Digital literacies

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**Key words:** digital literacies, multileracies, new literacy, semantics, new media, communication theory, youth media, media studies, software studies

# Description

How do multimedia, texting, chat, status updates, and hypertext change the way we read and interpret texts? Students study various theories of literacy and how it changes with the introduction of digital technologies. Readings will include selections on new media, new literacy, multiliteracies, multimedia cognition, and visual semantics.

This foundational course provides students a conceptual framework to critically interpret digital media, and to author powerful and effective digital documents. Students have the opportunity to practice and develop these skills, which are central to many aspects of the degree in Educational Technology.

# Class Information

**Instructor:**

* [Matthew X. Curinga](http://matt.curinga.com), [mcuringa@adelphi.edu](mailto:mcuringa@adelphi.edu)

**Class meetings:**

Classes meet 9am-1pm at Adelphi Manhattan.

1. Wedenesday, 8/20
2. Thurdsay, 8/21
3. Friday, 8/22
4. Saturday, 8/23
5. Tuesday, 8/26
6. Wedenesday, 8/27
7. Thurdsay, 8/28
8. Friday, 8/29

**Office hours:**

* Wed, Thurs, Friday, 12-1pm

# Goals & objectives

Two overarching goals drive this course. First, students should understand the literacy skills required to critically interpret digital texts. Second, they should learn how to communicate effectively using the tools and techniques of digital media. More specifically:

* Students will develop a conception of “digital literacy” as a multifaceted, social process of decoding audio and visual symbols and signals.
* Students will gain a familiarity with a range of research perspectives which engage with digital literacy.
* Students will refine their understanding of the affordances of a range of media, and these features’ implications for literacy.
* Students will confront and assess their own preconceived ideas about literacy and technology skills and how learners acquire them.
* Students will be able to create a variety of digital texts to communicate in different genres and for multiple purposes.
* Students will be able to articulate the cultural and political implications of communication, with attention to concerns of power and equity online and in classrooms.

# Class sessions

## Day1: Critical literacy

### Readings due:

Freire, P. (1971). Chapter 2 from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (M. B. RAMOS, Trans.). New York: Herder and Herder.

Gee, J. P. (1989). What Is Literacy? *Journal of Education*, *171*(1), 18–25.

Delpit, L. D. (1992). Acquisition of literate discourse: Bowing before the master? *Theory into Practice*, *31*(4), 296–302.

### Workshop

* HTML

## DayDay 2: Multiliteracies

### Readings due:

The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92.

### Workshop

* Screencasting

## Day 3: New Media

### Readings due:

Manovich, L. (2007). “What is new media?” from *The language of new media*. MIT Press.

### Workshop

* Shooting & editing digital video

## Day 4: Media Literacy

### Readings due:

Baker, F. W. (2012) Teaching Media Literacy from *Media literacy in the K-12 classroom*. International Society for Technology in Education.

Barthes, R. (1972). “Operation Margarine” and “Myth Today” from *Mythologies*.

### Workshop

* Gimp

## Day 5: Reading Images

Debord, G. (1967). The Commodity as Spectacle from *The society of the spectacle*. New York.

Mitchell, W. J. (2005). There are no visual media. Journal of Visual Culture, 4(2), 257–266.

### Workshop

* Diagramming

## Day 6: Representation

### Readings due:

Fanon, F. (2000). The fact of blackness. In L. Back & J. Solomos (Eds.), *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (pp. 257–266).

Nakamura, L. (2013). Digital racial formations and networked images of the body. In N. Mirzoeff (Ed.), *The visual culture reader (3rd ed.)*, (pp. 644–654). London ; New York: Routledge.

### Workshop

* Spreadsheets

## Day 7: Information and Data

### Readings due:

Tufte, E. (2001) The cognitive style of PowerPoint.

### Videos (in class):

* Steve Rambam: Privacy: A postmortem (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5otnMs0jSQ)
* Alessandro Acquisti: Why privacy matters (http://www.ted.com/talks/alessandro\_acquisti\_why\_privacy\_matters.html)

### Workshop

* GIS Data (CartoDB)

## Day 8: Computation

### Readings Due:

Deleuze, G. (1992). Postscript on the Societies of Control. *October*, *59*, 3–7.

Grover, S., & Pea, R. (2013). Computational Thinking in K–12: A Review of the State of the Field. *Educational Researcher*, *42*(1), 38–43.

### Workshop

* Open studio

# Assignments

## Digital portfolio

You will create a digital portfolio that highlights your understanding and proficiency with various digital literacies. You will be adding items to this portfolio throughout the course. You *must* show a breadth of expertise, with basic proficiency in each area of digital literacy. You will host your digital portfolio on your Adelphi panther account.

### Item 1: HTML/Hypertext

HTML is the basic building block of the Web and the most pervasive form of hypertext in use today. While most HTML is generated dynamically by web-based programming languages and/or GUI editors, understanding how to *hand code* html is an important piece of digital literacy for both consumers and producers of digital texts. Your portfolio will contain a home page, your resume/CV, and links to all of the other components of the portfolio identified below.

### Item 2: Digital Images

We live in a visual culture, and the ability to communicate using images is essential. The verb, “to photoshop” something has become common place in our society. Everyone’s portfolio must contain a **collage** where they exhibit their skills in digital image editing: cropping, scaling, selecting, composting, using layers, combining text and images. In addition to these *technical* requirements, your collage must also strive for expressive content, common in our study of new media: playfulness, non-linearity and multiplicity, irony/paradox, etc.

### Item 3: Digital Video and Audio

[100 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute](http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics/). Online video for teaching and learning have exploded, popularized by sites like [TED](http://ted.com) and [Khan Academy](http://www.khanacademy.org/) and video lectures in MOOCs. Your portfolio must include a 60 second video, where you teach *something*. The video can be made with footage that you shoot (with your phone, tablet, etc), find online and remix, create from still images, or “screencast” on your computer. Upload your video to YouTube and embed it in your portfolio.

### Item 4: Privacy & Security

Your portfolio must include a report of a **personal security audit**. Your audit will examine your digital and social practices to look for weaknesses. You must consider:

1. what **digital data** is most precious to you? do you have back-ups? how are they managed? can you restore them? if you keep your data “in the cloud”, can you retrieve it all at once? can you keep your own backup? *do you*? are you locked into a certain service (e.g. flickr, facebook, gmail)? are you locked into a proprietary format that would prevent you from switching? are their social/network pressures that influence you?
2. **financial security.** How do you choose passwords? How strong are they? Do you share them? Do you use them across multiple sites? What would happen if one of your passwords and email were stolen from a site you belong to? Can you list all of the sites/services that have financial information (e.g. CC, bank account, SSN)? In order, which of these do you think are the most secure?
3. **personal digital security.** Do you run a firewall on your desktop or laptop computer? Is there a password on your phone or tablet? If I stole your phone, what would I find? Do you encrypt any files on your computer? If I logged into your computer (or networked account) as you, what damage could I do? What steps do you take to minimize this damage?
4. **social security.** If I Google your name, what do I see? Would you want your mom to see it? Your (potential) boss? Do the top hits give the image you want to project? What if I look on Bing, Yahoo, or Duck Duck Go?  
   What about Facebook or that old MySpace account? How much information is public, or shared with your “networks” (i.e. everyone on Facebook)? What is the worst case if your FB account were hacked? What if you have a falling out with a close friend or lover? If you were hoping for a job at the Mayor’s office and they asked to see your personal FB account, would you still get the job? Do you care?

Write up your finding, (self) recommendations, and any changes that you have already made in a one-page report (~300 words).

### Item 5: Data literacy

The networked society is characterized by the problem of overabundance rather than scarcity of information. This means you must be able to to gather, analyze, and communicate large amounts of data. While not all of this information is quantitative, this portfolio item focuses on quantitative analysis. You will demonstrate your data literacy skills by:

1. Finding and downloading an interesting (and sufficiently large) data set.
2. Analyzing it using spreadsheet software.
3. Discovering something interesting in the data.
4. Creating a multimedia (textual and visual) representation of your interesting finding (like a series of graphs or an infographic).

## Seminar Leader

Each student will lead the discussion part of our class, where they spend extra time preparing to discuss the readings and devise strategies and prompts to facilitate a good discussion. The leader will not create a presentation, but will be an active participant in the seminar discussion. Discussions will typically take one of our class time.

## Participation

Your participation in the class is crucial for the class to succeed for all of us. You are expected to attend every class meeting and to arrive on time. You should treat your peers professionally and with respect. You should come to class prepared to discuss readings and other work. Lastly, you should turn in all assignments in a timely manner.

## Grading

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Item | % of grade |
| Portfolio | 80% |
| Seminar leader | 10% |
| Participation | 10% |

# Web & Digital Media Toolbox and Resources

## Software & Tools

The first step in becoming a web developer is to get your computer set up to start writing code and testing it out. At the very least you will need a text editor and a web browser. I’m guessing you have a web browser already.

This short, curated list is the software we will be using.

* Text Editor
  + [Sublime](http://www.sublimetext.com/) (free trial, Mac, Win, Linux)
* Browser
  + [Firefox](http://www.firefox.com), our go-to browser, better with [the firebug extension](https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/firebug/)
  + [Safari](http://support.apple.com/kb/dl1531), to get a second look
  + [Chrome](http://www.google.com/chrome/), to test you site in Chrome
  + [Internet Explorer](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/internet-explorer/download-ie), you might as well take a look in IE, too, either on your old windows box or in emulation
* Source control
  + [git](http://git-scm.com/downloads)
* FTP/SFTP/SCP Clients
  + [FileZilla](https://filezilla-project.org/download.php?type=client), cross platform
  + [CyberDuck](http://cyberduck.io/), mac
  + [WinSCP](http://winscp.net/eng/index.php), windows
* Windows stuff
  + [PuTTy](http://www.chiark.greenend.org.uk/~sgtatham/putty/), ssh client
  + [Cygwin](https://www.cygwin.com/), create a GNU/linux-like terminal on Windows. This is a big install, but worth it if you are going to stick with windows
* Linux
  + Linux is a great platform for programmers and web developers
  + many of the software is written/test on linux
  + many guides assume linux
  + your public website, eventually, will run on linux (in all likeliness)
  + so, check out [Ubuntu](http://www.ubuntu.com/) and maybe give it a shot, especially if you have a Windows laptop
* Virtualization
  + want to try linux but can’t commit?
  + want to install IE but hate Windows?
  + give [VirtualBox](https://www.virtualbox.org/) a shot
* Media editing
  + [Gimp](http://www.gimp.org/) for photo editing and raster images (instead of photoshop)
  + [Inkscape](http://inkscape.org/) for vector graphics (like SVGs)
  + [Audacity](http://audacity.sourceforge.net/) for editing and creating audio files
  + [LibreOffice Draw](http://www.libreoffice.org/features/draw/) is great for creating charts and diagrams, good for flowcharting and wireframes of software/sites you’re working on
  + Color picker: a tool to find the hex or RGB code for colors on your desktop
    - OSX (built-in): [DigitalColor Meter](http://www.techrepublic.com/blog/apple-in-the-enterprise/discover-the-digitalcolor-meter-tool-on-your-mac/)
    - Win: [List of Eyedropper](http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/eyedroppers-color-pickers-for-designers/)

## Books and online resources

### Documentation & Reference websites

* [World Wide Web Consortium](http://w3.org)
* [Mozilla Developer Network](https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/)
* [jQuery](http://jquery.com/)
* [W3 Schools](http://www.w3schools.com/)
* [Regular Expressions](http://www.regexr.com/)

### Books

* [HTML and CSS: Design and Build Websites](http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1118008189.html), our textbook
* [JavaScript & jQuery: Interactive Front-End Web Development Hardcover](http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1118871650.html), also J. Duckett, same series
* [Dive into HTML 5](http://diveintohtml5.info/) [free online]
* [The Elements of Typographic Style Applied to the Web](http://webtypography.net/toc/) [free online]
* [Mastering Regular Expressions](http://shop.oreilly.com/product/9780596528126.do)

### Tutorial websites & online learning

* [Code Academcy](http://www.codecademy.com/)
* [P2PU School of webcraft](https://p2pu.org/en/schools/school-of-webcraft/)
* [Treehouse](http://teamtreehouse.com/) [paid]
* [Thinkful](http://www.thinkful.com/)
* [GeekCamp::HTML5 Tutorial](http://www.geekchamp.com/html5-tutorials/1-html5-overview)
* [SkilledUp::Learn Web Design](http://www.skilledup.com/learn-web-design-guide/)

### Design, accessibility, UX

* [A List Apart](http://alistapart.com/topic/html)
* [Smashing Magazine](http://www.smashingmagazine.com/)
* [Nielsen/Norman Group](http://www.nngroup.com/articles/)
* [United States Section 508](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Section_508_Amendment_to_the_Rehabilitation_Act_of_1973)
* <https://www.section508.gov/>
* <http://webaim.org/standards/508/checklist>
* [Usability.gov](http://www.usability.gov/index.html)
* [Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines](http://www.usability.gov/guidelines/guidelines_book.pdf)
* [hex/html color chart](http://www.december.com/html/spec/color.html)

### Online Tools

* [w3c HTML Validation Service](http://validator.w3.org/#validate_by_uri+with_options)
* [w3c CSS Validation Service](http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/)
* [Pastebin](http://pastebin.com/)
* [HTML Formatter](http://www.freeformatter.com/html-formatter.html)

### Media Resources

* [Creative Commons Search](http://search.creativecommons.org/), for images, music, etc
* [Wikimedia Commons](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page), images and other media (including stuff from Wikipedia), curated
* [Open Clip Art](https://openclipart.org/), free vector graphics
* [Creative Commons Music](http://creativecommons.org/music-communities)
* [Fossil Bank](http://fossilbank.wikidot.com/)
* [Colour Lovers Palettes](http://www.colourlovers.com/)
* [DaFonts](http://www.dafont.com/)