Catalog Description

How does the study of digital cultures relate to intellectual traditions in the humanities and social sciences? You’ll become familiar with philosophical arguments underpinning current debates about digital technologies. We’ll examine how different disciplines—both traditional and emergent—describe and explain culture and technology. You’ll create an e-portfolio project that analyzes a digital phenomenon from several theoretical perspectives. This course is a hybrid course, with most course content delivered online along with face-to-face evening classes every two weeks.

Why Theory and Practice is Important

Usually when we have a “theory” what we mean is that someone has spent some time thinking about a phenomenon and has an explanation for how or why that phenomenon exists. We have the “theory of relativity,” which explains that gravitational force is relative to the size of an object—the bigger the planet, the bigger the gravity. This theory might turn out to be untrue someday. But, for now, it’s the best explanations we’ve got. The reason theories are so important is because they inform the fundamental platforms from which to make further decisions. If we want to get a rocket ship out of our Milky Way Galaxy, we should steer clear of the sun—the biggest thing in our galactic neighborhood—not because it’s hot, but because it has a lot of gravity, possibly keeping us from leaving in the first place. 150 years ago, we didn’t know this. We can make better decisions now, because of the theory of relativity. It is in this same way that, with the building of theory, we can better navigate culture and the digital technologies that so powerfully shape it in our modern information age. In this class we will visit some of the seminal theories of digital technology and culture so as to build a stable platform for making effective and responsible decisions as researchers, users, and producers of digital technologies.

Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Differentiate between the key theories and theorists within the interdisciplinary fields of digital culture
2. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of specific theories
3. Articulate choice of theoretical lenses in relation to one’s own value system and research topic
4. Formulate researched analyses that apply theories to digitally mediated spaces, identities, and cultures

Program Level Outcomes this Course Supports

*Shade of Box Corresponds with Emphasis of Outcome (Darker = More Emphasis).*

| I | EXPLAIN KEY CONCEPTS IN COMPUTING: This outcome focuses your ability to explain key concepts in computing, technological modes of production, and information/data flow. |
| II | EVALUATE RESEARCH SOURCES & DIGITAL TOOLS: This outcome focuses on your ability to evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of research sources, digital tools, technologies, interfaces, and artifacts. |
| III | ANALYZE TECHNOLOGY USING INTERDISCIPLINARY THEORIES & METHODS: This outcome focuses on your ability to analyze media, technology, and digital artifacts using interdisciplinary theories and methods. |
| IV | EXAMINE TECHNOLOGICALLY MEDIATED IDENTITIES: This outcome focuses on your ability to examine how technologically mediated identities reflect and transform cultural ideologies of gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, and social class. |
| V | DESIGN MULTIMODAL PROJECTS: This outcome focuses on your ability to design multimodal projects that demonstrate an engagement with and advocacy for social justice issues and are informed by digital rhetoric and an understanding of audience. |
| VI | REFLECTION: This outcome focuses on your ability to reflect upon your own work, roles, values, and identities related to digital culture. |

Assignments

**Participation**
Throughout the quarter you will have several “low-stakes” assignments designed to help prepare you for your final case study, engage the class community, or actively engage with course material. We will have weekly assignments due on the Slack channel, or here on canvas. Your face to face class session participation is also counted here each week that we come to campus. Each are discussed in our weekly introduction and overviews. Your participation grade is calculated based on these online and in-class activities as well as qualitative assessments of online and f2f interactions.
Weekly Slack Concept Maps and Explanations
Starting Week 4 we will learn about 6 different theoretical traditions. In each one of those weeks you will generate an answer to your course question by creating an infographic of a given week’s theoretical tradition (Semiotics, Rhetoric, Phenomenology, Critical Theory, Cultural Studies, Pragmatism), accompanied by a 400 word explanation that employs the vocab and concepts from that tradition to explain the answer.

These will be due on our course Slack Channel.

You will not be required to write a concept map/explanation the week that your wiki entry is due. Your wiki entry will replace the map/explanation for that week.

Reading Quizzes
To prepare you for your weekly blog entries as well as your answer paper and theory analysis at the end of the quarter, reading quizzes will be given. They are low stakes and prepared directly from the prompts that accompany class readings.

Wiki Entry
You will be assigned one of the six traditions of theory we'll be covering this year. Then you will write up a 1200-2000 word wiki entry in order to teach that tradition of theory to the rest of us. You will be assigned your wiki topic (and presentation date) week two. The assignment requires a rough draft be turned in one week prior to your final being due. The Wiki entry grade will replace your weekly concept map/explanation grade for that week.

Theory Assessment
At the end of the quarter, after we have practiced answering our own question with theory, we will evaluate some others’ attempts at answering questions in a Bluebook-style assessment of some controversial theories of technology and digital culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Concept Maps and Blog Explanations (x6)</th>
<th>240pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wiki Entry (Rough Draft &amp; Final)</td>
<td>260 (60+200)pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory Assessment</td>
<td>100pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (x9)</td>
<td>90pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: A 48-hour grace period is required after you receive a grade to discuss grades. Everyone is entitled to have a say in the grade that they get. All I require is that you first take a moment to think about what it is you have to say.

Policies and Resources

University Resources

CANVAS HELP:
http://www.seattleu.edu/canvas/students/

LIBRARY AND LEARNING COMMONS:
http://www.seattleu.edu/learningcommons/

WRITING CENTER:
https://www.seattleu.edu/writingcenter/

LEARNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS:
https://www.seattleu.edu/learning-assistance/

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY TUTORIAL:
https://www.seattleu.edu/academicintegrity/

The following policies govern this course and comply with Seattle University policies.

Support for Students with Disabilities

If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an “invisible disability” such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff located in Loyola 100, (206) 296-5740. Disability-based adjustments to course expectations can be arranged only through this process.

DISABILITY SERVICES:
https://www.seattleu.edu/disabilities-services/

Academic Policies from the SU Registrar

Be sure that you understand the following university academic policies, posted on the Registrar’s website:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:
https://www.seattleu.edu/media/redhawk-axis/registrar/registrar-policies/Academic-Integrity-2011-3.pdf
Incomplete Grades

If you are unable to complete course requirements because of extenuating circumstances, please notify the instructor on or before the date the assignment is due and provide relevant supporting documentation (e.g. doctor’s note, note from counselor).

An agreement to receive an Incomplete (I) grade may be negotiated if your circumstances do not allow you to finish the course on time. The Incomplete Removal Policy of the university available on the Office of the Registrar website: https://www.seattleu.edu/registrar/Policies.aspx (Links to an external site.)

Assignment Deadlines and Extensions

Assignment deadlines are visible on both the Course Syllabus and the Assignment List (as well as the individual Assignment pages themselves). You can always find links to those two pages in the left sidebar of the course.

Due to the nature of the work, and the online structure of the course materials, assignment deadlines will be automatically enforced. Generally, there will be no extensions to the assignment deadlines, primarily because falling behind on work in this course makes it exponentially more difficult to complete the course successfully.

Because our face to face sessions are limited, missing class sessions can have a negative impact on your learning experience, and that of your colleagues. If you feel you must miss a session, and you know beforehand, you will need to consult with me, schedule a 30 minute 1 on 1, and demonstrate prior completion of coursework.

If an emergency arises, please alert me as soon as you can to schedule a meeting to explore next steps. My goal is for you to succeed, so please communicate with me.

An agreement to receive an Incomplete (I) grade may be negotiated if your circumstances do not allow you to finish the course on time. The Incomplete Removal Policy of the university is available on the Office of the Registrar website: https://www.seattleu.edu/registrar/Policies.aspx

Student Responsibilities for Learning

You are expected to budget 10 hours per week for this course. Most of the time, this will be adequate time to complete all of the requirements for each week. However, given the nature of the material in these courses, it is likely that some weeks will be more time-consuming than others due to complexity of concepts. Please communicate openly with your instructor about how the course is going and let your instructor know if you are regularly spending a lot more time to complete work. Additional tutoring or other assistance may be available depending on the nature of the issue. You are also encouraged to review the calendar at the beginning of the quarter to flag any weeks that seem to you to be especially full or challenging.
Schedule

Week 1: Techne, Epistem, and Phronesis: From the archetype to the prototype (Pre-Modern to Enlightenment Era)

In Class

Readings

Due
1 Discussion post 1—Example of an exciting digital technological artifact, technique, or context. Is this technology used in the way the ancients conceived of technology? Why? Why not?
2 Student survey sheet
3 Reading Quiz 1
4 Join Slack

Week 2: Idealism, Materialism, and Culture: From nature to the factory (Enlightenment to Modern Era)

At Home

Reading

Due
1 Discussion post 2—Can you think of an example of a digital technology, past time keeping devices, that is representative of the “industrial turn”? What is its relationship to labor, technik or technology?
2 Reading Quiz 2
Week 3: Power, Agency, Networks, and: From the absolute to the relative (Postmodern-Post-Postmodern)

In Class

Reading

Due
1 Reading Quiz 3
2 Wiki entry rough draft?

Week 4: Semiotics: Signs, Cyborgs, and (Non)Human Assemblies of Meaning

At Home

Reading

Due
1 Reading Quiz 4
2 Concept Map/Blog Explanation 1—Semiotics
3 Wiki entry?
4 Wiki entry rough draft?
Week 5: Rhetoric: Publics, Errors, and Equipment for Living

In Class

Readings

Due
1 Reading Quiz 5
2 Concept Map/Blog Explanation 2—Rhetoric
3 Wiki entry?
4 Wiki entry rough draft?

Week 6: Phenomenology: Lifeworlds, Technics, and the Embodiment of Reality

At Home

Reading
1 Crick, T. P. (2010). The game body: toward a phenomenology of contemporary video gaming (Links to an external site.). Games and Culture.

Due
1 Reading Quiz 6
2 Concept Map/Blog Explanation 3—Phenomenology
3 Wiki entry?
4 Wiki entry rough draft?

Week 7: The Frankfurt School: Machines, Production, and the Public Sphere

In Class

Readings


**Due**
1 Reading Quiz 7
2 Concept Map/Blog Explanation 4—Critical Theory
3 Wiki entry?
4 Wiki entry rough draft?

**Week 8: British and French Cultural Studies: Habituses, Apparatuses and Assemblages**

**At Home**

**Readings**

**Due**
1 Reading Quiz 8
2 Concept Map/Blog Explanation 5—Cultural Studies
3 Wiki entry?
4 Wiki entry rough draft?

**Week 9: The Americans: Pragmatism, Empiricism, and Realism**

**At Home**

**Readings**
materialization of reality. *Differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies, 10(2),* 87-91.

**Due**
1 Reading Quiz 9
2 Concept Map/Blog Explanation 6—Pragmatism
3 Wiki entry?
4 Wiki entry rough draft?

**Week 10: Analyzing and Making our Own Theory: Is it Useful or is it Weird?**

**In Class**

**Due**
1 Theory Assessment