Course Description

“The digital revolution is far more significant than the invention of writing or even of printing.” Computer visionary (and inventor of the mouse) Douglas C. Engelbart’s assessment of the impact that digital media have on our lives provides the critical framework for our course. The most basic cultural techniques such as reading and writing are constantly being remodeled as the digital era advances, to a point where we have difficulties defining our cultural achievements and preferences in the categories used in pre-digital times. Our new ways of reading, learning, knowing, playing, and interacting all have little left in common with the practices of the previous generations.

Thus, our course is organized along the axis of basic notions of the self (reading, writing, learning, connecting, being, producing) that we will discuss from the vantage points of the humanities and the social sciences. Our course will commence with a discussion of the concepts “media” and “culture” by revisiting some of the traditional theories of these notions. Our first unit then will focus on digital literature: the genre of “interactive fiction” will allow us to appreciate the repositioning of the reader vis-à-vis the text and the redefinition of the author / creator. The unit on gaming will trace the advancement of the gamer as one of the new cultural avatars of the self. The unit on social media will explore how they allow users to perform a self, casting off their rootedness in authenticity and identity. Knowledge, likewise, has been transformed as shown in the unit on hacking.

The course will end with a discussion of the societal and political context in which digital media are used and produced.

Readings:

Book to be purchased:

All other course materials either will be placed on Latte or are available online.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand major developments in digital cultures and the relevance of media studies in the digital age
- Understand main concepts of digital media practices
- Acquire critical skills to analyze specific media and media practices
- Identify societal, economic and political parameters and contexts of digital media
- Formulate persuasive contributions to current debates on digital culture
Grading Policy:

- Attendance / participation / preparation 20%
- 1 presentation on assigned reading 20%
- 1 written analysis of a project from the Electronic Literature Collection 20%
- 4 responses (on Latte) to four different modules) 400 words each 20%
- Final paper (2500 – 3000 words) or Final media project (with permission of instructor)) 20%

Total 100%

Graduate students will be graded on participation and a final seminar paper (20 - 25 pages)

Options for topics of essays will be distributed throughout the semester.

University Policies and Regulations
We will adhere to all university policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to students with mobility, visual, hearing, medical, psychological and learning disabilities; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination.

Please address any issues early and contact me immediately if you wish for academic accommodations due to a documented disability. In this case, you would need to register with Disabilities Services and Support to verify your eligibility for appropriate accommodations as soon as possible.

Core Values:
http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/corevalues.html
http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/corevalues.html

Academic Integrity:
http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/ai/index.html
http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/ai/index.html

In addition, please review Brandeis' Rights & Responsibilities edition.
Syllabus  Fall 2017: ENG 160a: Digital Media and Culture

Module I  Reading / Data Mining

Week 1
Thursday, August 31
Introduction

Week 2
Tuesday, September 5

Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message” (From M. McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. 1964). (Latte)


Thursday, September 7

Week 3
Tuesday, September 12


Thursday, September 14


Week 4
Tuesday, September 19

Roberto Simanowski, “Reading Digital Literature: A Subject Between Media and Methods.” In Roberto Simanowski, et al. eds. Reading Moving Letters: Digital Literature
Thursday, September 21  Rosh Hashanah: No class

Module II   Writing / Designing / Engineering

Week 5

Tuesday, September 26

Thursday, September 28

Select a project from the Electronic Literature Collection and prepare a short presentation on this project.

NB: Written analysis of project due!

Week 6

Tuesday, October 3 (Brandeis Thursday)


Thursday, October 5: Sukkot: No class

Module III   Gaming

Week 7

Tuesday, October 10
NB: Short essay due (in hard copy)

Wednesday, October 11: Tuesday schedule

Veli-Matti Karhulahti, “Defining the Videogame,” Youtube Lecture at the Philosophy or Computer Games Conference, Bergen 2013

Alternatively: In Game Studies 15:2 (2015). (Latte)

Thursday, October 12 Shimini Atzeret: No class

Week 8

Tuesday, October 17

Thursday, October 19 (midterm grades due next day)


Module IV Self / Selfie / Being / Performing

Week 9

Tuesday, October 24


Thursday, October 26

Week 10

Tuesday, October 31

Thursday, November 2

Week 11

Tuesday, November 7

Thursday, November 9

Module V Knowing / Hacking

Week 12

Tuesday, November 14

Tuesday, November 16

Week 13

Tuesday, November 21

Thursday, November 23 Thanksgiving: No class

Module VI Producing / Controlling

Week 14

Tuesday, November 28

Thursday, November 30

Week 15

Tuesday, December 5


Thursday, December 7