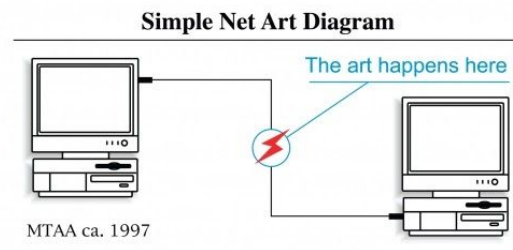


NET ART & CULTURES

FVNM 3235-001 (1436)

The Web represents a grand emotional, sensory, and intellectual adventure for anyone willing to explore it actively. [...] For artists, ignoring the imperative to grasp the cultural implications of the Internet means risking irrelevance. [...] As human discourse adapts to its new home, everything we do and think as human beings will be and is being shaped by new values. [...] If it's ever fair to say that anything has "changed everything," it's fair to say so about the Internet. — [Virginia Heffernan](#)



Course Description

This studio course examines the Internet as an artistic medium (computers, networks and code), as an environment (media ecology) and as "the masterpiece of human civilization" (a la Virginia Heffernan). We generally accept that computers and the Internet evolved outside of fine art contexts, in fields like science and mathematics. That said, the history of these technologies is a history of creative individuals collaboratively shaping one of the most important narratives of our time. While we will occasionally be discussing the contributions of self-identified artists (from the net.art movement of the 1990s for example) we will generally be taking a broader cultural view, exploring the histories, philosophies and practices of various online cultural niches. We will learn how hackers use the command line to break into networks and how the open source community use special tools that facilitate large scale collaborations. We'll learn about AI praised by singularity evangelists in the "age of spiritual machines" as well as the digital rights activists who protest against the algorithms of surveillance capitalism. We will also be learning the craft of the Internet, and in particular browsers and the World Wide Web. We will be borrowing techniques from demosceners, meme-makers, cyberpunks and web designers as we learn to produce work with the Web's generalized media format (coding HTML and CSS) as well as how to distribute that work online (deploying web sites).

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Learning Goals

- Solid understanding of what the Internet is and how it works (specifically the web)
- General background on key cultural/historical figures/movements and motivations which have informed the development of online culture (with a particular emphasis on Internet Art beginning with the "net.art" movement of the 1990s).
- Foundational understanding of web coding concepts, tools && working knowledge HTML and CSS.
- General understanding of the political/social/aesthetic implications of living in a networked culture.

Class Structure

It goes without saying this is going to be an unconventional semester. Rather than seeing our new remote learning context as a compromised version of the original course, we're going to embrace and experiment with our distributed virtual classroom. Given the experimental nature of the course this semester, keep in mind that the following format and proposed schedule are very much subject to change. If and when such changes occur, I will communicate this to the class via email. If at any point you feel disoriented, frustrated or confused send me an email. I'm always available (asynchronously) via email to help address any issues or concerns pertaining to the class. But it's up to you to let me know what you need.

Asynchronous Tutorials and Experiments

When it comes to the craft (HTML, CSS and possibly a bit of JavaScript) we'll be learning to code through online tutorials. The goal is for these to be interactive non-linear tutorials, but in the event that this is not possible we'll default to more traditional video or text based tutorials. In either case, the idea is that each student will progress through these **coding tutorials at your own pace**. While this course is aimed at beginners (with no prior coding experience) the reality is that we're all coming to this with different backgrounds and we all learn this stuff at a different pace.

Throughout the semester I'll also be assigning **experiments**, or code sketches. These will most often be associated with a particular tutorial. That being the case, there is no set number of experiments. Instead, everyone will produce a different number of experiments depending on which (and how many) of the tutorials they end up working on throughout the semester. That said, like any other craft, the more you experiment and iterate the better coder you will become.

Synchronous Group and Class Discussions

Our allotted synchronous class time this semester is scheduled for Tuesdays (Sept 8 - Dec 15) from 9am to 5pm. This time will be used primarily for class discussions which will be taking place over the web based open source video chatting platform Jitsi at this URL: <https://meet.jit.si/net-art-and-cultures>. With Jitsi you do not need to create an account or download any apps, you simply visit that URL in a modern browser (like Chrome or Firefox) and we'll all be on a shared video call (*NOTE: if you are using a mobile device you will need to download the free Jitsi app*).

Our weekly synchronous video conversation schedule will be as follows:

- **9 AM - 10 AM (CST):** On designated weeks (not every week) you will meet with your groups to share the experiments you worked on the previous week. See evaluation section below for more info on these group discussions.
- **10:15 AM - 12 PM (CST):** We will have weekly class discussions (same time every week at the Jitsi URL) about the particular theme/topic researched for homework the week prior (see schedule section below for the list of themes/topics). While everyone will be expected to have done the reading/watching/listening pertaining to that week's discussions, each week a different group will be responsible for leading that conversation (details on the class website). Each week we'll also leave time at the end of our discussion to address any other open questions (related to the tutorials,

experiments, or anything else that's come up that week related to the class or "the Internet" more broadly).

- **1 PM - 5 PM (CST):** This time is reserved for "office hours". These are to be scheduled in advance (over email). This can be one-on-one time or group meetings with the professor.

The Schedule

September

The first month of this course will be devoted to getting calibrated (making sure we all know what to expect from the course and from each other) as well as laying down the theoretical and historical foundation for the narratives we'll be exploring the rest of the semester.

- Class Calibrations
- Online Communities
- WTF is the Internet
- net.art and the WWW

October

Throughout the month of October we'll be learning HTML and CSS, as described above in the "Asynchronous Tutorials and Experiments" section the technical tutorials will take place asynchronously allowing each student to go at their own pace. Throughout the month we will be having synchronous discussions about different online communities which have approached the Internet and the Web as a creative medium (beyond the "fine art cannon" of Internet Art) to draw inspiration from as we work on our own HTML/CSS experiments.

- Hypermedia
- Web Design
- the Demoscene
- Cyberpunk
- Hacker Culture

November

Throughout the month of November, as we continue to work on HTML/CSS (and in some cases, JavaScript) experiments asynchronously, we will be having synchronous discussions about various contemporary social/political/philosophical Internet age themes. Towards the end of the month we'll revisit many of the topics and themes discussed throughout the semester and how they're meant to inform your final project.

- Open Source Culture
- Online Privacy
- Artificial Intelligence
- Surveillance Capitalism
- Netizens and Digital Folklore

December

The first two weeks of December will be devoted to class critiques of our final projects. The last day of class will be an open discussion about the Future: of technology, of society, of the Internet, of your lives online, as artists, as designers and as netizens.

- **Dec 01:** Final Critiques Session 1
- **Dec 08:** Final Critiques Session 2
- **Dec 15:** Looking into the Future

Evaluation

Receiving credit for this course will be determined according to the following:

- As is common at SAIC, our primary mode of evaluation will be **the class critique of your final project**. These critiques will take place virtually on our Jitsi video chat over the course of two weeks (Dec 01 and Dec 08). It is essential you participate in these critiques. We will discuss in more detail towards the end of the semester the specific expectations and format these critiques will take. **The final project** itself will be a piece of Internet Art (hand crafted HTML/CSS accessible on the Internet through a web browser) which will be a sort of personal portrait or "home page" that reflects the themes

discussed throughout the semester and responds in some way to the "MyVsMe" prompt (which will be discussed in much more detail towards the end of the semester).

- **Participation in group discussions** is also important, this will be the primary space for receiving feedback from your peers on your weekly code experiments/sketches. Blake (our TA) and myself will be occasionally popping in and out of different group discussions to ensure everyone is present and participating, but these discussions will be primarily student led. As noted in the "Synchronous Group and Class Discussions" section above, these will take place *most* weeks in designated group Jitsi URLs between 9 AM and 10 AM (CST)
- While it's expected that some of the themes discussed throughout the semester be present in your final project, **participation in the weekly class discussions** (10:15 AM as explained above in the "Synchronous Group and Class Discussions" section) will be key in helping me ensure that you have done the weekly readings/viewings and have thought about them critically. This means not only showing up (see Attendance section below) but also asking questions and sharing ideas. This might mean voicing your thoughts on the video call, via the chat function or via our shared doc.

Attendance

SAIC policy states that students are expected to attend all classes regularly and on time. If a student arrives to class more than 15 minutes after or leaves more than 15 minutes early, it will be considered a half absence.

Students should miss class only with reasonable cause. **If a student needs to miss class with reasonable cause, it is the student's responsibility to contact the professor before the date of the class being missed to receive instruction for how to make up for the missed class.** A reasonable cause to miss a class might include:

- Illness or hospitalization (the student should contact Health Services, who will relay information to the faculty in whose class the student is enrolled)
- Family illness or death
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Professional opportunities

If the student misses a class for other than a reasonable cause (communicated prior to the absence) the student will fail the class. **If a student misses MORE than three (excused) classes, the student will fail the class.**

- Add/Drop deadline: Sept 15th
- Deadline for withdrawal from class: Nov 03.

Extended Absence and Notification Assistance

If a student believes they will miss multiple sessions of in-person activity in a class due to illness, and/or feel too ill to participate in out-of-class activity/requirements, the student should contact Health Services (312.499.4288) to discuss their situation and, if necessary, may ask Health Services to send an Extended Absence Notification to their faculty.

For an extended absence due to other circumstances, students should contact Academic Advising (312.629.6800). If appropriate, Academic Advising may, at the student's request, email an Extended Absence Notification to the student's instructors informing them of the student's absence.

Extended Absence Notifications can begin a conversation with faculty about a situation when the student is receiving support from Health Services or another staff member in the Office of Student Affairs, such as Academic Advising. Please note that this communication is for informing faculty of a situation only; it does not absolve students from their responsibility to make up work that they may miss while absent.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes both plagiarism and cheating, and may consist of: the submission of the work of another as one's own; unauthorized assistance on a test or assignment; submission of the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all instructors; or the failure to properly cite texts or ideas from other sources. Academic misconduct also includes the falsification of academic or student-related records, such as transcripts, evaluations and letters of recommendation. Academic misconduct extends to all spaces on campus, including satellite locations and online education.

Academic integrity is expected in all coursework, including online learning. It is assumed that the person receiving the credit for the course is the person completing the work. SAIC has processes in place, including LDAP authentication, to verify student identity.

Accomodations

SAIC is committed to full compliance with all laws regarding equal opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with known or suspected disabilities, such as a Reading/Writing Disorder, ADD/ADHD, and/or a mental health condition who think they would benefit from assistance or accommodations should first contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) to schedule a virtual appointment. DLRC staff will review your disability documentation and work with you to determine reasonable accommodations. They will then provide you and your instructors with a letter outlining the approved accommodations via email. You must request accommodations for each course before any accommodations will be implemented. You should contact the DLRC as early in the semester as possible. The DLRC can be reached via phone at 312.499.4278 or email at dlrc@saic.edu.