

HISTORIES, THEORIES, & CULTURES OF NEW MEDIA

Comparative Literature 618, S23, CRN 36375, 312 VIL



Prof. K Kelp-Stebbins,
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Hours: M 10-1pm Zoom (and
by appointment)

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Oregon is located on Kalapuya Ilihi, the traditional indigenous homeland of the Kalapuya people.

Following treaties between 1851 and 1855, Kalapuya people

were dispossessed of their indigenous homeland by the United States government and forcibly removed to the Coast Reservation in Western Oregon. Today, descendants are citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon, and continue to make important contributions in their communities, at UO, and across the land we now refer to as Oregon.

Course Description:

What is new about new media? How does the distinction between analog and digital media expand the field of representation and alter the possibilities of techno-practice? What do the history of technology and the history of data offer to the study of media? Our class will provide an orientation to the theory and history of new media by exploring different traditions in media theory across generations, regions, languages, and methodologies. We will explore distinctions between comparative media studies, media archaeology, new media, and the history of technology with readings drawn from scholars working in distinctive theoretical traditions and different national contexts. In addition to weekly readings, students will be working on a final project in dialogue with debates and conversations from class. Authors we will read include: Friedrich Kittler, Cornelia Vismann, Bernhard Siegert, Wendy Chun, Simone Brown, Lisa Parks, Marshall McLuhan, and others.

Learning Outcomes:

The course is designed both as an introduction to key problems in the field of new media theory and as an opportunity to develop skills for writing, presenting and analyzing across different media. Assignments offer opportunities to engage theoretical and historical writing on new media in detail and to write critically about more finite issues whilst also working to cultivate skills for research, argument and sustained analysis of the sort expected at the graduate level. Specific learning objectives include:

- Understanding key analytical approaches and central concepts in new media theory
- Explicating the history and development of new media technology and practices
- Analyzing the impact of new media of society and culture
- Reflecting on the theoretical implications of new media

NMCC (New Media & Culture Certificate) Note: COLT 618 satisfies the common seminar requirement (sometimes also referred to as the core requirement) for NMCC graduate students.

Required Texts:

- W.J.T. Mitchell & Mark B.N. Hansen, *Critical Terms for Media Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010)
- Other required readings available via Canvas and UO Libraries

Accessible Education Statement of Support

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoac@uoregon.edu.

Student Engagement Inventory:

Class Meetings and Facilitation	30 hours
Assigned Readings	80 hours
Weekly Responses	30 hours
Re-Newing Media Proposal	10 hours
Final Paper	50 hours
Total	200 hours

Grade Breakdown:

25% Weekly Responses 5% Course Facilitation 20% Participation
 10% Re-Newing Media Proposal 40% Final Project, Project Proposal, and Presentation

Weekly Responses: You will post regularly to our Canvas discussion board based on the instructions. Make sure that you complete your postings when they are due or you will not receive full credit.

Course Facilitation: Working with others, students will elect one week of class to serve as discussion lead. Students will begin with a short presentation (20 to 30 minutes) in which they provide basic context for the week’s readings, their initial interpretation of the works, and guiding questions or concerns to launch the day’s discussion. Students may wish to bring in additional materials such as cultural objects relevant to the week, presentation slides, images, news, or other items.

Re-Newing Media Studies Proposal: Working either independently or with a group, students will compose a presentation based on the Re-Newing Media Studies assignment (details are on Canvas).

Final Project: You will compose a 3,000-3,500 word (not including notes and bibliography) paper. The paper will be an analysis of a topic of your choosing and should add new knowledge or bring a new perspective to old findings within the field. Your paper may take the form of a theoretical argument that you make regarding the core topics and concepts from the course, or your paper may apply the concepts and theories of the course to a contemporary or historical media object or event of your choosing. Whether you choose the theoretical or case study approach, your final project will be a research paper. (Alternative project plans, for example, producing a web-based presentation or some other digital-humanities style project, require pre-approval from the instructor.)

Final Project Proposal: You are required to submit a project proposal by the deadline, or your final project will not be accepted.

Final Project Presentation: In our last class, you will present the abstract or a précis for your final project.

Participation and Absences: It is essential that you show up to class on time, ready to contribute to discussion. Participation requires both physical and mental presence; if you are **texting** or otherwise engaged in non-course related activities, you will be considered **absent** for the day. Similarly, if you come to class **unprepared**—without the reading or without having completed the assigned reading—you will be considered **absent** for the day. The overall grade will drop by 5 points for each absence.

Grading Schema

A 93-100%; A- 90-92%; B+ 87-89%; B 83-86%; B- 80-82%; C+ 77-79%; C- 70-72%; D+ 67-69%; D 63-66%; D- 60-62%; F 59% or below

Policies

RESPECT, TOLERANCE, AND DIFFICULT CONTENT

A respectful environment is essential to facilitate discussions and to create a safe space for students to share their thoughts. Everyone in our seminar—regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class status, education, physical features, political belief, or religious belief—is worthy of respect. We don't always have to agree, and genuine ignorance can be an opportunity for personal and communal growth. Regardless of your personal beliefs, disagreement and ignorance are never excuses for cruelty or intolerance. At times, discomfort can be productive when our ideas are challenged, but at no time will we tolerate sexist, racist, ableist, classist, homophobic, or transphobic comments in our course platforms and interactions. I reserve the right to sanction students if they do not adhere to these guidelines. Furthermore, the UO Student Conduct Code provides clear guidelines regarding student behavior. You are responsible for acting in accordance with this code or you will be subject to disciplinary action. Additionally, if you are having particular difficulty with a text, or feel troubled by a specific discussion, please let me know. We will also discuss and agree to our Course Covenant, which provides specific guidelines for how we will interact with texts and each other during our seminar.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND HONESTY

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Any assignment that violates the Student Conduct Code will result in a failing assignment grade, the threat of a failing course grade, and academic sanctions determined by the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.

HARRASSMENT, ASSAULT, DISCRIMINATION

UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender-based stalking. If you have experienced gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, getting academic and housing accommodations, getting legal protective orders, and accessing other help. If you tell me about harassment or assault, I am not required to report this information to anyone unless you request that I do so. I am required to consult with a confidential UO employee (someone with legal confidentiality, such as a counseling professional or a crisis center advocate) to ensure that you are supported. If you decide to make a report, I and other UO employees will help you to do so. My goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available and that you have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options or visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

YOUR WELL-BEING

If you find yourself facing challenges in your ability to manage your mental and emotional health, you don't need to handle them on your own—there's help and support on campus. Getting help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and for those you care about.

University Counseling Services (UCS) has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at counseling.uoregon.edu or by calling 541-346-3227 (anytime UCS is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number).

BASIC NEEDS

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (346-3216, 164 Oregon Hall) for support.

The [UO Basic Needs Resource Guide](#) includes resources for food, housing, healthcare, childcare, transportation, technology, finances, and legal support.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to change)

Week 1, 4/3: Introduction to (New) Media Studies

Required

- W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark Hansen, "Introduction," *Critical Terms for Media Studies* (hereafter *CTMS*, 2010)
- Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium Is the Message," *Understanding Media* (1964 [2006])

Recommended

- Wendy Chun, "Did Somebody Say New Media?" in *New Media, Old Media* (2006)
- Mark Hansen, "New Media," *CTMS*
- Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproduction" (1935)
- Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*, (2006)
- Harold Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (1951)
- Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (1982)
- Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (2001)
- Benjamin Peters (ed.), *Digital Keywords* (2016)
- Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974)

UNIT 1: German Media Theory and History

Week 2, 4/10: Hardware/Software

Required

- Eva Horn, "There Are No Media," *Grey Room 29* (2008)
- Friedrich Kittler, "Gramophone, Film, Typewriter," *October 41* (1987)
- Joseph Vogl, "Becoming-Media: Galileo's Telescope," *Grey Room 29* (2008)
- Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, "Hardware/Software/Wetware," *CTMS*

Recommended

- Friedrich Kittler, *Optical Media* (1999 [2010])
- Friedrich Kittler, "There Is No Software," reprinted in Kittler, *The Truth of the Technological Age* (1992 [2013])
- Sybille Krämer, *Medium, Messenger, Transmission* (2008 [2015])
- Lydia H. Liu, "Writing," *CTMS*
- Alan Turing, "On Computable Numbers with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem," *The London Mathematical Society* (1937)
- Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, *Kittler and the Media* (2011)

** Reminder: 5th annual Data|Media|Digital Symposium April 14 from 9:15am to 5pm in the Knight Library DREAM Lab.**

Week 3, 4/17: Cultural Techniques

Required

- Bernhard Siegert, "Cultural Techniques: Or the End of the Intellectual Postwar Era in German Media Theory," *Theory, Culture & Society* 30.6 (2013)
- Bernhard Siegert, "The Map Is the Territory," *Radical Philosophy* 169 (2011)
- Cornelia Vismann, excerpts, *Files: Law & Media Technology* (2000 [2008])

- Cornelia Vismann, “Cultural Techniques and Sovereignty,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 30.6 (2010 [2013])

Recommended

- Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (1966 [1989])
- Peter Goodrich, “Law,” *CTMS*
- Markus Krajewski, *Paper Machines: About Cards & Catalogs, 1548-1929*, (2002 [2011])
- Sybille Krämer and Horst Bredekamp, “Culture, Technology, Cultural Techniques – Moving Beyond Text,” *Theory, Culture, & Society*, 30.6 (2013)
- Thomas Macho, “Second-Order Animals: Cultural Techniques of Identity and Identification,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 30.6 (2010 [2013])

Week 4, 4/24: Media Archeology

Required

- Wolfgang Ernst, excerpts, *Digital Memory and the Archive* (2002-2013 [2013])
- Jussi Parikka, excerpts, *What is Media Archaeology?* (2012)
- Bernard Stiegler, “Memory,” *CTMS*

Recommended

- Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969 [1972])
- Erkki Huhtamo & J. Parikka (eds.), *Media Archaeology* (2011)
- Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time* (1994 [1998])
- Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media* (2002 [2006])

UNIT 2: Anglophone Media Theory and History

Week 5, 5/1: Infrastructures

Required

- Lisa Parks, “‘[Stuff You Can Kick](#)’: Toward a Theory of Media Infrastructures,” in *Between Humanities and the Digital* (2015)
- Nicole Starosielski, excerpts, *The Undersea Network* (2015) and <https://www.surfacing.in/>
- Tung Hui-Hu, “Black Boxes and Green Lights: Media, Infrastructure, and the Future at Any Cost” (2016)
- Alexander Galloway, “Networks,” *CTMS*

Recommended

- Lauren Berlant “The Commons: Infrastructures for troubling times” (2016)
- Shannon Mattern, “[Deep Time of Media Infrastructure](#)” (2013)
- Rahul Mukherjee, *Radiant Infrastructures: Media, Environment, and Cultures of Uncertainty* (2020)
- Nicole Starosielski, “Warning: Do Not Dig’: Negotiating the Visibility of Critical Infrastructures,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 11.38 (2012)
- “Infrastructuralism,” Special Issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* 61.4, eds. Michael Rubenstein, Bruce Robbins, Sophia Beal (2015)

Week 6, 5/8: Cybernetics/Bodies in Space

Required

- Norbert Wiener, excerpts, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*
- Donna Haraway, “[A Cyborg Manifesto](#),” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991)
- Ashley Cordes, “Meeting place: bringing Native feminisms to bear on borders of cyberspace,” *Feminist Media Studies* 20.2 (2020)

- N. Katherine Hayles, excerpts, *How We Became Posthuman* (1999)
- N. Katherine Hayles “Cybernetics,” *CTMS*
- Eugene Thacker, “Biomedica,” *CTMS*
- Bernadette Wegenstein, “Body,” *CTMS*

Recommended

- Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan, “From Information Theory to French Theory: Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, and the Cybernetic Apparatus,” *Critical Inquiry* 38 (2011)
- Bruce Clarke, “Communication,” *CTMS*
- Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (1949)

Week 7, 5/15: Algorithms, Race, and Surveillance

Required

- Ruha Benjamin, “Default Discrimination,” in *Race After Technology* (2019)
- Simone Browne, excerpts, *Dark Matters: The Surveillance of Blackness* (2015)
- Lisa Nakamura, excerpts, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (2007)
- Rita Raley, “Dataveillance and Countervailance” (2014)

Recommended

- Marisa Duarte et al, “‘Of Course, Data Can Never Fully Represent Reality’: Assessing the Relationship between ‘Indigenous Data’ and ‘Indigenous Knowledge,’ ‘Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and Traditional Knowledge’”
- Lisa Gitelman, ed., excerpts [“Raw Data” Is an Oxymoron](#), (2014)
- Taina Bucher, “Facing AI: conceptualizing ‘fAIce communication’ as the modus operandi of facial recognition systems.” *Media, Culture & Society*, 44.4 (2022)
- Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions* (2011)
- Jennifer A. González, “Race, Secrecy, and Digital Art Practice,” *Camera Obscura* 24.1 (2009)
- Colin Koopman, *How We Became Our Data* (2019)

Week 8, 5/22: Case Study—Grid Knowledges

Required

- Bernhard Siegert, “(Not) In Place: The Grid, or Cultural Techniques of Ruling Spaces,” in *Cultural Techniques* (2007-2015 [2015])
- Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” *October* 9 (1979)
- Ángel Rama, excerpts from *The Lettered City* (1984 [1996])
- Mark Palmer, “Theorizing Indigital Geographic Information Networks,” *Cartographica* 47:2 (2012)

Recommended

- Shannon Mattern, [Gaps in the Map](#) (2015)
- Daniel Nemser, *Infrastructures of Race* (2017)

Week 9, 5/29: NO CLASS (Memorial Day)

Project Proposals due by 5/30

Week 10, 6/5: Final Project Presentations

Final Project presentations (presentations to take place in seminar)
Project peer review

Final Project Due 6/14