EMF 485
Seminar in Digital Studies

Course Description
History, theory, and aesthetics of digital media and culture, current technological trends and their origins.

Course Objectives
1. Extend and enlarge students’ historical understanding to include the origins and impacts of new media/digital media
2. Help students develop a lexicon and working theory of media that includes issues of networking, interactivity, alternative media distribution, and twenty-first century copyright issues
3. Acquaint students with the current and emerging artists, developers, and writers most engaged with digital media innovation
4. Discuss and understand the emerging aesthetic and conceptual issues associated with new media

Class Policies
Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Two unexcused absences will lower the final grade by ten points, and each additional unexcused absence will carry a ten point penalty as well. A written note from qualified individuals is required for absences resulting from illness, family emergency, etc. The instructor may excuse absences in certain situations, but only if the student has talked with the instructor beforehand. The responsibility of making up missed work will be solely on the student.

Tardiness: You are considered late if you arrive 10 minutes after the beginning of class without prior consent from instructor. Three late arrivals will be considered an unexcused absence.
Assignments

1. Readings and participation in class discussions

This course will include readings each week and discussions of those readings. As it is a seminar course, the quality of the class experience is largely based on students having read and being willing to discuss the material. Reading and participation, therefore, are absolutely required and will be weighed heavily in the student's final grade. (25%)

2. Weekly submissions to the class blog

There is a Wordpress blog for the course at www.digitalstudies2011.wordpress.com. Students are required to sign up at www.wordpress.com and become authors of the class blog (simply email me the email address you used to sign up and I can give you author rights on the blog). Each week, students are required to submit something relating to the current reading to the blog. This must include a few paragraphs of thoughts, comments, questions, etc. and should also include images, video links, and other links to related content on the internet. These submissions are designed to help spread information, thoughts, resources, and references to class members to inform discussion at the upcoming class meeting, and as such, should be submitted by the midnight before class at the latest (so that there is a little time for everyone to see what has been posted). Please check out others’ blog posts before class, and add comments if you so desire. (25%)

3. History of the New: Midterm Presentation

A PowerPoint presentation on the person of your choice who has played a pivotal role in digital/new media development. This can be an inventor, entrepreneur, artist, writer, designer, or other personality. (25%)

4. Final Paper or Project

Students will have the option of producing a paper or project for the final assignment in this course. The topic is open to anything we discussed during the course, or other
topics related to digital culture/new media that we did not cover during class. The form can be a traditional academic paper (10-15 pages, typed, double-spaced) or a media project of some type (video, website, multimedia performance, etc). Projects will have to be of a large enough scope to be considered equivalent to the paper. Whether a project or paper is undertaken, students will present their results during the final class. (25%)

Many assignments in this course require an in-class presentation component. This must be performed on the due date in class, unless a valid, documented excuse can be provided. Unexcused absences during presentations cannot be made up. Late assignments will be subject to a grading penalty. This penalty may be waived by the instructor in cases of documented illness.

8 GB Flash Drive: Your projects will be turned in as digital files (.ppt, .mov, etc.). They will be copied to the professor’s computer and the flash drive will be returned to you.

**Grading Scale**

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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**Schedule**

9/1
Introductions, class policies, blog basics

Screening: *Max Headroom: 20 Minutes into the Future*

Discussion

Reading: “Elements of Screenology: Toward an Archaeology of the Screen”, Erkki Huhtamo

9/8

Discussion

History of Computing and the Internet
Screening: The True Story of the Internet – Browser Wars
Reading: “Principles of New Media”, Lev Manovich
9/15
Discussion
New Media
Screening: Ghost in the Shell
Readings: “Welcome to the Desert of the Real,” Slavoj Zizek
9/22
Discussion
Cyberpunk, aesthetics of the internet age, the “real” and the “virtual”
Screening: TBA
Reading: “The Art of Watching Databases: Introduction to the Video Vortex Reader”, Geert Lovink. “'All Your Chocolate Rain Are Belong to Us'?”, Jean Burgess
9/29
Discussion
Youtube, homemade media, democratized distribution, aesthetics
Screening: Various youtube videos
Reading: “Memes: the new replicators,” Richard Dawkins
10/6
Discussion
The meme, viral media
Screening: various internet memes, selections from “Know Your Meme”
10/13
Discussion
Social networking sites, blogging, podcasting, self-publishing

Screening: *Us Now*

10/20

Midterm Presentations

Reading: “Video Games Can Never Be Art,” Roger Ebert

Play a video game (suggested games to be announced)

10/27

Discussion

Video Games, the virtual body

Screening: episode from the *Rise of the Video Game* series

Reading: “As We Become Machines: Corporealized Pleasures in Video Games,” Martti Lahti

Make and submit an Avatar

11/3

Discussion

Online video games, persistent virtual worlds, fictional universes entering the “real” world

Screening: *Second Skin*

Reading: selections from “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” Donna Haraway

11/10

Discussion

The Cyborg, Transhumanism

Screening: example artists, researchers

Reading: selections from “Transforming Mirrors”, David Rokeby

11/17

Discussion
Interactivity, Augmented Reality, Emergence

Screening: example artists, researchers

Reading: TBA

11/24

No Class: Thanksgiving

12/1

Discussion

Piracy, copyright, ownership, new views

Screening: various found footage examples, Steal This Film

Reading: TBA

12/8

Discussion

Privacy, international political implications, cyber warfare, Wikileaks

Screening: TBA

Finals Week (date and time TBA)

Presentations of Final Papers/Projects

Papers and Projects Due