

# Digital Media Composing & Critique

## Sample Syllabus

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### **Course Description:**

Our world is increasingly awash in digital information. After more than two decades of internet and mobile phone usage, research is starting to emerge about how a state of hyper-connectivity affects our lives, minds and relationships. In this course, we will explore this research, as well as conduct some of our own. How might mobile phones, broadband internet, video games and social media be changing how we think and communicate? What might be the social impact of “filter bubbles” and “fake news”? And what might it mean to be literate in an age of seemingly unlimited information?

In answering these questions, students will compose with sound, image, text and video. Each student will first create a personal website. This site will be used to track the progression of the student’s research. By the end of the semester, it will contain eight blog posts, two textual essays, two multimedia essays, two videos, a TED Talk-style presentation, a podcast or audio essay, and a multimedia presentation. Taken together, these artifacts will constitute a digital portfolio, showing what the creator has learned about our evolving relationship with technology.

### **Learning Goals:**

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Articulate some of the emotional, cognitive, ethical and political implications of an increased reliance on digital media technology.
- Explain what it might mean to be literate in a digital age.
- Create a website capable of serving both personal and professional needs.
- Use text, images and video to compose a multimedia essay.
- Edit a short video.
- Produce a short podcast or audio essay.
- Use video, text, images and sound to create an engaging multimedia presentation.

### **Primary Course Readings:**

- Susan Greenfield – *Mind Change: How Digital Technologies Are Leaving Their Mark on Our Brains* (Excerpt)
- Eli Pariser – *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding From You* (Excerpt)
- Mark Deuze – “Media Life”
- Barry Wellman – “Little Boxes, Glocalization, and Networked Individualism”
- N. Katherine Hayles – “Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes”

### **Supplemental Material (TED Talks):**

- Sherry Turkle – “Connected, But Alone?”
- David JP Phillips – “How to Avoid Death By PowerPoint”
- David JP Phillips – “The Magical Science of Storytelling”
- Tristan Harris – “How A Handful of Tech Companies Control Billions of Minds”

### **Computers & Software:**

In this class, we will use the following software programs:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- WordPress (online blogging platform)
- Audacity (audio editor)
- ShotCut (video editor)

These programs are available for free, and for either PC or Mac. You will need access to computer capable of running them. Please bring your laptop to every class.

### **Assessment:**

Participation is essential. To get a passing grade, you must complete every assignment. You should also be prepared to speak (and write) in every class meeting.

Your final grade will be based on the degree to which you: 1) complete every assignment as directed; 2) present evidence of sustained effort and engagement; and 3) progress towards achievement of the course learning goals.

The relative weight of each task is as follows:

- |                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| • Participation             | 15% |
| • Blog Posts                | 15% |
| • Essays                    | 30% |
| • Non-Essay Multimedia Work | 30% |
| • Website Design            | 10% |

### **Public Writing:**

To get better at composing, you must get feedback. As such, in this class, be prepared to share everything you create. If you wish, you can set your personal website to “private,” which means only people in the class will be able to view it.