Digital literacies & 21st century skills

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**Educational Technology 0858-501, Fall 2016**

**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 dates:** Monday, Aug 29 - Sunday, Dec 18

**Class meetings:**

This is an [*asynchronous* online class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asynchronous_learning), which will run on a weekly schedule, Monday-Sunday, beginning Monday, August 29. In asynchronous classes, there is no set time where the whole class “meets” online (e.g., via video chat). This does not mean that you will be working alone, or studying at your own pace. Each week, there will be short deadlines to post to the course websites and complete other assignments; many of these will be group assignments. You **must** commit to checking the online course materials (email, Moodle, Slack, & other communications) every day during the course. For us to be able to study together, it is crucial that everyone respect deadlines and submit their work on time.

**Office hours:**

* Tuesday 3pm-5pm, Manhattan Center
* Thursday 12-2pm, online
* *office hours by appointment*

# 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 tex, 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

### Dates and Schedule

| Week | Start | End | Topic | Due |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Aug 29 | Sep 04 | Critical literacy |  |
| 2 | Sep 05 | Sep 11 | What is Literacy? | Web portfolio |
| 3 | Sep 12 | Sep 18 | Multiliteracies |  |
| 4 | Sep 19 | Sep 25 | New Media |  |
| 5 | Sep 26 | Oct 02 | Studio workshop | Collage |
| 6 | Oct 03 | Oct 09 | Media Literacy |  |
| 7 | Oct 10 | Oct 16 | Remix |  |
| 8 | Oct 17 | Oct 23 | Images & Visuality |  |
| 9 | Oct 24 | Oct 30 | Power, Media, & Race |  |
| 10 | Oct 31 | Nov 06 | Power, Media, & Gender | Video critique |
| 11 | Nov 07 | Nov 13 | Privacy & Security |  |
| 12 | Nov 14 | Nov 20 | Visualizing data |  |
| 13 | Nov 21 | Nov 27 | Data Workshop | Media analysis |
| 14 | Nov 28 | Dec 04 | Coding culture |  |
| 15 | Dec 05 | Dec 11 | Computational Thinking |  |
| 16 | Dec 12 | Dec 18 | Visual programming | Data report |

## Week 0: Getting ready for Digital Literacies

Before our first class meeting, you must get your environment set-up and be ready to go.

Please go through this checklist:

* can log into Moodle and Google with your adelphi.edu account
* can shoot and capture video of yourself (and audio)
* have done a practice google hangout with a friend
* created an account on our Slack team (<https://auedtech.slack.com/signup>) using your mail.adelphi.edu email (Slack is group chat that we will be using for informal help/discussions), join the #diglit channel
* check out [Adelphi’s Online Readiness Course](https://moodle.adelphi.edu/course/view.php?id=75374) for students

This is a technical course, and expects students to come with some basic technical expertise. In particular:

* you should be an *advanced* user of your own computer:
  + you should be comfortable installing and configuring new software
  + freeing up room on your hard drive if it is full
  + backing up important work
  + understanding how (and where!) files are stored on your computer
* you should be a competent user of the internet:
  + be able to install necessary plugins to access different media
  + understand basic internet troubleshooting
    - when you can’t reach a website, is the problem on your end or on the website’s end?
    - what do you do if you can’t connect to the wifi in your home, library, or cafe?
  + have a system for generating and securing passwords and logins for multiple websites
* you should be an advanced user of media:
  + can transfer photos and video from your camera or phone to your computer
  + can download and play video in audio in multiple formats (.avi, .mov, .mp4, .mpg, .aac, .mp3, etc)
  + can particpate in video chat, with good clear audio and video (use headphones for sure, and an external mic if possible)
    - you have done this using Skype, Facetime, Google Hangout, or similar software

## Week 1: Critical literacy

### Readings due:

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

## Week 2: What is Literacy

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.

## Week 3: Multiliteracies

### Readings due:

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

## Week 4: New Media

### Readings due:

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

## Week 6: 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.

Watch: “Fifteen Million Merits” *Black Mirror* Season 1, Episode 2.

## Week 7: Copyright, Copyleft, & Remix

*No readings, only videos this week*

Open Source Cinema. (2006). [Lessig Remix.](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFdcPc-4Ris) YouTube. [Video 00:04:34]

Lessig, L. (2011). [Two Things, Not One.](https://youtu.be/TadjlMDQdG4) [Video 00:20:28]

Kirby Ferguson. (2012). [Embrace the remix.](http://www.ted.com/talks/kirby_ferguson_embrace_the_remix.html)[Video 00:09:43]

Leadbeater, C. (2005). [The era of open innovation.](http://www.ted.com/talks/charles_leadbeater_on_innovation.html) TED Talks. [Video 0018:58]

Question Copyright. (2011). [Copying Is Not Theft](http://youtu.be/IeTybKL1pM4?hd=1) [Video 00:01:00]

## Week 8: Images & Visuality

### Readings due:

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.

## Week 9: Power, Media, & Race

### 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).

Mirzoeff, N. (2015). [#BlackLivesLooking: A Year After Ferguson](http://tidalmag.org/blog/intensify/blackliveslooking-a-year-after-ferguson/). *Tidal*. (read online)

## Week 10: Power, Media, & Gender

### Readings due:

Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks*, 393–404.

## Week 11: Privacy & Security

*No readings, just video*

Watch [*Citizenfour*](https://thoughtmaybe.com/citizenfour/)

## Week 12: Visualizing Data

### Readings due:

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

## Week 13: Data workshop

*No readings, just data workshop.*

## Week 15: Coding culture

### Readings due:

Ford, P. (2015). [What is code?](http://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2015-paul-ford-what-is-code/) *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 11. (read online)

Kang, C., & Frankel, T. C. (2015). Silicon Valley struggles to hack its diversity problem. The Washington Post.

Kang, C., & Frankel, T. C. (2015, July 16). [Silicon Valley struggles to hack its diversity problem.](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/silicon-valley-struggles-to-hack-its-diversity-problem/2015/07/16/0b0144be-2053-11e5-84d5-eb37ee8eaa61_story.html) *The Washington Post.*

## Week 14: Computational thinking and CS4All

### Readings Due:

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

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

## Week 16: Visual programming

*No readings, just some coding.*

# Assignments

## Digital portfolio

### Item 1: Web Portfolio

For this course you will be setting up and creating your own website that will showcase you work in this class. You will use the hosted [Wordpress](http://wordpress.com) content management system for your site. Your portfolio will be assessed on its logical structure/organization, its usability, and its use of design and other digital media elements to enhance its appeal and message. In short, your portfolio should demonstrate your mastery of the specific tools made available by Wordpress, and of the general techniques of expressing ideas through a multimedia website.

### Item 2: Digital Collage

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. You will create a **collage** where you exhibit your 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. You are free to choose the subject and style of your collage.

**Links:**

* [Wikipedia Collage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collage)
* [Flickr Collage Tag](https://www.flickr.com/photos/tags/collage/)
* [Pinterest Collage Search](https://www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?rs=ac&len=2&q=collage&term_meta%5B%5D=collage%7Cautocomplete%7C0)
* [DeviantArt Collage Search](http://www.deviantart.com/browse/all/?section=&global=1&q=collage)
* [Quick Start to Making a Collage in Gimp](http://www.ehow.com/how_8416142_make-collage-gimp.html)

### Item 3: Youth Media Video Critique

This is a group project. All group members will receive the same grade. Working with your group, you will produce one video critique of a youth media topic.

The main *point* of the video is to practice and display your critical media analysis skills. To do so, though, you will also need to produce a high quality amateur video.

Technically, your video must have:

* clips from each person on your team (either voice over or on-screen)
* still images or video clips to illustrate your points
* multiple cuts with simple transitions (e.g. fades)
* an opening title screen with text

### Item 4: Media analysis

While we will be writing short reading response posts on most weeks, during this course you will also write a more formal paper where you analyze a piece of digital media, using the frameworks discussed in our readings. The paper must ~1,000 words in length. For this paper we will practice peer editing and the drafting/revising process that is essential to writing high quality scholarly work. You should select a new media work (website, software/app, film, tv show, etc) and offer an original analysis of it. To complete your analysis you should refer to the various analytic frameworks we have studied in this course. Your analysis is not a summary or description of the work, but a pointed critique that uses the work you are analyzing to offer new insight and new ideas.

### Item 5: Data report

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).

## Participation

Your participation in the class is crucial for the class to succeed for all of us. You are expected to post your work on time. You should treat your peers professionally and with respect. Your participation grade will be based on your efforts in Wordpress reading responses and comments, and in participation in Slack.

## Grading

| Item | % of grade |
| --- | --- |
| Web portfolio | 10% |
| Collage | 20% |
| Video critique | 20% |
| Media analysis | 20% |
| Data report | 20% |
| Participation | 10% |

# Web & Digital Media Toolbox

## Software & Tools

* Web Browsers
  + [Firefox](http://www.firefox.com), our go-to browser
  + [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), find a Windows computer to see how your site looks in IE
* 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

## Books and online resources

### 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)

### 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/)