2018 Spring, ENGL 3726 02 New Media
Haerin Shin
MWF 11:10am-12:00pm, Buttrick 308
Office Hours: MWF noon-1:30pm (or by appointment), Benson Hall Room 419

The Space between 1s and 0s: Digital Media and the Posthuman Vision

"Lulled into somnolence by five hundred years of print, literary analysis should awaken to the importance of media-specific analysis, a mode of critical attention which recognizes that all texts are instantiated and that the nature of the medium in which they are instantiated matters." — N. Katherine Hayles

Course Description

As breakthroughs in medical and computer science continuously expand the scope of our bodily and mental presence, the question concerning technology – the role it plays in defining our being and reality, its functional mechanism, and the effects such new methods of mediation exert upon our perception and cognition – presses us with an ever-growing urgency. How do we define and know who we are, and how does one certify his or her own existence, in an age when mechanical augmentation, extension, or even replacement of the body is a realistic venture, and the properties of the human mind can be reproduced, preserved, and/or emulated in the form of digital code? If the human body and its operational constitution could be compatible with that of machines, and self-evolving machines could interact with or even replace humans in their intellectual capacity, what does being human and discerning the grounds of the reality we inhabit involve, and mean? Do new mediatory means reconfigure the way in which we perceive, comprehend, and in turn build the world we live in? This course explores how new media represent, reflect on, and inspire ontological discourses by focusing on the structure and workings of digital and other types of telepresence technology. Students will examine how presence and its representation have transitioned from analog to digital, and organic to mechanic channels of mediation and instantiation. Course materials and exercises will, include reading/writing/interfaces in print (static) and digitally networked media, ranging from twitter fiction, film (digital/CGI), animation (cell/digital), videogame, comics (digital/web), and television show by authors/directors/artists such as Philip K Dick, Ted Chiang, Jennifer Egan, Oshii Mamoru, and Neal Stephenson. The primary texts and varied activities, including field trips and guest lecture, will be paired with critical/theoretical readings.

Course Objectives

-   Interrogate what "media" (and other related terms and concepts such as mediation and representation) means across temporal, cultural, material, and relational parameters
-   Think about the new-old dynamic in media. What would qualify as new media, and why? How does the old become new, and new grow old? How does this process influence our perception and cognition?
-   Examine and engage with various media instantiations (their workings, structures, effects, evolution, and interrelations)
-   Explore how the changing mediascape of the past, present, and future (the advent of the digital age) shape our understanding of being and reality

- Develop critical skills to situate and comprehend the texts within the social and historical rubrics from which they were conceived and are currently consumed
- Acquire the tools (vocabulary, concept, historiography, etc.) to critically think and write about media

Moving Images Screening (Film/TV/Animation)

"The Heavenly Creature" (Dir. Jeewoon Kim) from *Doomsday Book*: in-class screening
Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence (Dir. Oshii Mamoru): separate screening, details TBD
(also available for rental or purchase on Amazon Video)
Black Mirror Season 2 Christmas special "White Christmas": available on Netflix

Required Texts/Programs/Gadgets to Purchase

Bioshock (videogame):
> Purchase PC version at http://store.steampowered.com/agecheck/app/7670/. You will need to create an account, download/install the program, etc. Play at home. Alternatively, you can go play the game at the Curb Center's Videogame Archive. More info to be shared in class.

Google Cardboard (gadget):
> Can purchase at https://www.google.com/get/cardboard/get-cardboard/ (or Amazon or various other vendors). Make sure to buy a model that fits your phone's specs. Alternatively, consult the Visual Resources Center on campus; they have various cardboard models you could check out for class use.
> http://researchguides.library.vanderbilt.edu/vrc

Snow Crash (novel)
> Acquire eBook version (Kindle or other)

All Other Readings and Materials available on Brightspace/Google Drive

Course Structure

The course will consist of readings/viewings, in-class discussions/activities/writing, Brightspace posts, guest speaker visits, field trips, midterm/final assignment submission, group presentations, and a final project/paper presentation (in the form of an academic conference). **You cannot engage with the in-class portion without reading/viewing the materials and completing the writing assignments on time, so make sure to come into class prepared! Also, the in-class portion is MOST IMPORTANT – attendance is crucial.**

Assignments

Readings
Make sure to read or view the materials before coming to class. This is a seminar; the class cannot "happen" without your thoughts and input.

Group Presentation (max. 30 min)
Students will form groups, choose a text, and kick start the first day of discussion for each primary material with a presentation. The presentation should include basic information about the text/author, historical context, suggested close-reading (or an in-depth look into the medium), and critical questions. Feel free to bring up current events that speak to the text; use visual media (powerpoint, video clips, images, etc.); or any other creative form of

presentation, such as engaging the class members in activities or assigning on-site research tasks. The presenters will also take a leading role in steering and prompting class discussion throughout the remainder of the class time after presentation. If you're planning to use visual aid, come early and have everything setup before class begins.

Don't fall into a routine; try to make your presentation unique, *and* effective. Creativity is also part of the assessment criteria. See "Group Presentation Guideline and Grading Criteria" document for more info.

Virtual Forum (VF) Posts and Responses on Brightspace

Go to the top menu bar on our class Brightspace page. Click on "Activities and Assessments," and select "Discussions" from the drop down menu. You'll see virtual forums for each of the key texts we are discussing in class. Post thoughts on or questions about the primary text on the night before the second day of discussion (after we have our opening group presentation), and also respond to another class member's post. Everyone will post AND respond for each of the assignments. The VF is an optimum platform for incorporating multimedia material – feel free to embed videos, images, etc. in your posts. The class will be divided into two groups: one group will post, and the second group will respond. *All posts and/or responses must be fully uploaded by 10pm* (see Weekly Schedule for specific dates). The purpose of the virtual forum is twofold: 1) to create an ongoing conversation beyond the confines of the classroom, and 2) assess writing skills and confirm full engagement (can't post or respond without having read the text!). Your thoughts matter, precisely because the issues we examine in this course urgently call for discursive engagement in our society at large. I will not be providing individual comments for each post/response, but I will be reading every single one of them, and seek ways to incorporate your reflections into our discussion. Also, the forum is designed to serve as a prompter for classroom participation. Having written the post/response, you will know what your classmates are thinking. It will then be easier to dive into the conversation. Moreover, having written the post, you will have something concrete to say about the text. Also, the forum would be a good place to practice compact yet effective writing, which is a most important skill for accomplishing a key objective of this course; create discourse, and contextualize, by staying attuned to and reaching out to the world. We live in an age when short texts abound, exerting an unprecedented degree of influence on public opinion. Think of Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, Tumbler, Snapchat, the text messages you exchange with your friends, and other forms of online communication. The Forum serves as a training ground.

Posts and/or responses should be AT LEAST 250 words long. Formal writing required. The forum resembles the blog platform, but what you're posting is NOT A CASUAL BLOG POST; use correct grammar and full sentences. The content could include questions about the text you wish to share with the class, close reading of particular passages/moments, comparative reading (compare the text with other class materials or current issues), etc.

Collaborative In-Class Writing

Students will form small groups and engage in collaborative writing in class, summarizing; expanding on; and critically examining key take-away points after having read the theoretical/critical texts. The objective of this exercise is not only to check on the reading progress, but also collaboratively produce a document students could consult and revisit for their own research. Also note that the exercise is designed to harness your collective intellect to enrich our reading. The classroom is not a place to passively receive and digest knowledge, but a forum where participants become active agents, *reclaiming and producing new*

knowledge. Theory or criticism may seem elusive and dense, but by crowdsourcing, we can harness the power of the mass to parse out details individual readings may miss out on, and produce a concrete reference material for future use. There will be a Google Drive document link available in the Syllabus and Guidelines folder. Bring your laptops on theory days.

Other Activities

Students will go engage in a variety of activities (including taking a field trip, listening to a guest lecture, debate, writing exercises, etc.) that speak to the topics we explore in class for the last day of discussion on the given text. The objective of these activities is to practice, apply, and engage with the learnings we gain from the primary and critical readings. By the time we walk out of the classroom at the end of the semester, I hope that each and every one of you would notice how the subject matters we talked about are not mere figments of imagination, but issues we all breathe and inhabit on a daily basis, across geographic, temporal, and cultural boundaries.

Midterm: Abstract or Project Proposal

(Due by Sun Mar 4 before midnight, upload to Google Drive)

There are two tracks for the midterm and finals: either write a research paper, or work on a creative project. Start thinking about your paper/project idea early on.

> *Research Paper Track*: Research Paper Abstract + Annotated bibliography
> Write on a material/subject of your choice that resonates with our course topic. You can work on one of the course texts, or branch out and find another that interests you. Compose and submit an abstract of the paper you plan to write. (max. 250 words long). Must contain a clear thesis, a brief description of the material or issue you plan to address, and an explanation of why and how you make your critical intervention. This assignment is designed to help you formulate ideas for your paper. Details such as the sources you hope to use may change at a later stage as you continue your research for the paper, but think carefully and set up a concrete structure/direction. Make sure to read the "how to write an abstract/proposal" document for more info. You can also find model abstracts and proposals written by other students in the Syllabus and Guidelines folder on Google Drive.
> The Annotated Bibliography should be appended to the abstract (at leave five sources): construct a preliminary list of readings/resources you have consulted or plan to consult to write the paper, and add short paragraphs for each entry, describing what the source is about, and why it will be useful. The annotations do not have to be too long; several sentences would suffice.

> *Creative Project Track*: Write a project proposal, outlining the content and objective of your project. Explain the content; why you chose to work with the theme/subject/material and how it relates to the course topic; and how the medium/form informs and embodies the content. Creative projects in previous courses have ranged from blogs and videos featuring essays, images, collections of interviews, and responses to current issues; social media accounts that address a certain topic, inviting the reader/viewers to participate in an online discussion; photo essays; graphic narratives; musical compositions; board games; and creative writing such as poetry or short stories. One page, single-spaced.

For either option, follow the MLA style guide, use Times New Roman font or similar (size

12), leave one-inch margins on all sides, paginate, and include a title and proper heading info containing your name, course title, etc. (see MLA style guide). Review and spellcheck thoroughly before submitting. NO TYPOS, grammatical errors, or sloppy citation. The same applies to your research paper/reflection essay (see the Final Product section below).

Use the following format for the file title: [your first name_abstract/proposal].
e.g. helen_abstract, or helen_proposal

Final Conference (5 min presentations)
The last two days of class will take the form of a formal academic conference (details to be announced in class). Everyone will deliver a five minute presentation on the final paper or project, in the fashion of an elevator pitch. You can bring and read a shorter version of your paper as you would at an academic conference; read or show an excerpt if you've been working on a creative project that has written or visual components; perform your project; or present in any other format you find most appealing, effective, and creative. Use of visual aid encouraged. Think of it as a flash version of TED talks (or IGNITE talks).

Final Product (due by Apr 23 Mon, before midnight, upload to Google Drive)

> *Research Paper Track*: 10~12 pages. Must include at least five secondary sources that support or illuminate your claim, such as scholarly articles, book chapters, newspaper or magazine articles, etc. Include a Works Cited page at the end. Clearly state your argument and provide evidence. Read the "Argument as Conversation" document in the Syllabus and Guidelines folder. Review and spellcheck before submitting

> *Creative Project Track*: Submit your product, along with a one page, single-spaced reflection essay on your project. The essay should have two components: one subjective, the other objective. For the subjective portion, explain what you learned and realized through the production process. For the objective portion, critically analyze your own work based on the discussions and readings we had in class. Treat your project like one of the class texts. See sample reflection essays from other classes on the Google Drive.

Follow the formatting guideline detailed above in the Midterm section.
Use the following format for the file title: [your first name_final paper]
e.g. Helen_final paper, or Helen_final project

Office Visit
We will meet individually at least once throughout the semester to discuss/brainstorm on paper ideas, the course in general, and/or other matters you would like to talk about. There will be a mandatory one on one conference day throughout the semester, for which you will sign up for an office hour visit sheet at some point before midterm submission. Also, I am more than happy to meet by appointment, so feel free to ask anytime. I can be easily reached by email.

Extra Credit Opportunities
Occasionally, I will be alerting you to campus events that are relevant to our course content.

If you attend any such event, you will be eligible for extra credit (e.g. make up for an absence, depending on the nature and length of the event, or other missed points from various assignments), if you submit a one-page reflection essay. The essay should explain what the event was about, when it took place, how it relates to our course, and what kind of learnings you gained from the event.

Grading Basis
(Read "Grading Criteria" document for more details)
- Attendance and active class participation (20%)
- Virtual Forum post and response (20%)
- Mid-term Abstract and Annotated Bibliography, or Project Proposal (20%)
- Presentation (15%)
- Final paper (25%)

Class Policies: Academic Integrity and Commitment
- **Always bring your laptop, unless I specify otherwise.** This is a digital media course, and all the readings are either online or accessed through digital means.
- **Be punctual. Observe all deadlines**. If you need deadline extensions, let me know at least a week in advance before the deadline, and provide a reasonable explanation.
- This is a tech-friendly class. Feel free to bring laptops or tablets. But please use them only for class-related purposes such as note-taking, in-class activities, or looking up references/info. No phone use in class.
- **Attendance is essential**. Each absence will be cause for a half-downgrade, unless there's a valid reason such as conference presentation or health related issues. Three late-shows (of over ten minutes) will count as an absence. **Let's not forget that coming to class late disrupts the flow of the class.** Chronic late-shows will be seen as a sign of disrespect for your fellow classmates and a lack of commitment to your academic obligations as a student.
- **Respect the Honor Code**:
  http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system#honorcode
- Students with Disabilities: Vanderbilt's Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, & Disability (EAD) Department handles requests for accommodation of disabilities. If you need course accommodations due to a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me and/or the EAD (2-4705) as soon as possible.
- If you're having difficulty navigating through the course or feel the need for help for any other reason, **email me or drop by to talk anytime**. Don't ever hesitate to reach out. Also, if you feel like you're **experiencing excessive stress or any other psychological crisis**, you can get help at the Psychological & Counseling Center (https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/pcc/).

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 8, 10, 12): Intro, Media and Mediation
Mon: Intro – Media and Mediation / Media, Form, Genre / Syllabus Overview
Wed: "The Allegory of the Cave," "The Medium Is the Message" open discussion
Fri: "Inventing the Medium" small group discussion

Week 2 (Jan 17, 19) Hypertextuality, Old and New
* Tue: Virtual Forum (VF) Post (Form/Medium and Content analysis, min. 250 words) on Wednesday's two readings, and Respond to another post (min. 250 words)
Wed: Group Presentation (GP) on "The Garden of Forking Paths" and "As We May Think"
Fri: Static Media (Books) and Hypertextuality: Field trip to Library Special Collections

Week 3 (Jan 22, 24, 26) The Mind as Medium
Mon: In-class screening of "The Heavenly Creature"
Wed: "The Heavenly Creature" from open discussion
Fri: Excerpts from *Superintelligence*, in-class writing

Week 4 (Jan 29, 31, Feb 2) Film and Digital Media
* Sun: VF P/R on "The Heavenly Creature," film sequence close-reading (250/250)
Mon: Film Terminology Chart/Reading a Film Sequence, THC in-class analysis
Wed: *The Language of New Media* open discussion
Fri: "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," *Sunspring* small group discussion

Week 5 (Feb 5, 7, 9) TV and Remediation, Old and New
* Watch "White Christmas" at home
Mon: GP on "White Christmas"
Wed: "White Christmas" open discussion
Fri: Reading Day

Week 6 (Feb 12, 14, 16) Code: Digital and Analog
* Sun: VF P/R (no limit) on the Remediated Self, digital/analog. (1) Gather your digital traces/instantiations (e.g. emails, blog posts, social media, etc.), and construct what you/others appear to take as your "self," bringing in quotes, images, etc. (2) Find a physical object of your own/making, and explain how it carries a trace/instantiation of yourself
Mon: Excerpt from *Remediation: Understanding New Media* small group discussion
Wed: "The Electric Ant" open discussion
Fri: Excerpts (Part I) from *My Mother Was a Computer* (~p49 mandatory reading),

Week 7 (Feb 19, 21, 23) Textual/Audiovisual Media
Tue: GP on "The Truth of Fact, the Truth of Feeling"
Wed: "The Truth of Fact" open discussion
**Innocence* Screening: Buttrick 102, Thursday February 22nd 7:30 to 10 pm.
Fri: Guest Speaker Vanessa Chang (Stanford U)

Week 8 (Feb 26, 28, Mar 2) Animation, Old and New
* Sun: VF P/R on *Innocence* (250/250). For "form/medium part, compare cell vs. digital

Mon: GP on *Innocence*
Wed: *Innocence* open discussion
Fri: "Reality Effects in Computer Animation," excerpts from "Unthought: the Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious"
        Small group analysis visit from CFT
*** Sun (Mar 4) 11:55pm (before midnight): Midterm Due**

Week 9 Spring Break

Week 10 (Mar 12, 14, 16) The Space between 1s and 0s
Mon: GP on *Snow Crash*
Wed: *Snow Crash* open discussion
Fri: *Snow Crash* in-class writing

Week 11 (Mar 19, 21, 23) Video Games (Led by Guest Speaker Terrell Taylor)
* Mon: VF P/R on SOMA
Mon: GP on SOMA
Wed: SOMA Open discussion
Fri: Excerpt from Bogost and more (TBD), in-class writing

Week 12 (Mar 26, 28, 30) Comics: New or Old?
Mon: GP on *We 3* (digital edition)
Wed: Guest Speaker Prof. Se Young Kim on Comics and We3
Fri: *Understanding Comics* and/or *Unflattening* in-class writing

Week 13 (Apr 2, 4, 6) Virtual/Augmented reality
* Sun: VF P/R on NYT VR (with Google Cardboard)
Mon: In-class Google Cardboard, Samsung Gear VR / *Pokémon Go*
Wed: Fieldtrip to Wond'ry
Fri: Intro to *Bodies in Code: Interfaces with Digital Media* in-class writing

Week 14 (Apr 9, 11, 13) Social Media
Mon: Guest lecturer Jennifer Gutman, "The Black Box" open discussion
Wed: How do the interfaces of the social media services you use affect and shape your perception, cognition, and social interaction?
Fri: *Control: Digitality as Cultural Logic* in-class writing

Week 15 (Apr 16, 18, 20) Final Conference Week
Mon: Conference Day 1 (10 min each per presentation)
Wed: Conference Day 2
Fri: Conference Day 3

Week 15 (Apr 23)
        Mon: Virtual Office Hour Day
*** Apr 23 11:59pm (before midnight) Final Product Due**