

NMED20H3 Theory and Practice of New Media, Fall 2008

Course Lecturer: Gita Hashemi

<http://newmedia.opinionware.net>

Time: Wednesdays 9:00-11:00 am – Location: MW223

Contact Info

Email: <gita.utsc@gmail.com> I only read on Mon and Tue mornings. Reply usually in 24 hrs. Please use *only* your UTSC email address to contact me. I will *not* read/reply to email sent from any other address. (Yes, I know I don't use the UTSC address myself!)

Office location and hours: B526D – Wed, 11:00-12:00 or by appointment (Email me.)

Tel: 416-287-7511 This is a shared phone. Email is the best way to contact me.

Course Description

Welcome. This seminar course provides an opportunity to reflect critically on the histories, theories and practices of “new media” from an interdisciplinary perspective. Using artistic/cultural production as a prism, a point of departure and a critical alternative to mainstream “new media”, we will start the course by reading through some of the theoretical texts of the mid-20th century that are significant in contemporary understanding and theorization of the intersections of technology, society, politics, knowledge, culture and art. In the second module of the course, we will focus on contemporary writing and specific “new media” practices – including artworks/artifacts – to further our critical analysis of the current media technologies and their impacts on social formations and cultural/artistic productions. In this module you will select your areas of interest from a provided list of themes and sources that focus on different areas of “new media” practice. The third module will be driven by topics, research and examples of your own interest that build upon 3-5 relevant themes/keywords from a list we will collectively develop. There is enough flexibility in the course structure for you to identify and pursue your area(s) of interest. The key factors for a productive experience are your intellectual curiosity, active participation and genuine effort.

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to challenge, inspire and prepare you for your senior project in the winter term. Engaged in reading, critical and creative thinking, writing, exploring, researching, viewing, presenting, discussing, debating and making, you will hone your skills in research, analysis and creative conceptualization while gaining a broader set of concepts and analytical tools for the study and production of “new media” work. As a senior seminar, this course is conceived and structured around **collaborative and self-directed research, study and production**. Here you are significantly more responsible to one another and for the work and learning that takes place.

A Note on Critical and Creative Thinking

In the context of this course and in general, critical thinking refers to the ability to engage in reflective and clear thinking about a subject in order to form an independent judgment about it. Critical thinking involves the following:

- identifying and understanding connections between ideas
- identifying, understanding and evaluating arguments
- identifying inconsistent, incomplete, out of context and/or erroneous reasoning
- identifying and evaluating the significance and relevance of ideas and arguments
- reflecting on and evaluating one's own beliefs, values, knowledge and experience in relation to the subject

Creative thinking is generally understood as engagement in generating ideas, possibilities, processes, combinations, patterns, experiences, objects. Critical and creative thinking are interdependent processes; one feeds and inspires the other. In this course, we engage in critical thinking about “new media” as a necessary and complementary component of the process of creating “new media.” Feel free to ask me why I put quotation marks around “new media.”

Course Policies and Expectations

Participation: As a seminar course, our work in class and outside primarily depends on your active participation. You will take from this course what you bring into it.

Attendance: Your continued and punctual presence is *required*. Please inform me in advance if you know you will be absent, and provide appropriate reason and documentation. I expect that you arrive for class on time. Late arrivals and unexcused absences will be noted and affect your attendance/participation mark accordingly. Please make the habit to be there and to be punctual.

Lateness: Unexcused late submission of any course work results in 2% deduction from the final course grade per day late. All assignments are due at the start of class on the due date.

Collaboration: You will do some of your course work in collaboration with your peers. It is absolutely important that you do the work you are responsible for within the time you agree on. I consider all group members equally responsible for taking initiative and communicating.

Readings and Explorations: Please read and/or explore the assigned material before attending the class in which they are going to be discussed. Lack of preparation will be noted.

Time Commitment: On average, this course will require 5-7 hours of dedicated study/work outside the class time. If you can't make this commitment, you probably should not be taking this course at this time.

Communication: You are responsible for checking the course website regularly for updates. As well, from time to time I will send out information as necessary to your UTSC email address. Please remember to check your email regularly.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the representation of the work of someone else as one's own work, and is a serious academic offense. I fully encourage you to draw from the material we engage with and discuss assignments with others in the class, but the work you actually submit should always be yours. Ideas and material obtained from any source should always be acknowledged and appropriately cited in your bibliography.

| Required Course Work | Weight | Due Date |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Report 1 – 500-word critical response | 10% | by Wed, 08 Oct 2008 |
| Report 2 – group presentation and webpage | 15% | by Wed, 05 Nov 2008 |
| Report 3 – group presentation and webpage | 15% | by Wed, 19 Nov 2008 |
| Senior Project Proposal – individual or group | 40% (note components) | Wed, 29 Nov 2008 |
| (Text 15%) | | |
| (Scrapbook 15%) | | |
| (Bibliography 10%) | | |
| Attendance and Participation | 20% | Ongoing |

We will form the groups and draw for dates in the first class.

All assignments are due at the start of class. Separate assignment description and criteria will be posted as we go.

Last day to drop without academic penalty: Sunday, November 16

Schedule and Readings (tentative)

All assigned readings are freely available online.

Module I: Defining the Field

Week 1 – 10 Sep 2008

What Is New Media?

Introductions

Week 2 – 17 Sep 2008

Technology, Participation, Education, Convergence

Brecht, Bertolt. “The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication.”

<http://www.tonisant.com/class/2001/fall/brechtradio.htm>

Follmer, Golo. “Audio Art”

http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview_of_media_art/audio/

Read only: Participation (2-3) and Intermedia (12-14)

Arns, Inke. “Interaction, Participation, Networking: Art and Telecommunication.”

http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview_of_media_art/communication

Read only: Reception, participation, interaction—from receptive to active participation (1-3)

Electronic space as “communications sculpture” (8-9) and

Collective and collaborative authoring in telecommunications projects (14-16)

Week 3 – 24 Sep 2008

Technology, Perception, Democracy

Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Modules/MC10220/benjamin.html#Top>

Week 4 – 1 Oct 2008

Technology, Knowledge, Information, Imagination

Bush, Vannevar. “As We May Think.”

<http://www.ps.uni-sb.de/%7Educhier/pub/vbush/vbush-all.shtml>

Whitehead, Jim. “Orality and Hypertext: An Interview with Ted Nelson.”

http://www.ics.uci.edu/~ejw/csr/nelson_pg.html

Module II: Exploring Current Practices

Group reports and presentations 1

Week 5 – 8 Oct 2008 – Selections from Themes and Readings List A (on separate sheet)

Week 6 – 15 Oct 2008 – Selections from Themes and Readings List A

Week 7 – 22 Oct 2008 – Selections from Themes and Readings List A

Week 8 – 29 Oct 2008 – Selections from Themes and Readings List A

Module III: Places to Go

Group reports and presentations 2

Week 9 – 5 Nov 2008 – Student proposed themes and readings

Week 10 – 12 Nov 2008 – Student proposed themes and readings

Week 11 – 19 Nov 2008 – Student proposed themes and readings

Week 12 – 26 Nov 2008 Proposal presentations (We may have to schedule an additional meeting during the study break in place of a final exam.)