LMC 8000 Proseminar in Media Theory

Instructor
Jay David Bolter
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Office: 317 Skiles
Hours: 1-2 Wed and by appointment

Course Meeting Time
Wed: 2pm-5pm
Skiles room 326
3 credit hours

Course Description

In this seminar students will explore the key traditions of disciplinary and theoretical inquiry that contribute to the study of Digital Media, including media theory, literary-critical theory, visual culture and the cultural studies of media, communications theory, and performance studies. Students will examine key texts in each of these areas and explore their application to representative digital artifacts.

Learning Outcomes
General outcome:
• Students have knowledge, comprehension and ability to apply historical, cultural, and theoretical concepts to the study of digital media.
Specific outcomes:
Students will be able to
• Identify the historical and cultural roots of digital media;
• Identify the major theoretical traditions contributing to scholarly discourse about digital media;
• Discuss and distinguish among historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts for digital media;
• Summarize and paraphrase key theoretical works;
• Give examples of important historical and cultural elements of scholarly discourse about digital media.

Readings include chapters or excerpts from:
Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. "The Culture Industry"
Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation (excerpts)
Andre Bazin, various
Ian Bogost, Persuasive Games; other texts
David Bordwell, "Contemporary Film Studies" in Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies
Clement Greenberg, Modern Painting
Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (excerpts)
Friedrich Kittler, Introduction, Grammophone, Film, Typewriter
Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern
Lev Manovich, The Langauge of New Media
Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (excerpts)
W.J.T Mitchell, Picture Theory, Introduction
Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
Janet Murray, Hamlet on the Holodeck; other texts

The New Media Reader
Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy (excerpts)
Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Practices of Looking
and other texts

Class and Project Work
In class, each student will be asked to lead the discussion for a particular reading each week. In addition all students are expected to do all the readings and participate in the general discussion. The main work of the semester will be to produce a research paper applying media theory to a particular digital artifact or genre.

Grading
In addition to the paper, leading the discussion on assigned papers and participation in general are important to the seminar. Here is a breakdown of the grading:
        Paper: 75%
        Presentaiton of assigned readings: 15%
        Participation in discussion: 10%

Current schedule
(NMR = New Media Reader)

Introduction: Computer as a New Medium
Week 1. (Aug 20) (Introductions to NMR by Murray and by Manovich, NMR, 3-25;
Bush, NMR, 35-44
Nelson, NMR, 301-338;
Williams NMR, 289-300

2. (Aug 27) **Interactive Narrative: visual forms**
Murray, Hamlet on the Holodeck, Chapter 3 and 4
Laurel, Brenda. Computers as Theater 1, 6
Ryan, Mary-Laure. Avatars of Story, Chapters 1, 5
also: Aristotle, Poetics
Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre?"

3. (Sept 3) **Filmic narrative and film theory**
Bordwell, David, Post theory
Bazin, André, The Ontology of the Photographic Image and the Myth of Total Cinema
Mulvey, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema

4. (Sept. 10) **Game Studies I**
Ian Bogost, Persuasive Games
Essays from *First Person*

5. (Sept 17) Alumni lecture

6. (Sept 24) **Game Studies II**
Schrank, Avant-Garde Games
McGonigal, Excerpts
Outline of term paper due

Interactive Narrative and Textual theory
7. (Oct 1)
Joyce Siren Shapes, NMR 613-624 (Of Two Minds)

Stuart Moulthrop, NMR, 691-704
Aarseth NMR 761-780; also Cybertext
Hayles, Writing Machines
Landow, George. Hypertext.
Hayles on Digital Literature (http://eliterature.org/pad/elp.html)

Visual form and the materiality of the medium
8. (Oct. 8) Digital Theory and Art
Lev Manovich, Language of New Media
Prologue (xiv-xxxvi); 1. What is New Media (18-61); 5 The Forms: The Database (212-285)
Software Takes Command, Introduction

9. (Oct 15) Art and Picture theory I
Barthes, essays from Image, Music Text
Goodman, excerpts from Languages of Art
Mitchell, W. J. T., Picture Theory (introduction)

10. (Oct. 22) Modernism in art
Greenberg, "Avant-garde and Kitsch" and "Modern Painting"
Higgins, Intermedia
Debord, Society of Spectacle (also look at the film version on YouTube)
Drucker, chapter from Sweet Dreams

11. (Oct 29) Art and Picture Theory II
Mitchell, W.J., chapters from Reconfigured Eye
Carroll, Noel. excerpts from Theories of Art Today. Wisconsin: 2000.

12. (Nov 5) Visual Cultural Studies
Sturken and Cartwright, Practices of Looking, Intro & Chapters 1-7

The modern, the postmodern, and the avantgarde

13. (Nov 12) Modern(ist) Media Theory
Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry"
McLuhan, chapters from Understanding Media
Latour, We Have Never Been Modern

14. (Nov 19) Postmodern Media Theory
Baudrillard, excerpts from Simulacra and Simulations,
Jameson, chapters from Postmodernism
Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition
Draft of term paper due

Code vs Culture

15. (Nov 26) Technology and media
Heidegger, Martin, The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays
Kittler, Friedrich, There is No Software

16. (Dec 3) Semester Review
 Term paper due Dec 5