

Course Overview:

The purpose of this course is for students to engage in an active exploration and examination of English-language media today, with a special focus on new media and the convergence of media via the Internet. Aside from the obvious benefits to language study in taking any course in the language being studied, the course will achieve the following:

1. It will familiarize students with legal and technological intermediaries that determine how they relate to media, and which media becomes available for them to access.
2. It will provide them a chance to immerse themselves in a mediascape of living English, rather than just the ossified examples provided in textbooks.
3. It will focus on the development of critical reading/viewing/thinking skills that students can use to understand, and to respond to, media whenever and wherever they encounter it.
4. It will provide opportunities for students to creatively use their existent English-language abilities to connect with others online through creative projects like UCC, mashups, remixing, and podcasting, thereby opening a door to the global online discourse which predominantly is occurring in English.

For the purposes of this course, media will include print, video, audio, and other forms, but will especially focus on online forms of media, and most especially on materials that are freely available online in the form of podcasts, creative-commons licensed books and videos, and more. As much of the reading materials for this course as possible will be available online, for free, with the exception of the graphic novel we will explore.

Classes will involve occasional lectures, large- and small-group discussions, academic presentations and presentations of creative projects, and more. The final "exam" will be replaced by a creative "final group project" involving creative application of ideas and topics discussed in class. (We will discuss this project after the midterm examination period.) As a result, preparation and participation are absolutely crucial. Since lectures will only be occasional, it is vitally important that all students arrive prepared for each class. Participation marks will therefore comprise a significant part of your grade.

Homework

Homework for this class falls under several different categories.

- Basic preparations for classes should be performed by students regularly. I can tell when you haven't done the reading or done other preparatory work, and I will take it into account when assigning you a homework mark.
- Each student will contribute to an online media blog hosted at my courses website. A minimum of one blog entry per week discussing any interesting media issues, from class or from outside class, is expected from each student. The grade will be determined on a competitive basis determined by posting activity of other students, as well as comments that you offer to other students.
- Occasional homework assignments will be given. Some will involve writing reviews or summaries of readings or other media objects, while others will involve creative teamwork. Students will normally have 7-10 days to complete one-page assignment, or

longer for bigger assignments. All assignments submitted to me must be typed (double-spaced) and the header must include your name, student number, my name, and the course name and number. Submissions consisting of multiple pages should be stapled or paperclipped, but I prefer that students not use plastic folders or binders to submit their work. Any work failing to meet these criteria will be returned to the student immediately for resubmission within 3 days.

- Your final creative project will necessarily be different from student to student or group to group. We will discuss my expectations for this project after the midterm exam.

Textbook

We will examine the following texts, or excerpts from them, both of them legally available for free online as text files and as mp3 podcasts:

- The Hacker Crackdown by Bruce Sterling
- Free Culture by Lawrence Lessig, along with his Creative-Commons released slide-show presentation upon which the book was based

We will also examine various other texts and articles and media content available online. Additionally, as a break after midterms, we will read and discuss a graphic novel. I will announce the title, and ordering suggestions, in class.

Should you wish to explore media not encompassed in this course, please feel free to ask me for recommendations. I will be more than happy to help you find materials which are suited to your needs and worth exploring.

Assessment

As you can see below, course assessment is not heavily focused on examinations.

Class Participation – 20%

Personal Media Diary – 15%

Homework/Quizzes – 30%

Midterm Exam – 15%

Final Project – 20%

However, a 0% in any of the above marks will result in an incomplete grade. Students must at least attempt all homework assignments in order to complete the course.

My contact information:

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Class Website: <http://gordsclass.com>

Course Outline:

The following is extremely tentative and subject to change at any time, but it should give you an idea of what's planned.

Week 1: Introductions, Paperwork, etc.

Week 2: Discussing Media in Transition: Youtube, DRM, Creative Commons, Web 2.0, and More

Week 3: The Hacker Crackdown, Part 1

Week 4: The Hacker Crackdown, Part 2 | Podcast as a Medium

Week 5: The Youtube Phenomenon | Giving It Away: The What and Why of Creative Commons Licensing

Week 6: Free Culture: Copyright, the Remix, and Culture 1 | Satire

Week 7: Free Culture: Copyright, the Remix, and Culture 2 | Your podcasts

Week 8: Midterm Exam

Week 9: Graphic Novel 1: reading & discussion | Creative Project Launch

Week 10: Graphic Novel 2: reading & discussion | Satire

Week 11: Superman, remixed and mashed up |

Week 12: Superman, Smallville, and what you dig up

Week 13: The Nerds, the Geeks, and the Cool Kids | Your Superman Remix Trailer

Week 14: Almost Famous Viewing and Discussion

Week 15: Creative Project Workshop | Final Project Presentation

Week 16: Final Paperwork Sorting