

MC23: Digital Media
Spring 2008

This course introduces students to the study of digital media. Moving from video games to alternative artistic interventions on the Internet, from cyberpunk fiction and movies to SMS text messaging, it focuses on the theory, history, politics and aesthetics of digital media. Special attention will be paid to the tensions between our perceptions of technology and its actual operations and to technology's intersections with social/cultural formations (gender, sexuality, race, global flows) and with issues of control and freedom.

Professor:

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun

Office: 207 Forbes Center for MCM (155 George St.)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-4:30 p.m.

Section Leaders:

Erica Balsom

Office: Basement, Forbes Center for MCM (155 George Street)

Office Hours: Mondays, 12-1:30 p.m.

Josh Guilford

Office: Basement, Forbes Center for MCM (155 George Street)

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1-2:30 p.m.

Co-ordinates:

Lectures: M.W. 11:00-11:50 p.m., Rhode Island Hall 201

Labs: T. 7-10 p.m. Graduate Tower Multi-Media Lab

Sections: C01 W. 2-2:50 p.m., Partridge Hall 104

C04 F. 11-11:50 a.m., 135 Thayer Street 102

C05 F. 12-12:50 p.m., 135 Thayer Street 102

READINGS

Required:

- William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (New York: Acebooks, 2000).
- Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (New York: Spectra, 2000).
- Electronic Readings

Recommended:

- Wendy Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2006).

ALL REQUIRED BOOKS ARE TO BE PURCHASED AT BROWN BOOKSTORE. In case of emergency, copies of *Snow Crash* and *Neuromancer* will be placed in the Library Reserves.

The Electronic Reserves can be accessed through the Library Reserves site.

IMPORTANT: CHANGE IN YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION SCHEDULE

Disregard Banner section assignment. The first week of class we will re-assign you to a discussion section. Available times and procedures for sign-up will be announced the first day of class. **Unless you follow these procedures, you will not be properly enrolled in the course.**

There will be no section meetings the first week of class.

LABS/SCREENINGS (T 7 p.m.)

For many, but not all weeks, you are required to attend a lab or screening. It is imperative that you attend these. **If you cannot attend these, drop the course.**

The labs will generally be held in the Grad Center. Locations for the film screenings will be announced and posted on our website.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND GRADES :

- 1) **READINGS AND LABS/SCREENINGS:** You should have done the reading by the day assigned, since lectures may assume knowledge of the readings without reviewing them. Attentive attendance at the Tuesday night events is absolutely necessary for lectures, discussions and graded assignments.
- 2) **DISCUSSION SECTION ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:** Attendance is required at discussion sections and lectures as well as the Tuesday night events. Roll will be taken in section. **Three unexcused absences from section will result in an NC for the class. Two unexcused absences may affect your final grade.** Generally speaking, excused absences require documentation from health services, a physician, or a dean, as well as approval of the excuse by your section leader.

When you come to section, you are expected to be ready to discuss all class materials (screenings, lectures, readings) for the week.

- 3) **ELECTRONIC ASSIGNMENTS:**
 - 10 Weekly blog responses to the readings/lectures to be posted the night before your section (by 7 p.m.). Reading responses allow you to share your questions and reactions to the texts with the class before we meet. Ideally, these responses not only engage the readings, but also all the other blog postings. In general, they

make our short time together more rigorous and focused (I go over them carefully in order to come up with a "road map" for discussion). In a reading response, you may want to:

- cite a passage you found particularly challenging/intriguing and state why you found it so.
- identify a larger topic or question that you think connects the different texts.
- offer a critique of one or more of the pieces.

Or, since the readings for any given week engage the same topic in a different manner, you can also argue for one interpretation over another. They can be as long or as short as you think appropriate. **Each response is worth 1.5% of your final grade, be sure to post a response.**

- 3 creative/analytical assignments (roughly equivalent to 2-3 pages double spaced), responding to questions that cover one or more, readings, concepts from lecture, and/or screenings. Generally, you will be expected to demonstrate control over major arguments and/or concepts from readings and lectures, often in connection with selective but detailed attention to one or more films seen in class. More on these and the grading when the first posting is assigned.
- **Note: There will be penalties for late postings.** All assignments will be graded on a scale of 0-12. A routinely satisfactory performance will be evaluated as 7. If you receive less than 7 on any paper, you should meet with your section leader at once about your performance. More information will be provided when the first assignment is given. Blogs will be graded on a scale of 0-3.

4) **GROUP PRESENTATION / PROJECT:** Sections will be broken into groups for a collaborative project/paper, worth 20% of your grade.

5) **FINAL GRADE:**

weekly blogs	15%
class participation	5%
3 assignments	60%
group presentation/project	20%

Note: you must post all responses and assignments and participate in the group presentation to pass the course. (That is, you cannot decide to take a zero in one of these assignments and let the four others carry your grade.)

Syllabus

1.23 Introduction

1. Cyberspace

- 1.28 • William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (New York: Acebooks, 2000)
- 1.29 • Screening: *The Matrix* (Wachowski Brothers, 1999, 136 minutes)
- 1.30 • Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.149-181.
(<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>)

2. Hypertext

***weekly blog postings begin this week

- 2.4 • Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think"
(<http://www.press.umich.edu/jep/works/vbush/vbush.shtml>)
- Ted Nelson, "A File Structure for the Complex, the Changing and the Indeterminate," *20th National Conference, New York, Association for Computing Machinery*, 1965

Recommended:

- Cornelia Vismann, "Out of File, Out of Mind," *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*. Eds. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan (NY: Routledge, 2006): 97-104.
- 2.5 • Lab: Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl* (MA: Eastgate Systems, 1995)
- 2.6 • Stuart Moulthrop, "You Say You Want a Revolution? Hypertext and the Laws of Media," *PMC* 1:3 (May 1991)
(<http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.591/moulthro.591>)
- Selection from Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974)
- Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces,"
(<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>)

3. CODE

- 2.11 • N. Katherine Hayles, "Speech, Writing, Code," *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005): 39-62.
- Lev Manovich, "Generation Flash" *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*. 209-218.
- Soren Pold, "Interface Realisms: The Interface as Aesthetic Form," *PMC* 15:2 (2005)
- 2.12 • Lab: CAVE, 180 George Street.
- 2.13 Guest: John Cayley
 - Florian Cramer & Ulrike Gabriel, "On Software Art"
(<http://www.rhizome.org/object.rhiz?2848>)
 - McKenzie Wark, "Codework" (<http://amsterdam.nettime.org/Lists->

Archives/nettime-l-0109/msg00197.html)

- CODEDOC (<http://artport.whitney.org/commissions/codedoc/index.shtml>)
+ visit the sites of all the contributing artists
- Mez (<http://www.hotkey.net.au/%7Enetwurker/>)

4. Networks / Power

- 2.18 • University Holiday ****start reading *Snow Crash***
- 2.19 • *Networks lab*
- **Assignment #1: starring a text due**
- 2.20 • Alexander Galloway, "Introduction," 1. Physical Media" + "2.Form,"
Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization (Cambridge, MA:
MIT Press, 2004) 1-79.
- Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59
(Winter 1992): 3-7
<http://www.jstor.org.ezp1.harvard.edu/view/01622870/ap030057/03a00010/0?frame=noframe&userID=80673ce1@harvard.edu/01cce44066d910fe19bc70&dpi=3&config=jstor>

Recommended:

- Introduction and chapter 1 of *Control and Freedom*

5a. Interactivity / Using:

- 2.25 • Tara McPherson, "Reload: Liveness, Mobility and the Web," *New Media, Old Media*, 199-208.
- Matthew Fuller, "It Looks Like You're Writing a Letter"
(<http://www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/7/7073/1.html>)
- Friedrich Kittler, "There is No Software"
(http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=74)
- 2.26 • *Myst IV: Revelation (Ubi-Soft, 2004)*.
- 2.27 • Manovich, "Navigable Space" *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2000), 244-285.

5b. Interactivity / Simulations:

- 3.3 • Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Eds. Larry Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988), 347-360.
- Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of the Simulacra," *Simulation and Simulacra*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994), 1-42.
- 3.4 • *Second Life*
- 3.5 • Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (NY: Spectra, 2000).

5c. Interactivity / Public Space:

- 3.10 • Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78:6 (May 1973).
- Danah Boyd, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of

- Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life.” in *MacArthur Foundation on Digital Learning, Identity Volume*, Ed. David Buckingham (in press).
- 3.12
- Julian Dibbell, “1, A Rape in Cyberspace,” *my tiny life* (New York: Henry Hold, 1998), 5-38.
 - ---, “Viruses Are Good for You,” *Wired* 3.02 (Feb, 1995) (<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/3.02/viruses.html>)
 - Thomas Keenan. "Windows: of Vulnerability." *The Phantom Public Sphere*. Edited by Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), 121-141.

Recommended:

- 3.14
- Chapters 2 + 3 of *Control and Freedom*
 - **Assignment #2 due**

6. Realtime / Surveillance:

- 3.17
- Philip Agre, “Surveillance and Capture: Two Models of Privacy,” *The Information Society* 10:2 (1994) 101–127.
 - Michel Foucault, "Panopticism" *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage. 1979), 195-228.
- 3.19
- Victor Burgin, “Jenni’s Room: Exhibitionism and Solitude,” *Critical Inquiry* 27:1 (Fall 2000)
 - Paul Virilio. “The Visual Crash.” In Levin et al, *CTRL [SPACE]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2002), 108-113.
 - ---, “Speed and Information: Cyberspace Alarm!” (http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=72)
 - Anna Voog, “anacam,” (<http://www.anacam.com/>)
 - Ken Goldberg, “Demonstrate” (<http://demonstrate.berkeley.edu>)
 - John Simon, “Every Icon” (<http://www.numerical.com/appletsoftware/eicon.html>)
 - MTAA, “1 year performance video (aka samHsiehUpdate) (<http://turbulence.org/Works/1year>)

Recommended:

- Chapter 5 of *Control and Freedom*
- 3.24 March Break

7. Memory:

- 3.31
- Lisa Gitelman, “New Media </Body>,” *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge MA: MIT, 2006), 123-150.
 - Wolfgang Ernst, “Discontinuities: Does the Archive Become Metaphorical in Multi-Media Space?” *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, Ed. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan (New York: Routledge, 2005),
- 4.2
- Arjun Appadurai "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural

Economy," *Public Culture* (1990) 2: 1-24.

- Shilton, K., and Srinivasan, R., "[Preserving Empowered Representations: Using Archival Principles to Maintain Context for Cultural Heritage Materials](http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/srinivasan/Research/Proofs/Shilton%20Srinivasan%20Multicultural%20Archives%20final.pdf)" *Archivaria* 63.
(<http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/srinivasan/Research/Proofs/Shilton%20Srinivasan%20Multicultural%20Archives%20final.pdf>)

8. Convergences:

- 4.7 • Boast, R., Bravo, M. and Srinivasan, Ramesh, "[Return to Babel: Emergent diversity, digital resources, and local knowledge](http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/srinivasan/Research/Proofs/T0632SrinivasanEDITED.pdf)", *The Information Society*, in press.
(<http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/srinivasan/Research/Proofs/T0632SrinivasanEDITED.pdf>)
- Srinivasan, R. and Pyati, A. "[Diasporic Information Environments: Reframing Information Behavior Research](http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/srinivasan/Research/Proofs/SrinivasanPyatiJASIST7.pdf)," *Journal of the American Society of Information Science and Technology*, in press.
(<http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/srinivasan/Research/Proofs/SrinivasanPyatiJASIST7.pdf>)
- Srinivasan, Ramesh, "[Indigenous, Ethnic, and Cultural Articulations of New Media](http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/srinivasan/Research/Proofs/Srinivasan-IJCSProof.pdf)", *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9(4).
(<http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/srinivasan/Research/Proofs/Srinivasan-IJCSProof.pdf>).
- Ben Goertzel, "World Wide Brain: The Emergence of Global Web Intelligence and How it Will Transform the Human Race"
(<http://www.goertzel.org/papers/webart.html>)
- 4.9 • Henry Jenkins, "Introduction," *Convergence Culture* (NY: NYU, 2006) 1-24
- Ang, Ien. "In the Realm of Uncertainty: The Global Village and Capitalist Postmodernity." *Living Room Wars*. New York: Routledge, 1996. (162-180)
- 4.14 • **Class Presentations**
- 4.16 • **Class Presentations**
- 4.17 • **Assignment #3: Papers associated with group projects due**

9. Freedom

- 4.21 • Richard Stallman, "Gnu Manifesto"
(<http://www.gnu.org/gnu/manifesto.html>)
- Open Source Initiative, "The Open Source Definition"
(<http://www.opensource.org/docs/definition.php>)
- Florian Cramer, "Free Software as Collaborative Text"
(http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~cantsin/homepage/writings/copyleft/free_software/free_software_as_text/en/free_software_as_text.html)
- Biella Coleman, "How Free Became Open and Everything Else Under the Sun" *M/C: A Journal Of Media And Culture*, 7(3), 2004-07-00.

- (http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0406/02_Coleman-Hill.php).
- Biella Coleman, "The Political Agnosticism of Free Software and the Politics of Contrast." *Anthropology Quarterly* (Summer 2004). (<http://www.healthhacker.org/biella/colemanaq.pdf>)
 - Eric S. Raymond, "The Cathedral and the Bazaar" (http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue3_3/raymond/)

Recommended:

- Introduction to *Control and Freedom*
- Concluding Lecture

5.9 ***Assignment #4 due***