LIT 235: Introduction to Media

Tu Th 3:10 – 4:30

Olin 202

Prof. Maria Sachiko Cecire

Aspinwall 306

mcecire@bard.edu

Office hours: Mondays 3:30-5:00, or by appointment

http://blogs.bard.edu/lit235f16

#BardItM

This course offers a foundation in media history and theory, with a focus on how to use aspects of traditional humanistic approaches such as close reading and visual literacy to critically engage with both traditional and new media. We will examine how new media interacts with and transforms culture by considering the emergence of digital media and internet culture in relation to prior moments of media change, and discuss how such shifts have continually re-shaped our perceptions of time, space, publicity, knowledge, and identity. The premise of this course is that the new-ness of new media can only be approached against the background of humanistic experimentation and imagination with both old and new media. We will read key media theorists (Walter Benjamin, Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Henry Jenkins, Friedrich Kittler, and Marshall McLuhan), as well as contemporary fiction by authors such as Neal Stephenson and Gary Shteyngart that offer speculative visions of how digital media and human experience might determine one another in the future. As part of our ongoing examinations of how material conditions shape discourse, we will assess our own positions as users, consumers, and potential producers of media.

Intro to Media is one of the two core courses for the Experimental Humanities concentration (http://eh.bard.edu). This means that we will take on ambitious theoretical readings and embrace the ethos of "practice" and "making" as we consider what constitutes humanistic essays now, how they use and reflect upon "old" media, and what forms they might take in the future.

Required books:

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (William Morrow) 978-0060976255

Gary Shteyngart, *Super Sad True Love Story* (Random House, 2010). ISBN-13: 978-0812977868

Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (Spectra, 2000). ISBN-13: 978-0553380958

Recommended books:

Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (NYU Press, 2006). ISBN-13: 978-0814742815

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (MIT Press, 1994). ISBN-13: 9780262631594

Course Goals:

- Become familiar with major theories about the relationship between media and human experience, especially since the rise of electronic media but also in earlier moments of technological change
- Explore how different practices and media forms can affect learning, expression, argumentation, and analysis; experiment with this through several hands-on projects
- Close read literature to unpack social hopes and concerns about media use in the American context; engage this analysis with media theory to make well-supported arguments in essays
- Connect media theory to contemporary examples in class discussions and on the course blog

Schedule

30 August   Welcome

1 September   "Introduction: Did Somebody Say New Media?" Wendy Hui Kyong Chun
                 (ReservesDirect)
                 Balnaves, Donald, & Shoesmith, "Technologizing the Word" (ReservesDirect)
                                                            → *HTML project assigned*

WEEK 2 | WRITING / CODE

6 September   **Meet in RKC 100 with Prof. Keith O'Hara and Ryan Sablonsky**
                 Olia Lialina, "The Vernacular Web"
                 http://art.teleportacia.org/observation/vernacular/
                                        → *HTML project: Part 1, "Hello World" (in class)*

8 September   Walter Ong, "Writing Restructures Consciousness," Orality and Literacy
                 Ursula Le Guin, "The Author of the Acacia Seeds" (Reserves Direct)

WEEK 3 | WHAT IS A MEDIUM?

13 September   Marshall McLuhan, "Introduction" and "The Medium is the Message," from
Group A   *Understanding Media* (ReservesDirect)
                 Olia Lialina, "The Vernacular Web 2"
                 http://contemporary-home-computing.org/vernacular-web-2/

15 September   Fredrich Kittler, "Gramophone, Film, Typewriter" (ReservesDirect)
Group B   → *HTML project: Part 2, "About Me" Due*

WEEK 4 | AURA, DATA, AND ART

20 September   Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Group C   "Negative Dialectics in the Google Era: A Conversation with Trevor Paglen"
                 (both ReservesDirect)
                 Surveillance Week: Trevor Paglan panel, Fisher Center LUMA Theatre, 7pm

22 September   Rita Raley, "Dataveillance and Countervailance"
Group D   Elise Morrison, "USER-UN FRIENDLY: Surveillance Art as Participatory
                      Performance" (both ReservesDirect)
                 Surveillance Week: Surveillance Theatre panel, Fisher Center LUMA Theatre, 7pm

WEEK 5 | THE META-MEDIUM AND THE WEB

27 September   Vannevar Bush, "Memex Revisited" (ReservesDirect)
Group A   Lev Manovich, "Understanding Meta-Media," http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=493

29 September   Tara McPherson, "Reload: Liveness, Mobility, and the Web" (ReservesDirect)
Group B   → *HTML project: Part 3, "Image Essay" (3 pts.) Due*

WEEK 6 | VISION AND MODES OF ATTENTION

4 October   N. Katherine Hayles, "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in
Group C   Cognitive Modes" (ReservesDirect)
                Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, Chapters 1 and 2

6 October   *Understanding Comics*, Chapters 3 and 5
Group D   Midterm Review

WEEK 7 | MIDTERM

11 October   FALL BREAK (No class; begin reading *Snow Crash*)

12 October   → *HTML project: Part 4, "Close Reading" (3 pts.) Due to Aspinwall 306 by noon*

13 October   → *Midterm Exam in class*

WEEK 8 | HUMAN / MEDIA TRAJECTORIES 1.0: *SNOW CRASH*

18 October   *Snow Crash*, Chapters 1-16
Group A   → *HTML project: Part 5, "Response" (extra credit) Due*

20 October   *Snow Crash*, Chapters 17-31
Group B   Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (ReservesDirect)
                Optional: In Theory podcast, "Our Quantified / Cyborg Selves"
                http://www.intheory.us/episodes/2015/9/16/episode-8-our-quantifiedcyborg-selves
                                                    → *Paper 1 assigned*

WEEK 9 | BODIES IN CYBERSPACE

25 October   *Snow Crash*, Chapters 32-48
Group C   Lisa Nakamura, "Cybertyping and the Work of Race in the Age of Digital
                Reproduction" (ReservesDirect)

27 October   *Snow Crash*, Chapters 49 to end
Group D   Micha Cárdenas, "Shifting Futures: Digital Trans of Color Praxis" (ReservesDirect)
                http://adanewmedia.org/2015/01/issue6-cardenas/

WEEK 10 | PARTICIPATION

1 November   Henry Jenkins, "Buying into *American Idol*," in *Convergence Culture* (ReservesDirect)
Group A   Danielle Bernstein, "How Bloggers Make Money on Instagram" (ReservesDirect)
                http://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/trends/a10949/how-bloggers-make-money-on-instagram/
                                                    →*Code poem assignment due*

3 November   Henry Jenkins, "Why Heather Can Write," in *Convergence Culture* (ReservesDirect)
Group B   Look around fanfiction.net and archiveofourown.net
               Optional: http://geekgirlpenpals.com/2015/11/intro-to-fanfiction/

4 November   →*Paper 1 Due to Aspinwall 306 by noon*

WEEK 11 | MASS MEDIA CONTENT

8 November   Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" (ReservesDirect)
Group C   → *Final Project and Blog Audit assigned*

10 November
Group D   Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle over
               Representation" (ReservesDirect)

WEEK 12 | MEDIA TRAJECTORIES 2.0: *SUPER SAD TRUE LOVE STORY*

15 November   *Super Sad True Love Story*, 1-118
                                                    → *Blog Audit due*

17 November   *Super Sad True Love Story*, 119-203

WEEK 13 | MEDIA TRAJECTORIES 2.0: *SUPER SAD TRUE LOVE STORY*

22 November   *Super Sad True Love Story*, 204 - end
                                                    → *Paper 2 assigned*

24 November   THANKSGIVING – no class

WEEK 14 | FINAL PROJECTS

29 November   Final Project Presentations in class
                                                    →*Final Projects due*

1 December   Final Project Presentations in class

WEEK 15 | FINAL PROJECTS
5 December   Experimental Humanities Share Event

6 December   Final Class

WEEK 16 | COMPLETION DAYS – NO CLASS

13 December   →*Final Papers due to Aspinwall 306 by noon*

Expectations

What to bring: The correct edition of the text(s) we are discussing that day, in hard copy. Laptops and tablets are not permitted in class except when requested by me; this is to promote a present atmosphere and to practice deep engagement with physical texts and one other's ideas. (See, for instance, http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens) For special circumstances, however, come speak to me. Likewise, please turn your phones off and put them away during class time unless asked to use them for course purposes. You may bring drinks, but no food, to class.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "[t]he action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft." Bard takes academic honesty very seriously, as do I. See the Student Handbook (http://inside.bard.edu/doso/handbook/) under "Learning at Bard" for Bard's policies regarding academic integrity.

Academic Etiquette: I will try to respond to student emails in as timely a fashion as possible, but be aware that I do not respond to email between 6:00pm – 9:00am Mon-Fri, or on weekends. Please plan accordingly. You may refer to me by my first name both in class and in emails. For other questions about email etiquette, see http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor.

Grading:

Participation	15%	Attendance*, preparation, evidence of completed reading, discussion
Blog posts	10%	Engagement with course reading, outside example(s), depth and clarity
Assignments	25%	(HTML project 15% | code poems 5% | blog audit 5%)
Midterm Exam	15%	Identifying media theorists and showing comprehension of their work
Paper 1	10%	*Snow Crash* (5-6 pages) close reading, argument, engagement with theory
Paper 2	15%	*Super Sad True Love Story* (6-7 pages) as above
Final Project	10%	Originality, engagement with course material, execution, short statement

Note: papers should have interesting, informative titles

*Attendance policy: You are permitted up to two absences, no questions asked. Each missed session beyond the second, however, will reduce your participation grade by one level (A to A-; A- to B+, etc.). I do not expect you to be late; if this becomes a problem, lateness of five minutes or more will count as an absence. For special circumstances, come speak to me.

Late Submission policy: Late papers and assignments are accepted, but will be reduced by one level for each day late, beginning immediately after the session at which the assignment is due. I am willing to give an extension on one paper or assignment during the semester, but this **must be requested at least 48 hours in advance**.

Assignments
In keeping with Experimental Humanities' emphasis on "practice-rich" teaching and research, there will be several opportunities during the semester to try out hands-on projects and to reflect on our practices as humanities scholars. These will happen alongside the thinking, writing, and analysis that remain the heart of this course. Assignments include the HTML project, which introduces GitHub and basic HTML coding; the code poem, which tests the boundaries between spoken and computes languages; Final Projects (see below); and the Blog Audit late in the semester.

Blog: The course blog is a community space for us to share our thoughts about the reading in writing, and to connect the readings to examples and phenomena that we encounter in everyday life. It is an open blog, so people from outside the course will be able to see it. When writing, please keep the college's Free Speech policy in mind (available in the Student Handbook, under "College Policies, Regulations, and Procedures") and use your best judgment to make it both an intellectually vibrant and welcoming environment for classmates and visitors.

> Posts: Everyone in the class is an author on the blog, and will be expected to post reading responses at least four times over the course of the semester. You are assigned to a group (A, B, C, or D) that determines your posting schedule. These responses are an opportunity for you to explore some aspect of the reading that interests you, and connect it to either another reading or a real-world example. I encourage you to think creatively about the affordances of digital publishing platforms, and to make use of image, video, sound, and hyperlinks to provide a rich, well-illustrated post every time. **The post should be 300-500 words long and posted online by 9:00AM on the day of the given class.** While assigned posts are required, you are welcome to write additional posts of any length at any time, and to comment on each other's posts.

Twitter: Tweeting is not required, but it can be useful for sharing links and reactions to current events. I will take course-related tweeting into account when tallying participation grades (though not tweeting will not hurt your grade) – so especially if you are a quieter student in class this is a good way to stay involved in our ongoing conversations. You must use the hashtag #BardItM for your tweets to count.

Final Projects: Final projects will be group or individual projects that bring together your interests and technical abilities with the major themes and questions of our course. You are encouraged to devise your own questions about the relationship of humanity to the media that we use, and attempt to answer or expand upon them in essays in a form other than academic writing (a brief artist's statement will also be required). Keep an eye out for particular topics, texts, and media forms that excite you throughout the semester, so that you can pursue them in the Final Project.

Required Events
Over the course of term, we will have a few required lectures and events (Surveillance week events, Share Event). If you cannot attend, please let me know beforehand in order to receive a make-up assignment.