**LMC-6316 Historical Approaches to Digital Media**

**1. Instructor Name, Contact Information and Office Hours**

Instructor: Ian Bogost

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Appointments: By Appointment only

Office: TSRB 318

**2. Course Prerequisites:**(None)

**3. Core Area/Attributes Fulfilled by this Class:** (None)

**4. Course Description**

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| Examines digital media in the context of earlier media, such as handwriting and printing as well as photography, radio, film, and television. |  |

This seminar will focus on the historical and philosophical aspects of media and technology. In addition to the traditional historical approach to several media forms, we will focus specifically on a number of methods of the material history and analysis of media forms, the evolution of those media forms, and the ways conditions of material accident and influence affect future media.

The course will focus first on several abstract theories of the material history of media and then dive into specific historical media with those perspectives in mind. As such, the course will be very theory-intensive at first, and then settle into more concrete work about specific technologies. Our focus on digital media will be interwoven with earlier "traditional" media, in order to encourage a perspective of material context rather than a historical progress.

By the end of the course, students will be able to discuss and use several influential theories of media, and to put them to use in the historical, cultural, and material analysis of media—not to mention as inspiration and influence for media design no matter the material.

**5. Learning Outcomes:**

**Master’s Students**

Top Level

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| * Demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate existing digital media artifacts, services, and environments using formal knowledge, and to explain and defend one's critical evaluation.   Secondary Level  Analysis |  |
| * Can analyze digital media as cultural objects   Evaluation   * Can summarize their work orally and in written form using formal terminology   **Ph.D Students**  Top Level   * Students have knowledge, comprehension and ability to apply historical, cultural, and theoretical concepts to the study of digital media.   Knowledge   * Identify the historical and cultural roots of digital media * Identify the major theoretical traditions contributing to scholarly discourse about digital media   Comprehension   * Discuss and distinguish among historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts for digital media   Application   * Apply theoretical concepts to specific digital media works |  |

**6. Required Texts**

These books are available at the Engineers Bookstore or via your favorite bookseller. Please note that the Maher book will be published later this spring and thus will not be available immediately.

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (MIT)

Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford)

Friedrich Kittler, *Optical Media* (Polity)

Bonnie Mak, *How the Page Matters* (Toronto)

Jimmy Maher, *The Future Was Here: The Commodore Amiga* (MIT, forthcoming)

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (any edition)

Marshall McLuhan and Eric McLuhan *Laws of Media: The New Science* (Toronto)

Nick Montfort and Ian Bogost, *Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System* (MIT)

Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope* (Harvard)

J.P. Telotte, *The Mouse Machine: Disney and Technology* (Illinois)

**7. Graded Assignments**

This is a seminar course. That means students will be expected to thoroughly read a lot of material each week, to discuss that material in class, and to prepare responses to this material that will extend their individual goals.

In addition to attendance, reading, and discussion, students will be required to write five (5) short essays (of 2,000 to 2,500 words each) on specific media forms or objects, drawing from the approaches covered in the readings. Students may choose topics that suit their own interests, and they may choose five very related subjects forming a cohesive whole, or five totally different ones for variety, or even five takes on different aspects of a single medium. To encourage early and frequent work on these essays, and to help students refine them into writing that is *good*, not just complete, students will be required to begin writing immediately and to share, critique, and review that work on a weekly basis. We will devote a portion of most classes conducing this process.

50% of the final grade: attendance and participation

50% of the final grade: written essays

**8. Attendance Policy**

Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a half grade point reduction. An **excused** absence is one in which permission is requested in advance and you have a legitimate reason to skip class, such as an illness. You are expected to make up what you missed by checking with other students and reviewing lecture materials on the web site.

**9. Information for Students with Disabilities**

Please notify the instructor if you have any disabilities with which you need special assistance or consideration. The campus disability assistance program can be contacted through ADAPTS: <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>

**10. Honor Code Statement**

Students are expected to adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code:

<http://www.honor.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=9>

**12. Course Schedule**

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| **Week #** |  |  |
| **Week 1** | *Introductions - Goals - Etc.* |  |
| **Week 2** | *Martin Luther King Day*  No class meeting |  |
| **Week 3** | *Media Ecology I*  McLuhan, *Understanding Media* |  |
| **Week 4** | Week 4 - January 30  *German Media Theory*  Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* |  |
| **Week 5** | Week 5 - February 6  No class meeting |  |
| **Week 6** | *Media Ecology II*  McLuhan and McLuhan, *Laws of Media* |  |
| **Week 7** | *Science and Technology Studies*  Latour, *Pandora's Hope* |  |
| **Week 8** | *Digital Media*  Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation* |  |
| **Week 9** | *No class meeting* |  |
| **Week 10** | *The Book*  Mak, *How the Page Matters*  Manguel, "Shape of the Book" from *The History of Reading* (handout) |  |
| **Week 11** | *Spring Break*  No Class Meeting |  |
| **Week 12** | *Videogames*  Montfort and Bogost, *Racing the Beam* |  |
| **Week 13** | *Film and Animation*  Telotte, *The Mouse Machine* |  |
| **Week 14** | *Visual Media*  Kittler, *Optical Media* |  |
| **Week 15** | *The Microcomputer*  Maher, *The Future Was Here*  Kittler, "There is No Software" from *Literature, Media, Information Systems* (handout) |  |
| **Week 16** | *Wrap-Up* |  |