

DIGITAL HUMANITIES 150: Unlearning the Internet

UVic | Spring 2019 | M + R | 10:00-11:20am | jentery.github.io/150/

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Office Hours (Spring 2019) | M | 12-2pm | CLE D334

Teaching Assistants: Stefan Higgins, Ria Karve, and Ian Waddell

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE TERRITORIES

As a faculty member who has the privilege to live and work as a guest on these lands, I acknowledge with respect the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territories the University of Victoria stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The internet runs on habits. This course prompts us to change them from the inside. We will study ignored histories of digital stuff, examine dominant beliefs about technologies and culture, and compose our own content, from audio and images to prototypes and websites, all with the goal of making critical media, with the past in mind, in the present moment.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There is no textbook for this course. Visit jentery.github.io/150/, where I link to all course materials, including essays, audio, video, and slides. Most materials are open access. Some readings are passcode-protected (see me for an ID and password).

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the conclusion of this course, you should learn how to:

- Purposefully read, analyze, and synthesize digital media using the appropriate research tools and techniques,
- Concisely articulate issues common to digital culture and explain why and for whom those issues matter today,
- Combine critical thinking in the humanities with basic technical competencies in media practice and communication,
- Use digital media as a form of both evidence and argumentation,
- Demonstrate an awareness of various strategies used by researchers to produce critical work for the web, and
- Create a simple “zine” to teach a specific audience something important related to the theme of “unlearning the internet.”

For more on the topic of unlearning the internet, see jentery.github.io/150/.

FORMAT

Each week, class meetings will involve:

- **Workshop:** We will experiment with a particular technique relevant to critical media practice. You will be asked to document what you learned and apply it to your own work.

- **Lecture and Discussion:** I will lecture on the theme for the week (e.g., “The Rhetoric of Raw Data” or “The Futures of Digital Labour”), and we will use a case study to discuss the relevance of that theme to critical media and digital culture.

You should arrive to each meeting on time, having studied the assigned material, which is listed, with links, at jentry.github.io/150/. See the “notes” page on the website for slides and related remarks from lecture. All slides are composed in HTML and may be accessed in your browser.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

You will be required to keep a log and make a “zine” in this class. Below are descriptions of the two assignments. All assessment practices will follow the UVic Undergraduate Grading Scale, which you should review early in the term. It’s available via bit.ly/scaleuvic/.

Please note that the assignments are subject to minor changes as the course progresses. If I do make a change, then I will notify you by email. Also, the first two iterations of the log (mid-term and end-of-term) are essential to passing the course. Failure to complete these two assignments will result in a failing N grade (calculated as a 0 for your GPA). I do not post marks outside my office, and I do not use plagiarism detection software.

Log (three marks, each 25%, due 15 February, 29 March, and 12 April)

I will prompt you to create a log and contribute regularly (usually twice a week) to it. The entries will be short and focused, and they will be written in a syntax (Markdown) conducive to file conversion and publication online. For the last iteration of your log (due 12 April), I will ask you to reflect, in writing, on what you did this semester. These reflections will be included in the log itself, in the form of inline commentary.

The tone and style of your log should be more formal than notes from class but less formal than a research paper intended for an academic audience. Your entries should be self-aware and well-written (without typos or the like), and they should give credit where credit is due. They should also demonstrate critical thinking (e.g., knowledge of common assumptions, audience, context, and key details relevant to a given prompt). Feel free to use the first-person and to reference work conducted by your peers and spark dialogue with them via your log. Also, don’t hesitate to combine your preferred modes of composition: writing, drawing, collage, outlining, sketching, graphing, programming, images, audio, video, etc. The logs will require you to use at least text, audio, images, and data. However, I will not require you to render them discoverable online.

Your log will be assessed three times. The first two assessments will adhere to the following rubric. The third assessment will adhere to a different rubric (engaging the quality of reflection), which will be circulated in March.

A+: The content of the log is well-composed and -researched, with attribution, references, thorough documentation, and no typos. It combines critical and experimental thinking anchored in class discussions and assigned materials. The entries and embedded/referenced media not only meet the requirements of the prompts but also add a significant number of compelling elements, features, and/or perspectives that were not required for the assignments. These additions augment the overall quality of the log and demonstrate that you are learning far more than the course material and also exceeding the course objectives. This log could be published online as a model of exceptional undergraduate work in the course and at UVic.

A- or A: The content of the log is well-composed and -researched, with attribution, references, thorough documentation, and few typos. It combines critical and experimental thinking anchored in class discussions and assigned materials. The entries and embedded/referenced media not only meet the requirements of the prompts but also add compelling elements, features, and/or perspectives that were not required for the assignments. These additions augment the overall quality of the log and demonstrate that you are learning more than the course material and also exceeding the course objectives. This log could be published online as a model of undergraduate work in the course.

B- through B+: The content of the log is well-composed and -researched, with attribution, references, thorough documentation, and few typos. It combines critical and experimental thinking anchored in class discussions and assigned materials. The entries and embedded/referenced media not only meet the requirements of the prompts but may include some elements, features, and/or perspectives that were not required for the assignments. These additions augment the overall quality of the log and demonstrate that you are learning the course material and meeting the course objectives.

C or C+: The content of the log is easy to follow, with attribution and references. It may contain numerous typos. It engages class discussions and assigned materials. The entries and embedded/referenced media meet some requirements of the prompts. The log demonstrates that you are learning most of the course material and meeting most of the course objectives.

D: The content of the log is not easy to follow, even if attribution and references are provided. It contains numerous typos, and it engages only some of the class discussions and assigned materials. The entries and embedded/referenced media meet some requirements of the prompts. The log demonstrates that you are learning some of the course material and meeting some of the course objectives.

F: The log is missing entirely or in part. The entries do not meet the requirements of the prompts.

Zine (25%, on due 1 April)

Zines are self-published works of original, unofficial, or appropriated texts and images. The term is derived from “fanzine” (itself a portmanteau of fan and magazine). For the final project in this course, you will create your own zine, which will engage the theme of “unlearning the internet.” It will be paper-based. I will provide you with examples of similar zines and encourage you to engage a topic of significant interest to you (e.g., something you want to see in the world). The zine will be presented informally during a “zine fair” at the end of class, and I will provide you with a prompt and rubric for this assignment by the middle of the semester. Please note that the zine does not need to be technical.

POLICIES***Late Submissions***

Barring exceptional circumstances, I will not accept your log entries after the due date. Since log entries are meant to build on each other, I recommend that you do not fall behind on them. Of note, the zines may only be presented during the final zine fair. Thanks for understanding.

Absences

Regular attendance in undergraduate courses is expected. Attendance and active participation in discussions and workshops are part of meeting the course objectives. If you must be absent from class, then you should contact me beforehand, if only to keep me in the loop. Cases of continuous, unexplained absence could result in your ineligibility to complete the course.

Laptops

The use of laptops and other such mobile devices during class is allowed but not required.

Educational Technology

UVic cannot require students to disclose personal information to technologies or organizations that may store information on servers located outside of Canada because disclosure of personal information to vendors, systems, or services or accessing that personal information outside of Canada is restricted by section 30.1 of BC’s *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA). Personal information is information about an identifiable individual—for example, your name or your email address. In this course, I will not require you to use any educational technologies that store or access your personal information outside of Canada.

Extensions

Extensions will be given in extreme (and verifiable) circumstances. These circumstances include reasons of health and extenuating circumstances, such as the death of a family member.

Learning Climate, Human Rights, Equity, and Fairness

UVic is committed to promoting, providing, and protecting a positive, supportive, and safe learning and working environment for all its members. All students and faculty members are expected to adhere to the UVic Human Rights, Equity, and Fairness policy (Policy GV0200). You should alert me immediately if you have any questions about this policy and its application, or if you have concerns about course proceedings or participants.

Academic Integrity

All students are also expected to adhere to the UVic Policy on Academic Integrity. (Please note the new regulation change, effective May 2017: “unauthorized use of an Editor is prohibited, unless the instructor grants explicit written authorization.”) Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade for the given assignment and may additionally result in a failing grade for the course. By taking this course, you agree that all submitted assignments may be subject to an originality review. I do not use software to detect plagiarism in essays, logs, or any other assignments.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) as soon as possible. CAL staff is available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate services. The sooner you let us know your needs, the sooner we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Email

I will respond to your emails within 24 hours, Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm, except during holidays and conference travel.

Course Evaluation Survey

The Evaluation Survey for this course will be available online and distributed by the university via a URL. I encourage you to complete it during our last class meeting. I use course evaluations to improve my courses and teaching.

Basic Needs

I want you to thrive in this course and everywhere else. Please let me know as early as possible if you have any concerns or if you require any assistance to succeed, and I'll do my best to help.

Children, Including Babies

If you need to cover gaps in care, then please don't hesitate to bring your children to class. Babies who are nursing are always welcome, as I do not want you to choose between feeding your child and continuing your education.

Mental Health

UVic takes student mental health very seriously, with a website full of resources. We offer such services as assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include crisis and emergency mental health consultation and confidential assessment, counselling services (individual and small group), and referrals. Many of these programs are connected with Health Services, which is located at the Petersen Health Centre (Lower Parking Lot #5, off Sinclair Road, behind the residence cafeteria). Many offices have walk-in hours as well as appointments.

Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response at UVic

UVic takes sexualized violence seriously. I encourage you to learn more about how the university defines and approaches sexualized violence by visiting uvic.ca/svp/. If you or someone you know has been impacted by sexualized violence and needs information, advice, and/or support, then please contact the sexualized violence resource office in Equity and Human Rights (EQHR). Whether or not you have been directly impacted, if you want to take part in the important prevention work taking place on campus, you can also reach out: EQHR; Sedgewick C119; 250.721.8021; svpcordinator@uvic.ca.

Other Policies

UVic's Student Services website lists several policies that you might want or need to know about, to make your life at UVic safer and easier. Only some of them are directly related to this course, but they're still important.

SCHEDULE

The schedule is available at jentry.github.io/150/. Below is the rough outline, including themes we'll address. See the website for assignments, including prompts and readings, as well as context, definitions, and key questions. Please note that there is no exam (during the official exam period) in this course.

Intro (Jan 7): Why Unlearn the Internet?

Week 1 (Jan 10): The Myth of Lone Male Inventors

Week 2 (Jan 14 + 17): The Desire for Immediate Interfaces

Week 3 (Jan 21 + 24): The Investment in Neutral Instruments

Week 4 (Jan 28 + 31): The Rhetoric of Raw Data

Week 5 (Feb 4 + 7): The Appeal to Interactivity

Week 6 (Feb 11 + 14): Writing and Publishing Workshops

Week 7 (Feb 18 + 21): Reading Break

Week 8 (Feb 25 + 28): The Assertion of Autonomous Algorithms

Week 9 (March 4 + 7): The Belief in Sourcery

Week 10 (March 11 + 14): The Ideology of Landless Territory

Week 11 (March 18 + 21): The Fallacy of Extended Man

Week 12 (March 25 + 28): The Futures of Digital Labour

Week 13 (April 1 + 4): Zine Fair

I'm looking forward to working with you.

~ THE END ~