

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE
Department of New Media

NMED 5850 – NEW MEDIA THEORY & HISTORY
Spring 2013

Instructors: Dana Cooley, Leanne Elias, Deric Olsen & Aaron Taylor

Classes: Wednesdays 5 – 8PM (W870)

Course Description

If a medium is to be understood as an intervening substance through which an effect is produced, it has become necessary to understand and appreciate the post-industrial substances – the technological tools – that have radically reconfigured artistic production, distribution and exhibition practices in the twenty-first century. What exactly is so novel about New Media, then, and how have practitioners, critics, corporate entities, and audiences come to contend with its paradoxically permanent state of “newness?” Moreover, given that New Media is a field of study, creative sphere, *and* technological catalyst for social change – one that encompasses a number of disparate technologically-contingent areas of artistic endeavour – how might we begin to unify these distinct elements into a conceptually coherent and historically situated category?

NMED 5850 reviews a number of theoretical ideas, philosophical concepts, aesthetic movements, and industrial innovations that have played an instrumental role in the defining and organizing of New Media – both as an academic discipline and as a field of interwoven, electronically-enabled artistic and social praxes. The course is a critical survey of canonical writings and prominent historical developments upon which our understanding of New Media depends. Our investigations will address how these writings and developments have influenced the predominant subcategories within New Media including 3D art and animation, cinema and the moving image, digital design, and the interactive arts.

The primary aims of the course, then, are to:

- identify common principles, concepts, and practices that unify disparate creative activities
- establish categorical differences that distinguish these areas from the “traditional” arts
- historicize cohesively the transformations to these evolving and emerging areas

Working in accordance with Laurie Ouellette’s mapping of the discipline of Media Studies, each of the course’s sections will consider new media’s significant interrelationships with the following areas: culture, technology, representation, industry, identity, audience and citizenship. Each of these units will be addressed via the close, critical evaluation of representative essays by leading theorists and practitioners. These essays will be discussed in weekly student-led seminars that are overseen by two of the course instructors, and require the public articulation of critical responses. The objective here is to formulate carefully-considered enquiries into the field’s foundational ideas, as your interrogative engagement with these theories will ultimately play a vital role in defining and situating your own creative practice.

Required Texts

- Ouellette, Laurie, ed. *The Media Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Selected articles (available online)

Evaluation

- Participation 10%
- Response paper 1 (1500 words) 15%
- Response paper 2 (1500 words) 15%
- Response paper 3 (1500 words) 15%
- Response paper 4 (1500 words) 15%
- Presentation 30%
 - Lecture component
 - Discussion section

* All assignments **must** be completed in order to complete the course. Failure to complete an assignment will result in a final grade of **0%** for the course.

Attendance

As the seminars are dependent on your active participation, regular attendance is mandatory – i.e., it is imperative that you attend *all* of the scheduled sessions. Should you have more than two unexcused absences, we reserve the right to drop your mark by a full letter grade. If you are absent for more than three sessions, you will receive a grade of 0% for the course. If you are unable to attend a session, it is your responsibility to contact an instructor to explain your circumstances.

Late Policy

Late assignments will be penalized at **10% per day** and will not receive written comments. Instructors **will not** accept assignments that are more than seven days late. If you foresee difficulties in meeting a deadline, please consult an instructor at least one week before the due date. Extensions will also not be granted without the following documentation: **(a)** a letter from a medical doctor indicating that you were physically unable to complete an assignment on time; or **(b)** an official request made on your behalf via [Counselling Services](#). Please be aware that all accommodations are at the discretion of the relevant instructor.

Note on Academic Misconduct

Because academic integrity is vital to the well-being of the university community, the University of Lethbridge takes academic misconduct very seriously. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, which involves presenting the words and ideas of another person as if they were your own, and other forms of cheating, such as using crib notes during a test, fabricating data for a lab assignment, or submitting the same piece of work in more than one course. The penalties for academic misconduct can be very severe. A grade of zero may be given for the assignment or even for the course, and a second offence may result in suspension from the University. Students are urged to read the section of the Graduate Calendar that pertains to academic offences ([pp. 161-63](#)). Students are also reminded that the [Writing Centre](#) (room L1012 in the library) offers free workshops on writing and study skills and on avoiding plagiarism.

Definition of Plagiarism

“No student shall represent the words, ideas, images, or data of another person as his or her own. This regulation will affect any academic assignment or other component of any course or program of study, whether the plagiarized material constitutes a part or the entirety of the work submitted” (**University of Lethbridge Graduate Calendar, pp. 161**).

Re-examination Policy

If you feel your work has been unfairly graded, you may submit it for re-examination. However, your grade will not increase by more than 5% and I reserve the right to drop it further.

SCHEDULE

Session 1: Jan 9

WHAT IS NEW MEDIA? – DEFINITIONS

Sections: **Convergence** - Leanne Elias
 Interactivity - Dana Cooley
 Participatory culture - Aaron Taylor
 Remediation - Deric Olsen

Readings: 1) Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry” (13-30)
 2) Henry Jenkins, “The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence” (PDF)
 3) Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin, *Remediation* - Chapter 1 (Library e-book)

Session 2: Jan 16

WHAT IS NEW MEDIA? – SUBCATEGORIES

Sections: 3D art & animation - Daniela Sirbu
 Digital design & the web - Leanne Elias
 Physical Computing - Dana Cooley
 Videogames & interactive narrative - Aaron Taylor
 Cinema & the moving image - Deric Olsen

Readings: 1) Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry” (13-30)
 2) Henry Jenkins, “The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence” (PDF)
 3) Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin, *Remediation* - Chapter 1 (Library e-book)

Session 3: Jan 23

CULTURE

Convenors: Cooley & Taylor

Readings: 1) James Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication”
 (<http://www3.niu.edu/acad/gunkel/coms465/carey.html>)

 ○ **Respondent:** Blake

2) Lev Manovich, “The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life” (80-87)

 ○ **Respondent:** Christine

Session 4: Jan 30

MYSTERY SESSION

Convenors: Olsen & Taylor

Presenters: 1) Laurie Ouellette and James Hay, “Makeover Television...” (573-85)

 ○ **Respondent:** Dave

2) Philippe Ross, “Is There an Expertise of Production?”

 ○ **Respondent:** Christine

Session 5: Feb 6

REPRESENTATION

Convenors: Taylor & Elias

Readings: 1) John Berger, “Ways of Seeing” (197-204)

 ○ **Respondent:** Blake

2) Ella Shohat & Robert Stam, “Stereotype, Realism and the Struggle...” (205-26)

 ○ **Respondent:** Dave

Session 6: Feb 13 **TECHNOLOGY****Convenors:** Cooley & Elias

- Readings:** 1) Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age..." (105-16)
- **Respondent:** Dave
- 2) Leopoldina Fortunati, "The Mobile Phone" (156-69)
- **Respondent:** Kelaine

Session 7: Feb 27 **INDUSTRY****Convenors:** Olsen & Taylor

- Readings:** 1) Tziana Terranova, "Free Labor" (331-49)
- **Respondent:** Christine
- 2) Derek Johnson, "Cinematic Destiny" (PDF)
- **Respondent:** Blake

Session 8: March 6 **STUDENT SEMINARS I****Convenors:** Cooley & Olsen

- Presenters:** 1) Kelaine
- 2) Dave

Session 9: Mar 13 **CITIZENSHIP****Convenors:** Cooley & Olsen

- Readings:** 1) A. K. Thompson, "The Resonance of Romanticism: Activist Art..."
(http://sitemaker.umich.edu/parg/files/ak_thompson-resonance_of_romanticism.pdf)
- **Respondent:** Kelaine
- 2) J.P. Jones, "A Cultural Approach to the Study of Mediated Citizenship" (550-562)
- **Respondent:** Blake

Session 10: Mar 20 **AUDIENCE****Convenors:** Elias & Taylor

- Readings:** 1) Mark Andrejevic, "The Work of Being Watched" (492-505)
- **Respondent:** Kelaine
- 2) Lawrence Grossberg, "Is There a Fan in the House?" (458-65)
- **Respondent:** Dave

Materials:**Session 11: Mar 27** **IDENTITY****Convenors:** Elias & Olsen

- Readings:** 1) Sarah Banet-Weiser, "What's Your Flava" (379-93)
- **Respondent:** Kelaine
- 2) Stuart Hall, "Who needs 'Identity'?" (351-362)
- **Respondent:** Christine

Session 12: Apr 3 **STUDENT SEMINARS II****Convenors:** Elias & Cooley**Presenters:** 1) Blake
2) Christine**Materials:****Session 13: Apr 10** **CONCLUSIONS & REVIEW****Convenors:** Cooley, Elias, Olsen, Taylor**Note on Evaluation**

Assignments and tests will be given a numerical grade. Translation to the standard letter grades are as follows:

PERCENTAGE	LETTER GRADE	GRADE POINTS
90 – 100	A+	4.0
85 – 89	A	4.0
80 – 84	A-	3.7
77 – 79	B+	3.3
73 – 76	B	3.0
70 – 72	B-	2.7
67 – 69	C+	2.3
63 – 66	C	2.0
60 – 62	C-	1.7
55 – 59	D+	1.3
50 – 54	D	1.0
0 – 49	F	0

PARTICIPATION & ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING

ATTENDANCE & IN-CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS

- **5%** for your final grade will go toward your attendance. Should you miss **more than two** classes, **5%** will automatically be deducted from your final grade. If you are absent for **more than three** classes, **you will receive a grade of 0% for the course.**
- **5%** of your final grade will go toward your in-class contributions. You will be assessed on both the **quantity and quality** of your participation each session according to the following scale:
 - 0 – No contributions
 - 1 – Fair response to a direct question
 - 2 – Good response to direct questions or opinions voluntarily provided
 - 3 – Excellent responses, voluntary opinions, or initiative taken in leading fruitful discussion
- **IMPORTANT:** Please note that this is a seminar course, and therefore instructors will not be lecturing, nor mounting formal presentations after the first two weeks. This means that the course will predominantly revolve around your in-class contributions and discussions.
- Therefore, please come to class each week prepared to talk about the assigned material in considerable detail by:
 - writing extensive notes on the assigned readings
 - preparing discussion questions to facilitate conversation
 - formulating your own position with regards to the assigned material
 - identifying specific concepts or sections that you feel require more extensive explication

ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING INSTRUCTIONS

- Your assignments **must** be written in 12 point Times New Roman, your margins **must** be set at 1". **Double space** and **paginate** your assignments. **Do not** leave spaces between paragraphs.
- You must email electronic copies of your response papers and the notes for your seminar presentation to the relevant instructors during the weeks you are submitting assignments.
- Use **your last name, assignment number** (not the session number), and the **last name of the author** as the name of each file (e.g., Taylor 1 - Carey.docx). Include your name, date, and course number within the assignment as well.
- Your essay **must** be submitted as a **Microsoft Word file** (preferably a **.docx** file). If you do not own the software, free access to Microsoft Word is available on campus, or you may wish to make use of OpenOffice, a free, Word-compatible open source application suite at <http://www.openoffice.org/>. Because we will be grading your assignments electronically, **other formats will not be accepted.**
- The length of each paper is set at a **strict 1500 words** (**not including** your Works Cited list) and so, you must structure your argument carefully. **Do not** exceed the word limit by more than 300 words (roughly a page). We will stop reading your assignment if it runs over a page longer than the word limit. Conversely, **10%** will be deducted per every **200 words** under the required limit.

ASSIGNMENTS

READING RESPONSES

- 60% of your final grade will go toward critical responses to **four assigned readings** of your choice, each worth 15% of your final grade. These responses should be **1500 words** each. Be ready to use this material during discussion.
- You will select your four readings during the first week of class. Readings will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis. The same reading may not be chosen by more than one student. The sign-up sheet is included below on page 9.
- Your responses **must not** be exclusively summative; they must demonstrate an interrogative familiarity with the readings. Such familiarity could be demonstrated as follows:
 - (1) attempt to **apply** the reading to assigned/discussed materials
 - (2) **offer your own position** on one of the author's principal arguments, and ensure that you provide evidence and reasons for your position
 - (3) prepare a **discussion question** that includes **your own opinion**.
- Please remember to **cite** appropriate page numbers and to **follow the formatting instructions**.
- Because these reading responses are designed to ensure your in-class participation, each response must be submitted online to the appropriate instructors by **6PM of the day of your chosen assigned reading** (e.g., a response to the reading for session three – James Carey's essay, "A Cultural Approach to Communication – would be due on Jan 23 at 6PM).
- **IMPORTANT:** As all assigned work must be completed, you must hand in **all four** responses. Failure to submit a response will result in a final grade of **0% for the course**.
- The effort and ingenuity of your responses will be assessed according to the following scale:
 - 0 – Failure to engage with the correct reading
 - 1 – Misapprehension of or fatuous response to article
 - 2 – Basic comprehension and/or summary of ideas presented in article
 - 3 – Reasonable understanding of material or insightful discussion question generated
 - 4 – Good critical response to general thrust of the article & application to work
 - 5 – Penetrating criticism of the authors' ideas
- **IMPORTANT:** Please keep in mind that responding to a particular reading also means that you will have a more thorough-going knowledge of the material than your classmates. Be aware, then, that **you will be responsible for leading the class discussions** during your assigned weeks.

SEMINAR PRESENTATION

- During sessions 4, 8 and 12, one or more students will each lead a **sixty minute** seminar on a **topic and reading** of their choosing. The seminar will be comprised of:
 - 1) a forty minute lecture component
 - 2) a twenty minute discussion period
- During the lecture component, you will instruct the group about a theoretical development pertaining to New Media that you find to be of considerable import. Your presentation ought to (1) clearly **explain** a few central elements of the concept in question, (2) **apply** the theory in question to an artworks/object/technology/text, and (3) articulate **your own position** in relation to the concept you have selected.
- During the discussion period, your task is to lead the group in critical conversation, either by **proposing questions** or **presenting a critical position** on the assigned material (both readings **and** artworks/objects/technologies/texts). Therefore, please ensure that your elected approach is structured to encourage participation from your fellow students.
- Please provide your classmates and instructors **with access** to your chosen reading and materials, and ensure that they have adequate time to attend to this material before you present – at least one week is recommended.
- Upon completion of your presentation, you must submit any notes used during the course of the presentation. These will be evaluated as the written component of your presentation. Suggested length: approximately **ten double-spaced pages**. However, **avoid simply reading from a prepared paper** during the presentation itself.
- The assignment is designed to help you prepare a professional-level **conference-style presentation**, and/or **a lecture for students at a graduate level**. Therefore, please ensure that your presentation addresses your subject with a sufficient degree of rigour and presentational polish. Criteria for the assessment of presentations are itemized on the following page.

SEMINAR PRESENTATION

Name:

Date:

Criteria	Below Level 1			Level 1		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4			Total	
	Knowledge Demonstrably comprehensive knowledge of subject	Use of information not passable			Limited use of accurate information		Accurate for the most part; some important information is not accurate		All information accurate; most is relevant to topic		All information used is accurate and relevant			
	0	2	4	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	9	10	X 20%	
Thinking/Inquiry Skills	Clarity of argument's structure	Argument vague or unclear			Limited focus to critical argument		Adequate focus to argument, but some digression		Argument clear and more or less logical		Thorough and perceptive critical argument made			
		0	2	4	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	9	10	X 10%
	Evidence to support argument being made	Support demonstrated is not passable			Little evidence used to support thesis		Some good evidence to support thesis		Solid evidence to support thesis		Excellent support for thesis			
		0	2	4	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	9	10	X 15%
	Evidence and integration of research material	Evidence of research not passable			Quality and quantity of research limited; Integration weak		Fair quantity & quality of research; adequate integration		Good quantity and quality of research; good integration of material		Quality and quantity are sound; excellent supportive use of research			
	0	2	4	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	9	10	X 10%	
Effective use of academic language	Use of language not passable			expresses ideas using academic language with limited effectiveness		Expresses ideas using academic language with some effectiveness		Expresses ideas using academic language with considerable effectiveness		Expresses ideas using academic language with a high degree of effectiveness				
	0	2	4	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	9	10	X 10%	
Application	Persuasiveness and insight	Not insightful or convincing			Limited insight and persuasiveness		Persuasive and insightful in some key parts		Persuasive and insightful in all key parts		Totally insightful and persuasive			
		0	2	4	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	9	10	X 20%
	Originality of thought	Utterly pedestrian			Limited imagination & originality		Adequately perceptive argument		Evidence of some original thinking, but still reliant on analysis of others		Highly imaginative and original thinking			
	0	2	4	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	9	10	X 15%	
Final Mark												%		