

Introduction to Computer Mediated Communication

ATEC 3325

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TR 11:30-12:45 JO4.504

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Office Number: TBA

Office Hours: T1:30-2:30, R10:15-11:15

Course Description:

In December of 2006, *Time* magazine declared “you” the person of the year, “for seizing the reins of the global media, for founding and framing the new digital democracy, for working for nothing and beating the pros at their own game.” But who is this “you”? and how does one decide who is “you” and who is not “you”? In this course we will look at the substantial change brought on by the shift from analog to digitally networked writing. We will focus on the praxis of this change, by engaging in writing for the digital age in various forms (blog, wikis, etc.), and seek to understand its implications by reading about how they have been theorized. And while this course will focus primarily on “writing,” we will also examine how what writing is and means changes in the digital, moving past the idea that it is simply words. We will consider rhetorical, technical, cultural, theoretical, and ethical issues surrounding communication in a networked digital era. A new type of digital divide is developing, one which is based not only on consuming ever-increasing content, but, more importantly, on how to produce and critique it.

Required Texts:

The following are available at the Campus Bookstore or Off-Campus Books.
(Note: they may be listed under ATEC 4326.)

Uses of Blogs—ed. Axel Bruns & Joanne Jacobs

Smart Mobs—Howard Rheingold

Paper Machine—Jacques Derrida

Course Packet available at Off-Campus Books

Writing Analytically—Rosenwasser and Stephen (recommended)

In addition there will be readings available online, many of which you will want to print out.

Course Objectives:

It is perhaps an overstated point, overstated to the extent it is often not given enough consideration, that digital technologies have substantially changed the ways in which we communicate as a society. It is my goal to have us as a class consider this change from several angles. Not only will we engage in reading about these changes, but you will also write about these changes. As this is a writing intensive course I am going to ask you to write a great deal, perhaps, however, not in the way that you are accustomed. I also believe that in order to be a successful writer you must also engage in substantial reading, so I will also be asking you to read a lot as well (some online, some offline, some text-based, some video).

One of the requirements for this class is for each student to have a blog (see more on the details about this below). I do not expect to turn all of you into bloggers or content

producers on the web. Rather my intention is help you all develop a better sense of how knowledge, information, and power changes on the web by actively participating in that discourse. Mainly I want you all to engage the web as critical writers and readers in order to move past being simply consumers and empower you in this digital networked era.

Course Website:

The course website for this class can be found at <<http://www.outsidethetext.com/trace>>. You should get in the habit of checking this regularly as I will post suggestions and thoughts about the readings here, as well as links to other things that might interest the class. The syllabus can be found here as well, and any changes to the syllabus will be posted here. If you forget the web address you can always find it from <<http://www.outsidethetext.com>>, an easier url to remember.

Course Requirements:

Weekly Writing Assignments/Blogging (40%): There will be a writing assignment for every class, some brief, some long. Usually these will take the form of writing on your blog. Typically I will give you a direction for these posts, but at other times I will leave the assignment more open. We will spend class time the first few weeks on the “how-to’s” of blogging and writing for the web (honestly, though, if you can use a word processor and a web browser you already have the requisite skills).

Attendance and Participation (20%): This is a crucial part of class. Students are expected to come to class on time, prepared, having completed the assigned reading and writing, and ready to contribute their thoughts to class discussions, to listen seriously and respectfully to the thoughts of others, and to participate in all in-class group work and writing activities. I strongly urge you to attend every class, as most of the work done in class is necessary for successful completion of the course. Only three absences are permitted, and these should be used for illness or emergencies (i.e. this does not mean three absences plus absences for illness etc.). Missing more than three classes will affect your grade. More than five absences will result in failing the course. If you need to miss class for religious reasons, please speak to me ahead of time. Absences for religious purposes do not count against the permitted number (as long as prior notification is given). Lateness is also unacceptable; if you arrive late to class you will be marked as absent.

Midterm (20%): There will be a take home midterm for this class. It will consist of short answers covering concepts discussed in the first half of the course. I will give you more details as the midterm approaches. (Due Mon., Oct 8th)

Final Project (20%): All students will produce “web content” as a final project for the class. The parameters for this are fairly broad: you can produce a critical or creative piece, extended blog entries, video, audio, or text, or perhaps aggregate other content in a new way. After the midterm we will discuss this in greater detail in class. You will also be required to produce a more “formal” write-up of your project (2000 words). The project will be due the week of Nov. 13th, with the formal write-up due during finals.

Grading: As per the undergraduate catalog students will be graded on a range of A-F.

A Note on Technology:

Because at its core this class is about how technology changes communication and more broadly our sense of self and culture, we will necessarily engage with a range of computer tools and web based applications. You do not need any prior skill, however, merely a willingness to engage and learn, and I am more than willing to take extra time; all you need to do is ask.

A majority of the tools we will be using in class are web-based, thus you will not need any special software. You do however need an up-to-date version of Firefox (a free web browser) as well as current versions of various plugins (for example flash, and a video player). Don't worry though, we will cover this in class. You should have an email address that you check regularly for this class.

One further note about technology. As much as technology makes life easier, at times it can also be difficult (computer crashes, deleted work, unavailable internet connections, etc). Plan accordingly: "the computer ate my homework" or "the internet was down" are not reasons to forgo doing the assigned work. It is in your best interest to leave extra time, especially at first, to ensure that technology does not get in the way of your class work.

How to Reach Me:

This is not as tricky as it might sound. Right now I do not have an office number or a phone extension. (My office will not be ready until Sep. 1). For the time being I am borrowing Dean Terry's office (ATEC 1.602) so you can try and find me there. The best way to reach me though is by email <dparry@utdallas.edu> or you can find me online at <<http://www.outsidethetext.com>>. I check email frequently throughout the day. If you email me and do not receive a response within 48 hours (usually I will get back to you within a day), please feel free to email me again (I might not have received your first one) and give me a reminder. I promise not to consider this harassing.

My office hours are Tuesday 1:30-2:30 and Thursday 10:15-11:15. If these times don't work please email me and we can find another time.

A Final Note:

Should any aspect of class confuse/concern/trouble you, or if you have questions about any of this, please see me.

Schedule of Readings

Shifting Writing

Week One

Aug 16

- Introduction: "The Machine is Us/ing Us," "Shift Happens"

Week Two

Aug 21

- "Introduction" Bruns & Jacobs, *Uses of Blogs*
- "Blogs and the Communication Renaissance" Rushkoff & Jacobs, *Uses of Blogs*
- "What We Are Doing When We Blog" Meg Hourihan, *O' Reilly Web DevCenter* (online)

Aug 23

- "RSS in Plain English" *The Common Craft Show* (online)
- "The Technology of Reading and Writing in a Digital Space: Why RSS is crucial for a Blogging Classroom" David Parry, Michigan Blogs for Learning (online)
- "Web Feed" from Wikipedia (online)

Week Three

Aug 28

- "Remediation" Bolter & Grusin (course reader)

Aug 30

- "The Book to Come," "Word Processor" Derrida, *Paper Machines*

Week Four

Sep 4

- "Frequencies of Public Writing" Hartley (course reader)

Sep 6

- "The Practice of News Blogging" Bruns, *Uses of Blogs*
- "Journalists and News Bloggers" Singer, *Uses of Blogs*
- "Journalism in a Digital Age" Harper, (course reader)
- Epic, (online video)

Shifting Connections

Week Five

Sep 11

- *Smart Mobs* 1-3

Sep 13

- *Smart Mobs* 4-6

Week Six

Sep 18

- *Smart Mobs* 7-8

Sep 20

- Readings on *Assignment Zero* (available online)

Week Seven

Sep 25

- "Wikipedia" from *Wikipedia*
- "The Book Stops Here" from *Wired Magazine* (available online)
- "All the News That's Fit to Print" *New York Times* (available online)
- "Heavy Metal Umlat" (online video)

Sep 27

- Wikipedia cont.—discussion of edited pages

Week Eight

Oct 2

- "The Great Seduction" from the *Cult of Amateur* (course reader)
- "The amorality of Web 2.0" Nicholas Carr (online)
- "The Good, the Bad, and the Web 2.0" from *Wall Street Journal* (online)

Midterms will be distributed (due Mon. Oct 8).

Oct 4

- "The New Order of Order" & "The Work of Knowledge" David Weinberger, *Everything is Miscellaneous*, (course reader)
- "Social Bookmarking in Plain English" *The Common Craft Show*, (online video)

Week Nine

Oct 9

- "The Long Tail" Chris Anderson, *Wired Magazine* (online)

- *The Long Tail Blog*, Chris Anderson (online)

Shifting Ethics

Oct 11

- "<free culture>" Lawrence Lessig, (online presentation)
- "A Great Idea Lives Forever. Shouldn't its Copyright?" Mark Helprin (online)
- "Against Perpetual Copyright" (online)
- "Pachbel Rant" (online video)

Week Ten

Oct 16

- "What is an Author" Foucault (course reader)

Oct 18

- *Good Copy, Bad Copy* (video available online)

Week Eleven

Oct 23

- "Science as Open Source Process" & "Cold War Networks" Kittler (course reader)
- "Protocol vs. Institutionalization" Galloway (course reader)
- "Understanding Net Neutrality" (online video)

Shifting Selves

Oct 25

- "Paper or Me, You Know" Derrida, *Paper Machines*
- "Prometeus" (online video)

Week Twelve

Oct 30

- "Cybertyping and the Work of Race in the Age of Digital Reproduction" Nakamura (course reader)
- "Posting with Passion" Gregg, *Uses of Blogs*

Nov 1

- "The Internet Has a Face" (online video)
- "A Vision for Genuine Rich Media Blogging" Miles, *The Uses of Blogs*

Week Thirteen

Nov 6

- "How Twittering Creates a Social Sixth Sense" Clive Thompson, *Wired* (available online)
- "Friends Swap Twitters and Frustration" *Wall Street Journal* (online)
- "Justine Ezarik" on Wikipedia (online)
- "Justine TV" (website)

Nov 8

- Twittering Discussion

Week Fourteen

Nov 13

- *Student Projects*

Nov 15

- *Student Projects*

Week Fifteen

Nov 20

- *Final Class*