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet*. New York: Or Books, pp 59-66. (7)

Week 10 – THE LAWS OF MEDIA (20 pages) (Mar. 18)

Rose, P. and A. Moore (2011) "The Extended Pharmacist: Entering the Era of Remote Drug Dispensation and Pharmaceutical Counseling", in R. MacDougall (ed.), *Drugs and Media: Communication, Consumption, and Consciousness*, New York: Continuum Press, pp. 193-213. (20) **

Week 11 – OUR DIGITAL FUTURE/ NEW MEDIA? (27 pages) (Mar. 25)

Logan, R. (2011) "The Fourteen Messages of New Media", in *Understanding New Media: Extending Marshall McLuhan*, pp. 48-75. (27) **

12) POLICIES:

Electronic Devices—This course requires that you actively engage in conversation during the class period. Research has shown that the distraction of laptops and other electronic devices in class can lower the grades of not only the students using those devices but also those sitting around them (see http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/08/15/laptops_in_class_lower_students_grades_study_says.html). It is everyone's responsibility to contribute to a positive learning environment, and so, the use of laptops and tablets in class must be done responsibly so as to avoid socio-technical conflict. The use of cell phones in the seminar is generally prohibited. Should your use of technology in the seminar prove at all to be disruptive, I will contact you privately to discuss a resolution to the matter.

Final Assignment Submission: Do not submit papers to any administrative office. You must submit assignments directly to me in hard copy. Retain a copy of your paper for your own files. Students handing in a late final assignment (due. Mar. 25) must email it to me when completed, and then bring a hard copy to the final exam.

Late penalties: For your final assignment in this course, you will lose three marks per day (including weekends) for every day it is late. If the assignment is going to be late *for any reason*, you must make special arrangements with me, otherwise it may not be accepted.

Effective time management is critical for university students. Adhering to the schedule for assignments supports the development of this skill. In this regard, therefore, carefully consider the following:

“What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it” (Herbert A. Simon).