

MM3B03: Digital Culture

Academic Year: 2015

Term: Winter

Location: Burke Science Building 137

Day/Evening: Monday 9:30 – 11:20 / Thursday 10:30 – 11:20

Instructor: Dr. Andrea Zeffiro

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Office Hours: Monday 12:00 – 1:00

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Course Objectives: This course explores contemporary digital culture with particular attention to issues of digital labour. The course introduces critical theoretical frameworks for analyzing the permutations of labour and work in relation to new digital technologies. By the end of the course, students will have a refined understanding of the reorganization of labour under global digital capitalism and the broader implications for the production, distribution and consumption of digital culture.

Textbooks, Materials & Fees: Course materials are available on Avenue to Learn. Some readings may be accessed through a link provided or as a pdf, and others will require that you log on through the library system in order to access the journal.

Twelve 3 x 5 index cards.

Method of Assessment: Assignment guidelines will be provided at the start of the semester and posted to Avenue to Learn. Due dates are posted below.

PARTICIPATION / LECTURE RESPONSE (25%) **DUE:** Weekly

Students are expected to attend class regularly. Attendance and participation mean coming to class having read the assigned readings, contributing to class discussions, and participating in class exercises and group work. Absenteeism, chronic lateness and non-participation will affect the final grade.

At the end of lecture on Monday, students will submit a lecture response on a 3 x 5 index card. Details will be given the first class.

GROUP PRESENTATION (15%) **DUE:** Weekly

Every Thursday, a group of students will lead and moderate a discussion on the topic of the week. Groups will submit a one-page summary of their presentation topic.

EDITORIAL (15%) **DUE:** February 4

Students will write an editorial response to an assigned article from the popular press that touches on a facet of the course.

PROJECT PROPOSAL (15%) **DUE:** February 25

Students will submit a proposal for their final project.

PROJECT PRESENTATION (10%) **DUE:** March 28 & 31/April 4 & 7

Students will present to the class their research project (in-process).

FINAL PROJECT (20%) **DUE:** April 11

Students will produce a collaborative final project. The project may take the form of a traditional scholarly research paper or a hybrid research project.

Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties:

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at the start of class on the due date (unless otherwise noted). Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends and holidays.

Assignments not handed in within one week (7 days) of the due date will receive a 0 grade. E-mailed assignments will not be accepted. Extensions will be given only for documented reasons. A technical difficulty (network outages, hardware or software malfunctions, data loss) does not warrant an extension. Please keep this in mind. Plan accordingly and maintain back-up copies of work.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING POLICIES AND STATEMENTS:

Academic Dishonesty

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: 'Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty'), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Email correspondence policy: It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

Modification of course outlines: McMaster University reserves the right to change or revise information contained in course outlines in extreme circumstances. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check regularly their primary email account via their @mcmaster.ca alias and course websites.

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean's office.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances: Students requiring academic accommodation based on religion and spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the Course Calendar or by their respective Faculty. In most cases, the student should contact his or her professor or academic advisor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations for classes, assignments, tests and examinations that might be affected by a religious holiday or spiritual observance.

Topics and Readings:

Thursday, January 7

WEEK 1: Introduction to the Course

PART 1: THEORIZING AND ANALYZING DIGITAL LABOUR

Monday, January 11 / Thursday, January 14

WEEK 2: Digital Cultural Production

Fuchs, Christian., and Sandoval, Marisol. (2014). Digital Workers of the World Unite! A Framework for Critically Theorising and Analyzing Digital Labour. *Triple C: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 12(2). <http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/549/604>

Till, Chris. (30 January 2014). What is Digital Labour? Or How Did Facebook Make Its Billions? *This Is Not a Sociology Blog*. <https://christopherharpertill.wordpress.com/2014/01/30/what-is-digital-labour-or-how-did-facebook-make-its-billions/>

Monday, January 18 / Thursday, January 21

WEEK 3: From Immaterial to Aspirational Labour

Duffy, Brooke Erin. (2015). The Romance of Work: Gender and Aspirational Labour in the Digital Culture Industries. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1-17. <http://ics.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/02/25/1367877915572186.full.pdf+html>

Tokumitsu, Miya. (2014). In the Name of Love. *Jacobin*, 13. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/01/in-the-name-of-love/>

Monday, January 25 / Thursday, January 28

WEEK 4: The Sharing Economy

Rogers, Brishen. (2015). Social Costs of Uber. *University of Chicago Law Review*, 82(85).

<https://lawreview.uchicago.edu/page/social-costs-uber>

Rozworski, Michal. (16 December 2015). Why We Fight Uber. *Jacobin*.

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/uber-sharing-economy-taskrabbit-silicon-valley-technology/>

PART 2: DIGITAL LABOUR & PRIVILEGE

Monday, February 1 / Thursday, February 4

WEEK 5: The Hacker Class

Dafermos, George., and Söderberg, Johan. (2009). The Hacker Movement as a Continuation of Labour Struggle. *Capital & Class*, 33 (1), 55-73.

<http://cnc.sagepub.com/content/33/1/53.full.pdf+html>

Gregg, Melissa. (2015). Hack for Good: Speculative labour, app development and the burden of austerity. *The Fibreculture Journal*.

<http://twentyfive.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-186-hack-for-good-speculative-labour-app-development-and-the-burden-of-austerity/>

Monday, February 8 / Thursday, February 11

WEEK 6: Brogrammer Culture

Hicks, Marie. (2012). Brograms and the Power of Vaporware. *Computer*

History. <http://www.computerhistory.org/atcm/brograms-and-the-power-of-vaporware>

Wajcman, Judy. (2004). Male Designs on Technology, in *Technofeminism*. (pp.10-31). Cambridge: Polity Press

Mead, Rebecca. (14 October 2014). Cold Comfort: Tech Jobs and Egg Freezing. *The New Yorker*. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/facebook-apple-egg-freezing-benefits>

Monday, February 15 / Thursday, February 18

WEEK 7: READING WEEK

Monday, February 22 / Thursday, February 25

WEEK 8: Commercial Content Moderators

Roberts, Sarah T. (2016). Commercial Content Moderation: Digital Laborers' Dirty Work. *Media Studies Publications*. Paper 12. <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/commpub/12>

Chen Adrian. (23 October 2014). The Laborers Who Keep Dick Pics and Beheadings Out of Your Facebook Feed. *Wired*. <http://www.wired.com/2014/10/content-moderation/>

PART 3: DIGITIZING LABOUR

Monday, February 29 / Thursday, March 3

WEEK 9: Big Data

van Dijck, José. 2014. Datafication, dataism and dataveillance: Big Data between scientific paradigm and ideology. *Surveillance and Society* 12(2) <http://library.queensu.ca/ojs/index.php/surveillance-and-society/article/view/datafication>

Havens, Timothy. (2014). Media Programming in an Era of Big Data. *Media Industries* 1 (2). <http://www.mediaindustriesjournal.org/index.php/mij/article/view/43/82>

Kelly, JP. (29 October 2015). Outsourcing or Open-Sourcing? Digital Labour and Television's New 'Programmers'. *CST Online*. <http://cstonline.tv/outsourcing-or-open-sourcing>

Monday, March 7 / Thursday, March 10

WEEK 10: The Algorithm

Seaver, Nick. 2013. "Knowing Algorithms." In *Media in Transition* 8. Cambridge, MA. <http://nickseaver.net/s/seaverMit8.pdf>

Harris, Mark. (3 December 2014). Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers protest: 'I am a human being, not an algorithm'. *The Guardian*.
<http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/dec/03/amazon-mechanical-turk-workers-protest-jeff-bezos>

Napoli, Philip M. (2014). On Automation in Media Industries: Integrating Algorithmic Media Production into Media Industries Scholarship. *Media Industries* 1(1).
<http://www.mediaindustriesjournal.org/index.php/mij/article/view/14/60>

Monday, March 14 / Thursday, March 17

WEEK 11: Drones

Andrejevic, Mark. (2015). The Droning of Experience. *Fibreculture Journal* 25. <http://twentyfive.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-187-the-droning-of-experience/>

Bridle, James. Dronestagram: The Drone's-Eye View. *BookTwo.org*.
<http://booktwo.org/notebook/dronestagram-drones-eye-view/>

Evans-Thirlswell, Edwin. (8 October 2015). In this Game You Play a Drone Pilot, Then a Drone Target. *Motherboard*. http://motherboard.vice.com/en_uk/read/in-this-game-you-play-a-drone-pilot-then-a-drone-target

Monday, March 21 / Thursday, March 24

WEEK 12: The Quantified Self

Till, Chris. (2014). Exercise as Labour: Quantified Self and the Transformation of Exercise into Labour. *Societies* 4(3), 446-462. <http://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/4/3/446/htm>

Quantified Self. <http://quantifiedself.com/>

Monday, March 28 / Thursday, March 31

WEEK 13: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Monday, April 4 / Thursday, April 7

WEEK 14: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS