**LMC 3405:**

**MEDIA, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY**

Monday | Wednesday | Friday

2:00-4:30pm in Skiles 371

**Professor**

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Office Hours: by M 12 or by appt

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

How have contemporary media, such as comics, film, literature, video games, data visualization, and architecture, been used to shape popular conceptions of the environment, to challenge those conceptions and to propose radical alternatives? In this class, students will learn to analyze media representations of the earth, nature, sustainability, wildlife and wilderness in creative work across domains: a film by Hayao Miyazaki, a short story by Ursula K. La Guin, an interactive narrative by Jeremy Mendez and Leanne Allison, an installation by Natalie Jeremijenko, and a work of urban infrastructure here in Atlanta. The class will focus on unraveling various configurations of nature and technology in environmentalist creations and exposing their broad social, cultural and political implications. Such configurations might take the form of subject and frame, field and object, original and copy, native and foreign, or non-human and human. Moreover, we will engage with emergent work that seeks to complicate such oppositions as well as speculative practices that move beyond the role of critique. The class will make use of theory from both Media Studies and the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) to motivate a series of short essays and media collecting projects throughout the term. This course is part of the *iGniTe* program Sustainable STEM, coordinated by the Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

* **Textual/Visual Analysis:** Students will learn to read, analyze, and interpret cultural projects such as film, literature, art, architecture and digital media.
* **Interpretive Frameworks:** Students will become familiar with a variety of social, political, and philosophical theories and be able to apply those theories to creative projects, as well as to their own cultural observations.
* **Communication Skills:** Students will be able to gather, organize, and express information clearly and accurately with sensitivity to audience. They will be able to do so both by using traditional media and by tapping the potential of new computational media.
* **Historical Analysis:** Students will study cultural projects within a historical framework to become familiar with the various forces that shape artistic and commercial production. They will learn to interpret history actively, rather than passively accepting archival information.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

There are several types of assignments in this course: readings responses, collecting projects, papers, and an exhibition.

***Reading Responses*** Regular readings will structure the theoretical portion of the course. Each student should complete readings and prepare a short response by 2pm on the day of class. All reading selections listed on the syllabus are tentative. Additional readings may be assigned as supporting material along with projects and written assignments. Graded: Pass / Fail

***Collecting Exercises*** Students will be asked to contribute to a collection of media objects. The choice of objects should relate to the readings assigned for the same day. Students will make and submit a Google slide for their contributed object, including a brief description of the project in environmental terms. Specific instructions will be issued in due time. Graded: Pass / Fail

***Papers*** There will be two papers during the term. Paper prompts, to be distributed in due time, will ask you to make a claim and defend it in writing. A rubric will be distributed along with each paper assignment. Graded: A-F.

***Exhibition*** The course will culminate in an exhibition of media artifacts curated by the students. Details will be announced towards the end of the term. Graded: A-F.

The purpose of assignments is to give you regular, repeated practice exercising the learning outcomes of the course.

**GRADING**

In summary: Reading responses and collecting exercises will be graded pass/fail. Papers and the exhibition will be graded A-F. Class attendance will be graded A-F.

The grading scale for students will be:

* A: 90-100. This student demonstrates a thorough understanding and skilled use of class concepts and terminology. Moreover, s/he uses class concepts and terminology in such a way that s/he teaches us something new about the subject at hand.
* B: 80-89. This student demonstrates a solid understanding of and ability to use class concepts and terminology. However, s/he may demonstrate the need to learn more about some aspect of the subject at hand or may need to continue practicing pulling together key concepts and ideas.
* C. 70-79. This student generally grasps the key concepts and terminology of this class, but cannot yet use them consistently to provide in-depth analysis of class materials.
* D: 60-69. This student fails to understand or use class concepts and terminology much if at all in class or projects. S/he may also fail to provide accurate or in-depth analyses of the topic at hand or texts associated with it.
* F: 0-59. This student demonstrates a complete lack of understanding about the subject at hand. S/he may also fail to complete major assignments in an appropriate and/or timely manner.

Your final grade for the class will be calculated as follows:

20% Class Attendance

10% Collecting Exercises

10% Reading Responses

10% Exhibit

25% Paper 1

25% Paper 2

***Deadlines*** All assignments will include submission instructions and a due date. Late reading responses and collecting exercises will receive a failing grade. Late papers and projects will be penalized one letter grade (10%) per day. Those turned in on the due date, but after the specified deadline will be penalized half a letter grade. Extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances (i.e. serious illness, family emergency).

**CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES**

***Attendance*** Students are required to attend and actively participate in all classes. Please let me know if you plan to miss a class. Missing more than 3 classes for reasons other than documented illness (with the Dean of Students) or documented Institute-approved reasons will lower your final grade by half a letter grade for each unexcused absence.

***Readings and Materials*** Readings will be distributed electronically via Canvas. Check the “files” folder. Additional materials for assignments will be distributed with the instructions on Canvas. You will need your own laptop computer (Windows or Mac).

**DEBATE, DIVERSITY, AND RESPECT**

In this class, we will present and discuss a diversity of perspectives. Although you may not always agree with others' perspectives, you are required to be respectful of others' values and beliefs. Repeated inappropriate or abusive comments and/or behavior will be cause for disciplinary action. If you feel that your perspectives are being ignored or slighted, or you in anyway feel uncomfortable in the classroom, please contact me immediately.

**THE COMMUNICATION CENTER**

The Communication Center is located in Clough Commons, Suite 447. It is an excellent resource for any student (undergraduate or graduate) who wants help with a communication-related project. You can visit the center for help at any stage of the process for any project in any discipline. The knowledgeable and friendly tutors are available to help you develop and revise your work. They are not available to "fix" your assignments. Please do not ask the tutors to proofread or edit your essays. For information on making an appointment please visit http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/makeappointment. If you need assistance with the appointment system, you can call 404-385-3612 or stop by the center. All services are free and confidential.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

**PLAGIARISM WARNING**

Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated, and will result in a failing grade for the course. Plagiarism is not only the uncredited copying of text from another's work but also copying ideas or code from other digital artifacts. Adaptation of code samples (provided or found online) is not necessarily plagiarism. Having said that, students are encouraged to share and critique each other’s work. You are allowed (and encouraged!) to work together with other students, but collaboration is only permitted on group projects. On all other assignments, you are expected to complete and turn in your own work. Students may not submit work on another's behalf. Unauthorized use of any previous semester course materials is prohibited. Violating these terms will be considered a direct violation of academic policy and will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code (http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/ or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>)

**STUDENT-FACULTY EXPECTATIONS AGREEMENT**

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek.

**SCHEDULE**

Details about forthcoming assignments will be added to this syllabus weekly, so you will need to check it regularly. This schedule is subject to change at any time. Updates and changes will be announced in class or by email to students.

**Week 1 | Media and Environment**

**Wednesday, June 20 Introduction**

*In Class Reading:*Marshall McLuhan. 1964. *Understanding Media*

(excerpt)

Scott McCloud. 1994. *Understanding Comics*

(excerpt)

**Friday, June 22 Collecting Comics 1/2**

*Reading:* William Cronon. 1995. *Uncommon Ground*

(Introduction)

*Collecting:* [EX1] *Comic Panels (*1/2)

i.e. Ta-Nehisi Coates et al. 2016-2018. *Black Panther*

**Week 2 | Environmental Images**

**Monday, June 25 Collecting Comics 2/2**

*Reading:* Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright. 2009. *Practices*

*of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*

(Chapter 1: Images, Power, and Politics)

*Collecting:* [EX1] *Comic Panels (2/2*)

**Wednesday, June 27 Collecting Films 1/2**

*Reading:* Ursula K. Heise*.* 2014.“Plasmatic Nature

Environmentalism and Animated Film”

*Collecting:* [EX2] *Film Sequences (1/2)*

i.e. Andrew Stanton (Disney). 2008. Wall-E.

**Friday, June 29**  **Collecting Films 2/2**

*Reading:* Adilifu Nama. 2008. *Black Space* (excerpt)

*Collecting:* [EX2] *Film Sequences (2/2)*

**Week 3 | Environmental Literature**

**Monday, July 2 Collecting Literature 1/2**

*Reading:* Leo Marx. 1964. *Machine in the Garden* (excerpt)

*Collecting:* [EX3] *Literature Sequences* *(1/2)*

i.e. Ursula K. Le Guin. 2012. *The Unreal and the Real*

**Wednesday, July 4**  **No Class**

**Friday, July 6**  **Collecting Literature 2/2**

*Reading:* William Cronon. 1995. “The Trouble with Wilderness”

*Collecting:* [EX3] *Literature Sequences (2/2)*

**Week 4 | Digital Media and Environment**

**Monday, July 9 Collecting Digital Media 1/2**

*Reading:* Janet Murray. 1998. *Hamlet on the Holodeck*

(excerpt)

*Collecting:* [EX4] *Digital Interactions (1/2)*

i.e. Natalie Jeremijenko. 2009. Fish Interface

**Wednesday, July 11**  **Collecting Digital Media 2/2**

*Reading:* Jussi Parikka. 2010. *Insect Media*

(excerpt)

*Collecting:* [EX4] *Digital Interactions (2/2)*

*Guest Talk:* Joycelyn Wilson (LMC/GT)

**Thursday, July 12 Paper Due**

*Exercise: Paper [1]: Mediastories (Due at 10:00pm)*

**Friday, July 13 Collecting Data 1/2**

*Reading:* Lev Manovich. 2002. *Language of New Media*

(excerpt)

*Collecting:* [EX5]*Data Visualizations (1/2)*

i.e. Al Gore. 2006. An Inconvenient Truth

**Week 5 | The Built Environment**

**Monday, July 16**  **Collecting Data 2/2**

*Reading:* Paul Edwards. 2010. *A Vast Machine* (excerpt)

*Collecting:* [EX5]*Data Visualizations (2/2)*

**Wednesday, July 18**  **Collecting Architecture**

*Reading:* Michael Braungart and William McDonough. 2012.

*Cradle to Cradle*. (excerpt)

*Exercise:* [EX6]*Architectural Vignettes*

i.e. Renzo Piano Studio. 2008. California Academy of Sciences.

**Friday, July 20**  **Beltline/WonderRoot Lecture**

*Guest Talk:* Brandon Jones, WonderRoot

*Reading:* Kevin Lynch. 1960. *Image of the City* (excerpt)

**Week 6 | Exhibition**

**Monday, July 23**  **Open Collection**

*Reading:* Literature Review

*Exercise:* [EX7]*Open Collection*

**Wednesday, July 25**  **Beltline/WonderRoot Review**

*Exercise:* [EX8] *Beltline Boundaries*

**Thursday, July 26 SLS Showcase**

*Exhibit due:*  *Ecoexhibit*

**Week 7 | Final**

**Thursday, August 2****Final Paper**

*Paper [2] due: Mediascapes*