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Media Studies 255

**Final Exam**

Read all the instructions in the final exam instructions carefully before beginning! You’re required to write into this document, and adding the necessary pages. Re-save this file as your own, and submit it to me on December 11, 2018.

**Essay Question I.**

**New technologies have always produced unintended consequences. One result of this would be how UX designers and engineers face a number of new ethical challenges today with the rise of technology regarding our interaction with it and dependence on it.**

**What is the primary job of a UX designer? Discuss the principle ethical quandaries faced by UX designers. What is persuasive design? Discuss the ways you feel this positively and/or negatively affect user behavior.**

Beyond the ethical dimensions of professionals in their respective fields is the UX designer. UX designers are trained professionals with the primary job of improving usability and extending productivity. They use user scenarios as exhibits to fix previous issues and mistakes. UX designers set out to change the way people innovate. Their primary task is to be a problem solver who can visualize complex data in order to find the right solution.

They begin at the very forefront of a product’s prototype. With the intents of realizing the complete potential of the product, they will go beyond certain measures to achieve just that. A large aspect of their job is beta testing a product prior to the fully realized design being released for sale. Generally, in user scenarios, personas are created from its common demographic. This helps to answer questions in the gathering of data.

For usability testing they process an actual user’s thorough experience of the product to release any holes in its design. Most of these problems get solved when they figure out just how usable the product is. User experience designers can be great solutions to the problems an organization faces with their products in the market. But, UX can also be part of the problem.

There are principal quandaries of this job that regard most of the big issues, although not all. The main issue is that of automated things replacing people or diminishing their work. From the industrial revolution, technology has paved way for maximizing potential of a machine beyond of what humans are capable. Therefore jobs that previously would have hired a person, are now operated by a machine. This increases productivity at a lower cost, but the cost it has to socio-economics is greater.

As designers trained in their field, UX professionals develop skills to be really good at their job, too good. A user’s experience can shift from harmless to harmful, without realizing the play the designer issued unknowingly. Unfortunately, although it should be within the designer’s best interest to prioritize wellness of users, they are trained well enough to be able to manipulate experiences in favor of another direction. For example, a UX Designer can develop and sell an monitoring software for parents to keep an eye on their children. This invasion of privacy against the child, especially if it’s involuntary, is an awful thing to do to their dignity. Sometimes parents don’t need to know everything. But they will still persuasively sell the products as if they are in their consumer’s best interest.

A Venn diagram can portray this paradigm shift. On one side is the user, on the other is the content. The overlap is where the conflict lies. Users and content are created from one another but each maintain its own parts. UX designers have as large social responsibility to ensuring safe integration of technologies into people’s lives. They will obviously note the favorable shifts of new tech, however they must be willing to accept conflict. They must promote truly looking out for the best interests of the customers, rather than searching for ways to keep the customer coming back and buying more technology.

**Essay Question II.**

**The rise of digital technology has had a massive impact in the international creative community. Small digital video cameras and editing software have made it easier than ever for aspiring filmmakers to make a movie. Inexpensive recording software has done the same for musicians. Digital photography now rivals the traditional chemical process for resolution, while image manipulation is simpler and more sophisticated than ever before. Ultimately, the Internet provides a worldwide platform for artists of all stripes to share his/her work.**

**What are some of the core characteristics of the digital world? Discuss how these have impacted the arts. What are some specific developments that have impacted artists? In what ways are they unrewarding and in what ways are they beneficial?**

The digital world has brought unprecedented power. Large and powerful companies are creating media for audiences that that are much more powerful too. Audiences now more than ever, operate both as potential producers and consumers, but also and as figures who are interconnected enough to schedule their own media and are more easily able to deliver feedback to media producers via digital and social media. Audiences are more difficult to attract and impress given the sheer volume of media out there.

The convergence of digital technology with the traditional art of creating content means there is a bandwidth of content wherein the best will rise to the top. The demands for of this are new forms of media that conform to these new conditions. Successful media in this concentrated market is that of more interactive and participatory so it may be better received. Modern prosumers seek media that integrates the internet and social media into it’s very fabric, and can perform across multiple platforms. Media that manages to integrate or comply with distinctions between demanding an active audience, and citizens that may prefer to receive content passively. Media that understands how to commodify to our desires for activity enables social media. This fairly democratic tool means everyone has an equal opportunity to be a part of a conversation. Artists are enabled to connect with niche audiences, providing them with an outlet to engage with their fans, which did not exist beforehand.

The internet has given rise to the everyday producer, now any average person can be sharing content within their niche. The internet today is defined by the multitudes of niches within every genre and subgenre that unites and empowers people with those that are like-minded to them. Those that find their place in a community are more likely to be an active participant and producer, in the digital world that operates the same as in real life, or IRL.

The emergence of the term “platform” is key to modern culture. A platform is not media itself, it's the devices by which we consume media, with the networks that connects us to content. This can be in many formats, for example, an early platform would have been a disk drive with a multimedia player. Today, the list is longer and more complex, with platforms constituting everything from social media, blogs, wikis, video games, marketplaces and more. This is also where the idea of an influencer has been derived. Influencers are the term given to average people who happen to have a following on the internet, and thus a lot of power. This platform is often where the promotion of a voice, or a message, reaches a lot of people.

The convergence of consumers and producers marks a cultural shift where consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections across dispersed media content. This is also an intellectual and cognitive process as we put these pieces together and do our own research and homework on what we consume as media today.

**Essay Question III.**

**Human enhancement technology converges nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science to improve human performance, attempting to temporarily or permanently overcome the current limitations of the human body through natural or artificial means.**

**Discuss some specific developments in human enhancement technology. Do you have trouble with the idea of these technologies making us stronger, faster, better? Do these advancements come at any cost? Such as privacy issues or a question of morals? What technological innovation do you think we need most and why?**

The rise of new technologies- from artificial intelligence to synthetic biology- has reached beyond traditional computing and is now working on human enhancement. Emerging technologies in the field of medical research is of value to both researchers and physicians interested in the development and future of modern medicine, in which new technology plays a predominant role. This wave of the future comes with its share of controversies, those that agree with helping mankind, and those that believe we’re messing with a system God intended for us. Any science fiction story will be quick to tell you, technology that has gone too far is going to be more detrimental than the positive effects it ever would have had. We challenge the debate over where exactly that line is drawn.

Thanks to 3D printing, the creation of a printed object using an additive process, any prototype from a screen can be produced into a tangible object. The world of medicine in general has made advancements over the past century than all of the time the world has existed prior. With the help of a 3D printer, opportunities are endless. Physicians can create limbs and organs, as well as silicon sensors and so much more. These can be applied to enhancing human capacity, but more so to treat illness and disability. Obviously, technology has infiltrated fundamental aspects of the body and even of our reality of self.

This is set to alter the world, the human condition, and our very being. In ways that are hard to imagine, patients are receiving treatments that are still being developed at a very rapid pace. These advancements will prolong the lifespan of human beings. Our bodies, like any natural organism, decay over time. Deployment of technological innovations into the systems of the body that are no longer up to par is reversing the natural way of the world. Some worry about the ethical cost of this, about how human enhancement technologies can be implemented in a truly socially responsible way. Technology is increasingly becoming biology, as if humans are attempting to take over nature, and allowing for technology to advance as far as it may.

People maintain control over voluntarily inserting invasive and non-invasive technologies into their bodies and their lives. By paying attention to collective values and individual rights, the limits of human enhancement can be protected. The right to opt in to certain technologies should remain open, and we should never allow robotization or virtualization to change our human rights(Van Keulen). As long as we are still asking questions about the social impact of new technologies, we will remain aware of problems that may arise. Debating issues at an early stage will steer concerns in favor of individual choice. When businesses are developing new products, they must believe user interests are first and foremost, as well as citizens trusting that products are paying attention to their betterment. The fusion between people and technology should force us to keep our values and norms in mind during product designs and information systems.

DeFelice, A. “255\_WEEK10\_Art & Technology”. Kiely Room 315, Queens College, NY. 6 November 2018. Powerpoint/Lecture.

DeFelice, A. “255\_WEEK13\_Creative & Future Thinkers”. Kiely Room 315, Queens College, NY. 27 November 2018. Powerpoint/Lecture.

DeFelice, A. “255\_WEEK09\_UX Professionals and Beyond”. Kiely Room 315, Queens College, NY. 30 October 2018. Powerpoint/Lecture.

Van Keulen, Ira. “Why Human Enhancement Technology Requires Technological Citizenship.” Rathenau Instituut, 13 Apr. 2018, www.rathenau.nl/en/why-human-enhancement-technology-requires-technological-citizenship.