

Spring 2018 ENG 6810 0001: Texts & Technology Theory
BHC 0128, 6:00 – 8:50 PM Wednesday

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T&T Theory Course Description

We will examine how theoretical discourse has evolved through shifting technological platforms, with particular attention to the challenges software, code, and networks present to our understanding of texts. We will engage with examples of complex procedural works ranging from video games to electronic literature and social media. Each of these new platforms challenges our understanding of knowledge and how knowledge is circulated, curated, and redefined in a web-centric culture.

Throughout the course, students will engage with current book-length scholarship on a variety of digital media subjects using a range of methodologies. Students will develop their skills at framing long-form scholarly objects in preparation for their dissertation projects, while engaging in several projects to prepare for qualifying exams and digital scholarship.

Course Goals

- To learn how to read theoretical works and incorporate theory in your own writing.
- To enter and understand both “classic” theorists and the changing theoretical discourse surrounding evolving platforms, and engage with the interdisciplinary skillset required to make a meaningful study of technology.
- To write persuasively about the “how” and “why” of critical and theoretical work, particularly your own. Theory and criticism have features as a genre, rhetorics, and intertextualities. You will learn to explain and justify how you engage with them in your own writing.
- To understand the fundamentals of algorithms and code, along with the challenges inherent in scholarship focused on procedural work and systems.

Required Texts

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. 2016. *New media, old media: a history and theory reader*. New York: Routledge.

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. 2016. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Emerson, Lori. 2014. *Reading Writing Interfaces: From the Digital to the Bookbound*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Finn, Ed. 2017. *What Algorithms Want: Imagination in the Age of Computing*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Manovich, Lev. 2013. *Software Takes Command*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. (Available for free online)

Tufekci, Zeynep. 2017. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. London: Yale University Press.

Grading

- 10 points** **Reading Review Leader: Deadline Varies**
In one week (as scheduled and agreed upon during the first class meeting), you will be responsible for providing an overview of the central themes and making connections between the readings. Plan on leading discussion for approximately 30 minutes, and prepare either an exercise, set of discussion questions, or slides as you feel appropriate.
- 15 points** **Taroko Gorge Remix: Due March 7**
Working from Nick Montfort's Taroko Gorge, build your own annotated text-and-technology themed generator. You will need to change the language, CSS, and provide comments throughout the code explaining your design choices.
- 20 points** **Exam Reading Lists: Due March 21**
Based on your planned dissertation area of focus, you will be responsible for drafting your two specialized reading lists for qualifying exams. You can use any reading from the course not marked with an asterisk (which indicates selections or authors from the core reading list) to start your list. Samples will be provided.
- 15 points** **Final Paper Draft: Due April 11**
Produce a complete draft of your article (ballpark 8,000 words, unless your target journal has another length requirement) for peer review. Do not include any identifying information on the draft, because these drafts are going to be used for blind peer review. Include the CFP or journal information with your draft submission. Drafts will receive detailed feedback, but be graded on completion.
- 10 points** **Peer Review: Due April 18**
You will receive the papers of two other students to conduct double-blind peer review of the sort one is called to do for journals in an academic career. You'll tell your colleague what about their paper works, what doesn't work, and what you suggest to remedy whatever weaknesses it may have. You will be graded based upon the quality of your feedback.
- 30 points** **Final Paper: Due April 30**
Based on the feedback of the peer reviewers and on the presentation, submit a revised version of the paper. Your final submission will include a practice letter to the editor of the journal to which you intend to submit, explaining what revisions you have made and why you feel they make the paper stronger.
- 100 points** **Total**

Grade Dissemination

Graded tests and materials in this course will be returned individually only by request. You can access your scores at any time using the Grade Book function of Webcourses. Please note that scores returned mid-semester are unofficial grades.

Course Policies: Grades

Assignments in this course can be resubmitted once for re-grading. Late work is accepted within 24 with prior notice and discussion with the professor, and further extensions can be granted based on individual need and circumstances. Final grades are assigned on a standard +/- basis.

Course Policies: Technology and Media

Email: Students can email at any time. All emails will receive a response within 24 hours.

Webcourses: All assignments and class materials will be managed through Webcourses. Plan on checking the site at least three times a week for updates and assignment information.

Backups: You are required to maintain your own backups. A cloud-based service such as Dropbox is highly recommended.

Copyright: This course may contain copyright-protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used consistent with the Fair Use doctrine in order to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

Course Policies: Student Expectations

Disability Access: The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Ferrell Commons Room 185, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Professionalism Policy: As this is a course on visual language and culture, we will be viewing material that includes difficult content, including topics of political and social contention. Please be respectful of others' opinions, and let me know in advance if you have any concerns regarding a particular topic or unit.

Academic Conduct Policy: Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. If you are uncertain as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, please consult The Golden Rule, the University of Central Florida's Student Handbook (<http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>) for further details. As in all University courses, The Golden Rule Rules of Conduct will be applied. Violations of these rules will result in a record of the infraction being placed in your file and receiving a zero on the work in question AT A MINIMUM. At the instructor's discretion, you may also receive a failing grade for the course. Confirmation of such incidents can also result in expulsion from the University.

Schedule

January 10: Introduction

Reader:

Introduction (1-17)

Archaeology of Multi-Media Introduction (19-22)

Syllabus Review and Reading Review Sign-up

Introduction to JavaScript

January 17: Media Archaeology

Reader:

Thomas Elsaesser, Early Film History (23-36)

*Lev Manovich, The Language of Cultural Interfaces (37-51)

Wolfgang Ernst, Discontinuities (52-71)

Jonathan Sterne, Format Theory (72-91)

Lisa Parks, Earth Observation (92-113)

*Lisa Nakamura, Indigenous Circuits (114-131)

Virtual Window (132-140)

January 24: Archives

Reader:

Archives Introduction (143-146)

Vannevar Bush, Memex Revisited (147-157)

Cornelia Visman, Out of File (158-166)

Lisa Gitelman, Raw Data (167-176)

Matthew Kirschenbaum, Extreme Inscription (177-192)

Hito Steyerl, In Defense of the Poor Image (193-198)

Rick Prelinger, The Disappearance of the Archives (199-204)

Ariella Azoulay, Revolutionary Moments and State Violence (205)

January 31: “Digital” Literary

Lori Emerson:

Introduction

Indistinguishable from Magic

From the Philosophy of the Open...

Typewriter Concrete Poetry

The Fascicle as Process and Product

The Googlization of Literature

February 7: Media Machines

* Lev Manovich:

Introduction

Alan Kay’s universal media machine

Understanding metamedia

Reader:

Power-Code Introduction (225-228)

Wolfgang Hagen, Style of Sources (229-246)

Tara McPherson, US Operating Systems (247-259)
 Friedrich Kittler, Science as Open Source (260-262)

February 14: Software

*Lev Manovich:

Soft Evolution
 Media Design
 Conclusion

Reader:

Alexander Galloway, Protocol vs Institutionalization (263-274)
 Jussi Parikka, Viral Ecologies (275-286)
 Anna Watkins Fisher, User Be Used (287-300)

February 21: Crisis

*Wendy Hui Kyong Chun:

Introduction
 Interlude: THEY -> YOU
 Always Searching, Never Finding
 Habitual Connections
 Habit + Crisis = Update
 Crisis, Crisis, Crisis

Althusser, Louis "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (PDF)

February 28: Virtual-ness

* Wendy Hui Kyong Chun:

The Friend of My Friend...
 The Leakiness of Friends
 I Never Remember
 Inhabiting Writing
 Reality \neq Truth
 Conclusion

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1993. "Epistemology of the Closet." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin, 45–61. New York, NY: Routledge. (PDF)

*Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage: 195-170, 209-200: 34. (PDF)

March 7: Networks and Algorithms

Ed Finn:

Introduction
 What is an Algorithm?
 Building the *Star Trek Computer*
House of Cards: The Aesthetics of Abstraction

Reader:

Network-events introduction (301-302)
 Mary Ann Doane, Information, Crisis, Catastrophe (307-321)

McKenzie Wark, *Weird Global Media* (322-334)
 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *You Are Not a Loan* (346-358)

Taroko Gorge Showcase

March 14 - Spring Break

March 21: Algorithmic Imagination

Ed Finn:

Coding Cow Clicker
 Counting Bitcoin
 Coda: The Algorithmic Imagination

Reader:

*Ian Bogost, *Why Gamification is Bullshit* (678-688)
 Arvind Rajagopal, *Imperceptible perceptions* (359-369)
 Vicente L. Rafael, *The Cell Phone and the Crowd* (370-387)
 Mercedes Bunz, *Things are Not to Blame* (388-400)

Qualifying Exams Reading Lists Due

March 28: Using Networks

Zeynep Tufekci:

Preface
 Introduction
 A Networked Public
 Censorship and Attention
 Leading the Leaderless
 Movement Cultures

Reader:

Use Introduction (403-406)
 Tiziana Terranova, *Free Labor* (407-424)
 *danah boyd, *Always-on* (425-428)
 Yi-Ping (Zona) Tsou, *Digital Natives* (429-439)

April 4: Power and Platforms

Zeynep Tufekci:

Technology and People
 Platforms and Algorithms
 Names and Connections
 Signaling Power
 Governments Strike Back
 Epilogue

Reader:

Julie Levin Russo, *Many Copies* (440-450)
 Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter (451-471)
 Lawrence Liang, *Porous Legalities* (472-481)
 Anna Everett, *Toward a Theory of the Egalitarian Technosphere* (482-508)

April 11: Data

Reader:

- Desiring Data Introduction (511-514)
- *Jean Baudrillard, The Masses (515-522)
- Thomas Y. Levin, Rhetoric of the Temporal Index (523-538)
- Nishant Shah, Exposed Net Porn (539-551)
- E. Gabriella Coleman, Phreaks, Hackers, and Trolls (552-565)
- Taina Bucher, Want to be on top? (566-578)
- Siva Vaidyanathan, The Googlization of Us (579-598)
- Derek Gregory, View to a Kill (599-615)
- Michael Stevenson, Slashdot (616-630)

Final Paper Draft Due**April 18: Future Media?**

Reader:

- Re-Newing Media Introduction (633-636)
- Miriam Hansen, Early Cinema, Late Cinema (637-648)
- Lynne Joyrich, Tubular Vision (649-664)
- Nicole Starosielski (665-677)
- Florian Cramer, What is 'Post-Digital'? (689-702)
- Jennifer A. Gonzalez, The Face and the Public (703-717)
- Kara Keeling, Queer OS (718-722)

Peer Review Due**April 30*****Paper Due!***