

Sam Houston State University » Department of Mass Communication
MCOM 5300 Digital Media History and Theory » Fall 2017
Friday 4:30-7:20 pm The Woodlands Center, Room 338

Instructor: Robin Johnson, Ph.D.
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Woodlands Office: TWC, RM 310
Office hours: Tuesday (Huntsville) 10:30 am to noon and Friday (The Woodlands Center) 2 to 3:30 pm
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class outlines the history and theory of new media from different perspectives according to the many social and humanistic schools of thought that have converged upon the study of mass media. The course will explore cross-disciplinary theoretical approaches, historical accounts of the digital media and information age, and allow students to discuss and apply them to new media and their impact on cultural production.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the parallel and intertwined development of media technology, new media theory, production strategies, and media history in the 20th and 21st century;
- analyze and explain key issues and ideas in new media theory and history;
- acquire the vocabulary and skills to engage critically and theoretically with the media they encounter, whether as producers, consumers or users;
- situate major schools of thought on new media in a comparative matrix

REQUIRED BOOKS

Title: **The Information: A theory, a history, a flood**

Author: James Gleick Publisher:

Vintage Books

Title: **The Language of New Media**

Author: Lev Manovich

Publisher: MIT Press

Title: **The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society**

Author: James Beniger

Publisher: Harvard University Press

Title: **Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice**

Author: Nick Couldry Publisher:

Polity Press

Title: **Life after New Media: Mediation as a vital process**

Author: Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylińska

Publisher: MIT Press

Title: **Media Work**

Author: Mark Deuze

Publisher: Polity Press

Title: **Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other**

Author: Sherry Turkle

Publisher: Basic Books

Supplemental readings will be available through the course's online Blackboard site

ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS AND CLASS STRUCTURE

The class is structured around in-class discussion of the assigned readings. Students need to be prepared to discuss the readings and are encouraged to bring in examples from culture (such as television or movie clips, news stories, books, etc.) that might relate to the readings in some way.

For each week of assigned readings, students will write a one-page response paper about the assigned reading for that week to guide discussion. Response papers can identify key arguments, theoretical concepts and the student's reflection on the readings. You can also pose discussion questions that you would like to be addressed during class time.

Each student will also be assigned one week when they will **lead the discussion** of the assigned reading. This doesn't mean just reading and outlining the material for the day. Students will be expected to organize the reading, interpret it and do some outside research if necessary that will help place the reading in context or demonstrate possible applications.

Exams: There will be take-home essay exams given during the mid-term and finals week. See the course schedule for dates.

Course Guidelines

Attendance Policy – SHSU Student Handbook of University Policies states that regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student at Sam Houston State University and that it is expected that each faculty member will keep a record of student attendance. A student will not be penalized for three absences or six tardies (defined as entering class after roll has been taken) when examinations or other assigned work has not been missed.

Additionally:

- Exceptions are for documented illnesses or family emergencies or for students attending SHSU activities in an official capacity. Documentation for illness or emergency should be presented upon the student's return to the classroom. Documentation for activities should be presented prior to the absence and contain the signature of the SHSU employee sponsor.
- Each semester hour of credit entails at least two additional hours of work outside the classroom per week: so for this 3 credit course, you should expect to do at least an additional 6 hours of work a week beyond class time. This is on average; some weeks may require more, others less.

Grading scale

A	90% and above
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	59% & below

E-mail – You must be able to receive e-mail via your “@shsu.edu” account. You will be responsible for any messages you miss if you do not use this university-assigned address. Class announcements may also be posted on Blackboard.

Deadlines – Failure to make assigned deadlines will negatively affect grades, and persistent deadline failures will result in failing the course.

Academic Dishonesty – All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[Dean of Student's Office](#)

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy – Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s).

The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/documents/861001.pdf

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/811006.pdf>

Visitors in the Classroom – Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

Class Day	Topic	Readings	Assignments & Exams
Week 1 August 25	Introduction to the course	No readings assigned	
Week 2 September 1	Historical perspective I	The Information by James Gleick Chapters 1-7	
Week 3 September 8	Mainstream theory of communication	The Information by James Gleick Chapters 8-15	
Week 4 September 15	Media-centric and techno-centric theories of new media	The Medium is the Message, by Marshall McLuhan, Chapters 1-2 Additional reading to be posted on Blackboard	
Week 5 September 22		The Language of New Media by Lev Manovich, Chapters 1-3	Student-led discussion
Week 6 September 29		The Language of New Media by Lev Manovich, Chapters 4-6	Student-led discussion
Week 7 October 6	Historical perspective II Political-Economic Theory of media	The Control Revolution, by James Beniger, Chapters 1-3, 6, 8-9	Midterm Essay Exam
Week 8 October 13	Sociological Theories Digital Media	Media Work, by Mark Deuze	Student-led discussion
Week 9 October 20		Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice, by Nick Couldry, Chapters 1-4	Student-led discussion

Class Day	Topic	Readings	Assignments & Exams
Week 10 October 27		Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice, by Nick Couldry, Chapters 5-9	Student-led discussion
Week 11 November 3	Cultural Theory of Digital Media	Life After New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process, by Sarah Kember and Johanna Zylinska, Chapters 1-3 and Interlude	Student-led discussion
Week 12 November 10	Psychological Theory of Digital Media	Life After New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process, by Sarah Kember and Johanna Zylinska, Chapters 4-7	Student-led discussion
Week 13 November 17		Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other, By Sherry Turkle, Chapters 1-7	Student-led discussion
Week 14 No Class Thanksgiving break			
Week 15 December 1		Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other, By Sherry Turkle, Chapters 8-14	Student-led discussion
Finals Week			Final Essay Exam Due