

IRLS 417/517 INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL CULTURES (3) 001

Instructor:

[Kay Mathiesen](#)

Note: This syllabus is for both IRLS 417 and for IRLS 517. See below for the different requirements for Undergraduate and Graduate Students.

This course will be offered as a hybrid--part face-to-face and part online. Both in person and online participation are required.

Course Prerequisites:

This course is co-convened with both Graduate (517) and Undergraduate (417). There are no course prerequisites.

Course Description:

“Digital culture studies asks how new technologies reflect the wider social world offline, how they create new "wired" cultural interactions, and how those new interactions in turn reshape the real (non-virtual) world.” (from Digital Cultures http://culturalpolitics.net/digital_cultures) Culture has been defined as the “acts and activities shared by groups of people and expressed in social engagements that occur in their daily activities” (Overall 2009). So defined, cultures extend beyond ethnicity, to groups of people who share common experiences of gender, sexual orientation, disability status, class, and age.

Many of us now live in a intersecting digital cultures. Digital content has become an integral part of our personal, professional, economic, and political activities—we interact with others via e-mail, text messaging, and social networking sites; we shop and do our jobs over the internet; we learn about politics from surfing the web or voice our opinions by commenting on posts or blogging. New digital information technologies such as the internet, cell phones, and databases are undoubtedly transforming our culture(s), but our cultures also shape how we engage with these technologies. This course explores the dynamic interplay between culture and digital technology.

We will approach these issues from a multidisciplinary perspective, looking at the insights into digital cultures that can be provided by such areas of inquiry as history, communications, sociology, feminist theory, information science, and philosophy.

The course will not only critically analyze new digital information technologies, it will use such technologies to deliver the course—providing opportunities for active reflection on the ways in which digital technologies shape learning and social interaction.

Sample Topics Covered:

- Previous information technology revolutions (e.g., the printing press), their transformative impact on cultures, and the cultural influences on their reception and use.
- The "digital divide," its multiple types, causes, and solutions.
- The impact on and transformative use of digital culture by diverse populations--e.g., the LGBT community, disabled persons, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities.
- New cultures and identities formed through digital interaction--e.g., gamers, hackers, trolls.

Course Objectives:

Students will

- Be equipped with the conceptual tools to
 - Understand, engage, and critique the evolving set of digital cultures in which we live.
 - Understand the interplay between culture(s) and digital technologies.
 - Understand how technologies both constrain and enable human activity
- Learn how to
 - Analyze how systems create cultures of inclusion and exclusion.
 - Identify unmet information needs.
 - Create content that reflects an awareness of cultural context(s).
- This course addresses the following SIRLS Competencies:
 - A3) Students will demonstrate understanding of the use of information and communication technologies including social aspects of information in providing information resources and services in libraries and other information environments.
 - C8) Students will demonstrate an understanding of how diversity contributes to the library and information professions and analyze information issues from diverse perspectives.
 - C9) Students will demonstrate an understanding of the values and service orientation of the library and information professions and their applications in their areas of career interest.

Required Course Materials:

The textbook for this course is **Miller, Vincent (2011) *Understanding Digital Culture*. Sage Publications.**

Other course materials will be available in d2l.

Readings will include selections from books and articles such as,

- Winner, Langdon. "Do artifacts have politics?." *Daedalus* 109.1 (1980): 121-136.
- Moser, Ingunn. "Disability and the promises of technology: Technology, subjectivity and embodiment within an order of the normal." *Information, Communication & Society* 9.3 (2006): 373-395.

- Dobransky, Kerry, and Eszter Hargittai. "The disability divide in Internet access and use." *Information, Communication & Society* 9.3 (2006): 313-334.
- Brown, Deidre, and George Nicholas. "Protecting indigenous cultural property in the age of digital democracy: Institutional and communal responses to Canadian First Nations and Māori heritage concerns." *Journal of Material Culture* 17.3 (2012): 307-324.
- Klein, Adam. "Slipping Racism into the Mainstream: A Theory of Information Laundering." *Communication Theory* 22.4 (2012): 427-448.
- Friedman, Elisabeth Jay. "Lesbians in (cyber) space: the politics of the internet in Latin American on-and off-line communities." *Media, Culture & Society* 29.5 (2007): 790-811.

Course Requirements:

Course Discussion--Regular, active, and substantive engagement in face-to-face and on-line discussions in d2l and course blog discussion is required.

Quizzes--There will be regular quizzes on the key concepts from the readings and blog posts.

Blog Post--Students will be asked to be a "guest blogger" on the course once during the semester. Students are allowed to choose the topic of their blog post in consultation with the instructor. Students will then facilitate the discussion of their post. Undergraduates will do a second blog post that summarizes the results of their final projects. Graduate students will present their projects in the f2f class, and thus will only do one blog post.

Final Project/Paper—Students will research and evaluate the information needs of a particular group. Students will select the group and the information service in consultation with the instructor. Based on this information, students will write a project proposal (in the form of a logic model) that is designed to address the information need. Graduate students will write a 5 page grant proposal. Undergraduates will present their project proposal in a short video presentation.

All written work and course communications (including blog and discussion posts) will be evaluated for format, organization, style, grammar, and punctuation as well as content and argument.

Course Grading:

Assignments Percentage

Undergraduate Students

Discussion Participation 25

Quizzes 25

Blog Post 15

Project 35 (Note, that this grade encompasses a number of component assignments, e.g., an annotated bibliography, blog post, etc.)

Graduate Students

Discussion Participation 25

Quizzes 15

Blog Posts 15

Project/Paper 45 (Note, that this grade encompasses a number of component assignments, e.g., an annotated bibliography, blog post, etc.)

Grading Scale

90-100 = A “exemplary, far beyond reqs/expectations”

80-89 = B “exceeds requirements/expectations”

70-79 = C “meets requirements/expectations”

60-99 = D “falls short of requirements/expectations”

Below 59 = F “repeat of course needed”

Note: Grades will not be rounded up, e.g., if you have a 89.6 it will still be a B. Only 90.00 and over will receive an A.

Course Policies:

Attendance Policies:

All students are required to check into d2l and the course blog at least 5 days a week, to actively participate in online discussions, and to do the assigned readings for each week prior by Wednesday of the week in which they are assigned.

Discussion Policies:

Given that this is a safe environment for sharing and generating unique ideas, please try to be “open” to diverse perspectives and learn from others who may pose views that differ from your own. When sharing your own ideas, do not subject others to inappropriate language or problematic assumptions about social groups. In addition, use appropriate academic/professional language, avoid slang and carefully proofread your posts.

Academic Code of Integrity:

Students are expected to abide by the University of Arizona’s Code of Academic Integrity. See: <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity>
The guiding principle of academic integrity is that a student’s submitted work must be the student’s own. Do not copy another student’s work, pull text from online sources, or turn in the same work for this class that you have used in another class. All work turned in must be original and specific to this course. Students who violate the UA Code of Academic Integrity are subject to disciplinary penalties (e.g., failing grade or removal from the University). Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work must be the product of independent effort, unless otherwise instructed (as in the case of the Group

Presentation). If you have any questions regarding what is acceptable practice under the UA Code of Academic Integrity, please ask me (the instructor).

Accommodating Disabilities:

Arrangements can be made if you have a physical challenge or condition that could impair your participation and/or performance in this course. If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the Disability Resource Center and request that the DRC send me (the instructor), official notification of your accommodation needs as soon as possible. See: <http://drc.arizona.edu/>

Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate. The need for accommodations must be documented by the DRC.

Incomplete Policy:

The grade of I may be awarded only at the end of a semester, when all but a minor portion of the course work has been satisfactorily completed. The grade of I is not to be awarded when the student is expected to repeat the course; in such a case the grade of E must be assigned. Students should make arrangements with me (the instructor) to receive an incomplete grade before the end of the semester. If the incomplete is not removed within one year, the I grade will revert to a failing grade. See <http://registrar.arizona.edu/gradepolicy/incomplete.htm>

Additional Policies:

The Arizona Board of Regents' Student Code of Conduct, ABOR Policy 5-308, prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to one's self. See: <http://policy.web.arizona.edu/threatening-behavior-students>

All student records will be managed and held confidentially. See: <http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/ferpa/default.htm>

Information contained in this course syllabus, other than the grade and participation policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.