

ENGL 4008/5008-090, WGST 4050/5050-092

New Media: Gender, Culture, and Technology

Spring 2018

Dr. Aaron A. Toscano Office: Fretwell 280F Office hours: Wed. 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm (and by appt)	Classroom: Fretwell 219 Time: Wednesdays 6:30 am - 9:15 pm http://clas-pages.uncc.edu/aaron-toscano/
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Course Description

The term "new media" is a contested and evolving subject for the twenty-first century student. Traditionally, new media refers to the digital technologies that have inundated contemporary society—video games, webpages, digital photography, and numerous multimedia texts. This course will explore the ways in which new media reflect larger cultural myths, values, and attitudes. We will approach the study of new media by analyzing various media (TV, films commercials, printed texts, webpages, video game sequences, etc.) and locating the cultural values incorporated within media to help us evaluate capitalism, militarization, fragmented realities, patriotism, the individual hero, gender roles, and even manifest destiny. Recent scholarship on new media reveals complex narratives that complicate traditional notions of textuality, so our study will not be just about the technologies behind new media, but about how cultures mediate these new "texts".

Course Objectives and Biases

I have a bias that drives my pedagogy, and I want to make this absolutely clear: **I believe that education for the sake of education is good in and of itself.** I don't make any claim that you will learn anything practical that you may directly apply to a 9-to-5 job, and I hope we engage only in abstract theoretical endeavors. This is a theory rich course that questions the "truths" with which the media bombard us. There are no correct answers, but, as a rhetorician, I have a bias that your discussions will be sound, well-thought out, and resemble a commitment to logical reasoning. Another huge bias I have is that a university education is not about reinforcing student beliefs; instead, students should consider how their own biased perspectives/experiences have constructed their tastes, convictions, and opinions as they synthesize a new (preferably broader) intellectual appreciation of new (and traditional) media texts and technologies. In this course, students should push themselves to engage in critical thinking by developing their analytic faculties as well as field-specific vocabularies for talking about new media and theories surrounding new media. Special to this class is that we will view media and discuss as a class their "meanings." Therefore, ALL students will have to articulate an understanding of the material that reflects the rhetorical sophistication and level of commitment to pursuing knowledge expected in a 4000- or 5000-level course. Ideally, students will contemplate the role of media consumer or "critic" as that position relates to socially constructed norms and tastes.

Text and Materials

Required	Baudrillard, Jean. <i>The Gulf War did not Take Place</i> . {978-0253210036} Fisher, Mark. <i>Capitalism: Is There No Real Alternative?</i> {978-1846943171} Cline, Ernest. <i>Ready Player One</i> . New York: Broadway Books, 2011. {978-0307887443} Curran, James, Natalie Fenton, & Des Freedman. <i>Misunderstanding the Internet</i> . 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge, 2016. {9781138906228} eBook available here: https://www-taylorfrancis-com.librarylink.uncc.edu/books/9781317443513 Malpas, Simon. <i>Postmodernism</i> . New York: Routledge, 2004. {978-0415280655} eBook here: https://www-taylorfrancis-com.librarylink.uncc.edu/books/9781134463237 Willingness To Learn
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Expectations

I expect students to be prepared to participate in class discussions; therefore, students should finish all readings before the class meets. Participation means you must thoughtfully engage in class discussions. Merely showing up will not get you participation credit—you must speak. Starting July 7th, there are 7 face-to-face participation days—which exclude computer lab “workshop” days. Obviously, I don't expect you to comment multiple times every class period, but I do expect you to articulate an understanding of the course material many times during this five-week class. There is no magic number of times to participate and not all contributions are equal—some contributions are more thoughtful than others—but you should strive to be an active participant whenever possible. If you're not in class for discussions (whether they be small group discussions or class-wide ones), you can't receive credit, so your participation grade will be affected. I will note your participation (or lack thereof) daily. Thoughtful participation means that you engage critically in our discussions or ask engaging questions about the subject. I WILL OFFER YOU ALTERNATIVES, but please see me ASAP if you're concerned about your participation grade because you're shy or if you don't understand these requirements. Telling me at the end of July that you didn't participate because you're the quiet type or because you didn't understand what "thoughtful" meant will be too late. I emphasize participation as a way to assess your understanding of the course materials in conjunction with online posts. This class doesn't simply measure what you "read" and can regurgitate; instead, I try to evaluate how you negotiate the course material through discussions. The material might not be new to you—TV shows, video games, commercials, etc.—but this course asks you to rethink your ways of knowing in order to become more culturally aware critics of new media and society in general. Students can't show their critical faculties if they don't participate in class discussions.

Work Requirements

The ability to read college-level texts critically is a major requirement. In addition to the textbooks above, you have readings on Canvas. Students must have the readings read prior to coming to class and must bring the readings with them to class. Although some might claim to be able to "get by" without having read, don't assume that you can get a decent participation grade without having read. Your participation grade may be lowered for not having read for class. You do not have to print the readings

out and bring them to class, but I still expect you to be able to discuss the readings, so have notes. The full citations are given in the calendar section of the syllabus. In addition to participation, students will complete two written essays, a multimodal essay/project, online posts/responses, and a presentation. 5000-level students have an additional presentation as well as more involved requirements for their essays. The final presentations will be during the regularly scheduled final exam time: **Wednesday, May 9, 2018 6:30-9:15 pm.**

Assignments/Grade Distribution

ENGL & WGST 4000-level	Pts.	ENGL & WGST 5000-level	Pts.
Critical Analysis of Culture Essay	100	Critical Analysis of Culture Essay	100
Critical Media Analysis Essay	100	Critical Media Analysis Essay	100
Multimodal Project	200	Graduate Student Theory Presentation	100
Participation	300	Multimodal Project	200
Discussion Board Posts/Responses	300	Participation	300
Final Presentation	100	Discussion Board Posts/Responses	300
		Final Presentation	100
Total	1100	Total	1200

All of the above must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course.

Grading Policy

Your final grade is supposed to reflect your entire work for the semester and will be based on the percentages below:

Grading Scale for Graded Assignments and Final Grade:				
A= 90 - 100	B= 80 - 89	C= 70 - 79	D= 60 - 69	F=Below 60

Definition of A, B, C, D, and F Grades

Remember, your final grade is a combination of the above assignments. An 'A' means your work was excellent—not mediocre, average, or just good. A 'B' means your work was good—not quite excellent but definitely above average and thoughtful. A 'C' means your work was barely adequate enough to satisfy the assignment—showing a lack of effort or thought for the assignment guidelines. A 'D' or 'F' usually means assignments were late, missing, or incomplete—often this work does not demonstrate appropriate college-level work for a 4000- or 5000-level course.

Late Work

An assignment is due at the beginning of the class for which it was assigned. All late work will reduce the assignment by 10% for each class period it is late. Therefore, an assignment worth 100 points that is one

class meeting late will not be able to have a grade higher than 90. If you will not or cannot be in class on the day an assignment is due, you should make arrangements to get the assignment to me via another student or put it in my mailbox. Remember, I will not accept assignments attached to e-mails.

Attendance

I will take attendance each day of class. It is very important that you attend every class in order to keep up with the work and reading. Your grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each day missed beyond **2** absences. After **4** absences you will receive a failing grade for the course. Please make an effort to come to every class and to get here on time. Please discuss any problems you may have regarding attendance or work before class if at all possible. Do not just skip class because you feel you have two "free" days. Save your absences for emergencies. I will have links to videos for you, but not everything is available online, so we will watch some videos during class. If you miss a class, do not expect to borrow the videos. There are no such things as excused absences. Only students participating in UNC Charlotte sponsored activities (with the proper documentation) will not be penalized for missing class. Cars break down, parking is limited, students get sick, and traffic is brutal, but class still happens. Also, please be respectful of the other students and get to class on time. If you are absent, get the information from another student. Do not expect me to e-mail the class notes to you. Of course, never e-mail me and ask, "so...like, Dr. Toscano, man...did we...like...you know...do anything the other day in class?"

Important Dates and Administrative Information

The syllabus schedule below has important dates marked. Students are responsible for not only knowing course deadlines but also knowing UNCC deadlines (drop/add, billing, vacation, etc.). Please visit the following link for the registrar's calendar: http://registrar.uncc.edu/calendar?tid_1=10&tid=41.

Academic Integrity

All UNC Charlotte students have the responsibility to be familiar with and to observe the requirements of The UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity. This Code forbids cheating, fabrication, or falsification of information, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials (such as Library books on reserve), and complicity in academic dishonesty (helping others to violate the Code). Any further specific requirements or permission regarding academic integrity in this course will be stated by the instructor, and are also binding on the students in this course. Students who violate the Code can be punished to the extent of being permanently expelled from UNC Charlotte and having this fact recorded on their official transcripts. The normal penalty is zero credit on the work involving dishonesty and further substantial reduction of the course grade. In almost all cases, the course grade is reduced to 'F.' If you do not have a copy of the Code, you can view it on UNC Charlotte's Academic Integrity Web site at <http://integrity.uncc.edu/>. Standards of academic integrity will be enforced in this course. Students are expected to report cases of academic dishonesty they become aware of to the course instructor who is responsible for dealing with them.

If you try to pass off any work in full or part as your own without proper credit being given to the original source, you will receive an 'F' in this course.

In addition to the above identification of Academic Dishonesty, students should be aware of technology-mediated concerns related to Academic Integrity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "integrity" as "The condition of having no part or element taken away or wanting; undivided or unbroken state; material wholeness, completeness, entirety." A second definition states that integrity means "The condition of not being marred or violated; unimpaired or uncorrupted condition; original perfect state; soundness." Therefore, anything that draws students' attention away from course activities and goals is a violation of academic integrity because it corrupts the soundness and condition of learning. For instance, engaging in critical thinking/awareness is a sound, perfect state activity for this course; on the other hand, devoting attention to facebook, instant messaging, non-class-related Web surfing or e-mailing, etc. violates or corrupts the learning goals of this course. Although we may point to the Internet in general and social media sites specifically in our discussions of 21st-Century communication, engrossing oneself in them during class to "catch up with friends" divides your attention and may be distracting to members of this class. This violation is as serious as plagiarism and will result in an 'F' in participation the first time and an 'F' in this course for a subsequent violation. This syllabus section is your warning.

You may also receive an 'F' in the course for other academic integrity violations specified on the UNCC Integrity Web site. Do not expect another warning--this is it. Please see me if you need further clarification regarding cheating, fabrication or falsification of information, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, complicity in academic dishonesty, or other violations of academic integrity.

Instructional Modifications

Students who have a condition that may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to meet with professionals to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Please inform me about circumstances as soon as possible. I do not need specifics, but I do need to know what accommodations to make. For information and assistance, contact the Disabilities Resource Center: <http://ds.uncc.edu/>.

Statement of Academic Freedom

I strongly encourage students to use class as a place for free inquiry and intellectual growth. Although we as a class will not always agree or be comfortable with the views of others, every student has the right to his or her own tastes and convictions. I promise to be fair and always support your right to look at the world from your own position, but **I encourage all students to branch out and consider multiple perspectives.** If you think texts have single, objectively reasoned meanings...well, you are about to get a radical new perspective in this course. Our biases filter our interpretations of the world around us. Family, culture, media, law, religion, etc. influence how we perceive the world. Your perspectives might be similar to those close to you, but your worldview is not universally held. **I will not tolerate any**

harassment or abuse (emotional or physical) or any instance where others adversely affect students' learning. Remember, harassment is not just verbal—I will not tolerate harassing or abusive posts.

Building "Issues" and Inclement Weather

Some buildings have A/C problems and class have to be canceled because it's too brutally hot to remain inside. If the A/C "issue" cancels class, keep up with the syllabus. We'll pick up where we left off on the syllabus when we return to class. Also, if anything else (i.e., weather) causes us to miss class, we'll pick up where we left off.

Right to Make Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, to compensate for missed classes, or to make our lives easier.

Schedule for Readings and Assignments

(Have readings and assignments done before class. Have [Canvas](#) posts up by 11:00 pm on Thursdays.)

January 10*	<p>Asimov, Isaac. "The Cult of Ignorance" (1980) on Canvas</p> <p>Bazerman, Charles. "The Production of Technology and the Production of Human Meaning." <i>Journal of Business and Technical Communication</i> 12.3 (1998): 381-387.</p> <p>Conniff, Richard. "In the Name of the Law: How to Win Arguments without Really Trying." <i>Smithsonian</i> 38.7 (Oct. 2007): 128.</p> <p>Fricke, David. "The E Street Band Keep Rolling in '09." <i>Rolling Stone</i> 1070 (22 January 2009). 14.</p>
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*January 16th: Big day for the semester:

- Last day to register. If you're not registered, you will not be allowed to continue in the course.
- 2nd Cancellation for non-payment 11:59 PM.

January 17 You should begin reading Malpas, Simon. <i>The Postmodern.</i> London: Routledge, 2005	<p>Habermas, Jurgen. "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article." <i>Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords.</i> Eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Keller. Trans. Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. 102-107.</p> <p>Fraser, Nancy. "What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender." <i>Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory.</i> Eds. Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1991. 252-256.</p> <p>Mervin, David. "The News Media and Democracy in the United States." <i>Democratization and the Media.</i> Ed. Vicky Randall. London: F. Cass, 1998. 6-22.</p> <p>Jefferson, Thomas et. al. "The Declaration of Independence." <i>An American History.</i> Vol. 2. Rebecca Brooks Gruver. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1972. A7-A8.</p>
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January 24	<p>Remember, you should be reading Malpas, Simon. <i>The Postmodern.</i></p> <p>McLuhan, Marshall. "The Medium is the Message." <i>Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.</i> New York: Signet, 1964. 7-21.</p> <p>Federman, Mark. "What is the Meaning of the Medium is the Message?" 2004. Retrieved 9 Jan 2018 from here (PDF).</p>
January 31	<p>Williams, Raymond. "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory." <i>Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords.</i> Eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Keller. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. 152-165.</p> <p>Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. "The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas." <i>Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords.</i> Eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Keller. Trans. Richard Dixon et. al. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. 39-42.</p>
February 7 WORKSHOP	<p>Critical Analysis of Culture WORKSHOP—you must have something printed out to exchange</p> <p>Fisher, Mark. <i>Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?</i> Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2009.</p>
February 14 **DUE**	<p>Critical Analysis of Culture DUE</p> <p>Jenkins, Henry. "Introduction: Worship at the Altar of Convergence." <i>Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide.</i> New York: New York UP, 2006. 1-24 and 261-262.</p>
February 21	<p>Curran, James, Natalie Fenton, & Des Freedman. <i>Misunderstanding the Internet.</i> 2nd ed. 2016</p>
February 28	<p>Steinem, Gloria. "Why Young Women are More Conservative." <i>Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions.</i> New York: Henry Holt, 1995. 229-237.</p> <p>Le Guin, Ursula. "A left-Handed Commencement Address." <i>Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places.</i> New York: Grove Press, 1989. 115-118.</p>
<p>March 5th – March 11th: No Class—Spring Break</p>	
March 14*	<p>Cline, Ernest. <i>Ready Player One.</i> 2011.</p>
<p>*March 19th: Last day to withdraw from a course with a "W" grade (and retain other courses)</p>	
March 21 WORKSHOP	<p>Critical Media Analysis WORKSHOP—you must have something printed out to exchange</p> <p>Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." <i>Theatre Journal</i> 40.4 (Dec. 1988): pp. 519-531.</p> <p>Barthes, Roland. "Novels and Children." <i>Mythologies.</i> New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. pp. 50-52.</p>
March 28 ** DUE**	<p>Critical Media Analysis DUE</p> <p>Movie day, <i>Killing Us Softly 4</i></p> <p>Wolf, Naomi. "The Beauty Myth." <i>The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women.</i> New York: William Morrow, 1991. 9-19.</p> <p>Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." <i>Screen</i> 16.3 (1975): 6-18.</p>
April 4	<p>McRobbie, Angela. "Feminism, Postmodernism, and the 'Real Me.'" <i>Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords.</i> Eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Keller. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. 598-610.</p> <p>Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience." <i>Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society</i> 5.4 (1980): 631-660.</p>

	<p>Vance, Carole S. "Social Construction Theory and Sexuality." <i>Constructing Masculinity</i>. Eds. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, & Simon Watson. New York: Routledge, 1995. 37-48.</p> <p>Seidman, Steven. "Sex Work." <i>The Social Construction of Sexuality</i>. New York: Norton, 2003. 114-122 and 144-145.</p>
April 11*	<p>Baudrillard, Jean. <i>The Gulf War Did not Take Place</i>. Trans. Paul Patton. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991.</p> <p>Eco, Umberto. "Travels in Hyperreality." <i>Travels in Hyperreality: Essays</i>. Trans. William Weaver. San Diego: Harcourt, 1990 (originally published 1968).</p> <p>Cowlishaw, Brian. "Playing War: The Emerging Trend of Real Virtual Combat in Video Games." <i>American Popular Culture Online Magazine</i>. January 2005.</p>
April 18	<p>Jameson, Fredric. "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." <i>Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</i>. Durham: Duke UP, 1991.</p>
April 25 **Due**	<p>Multimodal Projects DUE</p>
May 2	<p>Reading Day—No class meetings</p>
May 9 Wednesday	<p>Final Exam--Presentations</p>

Commencement May 11th & 12th