DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES
TRENT UNIVERSITY

CUST 1535H: Introduction to Media Studies

2020 F
Peterborough

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Course Description

New media is everywhere. It leaks into our personal relationships, shapes our social obligations, informs our imaginations, and constructs our identities. In recent years, academics have cobbled together relevant methods and theories in the hopes of better understanding contemporary media culture. However, while learning these different approaches can be useful, there are also very good reasons to begin studying media through a critical engagement with one's own experience. Our course focuses on applying approaches derived from experience as a way of coming to terms with the complex media environments in which we live. Readings and weekly topics have been selected to directly address your experience, while course assignments invite you to develop critical perspectives on the cultural, social and political practices of digital culture.

Calendar Description

An introduction to media studies that starts with students' own experiences of contemporary media. It seeks to give students an understanding of these media and how they emerged. Leads into second-year courses in the history and theory of media, in changing media practices, and in digital culture.

Course Format

This course will be taught remotely through the Blackboard Learning System. The main components of the course include:

One weekly (pre-recorded) lecture, and one synchronous (recorded) Q&A session.

1) Weekly (pre-recorded) lectures. You will find these in digestible (10-15 minute) clips, along with other relevant material, in the sidebar pages on Blackboard.

N.B.: Each lecture page will have instructions for required media content, which will be provided either through clips that you can view directly from Blackboard, links to webpages, or links to material from the Bata Library.

2) Weekly synchronous (recorded) Zoom Q&A will be held on Thursdays, 4:00PM-5:50PM, for the duration of the school term. You can find a link to these sessions in the Zoom Live Sessions sidebar page on Blackboard. These meetings will be led by the Professor and TAs in conversation with students. *You are strongly encouraged to attend these sessions*.

3) Tutorial sessions have been scheduled by the Registrar but will NOT be meeting. Having said that, the TA who has been assigned to your tutorial session is responsible for evaluating your work, and they will remain the primary contact for you throughout the term. Please become familiar with your TA's name and contact information.

Texts and Materials

McLuhan, Marshall (1967) *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. This volume is available at the Trent Bookstore for home delivery. You can also find cheap copies online.

Other required texts are available for free on Blackboard, online, or through Trent Library's online resources, as indicated. *Please read through our weekly schedule on the syllabus for details on required course reading*.

Learning Objectives

Upon completing the class, you will be able to:

• Develop critical perspectives on digital media, including social media.
• Evaluate how new media informs perceptions of time, space, and society.
• Enhance your writing skills by providing summaries and convincing arguments.
• Test your speaking and presentation skills.

Office hour

I am available on Zoom each Wednesday at 1:00-2:00PM, or by appointment. Details will be made available on Week 1.

Evaluation

Your grade for this course will come from the following:

Media Ecology Analysis Paper   Oct. 1   25%

Online Tests (x3)	Sept. 24, Oct. 22 & Nov. 19	15%
Methods of Meaning: Go Viral!	Nov. 5	20%
Final Exam	TBA	30%
Participation	Ongoing	10%

1. Media Ecology Analysis Paper
Due date: October 1st, 11:59PM on Blackboard
Weight: 25%

In this assignment, you are required to write an analytical paper based on your reading of Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. You will probably notice that this book is a little unusual. The challenge to you, the reader, is to make sense of this material, and to commit your thoughts to writing. Consider the following questions (and/or make up your own): What is McLuhan's overall thesis? Why did McLuhan choose to convey his work using such an odd format, and is it effective? Do you think McLuhan's work is still relevant, despite the fact it was written in the 1960s – why or why not?

The assignment must be 2,000 words in length, not including bibliography. It MUST abide to the MLA citation style as found here: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/. Please note that MLA style includes in-text references, bibliography and formatting. Please use .docx format.

2. Online Tests (x3)
Due dates: September 24th, October 22nd and November 19th.
Weight: 15% (3 x 5%)

On each due date listed above, these end-of-module tests will be made available on Blackboard and released during the second hour of our scheduled Zoom sessions. These tests will evaluate your knowledge of course material, including lectures, readings, discussions and media supplements for the duration of the module.

3. Methods of Meaning: Go Viral!
Due date: November 5th
Weight: 20% (2 parts x 10%)

Global usage of TikTok nearly doubled during the pandemic, making it one of the fastest growing platforms in the industry. TikTok's video format offers a rich arena for thinking about the construction of meaning through images, the development of sharing communities, algorithmic culture, and political solidarity. In this assignment, you will have an opportunity to participate in the TikTok maker community, while also developing a strong analysis of its mass appeal.

This assignment has two, equally weighted parts:

Part 1: Create three (3) TikTok videos that aim to "go viral." Navigate the layers of meaning that are embedded in the platform's latest trends, and develop a series of videos that you can use to contribute to the ongoing conversation regarding TikTok's growing significance in the world of social media. This assignment is *not* intended to evaluate your work based on the

number of "likes," "shares" or "adds" that your video manages to produce, but rather on the creativity and the degree of thoughtfulness that you invest in the final product.

Part 2: Write a paper that critically examines your TikTok productions. This paper must demonstrate your strong grasp of the methods that we cover in Module 2 – namely, semiotics and audience theory – as well as your ability to integrate conceptual or analytical tools and media content. The paper must be 1,200-1,500 words in length, not including bibliography. It MUST abide to the MLA citation style as found here: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/. Please note that MLA style includes in-text references, bibliography and formatting. Please use .docx format.

You will need to submit your assignment twice:

1) Submit all your material for this assignment (i.e. videos + reflection paper) onto Blackboard's "Assignment Uploads" page.

2) Submit an additional copy of your favourite video onto the Discussion Board forum titled "Methods of Meaning: Go Viral!" Feel free to comment on other videos submitted for this assignment, as being active in this forum will contribute toward your participation grade. More details will be provided before the deadline for this assignment.

4. Final Exam
Due date: TBA
Weight: 30%

A final exam will be held during the Exam Period. _Students are expected to be available during this period._ The content will be based mainly on required course readings, but also on lectures, discussions, forum contributions, etc. It will include two (2) sections: i) multiple choice) questions, and ii) essay questions. The exam will be 2 hours in length. More details will be provided closer to the end of term.

5. Participation
Due date: Ongoing
Weight: 10%

Teaching remotely is not ideal, especially when it comes to evaluating a student's participation. For that reason, we have developed a number of different avenues where you can achieve a strong participation grade. Consider participating in one or more of the following:

1) The Discussion Board. Here you will find forums dedicated to each of the four modules in the course. Each week of class, you may contribute to the forum by asking questions, and by developing conversation around the issues and concepts explored in class. These conversations will help you make sense of the material, and build a sense of community.

2) Engage your professor and TAs during the weekly Zoom Q&A, either through audio or video conversation, or through Zoom's "chat" function.

3) Post messages on the course Discord page (invitations will be issued on Week 1). For this option, you must download the Discord app onto your computer.

4) Post on Twitter or Instagram with the hashtag #1535medialive.

5) Engage your professor and TAs during scheduled office hours or through email. (Cf. "How to Email Your Professor": https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from failure on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's *Academic Integrity Policy*. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more: www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity.

Access to Instruction

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and documentation from a regulated health care practitioner and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in a course, the student should contact the Student Accessibility Services Office (SAS) at the respective campus as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

Devices

You will need access to a computer and a reliable internet connection for this course.

Late Penalties

I will deduct marks at a rate of 5% per day (not including weekends) for late assignments, barring instances of verifiable illness or family emergencies. Please be mindful of the due date for each assignment. *If you need to be accommodated for a specific circumstance, please contact your TA as soon as possible.*

Schedule and Readings

MODULE 1: MEDIA ECOLOGIES

Week 1: Introduction: What is media studies?
Sep. 10

Required: Angela Misri, "This is the Internet We Were Promised."
      http://shorturl.at/apwNY

      Raymond Williams, "Communication" (pp. 72-73), "Culture" (pp.87-93), and "Media" (pp. 203-204), in *Keywords*. (Blackboard)

Media: Stuart Hall, "The Founding of Cultural Studies." (Excerpt)

Week 2: Media ecologies 1
Sep. 17

Required: Start: Marshall McLuhan (1967) *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*.

Media: Kevin McMahon and David Sobelman (2002) *McLuhan's Wake*.

Week 3: Media ecologies 2
Sep. 24

Required: Finish: Marshall McLuhan (1967) *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*.

<< Test #1 on material from Weeks 1, 2 & 3 >>

MODULE 2: METHODS OF MEANING

Week 4: Reading (on) the internet: Brain drain?
Oct. 1

Required: N. Katherine Hayles, "How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine." https://goo.gl/6hPpEl

                          Sherry Turkle, "Growing Up Tethered." https://goo.gl/kqZIHc

<< Media ecologies paper is due >>

Week 5: Reading (on) the internet 2: Signs, images & meanings
Oct. 8

Required: John Berger et. al., *Ways of Seeing*, pp. 7-34. (Blackboard)

                          Thomas Seboek, *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics*, Chapter 1. (Blackboard)

Recommended: Cady Lang, "How the 'Karen Meme' Confronts the Violent History of White Womanhood." http://shorturl.at/cijB8

Media: Alexis O'Hara, "Toxically Defensive uber-Karen."

                          Christina Petersen, "Viral Aesthetics: Before and After COVID-19." (video)

Week 6: Audience Theory

Oct. 15

Required:	Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding." https://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/SH-Encoding-Decoding.pdf
	David R. Croteau and William D. Hoynes, "Active Audiences and the Construction of Meaning." (Blackboard)
Recommended:	Rob Horning, "How TikTok Turns Status Games into Spectator Sports." https://frieze.com/article/how-tiktok-turns-status-games-spectator-sports

MODULE 3: POLITICS AND PARTICIPATION

Week 7: Politics and participation
Oct. 22

Required:	Henry Jenkins, "Why spreadable doesn't equal viral." https://goo.gl/lfI6Cx
	Victor Pickard, "Media and Politics in the Age of Trump." http://origins.osu.edu/article/media-and-politics-age-trump
	Nicholas D. Mirzoeff, "How Ferguson and #BlackLivesMatter Taught Us Not to Look Away." https://theconversation.com/how-ferguson-and-blacklivesmatter-taught-us-not-to-look-away-45815
In Class:	André Panisson, "The Egyptian Revolution on Twitter."

<< Test #2 on material from Weeks 4, 5 & 6 >>

Reading Break
Oct. 29

Week 8: Geopolitics, tech & labour
Nov. 5

Required:	Naomi Klein, "Screen New Deal: A High Tech Coronavirus Dystopia." https://theintercept.com/2020/05/08/andrew-cuomo-eric-schmidt-coronavirus-tech-shock-doctrine/
	Mark Pupo, "Animal House." https://torontolife.com/tech/truth-tech-insider-got/
Media:	Franco Berardi, "After the Future" (video).
	McKenzie Wark, "Hacker Manifesto" (video).

<< Methods of Meaning: Go Viral! is due >>

Week 9: Privacy, community, ideology
Nov. 12

Required: Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "The Leakiness of Friends, or Think Different Like Me." (Blackboard)

MODULE 4: TECHNOLOGY, EMBODIMENT, RESISTANCE

Week 10: Algorithms, automation, AI
Nov. 19

Required: Nick Seaver, "Knowing algorithms."
https://goo.gl/bz1T3T

                        Kevin Warwick, "The Philosophy of AI." (Blackboard)

<< Test #3 on material from Weeks 7, 8 & 9 >>

Week 11: Technology, embodiment, resistance 1: Cyborg
Nov. 26

Required: Steve Mann, "The Right to Think." (Blackboard)

                        Donna Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto." (first 5 pages) (Blackboard)

Media: Peter Lynch (2001) *Cyberman.*

Week 12: Technology, embodiment, resistance 2: Spatial media
Dec. 3

Required: Adriana de Souza e Silva and Eric Gordon, "Net locality." (Blackboard)

                        Paul Kingsbury, "Walter Benjamin's Dionysian Adventures on Google Earth." https://goo.gl/mGM6pF

Recommended: Josh Synenko, "COVID-19 and the Politics of Locations."
http://shorturl.at/gnDFQ

                        Katherine Cross, "Augmented Reality games like Pokémon Go need a code of ethics—now." https://goo.gl/3f3E92

<< Exam Prep Session >>