

Class Information

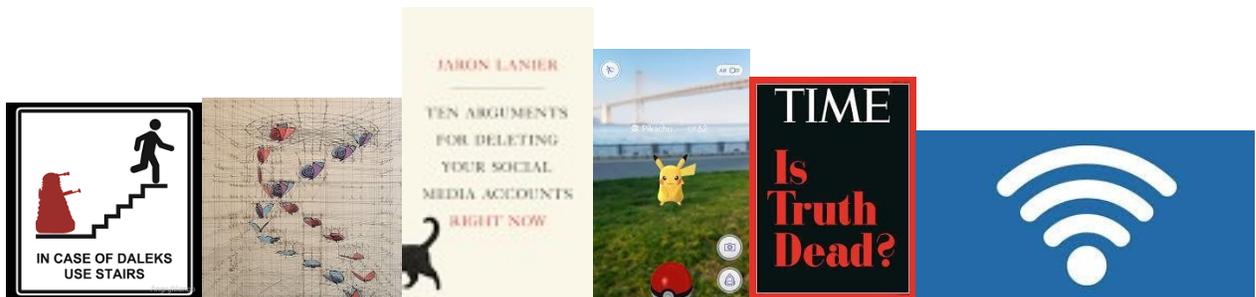
Digital Culture
IAHIS 1700
Fall 2019
W, 4:00-6:30pm
Location: Lunder 117
Credits: 3

Instructor Information

Dr. Ryan H. Collins
Office Hours: W 6:30-7:30
& By Appointment
rcollin8@lesley.edu

Course description

How have digital and interactive technologies restructured our economic and cultural landscape? In what ways have digital technologies inserted themselves into our social fabric and transformed our political landscape? How have interactive technologies affected our cognitive processes and social skills? This course explores the ways in which digital technologies are fundamentally restructuring our social, political, and cultural experiences. Students will engage in theoretical discourse and will be challenged to think critically about these technologies impact culture and/or can be employed as a means of affecting change.



General course goals

What is digital culture, especially now that it has become so ubiquitous, so pervasive, and so familiar? This course offers an open forum setting for students to reflect upon and build an understanding of our changing world.

What does digital culture promise? A variety of terms circulate --- even recirculate --- describing aspects of digital culture, including; 'digital natives', 'networked teens', 'gamers', the 'post-human', as well as, 'post-text', 'writing-machines', 'post-truth', 'data mining,' 'driverless cars', 'reality mining', 'artificial companions' etc., Each term describes ways that digital media impacts our lives.

We indulge in selfie-tourism; use social media; Instagram, Facebook, and, Google, Amazon, etc., We are part of a computer mediated reality, ("You are Media") we experiment in collaborative work, space and production, we dissolve boundaries, between art, design, and architecture; we are accepting of the "uncreative" and modular, as well as, possibly, becoming increasingly "addicted" to online social interactions. Digital information and communications technologies (ITC's) are affecting our sense of self and how we shape and interact with the world. Let's explore why?

Course objectives and learning outcomes

- To engage in an open an active debate on the impact of digital culture on our society.
- To enquire, in a spirited way, into how new norms of technology and behavior currently impact social and political meaning,
- To examine several vital debates and areas of social change as they relate to digital technologies, social media, and the Internet.
- To write about as well as research topics such as social responsibility, self-empowerment, friendship, etc., in relation to new media.
- Design and use wiki publishing tools.
- Explore ways for advancing toward a new “digital humanism.”
- To create new forms of knowledge and meaning to insert into the current flow of digital media.
- To build concepts and ideas to be shared with the learning community at Lesley University.
- Students’ will build design strategies as well as the present digital culture in new, traditional, and experimental formats.

Outcomes

- Define cultural/social issues specific to digital media and use critical terms appropriately.
- Illustrate and explain how digital cultures and interactive technologies operate in the contemporary world and relate to design practice and visual production.
- Using a digital culture framework, analyze everyday experiences, industry trends, and the impact of technology on society as it relates to human-centered design and interaction.

Expectations

Students will engage in, as well as, promote open discussion; students will read all assigned readings. Students will prepare all assignments in a timely manner, submitting work when it is due.

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance in all classes is required. Students are expected to arrive on time and remain in class for the entire period scheduled. The responsibility for work missed due to any type of absence rests with the student. A failing grade may be assigned to any student who attends less than 80 % of class meetings (3 classes of a course meeting once per week or 6 classes of a course meeting twice weekly). Any exceptions are made at the discretion of the instructor.

Main Assessments & Grading Policy

1. 2 Exams – Terminology, Critical Thinking, Applied discussion **(10% each = 20% total)**
2. 4 Media Reflections (How is Digital Culture impacting Current Society) **(5% each = 20% total)**
3. 4 Personal Reflections (How do you use/how are you impacted by Digital Culture) **(5% each 20% total)**
4. Students will propose a research project for on a Digital Culture topic of their choice. Proposals include a clear top, a research question, and five sources in an annotated bibliography (blending scholarship, media, personal use, journalism). **(10% total)**
5. Students will present their research project to the class. **(10 % total)**
6. Final Essay – How to Design a Better, More Inclusive, Digital Culture **(20 % total)**
Your final assignment represents a culmination of your study and critical reflection during this course. You will write a focused paper **(minimally 8 full pages, no more than 11 full pages; *this does not include figures, images, or citations*)** exploring the social or cultural values promoted through technologies or design and critically assess values and social impact through design.
 - a. • Creativity – Your essay demonstrates an imaginative, well-considered approach to selecting precedents
 - b. • Critical Thinking – Arguments in your essay are well-developed and show evidence of your perspectives and position
 - c. • Mechanics – Sentence structure, grammar, and spelling are attended to

Weekly Course Meeting Topics

1. (9/4) Introduction to Digital Culture

Introductions.

Review: Program or Be Programmed, Ten Commands for a Digital Age, Douglass Rushkoff (2010).

2. (9/11) What is Digital Culture? How do we distinguish it from culture?

We are the most (digitally) connected generation ever. Play Pokémon Go? Minecraft? Fortnite? Blog? Produce new media? Tweet? Design with digital media? What is this new lifestyle and how does it affect how we understand civilization, life and ourselves? Social media platforms? Mobile phones? How are we immersed/networked into digital technology?

Personal Reflection #1, due prior to the start of class: What is Digital Culture to Me? Reflect on concepts from the readings and explain in a post that is between 200 and 300 words in length.

Readings due for Week 2:

1. Introduction, Digital Culture, Charlie Gere (2008)
2. Participation, Remediation, Bricolage: Considering Principal Components of a Digital Culture, Mark Deuze (2006)
3. From Clay Tablets to Smart Phones: 5000 Years of Writing, Cody Delistraty, NYTimes, May 2, 2019.

3. (9/18) Truth in the Digital Age

Time Magazine famously carried a cover with one question: Is Truth Dead? Critics argue that social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have resulted in a proliferation of false news. Have the algorithms on which these services are built unable to protect us from the spread of 'fake news'? Should they? What is open access? One critic, Siva Vaidhyanathan, in his book Anti-Social Media, believes Facebook undermines democracy. Topics:

- A. Post Truth
- B. Twitter
- C. Facebook

Media Reflection #1, due prior to the start of class: How has TRUTH been called into question in the media I use most often? Explain in a post that is between 200 and 300 words in length.

Readings due for Week 3:

1. Farhad Manjoo: "How Twitter Is Being Gamed to Feed Misinformation," New York Times, (2017).
2. [Siva Vaidhyanathan: "The Problem with Facebook is Facebook."](#) An interview on her book, Anti-Social Media, How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy, Oxford University Press, 2018., by Logic.io (2018)
3. Lee McIntyre, "[Fighting Post-Truth](#)," in Post-Truth, an excerpt published on The Humanist (2018).
4. Regina Rini Deepfakes Are Coming. We Can No Longer Believe What We See, NYTimes, June 10, 2019.
5. Charlie Warzel, The Fake Nancy Pelosi Video Hijacked our Attention. Just as Expected. NYTimes, March 26, 2019.

4. (9/25) Digital Media in Everyday Life

Personal Reflection #2, due prior to the start of class: How has my everyday life changed because of digital media? Reflect on concepts from the readings. Explain in a post that is between 200 and 300 words in length.

Readings due for Week 4:

1. Digital theory: theorizing New Media, Digital Cultures, Glen Creeber
 2. Media Life, in Media Culture and Society 33(1) 137-148, 2011.
 3. "Generation Life," Rushkoff, CBS documentary, (2016).
- Study Guide for Exam #1 Sent Out – Study Up!

5. (10/2) Virtual Design, Architecture and Space

What do we understand the virtual to be? Pokémon Go's augmented reality establishes a relationship between the digital and the 'real.' Using an app (Stryd), designed to share a virtual run with others, while on an exercise machine? During the 1980s and 1990s, the virtual and the real were treated as distinct; today such a distinction does not explain our 'experiences.' The digital has impacted our perception of social space, design, and architecture, according to architect Rem Koolhaas; including, how we see ourselves in this new digital reality. Second, we focus on the nature of the avatar and virtual space in Second Life virtuality and presence. Mobile devices create a listening space of mixed spatiality.

Readings due for Week 5:

1. [Excerpts] Simulacra and Simulation by Jean Baudrillard, (1981)
2. Dan Bilefsky, [Video Game Meets History, and France Rebels Again](#), NYTimes, June 24, 2014.
3. Amanda Woods, [Video game could be key to rebuilding Notre Dame](#), NY Post, April 17, 2019.
4. Picon, Architecture and the Virtual: Towards a New Materiality, 2008

6. [Exam 1: Study Up \(10/9\)](#)

7. (10/16) Artist as Designer in the post-post studio age

Has our definition of the artist changed in the digital age? How does digital media change our perception of what an art studio is? Who are artists, who designers, who engineers? Team/Lab is one of the worlds noted new media production companies that use a collective art practice based on using digital tools. Today, the growing fluidity of artists and designers/engineers is witnessed. According to Alex Coles we are witnessing a post-post-studio age, the transdisciplinary. Are we no longer defined by disciplines? Is this a consequence of usage of digital devices and networked culture? We are interactivity and loops of creative connectivity. We can, therefore, ask, who is the 'artist,' and, what is the 'artwork' produced today in these contexts? Topics:

- a. What are trans-disciplinary art practices?
- b. Olafur Eliasson
- c. Rain Room
- d. MIT Media Lab
- e. Team/Lab

Media Reflection #2, due prior to the start of class: Do artists still require physical spaces? Explore media on digital art and design and reflect. Explain in a post that is between 200 and 300 words in length.

Readings due for Week 6:

1. [Random International|Brilliant Ideas](#), Ep. 44 & [Olafur Eliasson](#), Ep. 32.
2. [Behind the Scenes with Team Lab|Brilliant Ideas](#) Ep. 67. (2017).
3. "The Function of the Studio (when the studio is a laptop)," Caitlin Jones, [contemporaryarts.mit.edu](#).
4. "The Studio as Cloud," David Eastward, [Leonardo Electronic Almanac 22, no. 1, 2017](#).

8. (10/23) Networked Identity

Amanda Palmer offers a picture of how the sharing networked world works. How is her art and music part of a 'networked identity' and a networked world? If we are "blogging," "twittering," and "wikiing," frequently, how does that change us? Is Twitter/Facebook clogged with fake identities? How do people choose to work through networks to create new forms of cooperation and relationships? We share time on networked communities and platforms today, more so than ever. What are we doing? Making? Reshaping identity? Are our networked identities being managed? Are they merely an effect of a 'template culture'? Topics:

- o Facebook
- o Twitter
- o Instagram

Project Proposals due prior to the start of class (Topic, Question, Bibliography)

Personal Reflection #3, due prior to the start of class: Has your identity been stretched or compressed in the digital age? Do you feel more like yourself in one community versus another? Why or why not? Reflect on concepts of networked identity from the readings. Explain in a post that is between 200 and 300 words in length.

Readings due for Week 7:

1. Chapter 1, New forms of personal connection, Personal connections in the digital age, Baym, N. (2015).
2. 'You have one identity': performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn, José van Dijck, Media, Culture & Society, 35(2) 199-215, 2013
3. Dream McClinton, Travelling While Black: behind the eye-opening VR documentary on Racism in America, The Guardian, September 3, 2019.

9. (10/30) Eco-media: Nature, Data Visualization, and Environmentalism.

How has visual and digital culture shaped our relationship to nature? Philip Beasley's architectural sculptural projects, his near living architecture, aim to create an intimacy with life, a type of presence using digital design and artificial intelligence. Google Earth, depicts and frames our earth, creating a visual language of our economic and political relationship with nature. Between them lies a gulf. Google Earth creates digital abstraction. Beasley's sculptural/architectural forms concern digital intimacy. We consider how digital technology generates and expands our relationships with nature in different ways. Topics:

- a. Digital Nature?
- b. Data visualization (Google Earth-Moon-Mars, LiDar, Telescoping and Remote Sensing, Assassin's Creed?)

Media Reflection #3, due prior to the start of class: In what forms has the environment taken on a digital identity? Reflect on media you are connecting with and cite them here. Explain in a post that is between 200 and 300 words in length.

Readings due for Week 8:

1. C, YouTube (Oct 2016).
2. (In Class) "Welcome to the Anthropocene," in Against the Anthropocene Visual Culture and the Environment Today, by T.J. Demos, 2014. Philip Beasley, Building Living Architecture, TEDTalkxUW, 2012.
3. "Epiphyte Chamber", Philip Beasley, in Interactive Architecture, Adaptive World, Michael Fox editor, Architecture Briefs, The Foundations of Architecture, Princeton Architectural Texts, 2016.

10. (11/6) Digital Learners, Literacy, and the Net Gen Workforce

What do we mean by digital learners? What is meant by 'digital literacy'? A new type of learner has emerged with open-access media, digital networked learning sites as well as sites like Google, Wikipedia, etc., In what ways? Also, digital life is today, entwined with work experience. What are the consequences? Topics Open learning

- a. Digital literacy
- b. Every space is a workspace

Personal Reflection #4, due prior to the start of class: In what ways have you achieved digital literacy? Where might there be room to grow and why? Reflect on the concept of digital literacy from the readings and how others have used it. Explain in a post that is between 200 and 300 words in length.

Readings due for Week 9:

1. Farhad Manjoo: "Welcome to the Post-Text Future," New York Times, (2018).
2. Maryann Wolf, "Skim reading is a new normal. The effect on society is profound", The Guardian, August 18 (2018).
3. "It's Not Plagiarism. In the Digital Age, It's 'Repurposing.'" The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2017.
4. The role of media in developing literacies and cultural techniques, Barbara Gentikow, Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy, 2006–2016, p. 35–52, 2015.
5. (In Class) Reality is Broken Jane McGonicle. YouTube, Jane McGonicle, TED Talk.

Study Guide for Exam #2 Sent Out - Review and study up!

11. (11/13) Exam #2: Study Up!

12. (11/20) Robotics and Artificial Intelligence

Driverless cars, robotic hummingbirds, rescue bots, farming bots, in step with so many developments in robot design is the sophisticated advances in artificial intelligence. Deep Mind, Superintelligence, as well as many robotic projects, will be discussed.

Media Reflection #4, due prior to the start of class: How is artificial intelligence depicted in the media? Find an example and reflect on the accuracy of this representation.

Readings Due for Week 11:

1. Autonomous Robots, From Biological Inspiration to Implementation and Control, George Bekey.
2. Robot-Proof, Higher Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, Joseph Aoun.
3. "Cars without drivers still need a moral compass. But what kind?" David Edmonds, Guardian, 14 Nov. 2018.

13. (12/4) Wrapping Up

Final Class: Short Presentations and Reflection

14. Final Papers Due during Exam Week, Wednesday December 18th.

Recommended Outside Text and Reading for your Research and Enjoyment

1. Anti-Social Media, How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy, Siva Vaidhyanathan, (2018).
2. In the Swarm, Digital Prospects, Byung-Chul Han, (2017).
3. Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now, Jaron Lanier, (2018).
4. The Transdisciplinary Studio, Alex Coles (2012).
5. Grown Up Digital, how the net generation is changing your world, Don Tapscott, (2009)
6. The Young and the Digital, What the Migration to Social Network Sites, Games, and Anytime Media Means for Our Futures. Craig Watkins, 2009.
7. Post-Truth, Lee McIntyre (2018).
8. Against the Anthropocene, Visual Culture and Environment Today, T. J. Demos, (2017)
9. JunkSpace with Running Room, Rem Koolhaas/Hal Foster, 2013.
10. Are We Human? Notes on Archaeology of Design, Beatriz Colomina & Mark Wigley, 2016.
11. Program or Be Programmed, Douglas Rushkoff (2010).
12. Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media, Claire Bishop, (2012).
13. "Homo Cellular," in Are we Human? Notes on Archaeology of Design, 2016.
14. "Introduction," in Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now, by Jaron Lanier (2018).
15. Blending of youth and digital culture - digital media and generational change. YouTube.
16. "Information Fatigue," "In Swarm, Digital Prospects, Byung-Chul Han, (2017).
17. Siva Vaidhyanathan: "The Problem with Facebook is Facebook." Anti-Social Media, How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy, Oxford University Press, 2018.
18. Lee McIntyre, "Fighting Post-Truth," in Post-Truth, (2018).
19. Rem Koolhaas, "On Smart Technology's 'sinister dimensions,'" Charlie Rose, 2016. YouTube.
20. Junkspace – An Interpretation, Coldcat Productions, YouTube, 2017.
21. "Artist in Conversation - Frank Gehry," Los Angeles County Museum of Art, YouTube.
22. "Our Digital Selves," SecondLife/ LindenLabs, YouTube.
23. "Virtual Space and Atmosphere in Electronic Music," Torben Sangild, Throughout, Art and Culture Emerging with Ubiquitous Computing, 2013.
24. Are We Human? Notes on Archaeology of Design, Beatriz Colomina, 2017.
25. "Presence" in Hello, Avatar. The Rise of the Networked Generation, B. Coleman, 2016.
26. I. Avatar: The Consequences of Having a Second Life, Mark Stephen Meadows, 2007.

Lesley University Learning Community Syllabus Statement

Faculty, staff, and students are all responsible for advancing a campus and classroom climate that creates and values a diversity of ideas, perspectives, experiences, and identities. As such, we aspire to engage together in a community where each person is respected and empowered to express themselves and be heard.

We commit to creating an environment and developing course content that recognizes the learning experience of every student with dignity and respect, regardless of differences that include, but are not limited to: race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, indigenous background, immigration status, nationality, gender identity/expression, language, abilities and accommodations, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, veteran status or membership in uniformed services, political views, age and physical appearance.

Lesley University's Mission Statement states "...Lesley prepares socially responsible graduates with the knowledge, skills, understanding and ethical judgment to be catalysts shaping a more just, humane, and sustainable world." Among many experts in the field, Diane Goodman has described the following competencies: (1) Building self-awareness, (2) Understanding and valuing others, (3) Knowledge of societal inequities, (4) Interacting effectively with a diversity of people in different contexts, and (5) Fostering equity and inclusion. Our mission and these competencies are embedded in our curricula and our classrooms. They provide a foundation for transformative teaching and learning and approaches to social justice.

Lesley University Library Services

The [Library Research Portal \(research.lesley.edu\)](http://research.lesley.edu) provides access to multiple services and authoritative resources for academic research, including books, articles, tests, visual media, and teaching resources. The Lesley University Library encourages students and faculty to use these academic resources for their assignments:

Our [Ask-A-Librarian page](#) lets you chat, text, call, e-mail, or request a meeting with a librarian!

Visit our two libraries for drop-in help, course reserves, computers/wifi, printing, new magazines and journals, and (of course) books!

Sherrill Library, the main university library, Brattle Campus, 617-349-8850

Moriarty Library, the art library, Porter Campus, 617-349-8070

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty comes in many forms. The following list is not meant to be exhaustive, and a student may be charged and found guilty of violating the University's Academic Integrity Policy for an offense not enumerated below. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication and falsification, multiple submissions, abuse of academic materials, complicity/unauthorized assistance, lying/tampering/theft. Please review the student handbook for details: <http://www.lesley.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

Disability Statement

Lesley University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and to benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 and must provide documentation of the disability. Eligibility for reasonable accommodations will be based on the documentation provided.

If you are a student with a documented disability or feel that you may have a disability, please contact the appropriate disability administrator.

Center of Academic Achievement:

For Students with Learning Disabilities, Attention Disorders, and Asperger Syndrome:

Kimberly J. Johnson, Director LD/ ADD Academic Support Program

Doble Hall, 2nd floor

Phone: 617.349.8462 • Fax: 617.349.8324

kjohnso7@lesley.edu

For Students with Physical, Sensory, and Psychiatric Disabilities:

Daniel Newman, Director of CAA (ADA/ 504 Coordinator)

Doble Hall, 2nd Floor

Phone: 617.349.8572 • Fax: 617.349.8324

dnewman@lesley.edu

The contact persons play the role of facilitator between the student's needs, faculty requirements, and administrative guidelines of the University. Disability-related information is not shared without the permission of the student.

Equal Opportunity and Inclusion Policy

Lesley University remains committed to a policy of equal opportunity, affirmative action, and inclusion for all current and prospective faculty, students, and staff and to eliminating discrimination when it occurs. Lesley University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, veteran status, disability, or sexual orientation in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its programs and activities. Lesley will not ignore any form of discrimination, harassment, or sexual harassment by any member of the Lesley community. Moreover, Lesley does not condone any form of retaliation against any person who brings a complaint of discrimination, harassment, or sexual harassment or against anyone who cooperates in a complaint investigation. For more information, visit <https://lesley.edu/students/policies/equal-opportunity-and-inclusion-policy> or contact Dr. Nathaniel Mays, Dean of Student Life and Interim Title IX Coordinator, 617 349-8539 and equalopportunity@lesley.edu