**English 25: Literature and the Information, Media, & Communication Revolutions**

**(DISCUSSION SECTION)**

**Spring  2022**

**Professor Alan Liu**

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**Main Class Website Quick Links:**     [Schedule](https://alanyliu.org/courses/english-25-2022-spring/schedule/)   |   [Assignments](https://alanyliu.org/courses/english-25-2022-spring/assignments/)   | [Front Page](https://alanyliu.org/coursetype/undergraduate/)

**Goals & Format**

After the past two iterations of this course taking place in a purely virtual and asynchronous form, this quarter we’ve resumed in-person lectures and discussion sections. Two major goals we should aim to achieve with our discussion section:

1. Explore and discuss core concepts and central ideas (sometime quite complex) introduced in the assigned readings and discussed in the lectures. Any ideas in the readings you find intriguing or confusing, this is the place to raise them.

2. The assignments and section activities are designed to enhance your critical thinking and writing skills.

The basic format of the section is guided by the above twin goals. Each week, we will kick off discussions with your postings on this GauchoSpace forum. Our section will begin with the presenter(s) briefly go over their thoughts on the presented reading (5 min max), followed by a discussion guided by the repliers’ posts (I’ll pinpointed a few important and interesting replies and questions from your postings as our conversation-starter).

**One (1) required forum “presentation” and eight (8) weekly responses to presentations. More on Presentation and Responses below.**

***Presentation posts will be posted by 11:59 pm PDT on the Thursday of your assigned reading week (for example, if you choose to present on the Week 2 reading “Is Google Making Us Stupid?,” then your presentation post will be due on Week 2 Thursday at midnight); responses will be posted by 11:59 pm PDT on the Friday after the presentation posting.*** If you find that you are unable to post or reply in time for any week, please let me know beforehand.

**Presentation Post**

* Every student will choose one reading to “present” in the discussion forum.
  + During Week 1 you’ll introduce yourself and sign up for a presentation in the Discussion Forum. You can see the list of possible readings in one place, broken out by due date, [here](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11PxHlBl9qy8j7S1wDw5UkTFUP99qQcvwV-mufBrGJ6E/edit#gid=0).
  + Presentations are 200-300 words.
  + Presentations are due by 11:59 PM on Thursdays, starting Week 2.
  + You do **not** need to respond to posts the week you present.
  + In most weeks, there will be multiple presentations, each by a different presenter.
* All students who are not presenting choose one presentation per week and write a response:
  + Response is 100-200 words.
  + Response is due by 11:59 PM on Fridays (excepting the first week)
* **Presentation posts are essentially a critical summary of the text of your chosen.** Here is a recommended format you may consider as a reference in drafting your posts.

***A strong critical summary should consist of three components: Teasing out the Thesis, Clarifying the Grounds, and Illuminating the Stakes.***

**Thesis**: Start your summary by stating the reading’s thesis. You may quote a single sentence of thematic weight from the reading or synthesize a series of points considered essential to the overall theme into one or two sentences. Consider to structure your thesis in this format:

*In [title of the reading], [author's name] argues that...*

Most often, the claim will be about *cause-and-effect* or *definition-of-terms*. For example, in the first week’s reading on McLuhan and Walter Ong, the major claims of the excerpt can be summarized by the following statements:

*In "The Medium is the Message," Marshall McLuhan argues that "the medium is the message." McLuhan means that what makes a technology important is not the contents of the messages it delivers, but how it changes people's interactions with each other and the world around them.* (definition of terms)

*In*Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong argues that the invention of writing changed the way humans think and what they consider to be knowledge.* (cause and effect)

The rest of your summary will consist of an explanation of the thesis. In the Ong example above, you would expect that the first paragraph may explain what they considered to be knowledge before the invention of writing. The second paragraph may explain how writing changed such perception.

**Grounds (Evidence)**: In the course of your summary, be sure to mention the evidence that the author uses. Returning to the Ong example, he draws the backbone of his argument from anthropological study of oral cultures, and you should include that fact explicitly.

*Ong's evidence for the change in human thought comes primarily from the field of anthropology. In particular, he quotes extensively from the work of Milman Pary on epic poetry in Eastern Europe.*

In general, tell us the link between an author's claim and main evidence in support of the claim.

**Stakes**: By the end of the summary, tell us why the author thought their claim was important. ("What is at stake?") The stakes of an argument are usually either epistemic (about theoretical ideas) or pragmatic (about real-world problems).

*At stake, for Ong, is the question of what it means to be a human. Our relationship to the things and people in the world around us are not the same in all times and places, but varies depending on our technologies for recording knowledge. A "human" therefore is not something that occurs in nature, but is dependent on context.* (epistemic)

*For McLuhan, media are the condition of social organization. When he discusses the automation of factories, he is concerned about the resulting unemployment among "low-skilled workers" and the rise of "knowledge workers" who manage the automated plants. Specific groups of people will gain and lose jobs thanks to various media.*(pragmatic)

* If your presentation is on a fictional or creative text, pay attention to the textual strategies employed by the author. What kind of imagery, metaphors, symbols, plot structure, and narrative points of view are used by the author? How do the textual choices correlate with the story/content of the text? What kind of emotional effect do the choices generate for the reader? ***Do not summarize the plot.***

**Response Post**

Following the presentation post, there will be a thread of replies responding to either the reading itself, your peer student’s summary, or any related ideas you want to bring to our section’s attention. *A response post should be 100-200 words (one paragraph). Due on Fridays 11:59 pm.*

All students who are not presenting in a given week are required to make at least one response to a presentation of their choosing. (If there are no presentation postings scheduled for that week, you may comment on anything of your interest in the readings and lectures of the previous week.)

Responses will be much simpler and less structured than the presentations. A few examples of responses may include:

* Questions you have about the reading that remain unanswered by the lecture and presentation
* Ideas from the reading or Professor Liu's lecture that you find intriguing or confusing and want to explore further
* Important ideas you’d like to comment on in previous replies
* Direct responses to other questions in the thread

**Section Grading**

Your participation grade in the class (16.6 % of total grade) is determined by your postings in the discussion forum (1 presentation summary + 8 replies) and your attendance/active participation in the section discussion.

*For non-section activities, like essays and midterms, refer to the* [*Assignment*](https://alanyliu.org/courses/english-25-2022-spring/assignments/) *section of the course site for grading.*

**Office Hours**

I’ll be holding office hours in both in-person and virtual capacities. You may choose to come to my office at SH 2432 – U, or access my Zoom meeting room. Address information below:

Zoom Link: <https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/3239835225>;

Meeting ID: 323 983 5225

Please note, if possible, send me a quick email in advance if you’re coming to meet for the week.

*This syllabus is provisional and subject to modification. All policies and information provided in the course website apply to this section syllabus.*