DIG 4800
Digital Theories

School of Journalism and Mass Communication
Florida International University

Fall 2013

Dates/Times (Note change from PantherSoft)
M W 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Glenn Hubert Library 160

(Subject to minor, but timely changes, as the semester progresses)

Course Instructor
Dr. Robert Gutsche Jr., Assistant Professor
318 A, Academic 2
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tedgutsche or Robert Gutsche (skype)
robertgutschejr.com
Individual workshop hours: MW 2:45 to 5 p.m.
Web, digitaltheories.wordpress.com

A scene altered. Twice.
Course Overview
Digital Theories is an interdisciplinary and international approach to applying critical/cultural theory to digital media and communities. Because the world of digital communication is constantly in flux, this class is designed to keep pace with the rapidly shifting digital media landscape. At the same time, however, this course approaches communication as a cultural function of power-making used to maintain dominant social and cultural positions within society. Therefore, this course relies on canonical readings in mass communication, scholarship focused on emerging technologies, and cutting-edge material, likely to be supplied by current journal articles that can be updated as the course develops.

This course is part of a larger major to prepare students for future careers as communicators in digital environments with content that is relevant for multiple professional academic and institutional settings. From graduate preparatory education to large firms and small businesses, social media start-ups to traditional media outlets seeking to leverage new digital strategies, as well as non-profit managers and community organizers, approaching media production, messages, and its audience through a critical lens helps us to identify issues of power within media and examine avenues for resistance.

Students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of concepts and theories of mass communication as they are influenced and remade by the digital era, the hallmarks of which are increased audience autonomy, segmentation and specialization, interactivity, media convergence and conglomerations, and democratization. Specifically, students should be able to identify and apply the following concepts to digital news, advertising, and social products: hegemony, agency, social control, technological determinism, culture, and ideology. (A glossary of terms for you to fill out is available at the end of the syllabus and on the course website.) This outcome will be measured through papers and a final project.

Readings
1) Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies, Hartley, 9780470671016 (2012)
3) Communication as Culture, Carey, 0-415-98976-0 (2009)
4) Net Locality, Gordon & de Souza e Silva, 1-4051-8060-3 (2011)
7) RECOMMENDED, but not required: Internet Politics, Chadwick, 0-19-517773-8 (2006)
8) One book that you will select for your Final Paper
Assignments
(These are rough guidelines. More will be explained in lecture.)

1: Midterm Exam (5-10 pages)
2: Midterm Paper (5-10 pages)
3: Final Paper Presentation
4: Research Paper (10-20 pages)

For this paper, you must select a topic presented in class, preferably a concept or controversy/case about digital media and the theories used to explain it. You must follow APA style, have at least 10 scholarly citations, and produce an original argument about how the concepts and controversies/cases interact. This should be viewed as original research, which we will be reading in class. Therefore, you must follow a structure that will be presented in lecture – including an introduction, a thesis, a problem, relevant scholarship on the topic, and then your analysis (the latter being the majority of the paper).

In this analysis, you must make direct connections between your argument about concepts and the role of digital media. How does your concept and discussion relate to digital media and future technology? What role does technology play in this debate? What changes can be made within society to address the cultural influences inherent in this technology?

Grading
Midterm Exam: 20 percent
Midterm Paper: 20 percent
   I must approve your paper topic and approve the citations you will be using. Find articles from the Communication and Mass Media Complete Database within the last five years.
Final Paper Presentation: 20 percent
   I must approve your final paper topic.
Final Paper: 20 percent
Participation: 20 percent (including the final paper research session)
Rubrics for assignments are at the end of the syllabus and on the course website.

Extra Credit
I do not give extra credit assignments.

Makeup/Late Work
You may be able to take a quiz or exam on a day other than the assigned day ONLY in the case of an excused absence. Excused absences involve true emergencies (i.e. illness or death in the family, or otherwise according to FIU policy). In order to receive consideration for an excused absence, you must do several things:
1) It is your responsibility to get in touch with me within one business day in the event you qualify for a makeup exam or quiz in order to be considered for makeup or to have a late assignment graded. Otherwise, all missed work will receive a zero.

2) You must provide appropriate documentation. In the case of a medical emergency, you need a doctor or hospital note that says you could not attend class on that date. In the case of a death (family emergency), you need to provide something documenting the dates and your relationship to the deceased, such as an obituary or funeral program. Examples of unacceptable documentation include a note saying you were seen by a doctor or health center, airline tickets to a family event, etc. Other absences that will not count as excused include family events (wedding, family trip, etc.), conflicts with other classes or school related activities (such as grammar exams or reviews), car trouble, a work conflict or an internship obligation. Failure to provide appropriate documentation means the absence will not be excused. Traffic and rain are not appropriate explanations for lateness or absences. That said, if you are more than 10 minutes late, please consider not coming to class or sit in the back without making any disruption. Pop quizzes will be presented right at the start of class. If you are late, you will not be able to make-up the quiz.

Email Policy
Students are encouraged to email me, but not about grades, due dates (or other information that is in the syllabus). Information about what was missed in class should be first directed to another classmate.

Cell Phones and Browsing
If there are issues with cell phones, this will be the result: At the beginning of class, all cell phones will be placed in one spot within the classroom that’s agreed-upon by the class. This is a procedure sometimes used within the professional world. Not only does it take our minds off of the cell phones, but it also takes away the temptation to text. If you choose to use your phone, you may be asked to leave the room and not return. Internet browsing is something that you must self-police. Please see or email me if you have concerns about excessive browsing and I will take action.

Attitude
It’s everything. We all have bad days, but we don’t need to make our own issues known to the world. If you are having troubles that you think would make their way into the classroom, please let me know. In this class, let’s support each other – and that means showing respect. In fact, if you have something going on that may put you out of commission for the class period, just tell me that (I don’t need to know details). Students who fail to do this will be asked to leave during that class period. Give respect. Get it.

Warning/Disclaimer
At times, conversation in the course, and in journalism as a whole, may have offensive (or uncomfortable) tones. Covering such topics is a necessary part of the journalist’s role in society. Discussing these topics also is important to being a critical media user and member of society. However, this freedom to discuss issues of a sensitive nature does not allow for sexual harassment, racism and other forms of discrimination. If you have concerns about conversations in the classroom or the content shared, please discuss them with me.
And, just to let you know, **in all facets of this course, you are responsible for your own education and knowledge-base.** I am here to help lead you in the “right direction(s).” That means, stopping by during workshop hours (or making appointments outside of those hours).

**Academic Honesty**
Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning.

Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Misconduct includes: Cheating – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not.
Plagiarism – The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

Any student who fails to meet these expectations will not only fail the course, but will also be reported to the Chair of the Department of Journalism & Broadcasting and to the Dean of SJMC.

**Course Schedule**

**1: Cultural Studies – Communication as Culture**
8/26: Introduction

8/28: *Communication as Culture* Introduction through Chapter 4

**2: Cultural Studies – Communication, Culture and the internet**
9/2: NO CLASS

9/4: Carey Chapters 5 through 8

**3: Cultural Studies – Ideology, Power, and Media**
9/9: *Manufacturing Consent* (in-class film)

Additional article will be assigned

9/11: *Manufacturing Consent* (in-class film)
Additional article will be assigned

4: Locality – Digital Places and Spaces
9/16: Presentation, Location matters: Place-based apps-as-business and as-news

*Net Locality* Introduction through Chapter 3

“Location matters: Place-based apps-as-business and as-news,” Future of Journalism Conference, Cardiff, Wales, UK, September 2013 (via FOJ website)

9/18: *Net Locality* Chapters 4 through 5


5 Locality – What Matters, Location?
9/23: *Net Locality* Chapters 6 through Conclusion

Search Communication and Mass Media Complete for “Building boundaries: A case study of the use of news photographs and cultural narratives in the coverage of local crime and in the creation of urban space,” *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 2011

9/25: MIDTERM

6: Gatekeeping – How Gates Work
9/30: *Gatekeeping Theory* Introduction through Chapter 3

Search Communication and Mass Media Complete for “Gatekeeping Twitter: message diffusion in political hashtags,” Marco Toledo Bastos, Rafael Luis Galdini Raimundo and Rodrigo Travitzki, Media Culture Society, 2013

10/2: *Gatekeeping Theory* Chapters 4 through 7


7: Gatekeeping – What Enters & What Doesn’t? (And Why?)
10/7: *Gatekeeping Theory* Chapters 8 through 10

Additional article will be assigned
10/9: TBA

8: Digital Myths – What the internet is Not
   10/14: The Myth of Digital Democracy Parts One through Three
   Additional article will be assigned
   10/16: The Myth of Digital Democracy Parts 4 through 6
   Additional article will be assigned

9: Digital Myths – What is the New Digital Divide?
   MIDTERM PAPER DUE
   10/23: TBA

10: Digital Disconnect – How (Digital) Markets Operate
    10/28: Digital Disconnect Chapters 1 through 3
    10/30: Digital Disconnect Chapters 4 through 5

11: Digital Disconnect – More Connections
    11/4: Digital Disconnect Chapter 6
    Additional article will be assigned
    FINAL PAPER PROPOSALS
    11/6: Digital Disconnect Chapter 7
    Additional article will be assigned

12: Digital Futures – How to Study it
    11/11: NO CLASS
    11/13: Digital Futures Chapters 1 through 4

13: Digital Futures – Cultural Studies Perspectives
    11/18: Digital Futures Chapters 5 through 7
    Additional article will be assigned
    11/20: Digital Futures Chapters 8 through 9
Additional article will be assigned

   11/25: Final Paper Presentations
   11/27: Final Paper Presentation

15: Your Work – The Future of Digital Media Studies II
   12/2: Final Paper Presentations
   12/4: Final Paper Presentations

FINAL: DETAILS TBA
Course Glossary

Agency

Collective Memory

Critical Studies

Culture

Gatekeeping

Hegemony

Ideology

Net Localities

Place

Political Economy

Power Elite

Resonance (v Salience)

Security

Social Control

Space

Technological Determinism
Grading Rubric for Digital Theories, Fall 2013
Research Report and Papers

(20 points possible in each section; each assignment valued at 100 points)

Compliance & Presentation
Does this assignment follow the requirements?  
Is the assignment correct in APA format?  
Is the assignment presented in a clean fashion?  
Are concepts from the course applied?

Research Quality & Sources
What is the academic rigor of this assignment?  
Does the assignment have adequate sources?  
Are concepts from the course applied correctly?

Writing Quality
Does this assignment use proper grammar & punctuation?  
Is the writing strong, active, and interesting?  
Are sentences concise and clear?  
Does the assignment flow through proper transitions?

Argument
Are the arguments clearly stated?  
Are the arguments sound and focused?  
Does the evidence provided support the arguments?  
Are the arguments conceptually based?

Analysis
Is the analysis analytical rather than descriptive?  
Does the analysis utilize appropriate scholarship?  
How well does the analysis capture the literature?  
Does the analysis contribute to future research?  
Are concepts from the course explicated throughout?

General Comments:
Grading Rubric for Digital Theories, Fall 2013

Final Presentation

(20 points possible in each section; each assignment valued at 100 points)

Compliance & Presentation
Does this assignment follow the requirements?
Is the assignment correct in APA format?
Is the assignment presented in a clean fashion?
Are concepts from the course applied?

Research Quality & Sources
What is the academic rigor of this assignment?
Does the assignment have adequate sources?
Are concepts from the course applied correctly?

Writing Quality
Does this assignment use proper grammar & punctuation?
Is the writing strong, active, and interesting?
Are sentences concise and clear?
Does the assignment flow through proper transitions?

Argument
Are the arguments clearly stated?
Are the arguments sound and focused?
Does the evidence provided support the arguments?
Are the arguments conceptually based?

Analysis
Is the analysis analytical rather than descriptive?
Does the analysis utilize appropriate scholarship?
How well does the analysis capture the literature?
Does the analysis contribute to future research?
Are concepts from the course explicated throughout?

General Comments:
CONTRACT:

I understand this syllabus represents a contract. I agree to abide by the grading and policy terms outlined in class and in the syllabus for the Fall 2013 semester. Turn this form in no later than the beginning of class.

No grades will be posted for you until you have returned this form.

Print name:

Date:

Signature: