

## Media 2.0: Critical Studies in Digital Media

**Instructor:** Dr. Joshua Reeves

**Meeting Time:** 9:40–11:05 T/TR

**Classroom:** ACB 314

**Instructor's Office:** ACB 225

**Office Hours:** 11:05–1:30 T and by appointment

**Email:** jreeves4@memphis.edu

**Course Website:** <http://jreeves1.wix.com/jreeves2 - !media20/c1udm>

**Course Overview:** The emergence of digital media has radically changed our society. From the ways we spend money to the ways we socialize, and from how we travel to how we wage war, digital media have touched nearly every aspect of our lives. While traditional media outlets continue to be an important source for news and entertainment content, the Internet has become a decentralized network for the distribution of a wide variety of information. Key to this explosion in creative output is that the Internet allows producers to supplement and bypass (though not necessarily replace) traditional media gatekeepers. Keeping a critical eye on the dangers and promise of the digital age, we will talk directly to people who are producing and distributing their work on the Internet and other alternative channels, and we will explore how these new distribution forms challenge assumptions about how media should/do work. Students in COMM 4811 will not only learn to think critically about the social impact of digital media, but will also learn to use media creatively in their everyday lives.

### **Student Learning Objectives:**

Upon completing this class, students will be able to:

- \*Understand current debates about the social impact of digital technologies.
- \*Contextualize developments in new media within the larger history of media technologies.
- \*Produce digital media projects based on successful real-world campaigns.
- \*Work constructively in collaborative digital environments.
- \*Compile a digital portfolio that showcases their diverse media projects.

### **UNIT I: INTRODUCTION: DEBATING TECHNOLOGICAL UTOPIANISM**

January 16: Introduction

#### **January 21: Critiquing Technology**

Chellis Glendinning, [“Technology Can Be Damaging”](#)

#### **January 23: Technological “Utopianism”**

Ray Kurzweil, [“Reinventing Humanity: The Future of Human-Machine Intelligence”](#)

#### **January 28: Watch *Minority Report* in class**

January 30: Finish *Minority Report*, and discuss emerging technologies

## **UNIT II: SURVEILLANCE**

### **February 4: The Surveillance State**

Paul R. La Monica, [“Government ‘Spying’ on Me: Who Cares?”](#)

Glenn Greenwald, [“On the Espionage Act Changes against Edward Snowden”](#)

Somini Sengupta, [“Privacy Fears Grow as Cities Increase Surveillance”](#)

### **February 6: Corporate Surveillance and Free Labor**

Ian Bogost, [“Hyperemployment, or the Exhausting Work of the Technology User”](#)

Stephanie Armour, [“Borrowers Hit Social Media Hurdles”](#)

Elizabeth Dwoskin, [“What Secrets Your Phone is Sharing about You”](#)

*Read in class:* Trebor Scholz, [“Introduction: Why Does Digital Labor Matter Now”](#)  
(pages 1-3)

## **UNIT III: ACTIVISM AND THE DIGITAL PUBLIC**

February 11: Guest! [Brittany Fitzpatrick of Mentor Me](#)

February 13: Guest! [Addie McGowan of Bigfish](#)

### **February 18: Social Media and the Arab Spring**

Jay Rosen, [“The ‘Twitter Can’t Topple Dictators’ Article”](#)

Philip N. Howard, [“The Arab Spring’s Cascading Effects”](#)

February 20: Guest! [Shannon Little of Shannon R. Little Communication](#)

## **UNIT IV: WAR PROPAGANDA AND WAR TECHNOLOGIES**

### **February 25: War Propaganda**

Stacey Leasca, [“Social Warfare: Israel and Hamas Bring War to the Digital Age”](#)

Zeina Karam, [“Syria’s Civil War Plays Out on Social Media”](#)

### **February 27: U.S. Propaganda**

Eric Schmitt, [“A U.S. Reply, in English, to Terrorists’ Online Lure”](#)

Tom Vanden Brook, [“White House Fights Bid to Kill Pentagon Propaganda Sites”](#)

### **March 4: Weapons and War Technologies**

[Peter W. Singer, “Do Drones Undermine Democracy?”](#)

Diane Weber Bederman, [“Drones: The West’s Best Ethical Response to Terrorism”](#)

### **March 6: Stuxnet and Cyber-Attacks**

David E. Sanger, [“Obama Order Sped up Wave of Cyberattacks Against Iran”](#)

March 11: SPRING BREAK!!!

March 13 SPRING BREAK!!!

## **UNIT V: PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ADVERTISING**

### **March 18: Digital Advertising**

David Carr, [“Storytelling Ads May Be Journalism’s New Peril”](#)

Amanda Holpuch, [“Advertising in the Digital Age: A Global Idea is Still the ‘Holy Grail’”](#)

*Business Insider*, [“Why Social Media Advertising Is Set to Explode”](#)

March 20: Advertising Presentations

### **UNIT VI: LITERACY**

#### **March 25: Digital English?**

John McWhorter, [“Is Texting Killing the English Language?”](#)

Motoko Rich, [“Online, R U Really Reading?”](#)

March 27: Final Previews

### **UNIT VII: ELECTIONS AND DIGITAL POLITICS**

#### **April 1: Digital Voting**

Roger Johnston, [“How I Hacked an Electronic Voting Machine”](#)

Keith Thomson, [“Could Romney-Linked Electronic Voting Machines Jeopardize Ohio’s Vote Accuracy?”](#)

#### **April 3: Social Media and Political Campaigns**

John Axelrod, [“A New Study on Twitter’s Power Could Change How Politicians Campaign”](#)

Nick Judd, [“The Game: How Campaigns’ New Obsession with Social Media Is Hurting America”](#)

### **UNIT VII: MUSIC INDUSTRY**

#### **April 8: Music in the Digital Age**

Paul Resnikoff, [“Technology Didn’t Kill the Music Industry. The Fans Did”](#)

Steven Goldstein, [“How the Digital Age Changed Hip-Hop”](#)

April 10: Guest! [Elizabeth Cawein of Signal Flow](#)

### **UNIT IX: EDUCATION: MOOCs, ONLINE LEARNING, ETC.**

#### **April 15: Digital Education**

Max Chafkin, [“Udacity’s Sebastian Thrun, Godfather of Free Online Education, Changes Course”](#)

Laura Hepler, [“Coursera Founder Ng Counters MOOC Criticism”](#)

*Huffington Post*, [“Is Online Education Replacing the Classroom Learning Experience?”](#)

April 17: Online Education Experiment

### **UNIT X: DOING BUSINESS IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

#### **April 22: Economy**

Bill Halal, [“How Netflix Beat Blockbuster: An Exemplar of Emerging Technologies”](#)

Alex Pappademas, [“Blockbuster Video: 1985–2013”](#)

Chris Anderson, [“The Long Tail”](#)

April 24: Digital Media Debates

April 29: Digital Media Debates

**Final Exam: T, May 6, 10:30a - 12:30p**

## MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

**Attendance, Participation, and Small Assignments (25%):** Because this is an upper-level discussion class, students must participate regularly in our class discussions. Students that do not verbally participate in class during a given week will not be allowed to bring their laptops to class the following week (they will, therefore, need to print out the readings before class). If participation is low, the instructor may assign periodic quizzes throughout the semester. Miscellaneous small assignments are also included in this percentage.

**Minority Report Technologies Report (10%):** Students will break into six groups and present the current state of digital technologies portrayed in *Minority Report*. Using at least one concrete example, groups will have seven to eight minutes to demonstrate where these technologies are today. Groups will choose between E-paper (electronic paper), crime prediction software, personalized advertising, insect robots, retina scanners, and Multi-touch interfaces. For a good point of departure, see [this link](#). Presentations must use presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint) and may include short video segments (maximum two minutes).

**Social Media Campaign Lightning Presentations (10%):** On March 20, student pairs will give a 100-second lightning presentation to the class in which they analyze the social media outreach promoting a movie, a political campaign, a musician, an event, or a product. Students should demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the campaign strategies at hand. For ideas, students may look at campaigns begun by the advertising giants featured [here](#). Students should develop twenty PowerPoint slides that each last five seconds, as well as develop a practiced script that goes along with the slides. Presentation slides require minimal text.

**Media Technology Showcase (10%):** Once during the semester, students will divide into pairs and research how a particular activity was carried out before the advent of digital media. Projects should be case-study-based and should focus in-depth on a specific example. Presentations should be about fifteen minutes long and must make use of innovative presentation format and style; PowerPoint is not allowed. (For a few suggested formats, see [here](#). Peer-evaluations and self-evaluations—by which students write a paragraph describing each participant's duties and also give one another a grade—are due the class period following the presentation. A typed, annotated bibliography with eight sources is due on the day of the presentation. (Each source should be accompanied with two or three sentences summarizing the source's content and

explaining its relevance to the presentation.) Five of these sources must be print-based, not online/digital.

**Final Preview (10%):** On March 27, students will introduce their final projects to the class during a four-minute, informal presentation. (No presentation software is necessary; students should just plan to talk us through their projects.) Students will briefly introduce the organization or business they are working with and will describe how they plan to use digital media to contribute *to a particular goal* (e.g., to recruit new members, promote a product, advertise an event). The preview should do three main things: first, students must introduce the organization to the rest of the class and describe why it is interesting and/or important. Second, students will reference another campaign and explain how they plan to incorporate some of those social/digital media outreach strategies into their own project. Third, students will choose a lesser-known social media platform and describe how they plan to use it in their outreach. (Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter are off limits.) For ideas, see [this link](#). Partners are allowed for this assignment, so long as the final project itself is collaborative.

**Digital Media Policy Debate (15%):** Students will pair up and choose a topic to debate in class on April 24 or April 29. One student will argue in favor of a particular policy, while his/her partner will argue against it.

*\*Potential topics include (but are not limited to):*

Drone Strikes

Domestic Surveillance Drones

SOPA/SISPA

Electronic Voting Machines

Online Education

NSA Surveillance

Censorship of web (hate speech specifically on web)

File Sharing

**Final Project (20%):** Students will use digital media to (1) develop or enhance the profile of a business or organization with which they work, and/or (2) build awareness about an issue, cause, or event. (Students may find organizations for this assignment, if they wish.) Students will propose a project to the instructor, who will work individually with each student to come up with a project that is both beneficial to the student and sufficiently rigorous for an upper-level final assignment. Projects may be collaborative. (Alternative assignments are possible but must be approved by the instructor. *For example, in lieu of a digital media production project, students may choose to write an eight-page analysis paper.*)

***The instructor reserves the right to change this syllabus at any time.***

### **GENERAL NOTIFICATIONS**

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities (including invisible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, and head injuries) are encouraged to notify their instructor of their condition within the first two weeks of the semester. The college

and your instructor will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Any claim of disability must be documented by Student Disability Services in order to qualify for accommodation.

### **Course Materials**

Readings are linked to this syllabus and the course [website](#). Some materials must be accessed directly from the website. Assignment sheets will be available at the course portal at <https://elearn.memphis.edu/>.

**Originality:** According to The University of Memphis Student Handbook, your assignments must reflect your own effort (or a group effort for team assignments). In situations where external sources are used, you must acknowledge your sources and add your own analysis. Otherwise, it's plagiarism. If you plagiarize or cheat, the minimum penalty is an F on the assignment; other penalties could include an F for the course and/or suspension. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Expectations for academic integrity and student conduct are described in detail on the website of the Office of Student Judicial and Ethical Affairs: <http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs/dishonesty/definitions.htm>

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of source. As part of this process, you will be required to submit electronic copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. According to the U of M's Office of Legal Counsel (10/17/ 2005) by taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in [Turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com)'s restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.