

ANTH 309
Anthropology of Digital Media & Cultures

Syllabus Spring 2016
T. 1:10-4:00pm, Anthropology Room 6
Anthropology, Wesleyan University

Dr. Jordan Kraemer, Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology
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Course description

Networked media technologies, from the Internet to mobile phones, are reshaping many aspects of daily life, selfhood, and society. While digital and electronic media seem to make the world smaller, ostensibly facilitating global flows of capital, people, goods, and ideas, this course examines how these technologies co-constitute particular kinds of subjects, accommodating some uses and modes of living more than others. Digital platforms and services, for example, are often designed with elite, technically savvy users in mind, yet are taken up transnationally in diverse and unexpected ways. Media, like other technologies, never exist separately from social life as independent agents of change, but instead emerge through contingent histories, material realities, constellations of discourse, and unequal distributions of power. This course introduces students to the anthropology of digital media and culture, drawing on empirical, ethnographic accounts from a variety of theoretical perspectives, including feminist technology studies, actor-network theory, queer theory critiques, new materialisms, postcolonial studies, and social informatics. Topics include space and place online, media publics, new transnationalisms, design anthropology, big data, social networks, virtuality and embodiment, the social construction of users, mobility, disability, and locatability, and telecommunication infrastructures.

We will consider emerging media practices in cross-cultural and transnational settings, to examine the situated contexts of design and use, while asking broadly what consequences these technologies have for our social worlds. This course requires intensive reading and writing, including a final project that can be undertaken in a variety of ways, such as an original ethnographic or creative project exploring an emerging media practice.

Required texts (available at Broad Street Books and on reserve in Olin)

Boellstorff, Tom 2008. *Coming Of Age In Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores The Virtually Human*. Princeton.
Burrell, Jenna 2013. *Invisible Users: Youth In The Internet Cafés Of Urban Ghana*. MIT Press.
Miller, Daniel, And Don Slater 2000. *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*. Berg.

Optional:

Sanjek, Roger And Susan Tratner (eds) 2015. *eFieldnotes: The Makings Of Anthropology In The Digital World*.
Coleman, Gabriella. 2015. *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*. Verso.

All other materials will be available through the course Moodle or on reserve in Olin.

Course requirements

- *Attendance & participation: 20%*
- *In-class presentation: 10%*
- *Short essay papers (2): 30%*

- *Project proposal & bibliography*: 10%
- *Final paper*: 30%

Attendance & participation: 20%

This is a small reading-intensive seminar that requires everyone come prepared to discuss the readings each week. Participation includes contributing to class discussions, listening actively to others, and being present and on time for each class meeting. Each student must also contribute at least once during the semester to shared class notes via Google docs.

In-class presentation: 10%

Students will each be responsible for introducing the readings and initiating discussion on one week. This will include a brief summary of each reading and questions for discussion.

Short essay papers: 30%

Two short essays (600-800 words, approx. 3 double-spaced pages) are due during the semester that engage with the readings to date (but not before the previous paper was due), on **March 3 and April 14, by midnight** on the course Moodle. Each paper will consist of a brief summary of the key arguments of three scholarly readings, followed by a discussion that puts the readings in conversation with each other.

Project proposal: 10%

You will propose your final project midway through the semester (**due Thursday, April 21 by midnight**, on the course Moodle). Please provide a 250 word (1 page) description of your topic and your approach (i.e., what your central argument might be), and append a 1 page bibliography. This project can take the form of an original research paper, a mini ethnography, or a multimedia project of some kind. If you wish to propose a creative or tech project, please contact me in advance for approval.

Final paper: 30%

Due Tuesday, May 10 by 5pm by email. Papers should be 2000-2500 words in length (~8-10pp), *not including* the bibliography/references cited, 1.5 or double-spaced, 11-12 pt font size, pages numbered, &c., unless I have approved an alternative project (a short paper may still be required). Any standard citation format is acceptable; if unsure, use Chicago or see me.

Policies

Email and communication: I will try to respond to all emails promptly, but please allow up to 24 hours for me to get back to you (and 48 hours over the weekend).

Attendance & Absences: Attendance is required as part of participation. You may miss one class meeting without excuse; otherwise, I will only excuse absences in rare circumstances (e.g., unexpected exigencies or religious observance), preferably with documentation. When possible, you must notify me in advance.

Extensions: I ordinarily do not grant extensions unless you make arrangements in advance (or under extenuating circumstances, as above).

Late work: Papers handed in after the deadline without prior approval will usually be penalized one-third of a full letter grade per day.

Technology in the classroom: Devices are permitted in the classroom when used to participate in class. Please minimize their use to prevent distracting yourself or others.

Disability: From Wesleyan's Disability Resources: Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its

programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Honor Code: All your work must be in compliance with Wesleyan's Honor Code. Please meet with me if you have questions about proper citations or avoiding plagiarism, or contact the Writing Workshop, <http://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop/>.

Course schedule

Week 1: January 26 — Introduction

1. Ricardo de Querol, “Zygmunt Bauman: ‘Social media are a trap.’” *EL PAÍS*. http://elpais.com/elpais/2016/01/19/inenglish/1453208692_424660.html (read in class)
2. Patricia G. Lange 2014, “Hey Watch This! Sharing the Self Through Media” (film); for trailer, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVuC3DsDJRg>.

Week 2: February 2 — Technology, culture, capital

1. Carolyn Marvin, 1988, “Introduction,” *When Old Technologies Were New*. New York: Oxford. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)
2. Karl Marx. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. “The German Ideology,” 149-150; “Wage Labour and Capital,” 203-211; “Capital, Part II, Chapter IV: The General Formula for Capital,” 329-336 (skim).
3. Brian Pfaffenberger 1989. “The social meaning of the personal computer: or, why the personal computer revolution was no revolution.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 61: 39-47.
4. Roberts, Jeff John December 8, 2015, “This Image Explains Why the U.S. Can't Stop Mass Shootings.” *Fortune.com*. <http://fortune.com/2015/12/08/gun-control-beta-works/>

Week 3: February 9 — Media, community, society

1. Raymond Williams 2002, “The Technology and the Society.” In *The Anthropology of Media: a Reader*. Kelly Askew and Richard Wilk, eds. Blackwell: Malden Mass.
2. Fred Turner 2005. “Where the Counterculture Met the New Economy: the WELL and the Origins of Virtual Community.” *Technology and Culture* 46(3):485–512.
3. Eli Pariser 2011, “Beware online ‘filter bubbles.’” TED talk, https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles (watch video before class).
4. Bakshy, E, S Messing, and L A Adamic 2015, “Exposure to Ideologically Diverse News and Opinion on Facebook.” *Science* 348(6239): 1130–1132.

Further reading

Bakshy, Eytan, Itamar Rosenn, Cameron Marlow, and Lada Adamic 2012. “The Role of Social Networks in Information Diffusion.” Proceedings of the 21st international conference on World Wide Web, Lyon, France: 519–528.

Week 4: February 16 — Ethnography of/on the Internet

1. Clifford Geertz 1973, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.” In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5-29.
2. Daniel Miller and Don Slater 2000. *The Internet: an Ethnographic Approach*. Oxford, New York: Berg. Chapters 1-2.
3. Sanjek, Roger and Susan Tratner (eds) 2015, *eFieldnotes: The makings of anthropology in the digital world*. Penn Press, chapters 7 and 9.

Further reading

Michael Fischer 2003. “Chapter 8: Worlding Cyberspace.” In Fischer, Michael (ed.), *Emergent forms of life and the anthropological voice*, pp. 261-304.

George E. Marcus 1995. “Ethnography in/of the World System: the Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24(1): 95–117.

Ingold, Tim 2014 “That's Enough About Ethnography!” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4(1): 383.

Week 5: February 23 — Social capital, networked publics

1. Pierre Bourdieu 1986, *The Forms of Capital*,
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>.
2. Nicole Ellison, Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe 2006, “Spatially Bounded Online Social Networks and Social Capital: the Role of Facebook.” *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the International Communication Association*.
3. Lange, Patricia G. 2007 “Publicly Private and Privately Public: Social Networking on YouTube.” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13(1): 361–380.

Further reading

Pierre Bourdieu 1984, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*.

Debra Spitulnik 1996. “The Social Circulation of Media Discourse and the Mediation of Communities.” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 6(2): 161–187.

Week 6: March 1 — NO CLASS

** FIRST RESPONSE PAPER DUE ONLINE THURSDAY MAR. 3, BY MIDNIGHT **

Alternate assignment TBD

Spring Break, March 4-21

Week 7: March 22 — Media(ted) selves, media ideologies

1. Michel Foucault 1986. “The Cultivation of the Self,” In *The Care of the Self, The History of Sexuality Volume 3*. Vintage Books: 39-68.
2. Gershon, Ilana 2014 Selling Your Self in the United States. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 37(2): 281–295.
3. Alice Marwick 2015 Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy. *Public Culture* 27(1 75): 137–160.
4. Ilana Gershon 2010. “Breaking Up Is Hard to Do: Media Switching and Media Ideologies.” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 20(2): 389–405.

Further reading

Michel Foucault 1997. “Technologies of the Self.” In *Ethics: Subjectivity and truth*. Paul Rabinow ed., Robert Hurley trans. New York: The New Press.

Week 8: March 29 — Cyborgs: gender, power, difference

1. Donna Haraway 2007 (1991), “The Cyborg Manifesto.” In *The Cybercultures Reader*, Bell, David, and Barbara M Kennedy, eds. London, New York: Routledge: 34-65.
2. Lisa Nakamura 2007 (1995). “Race in/for Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet.” In *The Cybercultures Reader* (Chapter 18): 297-304.
3. Nafus, Dawn 2012 “‘Patches Don’t Have Gender’: What Is Not Open in Open Source Software.” *New Media and Society* 14(4): 669–683.

Further reading

Allucquere Rosanne Stone 2007 (1991). “Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?: Boundary stories about virtual cultures.” In *The Cybercultures Reader*, Bell, David, and Barbara M Kennedy, eds. London, New York: Routledge: 433-455.

Allison, Anne 2001 “Cyborg Violence: Bursting Borders and Bodies with Queer Machines.” *Cultural Anthropology* 16(2): 237–265.

N. Katherine Hayles 1999. *How we became posthuman: virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.

Week 9: April 5 — Sociality and social media

1. Bruno Latour 2005. *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford; New York: Oxford. (selections)
2. danah boyd 2014 *It's Complicated*. Yale University Press. (selections)

Further reading

Daniel Miller 2012. “Social Networking Sites,” in *Digital Anthropology*, Daniel Miller and Heather Horst, eds. Berg: 146-161.

Barry Wellman 2001, “Computer Networks as Social Networks.” *Science* 293(5537): 2031–2034.

Berlant, Lauren, and Michael Warner 1998 Sex in Public. *Critical Inquiry* 24(2): 547–566.

Michael Warner 2002 “Publics and Counterpublics.” *Public Culture* 14(1). Duke University Press: 49–90.

Week 10: April 12 — Virtual places, transnational spaces

**** SECOND RESPONSE PAPER DUE ONLINE THURSDAY APRIL 14, BY MIDNIGHT ****

1. Tom Boellstorff 2008. *Coming of Age in Second Life*, Chapters 1 & 2. Princeton.
2. T. L. Taylor 2006. “Does WoW Change Everything?: How a PvP Server, Multinational Playerbase, and Surveillance Mod Scene Caused Me Pause,” *Games & Culture* Vol. 1(4), pp. 1-20.
3. Thomas Eriksen 2007 “Nationalism and the Internet*.” *Nations and Nationalism* 13(1): 1–17.

Further reading

Bonnie Nardi, 2010 *My Life As A Night Elf Priest: An anthropological account of world of warcraft*. (selections)

Victoria Bernal 2014 *Nation as Network : Diaspora, Cyberspace, and Citizenship*. Univ. of Chicago Press.

Week 11: April 19 — Mobility versus locatability: mobile media and place

**** FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE THURSDAY, APRIL 21, BY MIDNIGHT ****

1. Nicola Green 2002. “On the Move: Technology, mobility, and the mediation of social time and space.” *The Information Society* 18 (4): 281-292.
2. Lane DeNicola 2012 Geomedia: the Reassertion of Space Within Digital Culture. In *Digital Anthropology*. Heather A. Horst and Daniel Miller, eds. Pp. 80–98. London, New York: Berg.
3. Mirca Madianou 2014. “Smartphones as Polymedia.” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 19(3): 667–680.

Further reading

Amanda Williams and Paul Dourish 2006. “Imagining the City: the Cultural Dimensions of Urban Computing.” *Computer* 39(9): 38–43.

Rafael, Vicente L. 2003. “The Cell Phone and the Crowd: Messianic Politics in the Contemporary Philippines.” *Public Culture* 15(3): 399–425.

Celeste Langan 2001 “Mobility Disability.” *Public Culture* 13(3): 459–484.

Week 12: April 26 — Users matter: new materialisms

1. Jenna Burrell 2013. *Invisible Users*. MIT Press
OR

2. Coleman, Gabriella. 2014. *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*. Verso.

Further reading:

Trevor J. Pinch and Nelly Oudshoorn 2003. "Introduction: How Users and Non-Users Matter." In *How Users Matter: The Co-construction of Users and Technologies*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*.
N. Katherine Hayles 2004. "Print Is Flat, Code Is Deep: the Importance of Media-Specific Analysis." *Poetics Today* 25(1): 67–90.

Week 13: May 3 — Data and design

1. Susan Leigh Star 1999. "The Ethnography of Infrastructure." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43(3): 377–391.
2. Natasha Schull 2005. "Digital Gambling." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 597: 65-81
3. Wilf, Eitan 2013 "Toward an Anthropology of Computer-Mediated, Algorithmic Forms of Sociality." *Current Anthropology* 54(6): 716–739.
4. Lilly Irani, Janet Vertesi, Paul Dourish, Kavita Philip and Rebecca E. Grinter 2010 "Postcolonial Computing: A Lens on Design and Development." 1–10.

Further reading

Adam Drazin 2012. "Working on, with, and for digital technologies." In *Digital Anthropology*, Daniel Miller and Heather Horst, eds. Berg: 245-265.

Brian Larkin 2008. *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. Durham: Duke University Press.

***** FINAL PROJECT: DUE MAY 11 BY 5PM *****