

Syllabus

ENG 6811 Cultural Contexts of Texts and Technology:
“Digital and Analog Cultures: Nature, Information, and the Rise of the Anthropocene”
CB1 0109 Mondays 6:00-8:50pm

Course Description

What has the digital culture done for us? What has it taken from us? In this discussion-driven seminar, we'll look at the intersections of the digital and the analog through popular media and academic sources as one cultural context of texts & technology. Through popular media and academic sources (converging on and diverging from texts on our core reading list), we'll analyze the ways in which the digital is produced and how it shapes, rebuilds, or reforms cultures. We'll look at how digital culture has developed and where it is headed. And we'll examine its intersections with analog culture, both technological and “natural” with a specific eye on its implications for the Anthropocene. A key lens through which we'll do this examination is the lens of semiotics, the study of signification. Each session, readings in semiotics will be coupled with readings about the Anthropocene and contemporary cultural case studies as a jumping off place for our discussion. As a participant in the class, you'll critically engage readings in discussion, and focus on identification of conference-worthy theses and writing.

Participants in this course, yourself included, will:

1. understand and identify key concepts and figures in semiotic theory,
2. apply analytic reasoning skills to cultural contexts of texts and technology,
3. demonstrate pedagogical skills through presentation and peer-evaluation, and
4. develop critical perspectives on the relationship between the analog and the digital.

Office Hours

Office hours will be held in-person and online by Webcourses chat. I will be available during official office hours from 2:00pm-4:00pm on Mondays and will work with you to find a mutually agreeable alternative time as needed. Please contact me at least 24 hours in advance to schedule an individual time to talk. I am in my office considerably more than my scheduled office hours per week, so feel free to stop by or call at your leisure to talk. If I need to cancel or change my office hours during the semester, I will make that announcement in advance. I am also available by email, and will respond as promptly as I can. I encourage you to speak with me about course material and related topics.

Instructor Contact

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Required Texts & Materials

I will provide readings and multimedia content through our UCF online course site. No physical textbook is required.

Course Requirements

- 1) **Attendance and Participation (0%)** –This is a Ph.D.-level graduate seminar. Attendance and participation in course sessions are expected and a professional obligation. However, conflicts will arise and so I will not penalize your grades for missed sessions. However, please let me know in advance of class if a conflict does arise.

- 2) **Reading Journal (20%)** – I've been a big fan of annotations for my undergraduates, since it compels them to read, to think about what they've read, and to write something that will help them remember what they've read. This is an important skill for all of us. So, at the Ph.D. level, I expect that you'll write thoughtful notes to yourself about the content of each of the readings and connections to other readings. These journal entries will be graded on a simple complete/incomplete basis and so you should feel free to write in whatever way is helpful to you.
- 3) **Seminar Leadership (20%)** – You'll lead half of one session this term, guiding us through a topic that's of interest to you. Treat this as facilitation of a high-level class discussion: find ways to draw us into discussion about core questions or concepts from readings and cases.
- 4) **Digital Case Study (5%)** - As part of your presentation, you should prepare a short 2-5 minute case study incorporating voiceover, music, video, images, or documents to share a case study relevant to your topic. That case study will form the basis of discussion in your presentation, so should provide enough context to open space for questions and discussion.
- 5) **Mid-Term Paper Draft (20%)** – Although the idea will likely be preliminary, you should start early in thinking about topics and approaches to what will become your final paper. Plan for at least 500 words and a list of preliminary sources, if not an entire draft.
- 6) **Written Feedback on Peers' Drafts (10%)** – A key professional skill is peer-reviewing others' work. So I'll ask you to read and comment on your peers' paper drafts. These comments can be at any level, from conceptual to grammatical, and should be that careful scholarly balance of encouraging and critical.
- 7) **Final Paper (25%)** – Shaped by your early draft and comments from me and from your course peers, your final paper should be conference paper length (approximately 3000 words) and should include a 200-300 word abstract for possible submission to a conference venue. You'll be evaluated for content and clarity and you must pull in at least 2 outside secondary sources as well as at least one text from our T&T core reading list.

Academic Integrity

This is a Ph.D. course, so I'd like to think it unnecessary to say that plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or cheating of any kind on course work will result in *at least* an "F" for that assignment. Academic dishonesty will subject you to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule and <http://z.ucf.edu> for further information. I also expect you'll act with *academic honor*: putting in your best effort, fully engaging with assignments and readings, and staying informed about course requirements. I will, in turn, do the same.

Course Accessibility Statement

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may impact learning. If anyone believes the design of this course poses barriers to effectively participating and/or demonstrating learning, please meet with me (with or without a Student Accessibility Services (SAS) accommodation letter) to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. Helpful information is found at SAS: Ferrell Commons 185; 407-823-2371; sas@ucf.edu.

Teach Act Statement

The materials for this course are only for the fair use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated. The instructor (that's me!) receives no royalty payments for any materials used in this course.

Syllabus Subject to Change

I anticipate that we will make adjustments to the following schedule based on your interests and what decisions we make together in class. All changes will be clearly announced in person and online. Remaining in the course after reading this syllabus will signal that you accept the possibility of changes and responsibility for being aware of them.

Course Calendar (*TENTATIVE*)

<i>Wk</i>	<i>Topic</i>
1 - Jan 9	Introduction to each other and to the course Cultural contexts of cultural contexts
2 -Jan 16	<i>No classes</i> <i>MLK, JR. Day</i>
3 -Jan 23	Digital and Analog
4 - Jan 30	A Semiotics Primer
5 - Feb 6	Biology and the Human
6 - Feb 13	Environment(s)
7 - Feb 20	Popular Culture and Social Movements
8 - Feb 27	Ethics
9 - Mar 6	Media and Storage
10 – Mar 13	
11 - Mar 20	Politics and Economics
12 - Mar 27	Music/Sound
13 - Apr 3	Presentations
14 - Apr 10	Presentations
15 Apr 17	Presentations
16 Apr 24	Final Thoughts