COMS 465: Computer-Mediated Communication
Spring Semester 2016

Location: DuSable Hall 218
Time: MW 2:00-3:15pm
Instructor: Dr. David J. Gunkel
Department: Communication
Office: Reavis 112
Office Hours: MW 1:00-2:00, W 5:00-6:00 & by appointment
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Social Media: Facebook Group

Course Description

This undergraduate seminar investigates computer-mediated communication (CMC). The course has both a theoretical and practical component. On the one hand, seminar members examine the history and significance of CMC, examining its technological, economic, social, political, and even philosophical aspects. On the other hand, they gain practical experience with the technologies and techniques of computer-based communication and information systems. Students learn how to use the Internet as a tool for communication, examine interactive media, and write programs for the web. The seminar, therefore, not only investigates the history, significance, and consequences of CMC but fosters critical literacy with these new technological forms.

Texts & Materials

- David J. Gunkel. *Of Remixology: Ethics and Aesthetics After Remix*. The MIT Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780262033930
- Cathy LaBerta. *Computers Are Your Future* (Complete), 12th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011. ISBN: 9780132544948

These texts are required and **must** be procured by all students enrolled in the course. In addition to these traditional print materials, we will employ a number of on-line texts. These materials are indicated in the course calendar and are required reading.

Responsibilities

Preparation - Students are responsible for reading and preparing all assigned class materials in accordance with the course calendar. Reading involves not only looking at the text but engaging the material in a thoughtful and organized fashion. Note taking, outlining, and other reading strategies are highly recommended.

Course Structure- This class is not a lecture-course. It is a seminar. Therefore, the responsibility for working through the material and structuring an effective learning environment falls to each member of the seminar.
Attendance - Because the environment of the course is interactive and collaborative, it is necessary that students attend and participate in every class meeting. Attendance is,

therefore, mandatory. Seminar participants are permitted two (2) unexcused absences over the course of the semester. After that, the final grade will be reduced by 20 points per additional absence. This guideline is not inflexible and is subject to change due to individual circumstances. This alteration, however, must be confirmed with the instructor. When possible, this should be accomplished before the additional absence(s). Missing the first class meeting does constitute an absence. In the case of any absence, it is the student's responsibility to make-up the missed work by obtaining notes from classmates or reading the assigned material. The instructor will not provide individual instruction for students who have missed a regularly scheduled class meeting.

Activities - Student learning and achievement will be assessed by three activities: a formal presentation of course material, a mid-term examination, and a final examination.

1. Presentation - One of the skills necessary to live and work successfully in an age of information is the ability to process, organize, and present data. For this reason, the course offers you the opportunity to exercise, develop, and demonstrate this ability that has been and will continue to be an integral part of your educational experience. Each class meeting one or more seminar members will provide a formal presentation (approximately 15 minutes) of the texts/topics that are to be considered that class period. These presentations are not book reports. They must be thoughtful engagements with the material that are designed to initiate and to structure seminar discussion. For this reason, interesting questions and methods of inquiry are more valuable than hasty conclusions, superfluous summaries, and rigid assessments. The manner of presentation is wide open, and you are encouraged to be creative and innovative. In presenting the material, each presenter is required to incorporate some mode of presentation technology. This may include video, overheads, web materials, PowerPoint graphics, etc. The presentations will be evaluated using the following evaluation form:

Evaluation Form

A sign-up sheet will be circulated early in the semester. You are encouraged to browse the course calendar to decide on possible presentation topics and dates. It is your responsibility to remember your presentation date and plan accordingly. Missing your presentation will constitute failure of the assignment.

2. Exercises - Students will complete three "learn-by-doing" exercises designed to provide hands-on practical knowledge of computer technology and to assist in the development of basic computer skills. These exercises will be developed, executed, and evaluated during specially designated class meetings. Students who are absent for these lab sessions, will need to complete the work on their own outside class and present the results to the instructor no later than 1 week after the scheduled lab session.

- Code - Learn how computers are programmed and function by writing basic Javascript programs.

- Web Content - Use the core technology of the web--HTML--to produce basic Internet applications.

- Mashup - Use audio processing and editing tools to create an original digital remix.

3. Mid-Term and Final Examinations - There will be two examinations, one at the mid-term and another at the conclusion of the course. The final examination will not be comprehensive. It will only concern course materials covered since the completion of the mid-term. Each examination will consist of four sections:

Talk the Talk - Define technical terms and acronyms (i.e. URL, Hypertext, ARPANET).

It's Who You Know - Identify major figures in the field of CMC (i.e. J. C. R. Licklider, Jaron Lanier, Donna Haraway).

Short Answers - Provide brief responses to short answer questions (i.e. The Internet has been described as a "decentralized web of heterogeneous processors." What does this phrase mean?).

Essay - Write an essay in response to a question. This part of the exam will be written on the computer and students may use both word processing tools (spell check) and Internet resources in constructing their responses.

Questions in the first three parts will be based on course materials and our investigation of these materials in seminar discussions. They will examine your understanding of terminology, people, and basic concepts that are necessary for a working knowledge of advanced communication technologies and computer-based systems. The essay question will provoke critical reflection on or assessment of a particular issue previously discussed in seminar meetings. It will assess your ability to reflect critically on a contended issue and your skill in communicating this assessment in writing. Several days before the examination, an on-line study guide will be published. The study guide will list all elements that need to be reviewed prior to the exam. The best way to prepare for the examination is to complete the study guide. And the only way to complete the study guide is to read the course material, to attend class, and to take notes during discussion. If you read the material and participate in class, you should have no problem with the examination. If you do not read the material and are consistently absent, you should expect to have significant trouble with the examinations.

Grading

Evaluation Distribution (399 Total Points)
   Presentation = 100 points
   Exercises = 99 points (3 x 33 points per project)
   Mid Term Exam = 100 points
   Final Exam = 100 points

Grade Scale
   A = 369-399
   A- = 360-368
   B+ = 353-359
   B = 328-352
   B- = 320-347
   C+ = 313-319
   C = 280-312
   D = 240-279

Policies

Academic Integrity - Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are responsible for plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students responsible for, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.

Classroom Conduct - This course encourages students to form, express, and defend their own ideas. In order to ensure a fair and equitable environment for the open discussion of these ideas, students agree to be respectful and civil in their interactions with each other and with the instructor. Debate and criticism will be directed to ideas and the mode of their expression and not to the individual person who articulates it.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities - A student who believes that reasonable accommodations with respect to course work or other academic requirements may be appropriate in consideration of a disability must (1) provide the required verification of the disability to the Disabilities Resource Center (DRC), (2) meet with the DRC to determine appropriate accommodations, and (3) inform the faculty in charge of the academic activity of the need for accommodation. Students are encouraged to inform the faculty of their requests for accommodations as early as possible in the semester, but must make the requests in a timely enough manner for accommodations to be appropriately considered and reviewed by the university. If contacted by the faculty member, the staff of the DRC will provide advice about accommodations that may be indicated in the particular case. Students who make requests for reasonable accommodations are expected to follow the policies and procedures of the DRC in this process, including but not limited to the Student Handbook. A wide range of

services can be obtained by students with disabilities, including housing, transportation, adaptation of printed materials, and advocacy with faculty and staff. Students with disabilities who need such services or want more information should contact the DRC at 815-753-1303.

Terms & Conditions - The policies, procedures, and responsibilities articulated on this website are considered binding and in full force and effect for the entire academic semester during which a student is enrolled in the course. By registering for the course, students consent to these stipulations and affirm that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by everything contained herein. Only students who officially drop the course or withdraw from the university will be considered to be released of these responsibilities prior to the recording of final grades. Additionally, exceptions to and/or alterations in the policies, procedures, and responsibilities listed on this website will only be considered in situations of extreme hardship, documented learning disability, or medical emergency. In all cases, the instructor will be considered to be the final arbiter of any request for exception.

Objectives
Seminar members will be introduced to and become proficient with the following:

- **Theory and Concepts**. Students will know the terminology, fundamental texts, and basic concepts of computer-mediated communication. They will be able to talk the talk of CMC and feel confident discussing its social, political, and philosophical aspects.
- **Technology and Computer Literacy**. Students will learn and develop practical skills with CMC technology. They will learn how to employ the core technology of the web, *Hypertext Markup Language (HTML)*, to create basic web pages and Internet applications.
- **Critical Thinking and Information Literacy**. Students will practice critical evaluations of texts, media, and technology. They will learn how to question information, assess its importance, and communicate their findings.

Calendar

Introduction

20 January Introduction	Course Website

Computer Technology

25 January Computer Basics	LaBerta, ch. 1 - Computers & You [History of Computing](#)
27 January Hardware	LaBerta, ch. 2 - Inside the System Unit
1 February Hardware	LaBerta, ch. 3 - Input/Output & Storage LaBerta, Spotlight 3: Buying & Upgrading

Date	Topic	Readings
3 February	Software	LaBerta, ch. 4 - System Software LaBerta, ch. 11 - Programming Languages Hacking the Future
8 February	Code Exercise	LaBerta, ch. 11 - Programming Languages

Networks

Date	Topic	Readings
10 February	Computer Networks	LaBerta, ch. 8 - Wired & Wireless LaBerta, ch. 7 - Networks LaBerta, Spotlight 5: Cloud Computing
15 February	Internet & Web	LaBerta, ch. 6 - Internet & WWW LaBerta, Spotlight 4: Web 2.0 History of the World Wide Web
17 February	HTML Exercise	LaBerta, ch. 6 - Internet & WWW
22 February	Broadband & Broadband Policy	Importance of Broadband Policy Emerging Network Technologies

Midterm Examination

Date	Topic	Readings
24 February	Mid-Term Exam Preparation	Mid-Term Exam Study Guide
29 February	Mid-Term Exam	

Social Problems & Opportunities

Date	Topic	Readings
2 March	Communication & Community	A Cultural Approach to Communication Connected But Alone
7 March	Digital Divides	Second Thoughts Digital Differences Let's bridge the digital divide!
9 March	Avatars & Identity	A Rape in Cyberspace Is Facebook Changing our Identity?
14 March	Spring Break	No Class Meeting

16 March Spring Break	No Class Meeting
21 March Cybercrime & Privacy	LaBerta, ch. 9 - Privacy & Security [Why privacy matters](#)

Intellectual Property & Remix

23 March Digital Media & the Law	[Amateur-to-Amateur](#) [Open Source](#)
28 March Conference	No Class Meeting
30 March Copyright vs. Copyleft	[Rip: A Remix Manifesto](#) Gunkel, Introduction (pp. xvii-xxxi)
4 April Remix/Mashup	Gunkel, chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 3-58)
6 April Remix Exercise	Gunkel, chapter 7 (pp. 169-177)

Graphics, Games & Virtual Worlds

11 April CGI, Animation & Digital Cinema	[A Short Introduction to Computer Graphics](#) [What is Digital Cinema?](#)
13 April Computer Games & Gaming	[Computer Games](#) [The Rhetoric of Video Games](#)
18 April Virtual Worlds	[Virtual Worlds](#) [Social Contract 2.0](#)

Posthumans, AI & Social Robotics

20 April Posthumans, Transhumans & Cyborgs	[We are All Cyborgs Now](#) [Resistance is Futile](#)
25 April AI & Robots	[Artificial Intelligence & Robotics](#) [Communication and Artificial Intelligence](#)

27 April
    Machine Question

When Will We Worry About Robots?
The Other Question

Course Conclusion

2 May
    Conclusions
    Projections

Career & Educational Opportunities
Course Evaluation
Final Exam Study Guide

9 May - 2pm
    Final Examination