

DIGITAL LITERACIES & SOCIAL ACTIVISM
RTVF 5660: Topics Course
Spring 2015
University of North Texas
Department of Media Arts

Instructor: Dr. Jacqueline Vickery

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Course description: This course examines the intersection of media literacy, participatory cultures, network society, media advocacy, and social activism within the context of evolving technologies and social practices. The concept of literacy is undergoing a transformation as a result of changes in media, technology, education, and society. Scholars, educators, and professionals are recognizing the importance of digital literacy to citizenship, education, information-sharing, identity exploration, and community building. In order to be digitally literate you must understand technological affordances of communities and online tools, the pedagogical implications of participatory media cultures, the ethics and legal struggles around authorship and intellectual property, changing notions of public and private, and know how to leverage knowledge and skills in an increasingly global and networked society.

New media provide avenues for students and citizens to collaborate, organize, and share ideas across different networks and can be powerful tools for social change and education. In this course, students will critically consider how media can be used as a tool to advocate for social/political change and social justice. While engaging in scholarly and activist literature on media, social change, and advocacy, students will work together on a project/campaign/movement/advocacy of their choice. The class is designed to be collaborative, participatory, and project-based. Students will create media, curate an online presence, participate in online communities, and work together on creative multimedia projects that serve an awareness building and/ or social activist purpose.

Course objectives - By the end of the course students will:

- Learn media advocacy skills to advocate for social and political change and social justice through engaging with theories, case studies, application, and participation.
- Be able to think critically about how media can be harnessed to advocate for social and political change and social justice.
- Know how to leverage knowledge and skills for acquisition of social capital in a networked society
- Know how to collaborate and curate information in an online environment
- Understand the historical, contextual, local, and global implications of changing technological norms and practices
- Use a variety of online tools for collaboration, education, information seeking, and media production

Required Books:

1. *Digital Literacies: Concepts, policies, and practices* – Colin Lankshear & Michele Knobel (Eds.) (paperback or as a free .pdf
<http://sites.google.com/site/colinlankshear/DigitalLiteracies.pdf?attredirects=0>)
2. *Re:Imagining Change: How to use story-based strategy to win campaigns, build movements, and change the world* – Patrick Reinsborough & Doyle Canning (paperback or Kindle edition)
3. *Civic Life Online: Learning how digital media can engage youth* – Lance Bennett (Ed.) (paperback or as a free .pdf
https://mitpress.mit.edu/sites/default/files/titles/free_download/9780262524827_Civic_Life_Online.pdf)
4. *Commodity Activism: Cultural resistance in neoliberal times* – Roopali Mukherjee & Sarah Banet-Weiser (Eds.) (paperback or Kindle edition)
5. All other readings available via Dropbox or online

Assignments & Evaluation

A = 90-100 points; B = 80-89 points; C = 70-79 points; D = 60-69 points; F = fewer than 60 points.

Presenting a Case Study (15 points): You will be responsible for presenting and analyzing one case study in class. The case study should be an example of a contemporary social activism or media advocacy campaign. The goal is to unpack the resources, networks, tools, and strategies used and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign. The presentation should also include discussion questions for the class. You may use supplementary material to help illustrate your points, contextualize the campaign, or as a point of analysis (e.g. film clips, images, interviews, podcasts, news articles, apps, etc.). The total presentation should be approximately 45 minutes, including ample time for class discussion.

Tool or Resource Demo (5 points): You will be responsible for demoing a digital tool or resource that is useful for digital media creation, analysis, critique, circulation and/or for social activism/advocacy. The demo should briefly explain how the tool/resource works (i.e. brief tutorial) and explain why it might be useful for your campaigns. The demo should take 5-10 minutes.

Curated Content / Blog Posts (5 points each = 15 points): You will write 3 blog posts on your website that curates content and responds to an issue/debate/idea relevant to your campaign.

Breaching Social Norms Reflection (5 points): After breaking a social media norm, write a 2-3 page reflection essay on the experience.

Participation (15 points): You are expected to come to class each week prepared to discuss all of the assigned readings. You will be evaluated on your ability to contribute to critical dialogue, analysis, and debate each week. You get 1 excused absence (no questions asked), but will lose points from your final grade for any additional absences. Arriving late, leaving early, not actively participating, and/or a multiple absences will negatively affect your final grade.

Social Activism/Media Advocacy Campaign (45 points): You will select a social activism and/or media advocacy campaign (must have instructor approval). The campaign must work towards social or political

change and/or social justice. Your goal is to learn about the issue & create clickable, spreadable, and interactive digital content and information that supports the mission/cause. While much of the contributions will be online, you are encouraged to have offline components to the campaign as well.

The campaign has specific requirements, but also allows you to create content and activities of your choice. Components include:

1. A website that will serve as your hub for information and all media created
2. Infographic
3. Factual information presented in a concise, clickable, informative, and engaging format
4. Curated content about the topic/issue (i.e. blog posts)
5. A call to action (must have instructor approval): e.g. petition, fundraiser, rally, protest, screening, letter writing campaign, community event, user-generated content submissions, other ideas upon instructor approval
6. Media component of your choice (must have instructor approval): e.g. app, game, PSA, curriculum/lesson plan, badge, podcast, shareable video, remix, mashup, other ideas upon instructor approval

Late Work: In order to pass the course, ALL assignments must be completed and turned in. You will lose a full letter grade on the assignment for every day your assignment is late. Assignments more than 3 days late will receive an automatic “0” for the assignment.

Weekly Topics & Tentative Reading Schedule

Week 1: Jan. 20 – Media Literacy

Screening: *#ReGENERATION: The Politics of Apathy & Activism*

Reading: Kellner & Share– Toward Critical Media Literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy

Week 2: January 27 - Digital Literacies

Readings: Lankshear& Knobel, (Eds.) - *Digital Literacies: Concepts, Policies, and Practices* (Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, & 7)

Rheingold – Introduction to *NetSmart* (pp. 12-26)

Week 3: February 3 - Social Activism & Advocacy Pt. 1

Submit campaign proposal

Demo #1: T.B.D.

Readings: Gamson and Wolfsfeld – Movements and Media as Interacting Systems

Gamson – Silence, Death, and the Invisible Enemy: AIDS activism and social movement “newness”

Gladwell – Small Change: The revolution will not be Tweeted

Kahn & Kellner – New media and internet activism: from the “Battle of Seattle” to blogging

Week 4: February 10 - Social Activism & Advocacy Pt. 2

Breaching Social Norms Reflection Due

Demo #2: T.B.D.

Case Study #1: T.B.D.

Readings: Berger - Introduction to *Contagious: Why things catch on*
Jenkins, Ford, & Green – *Spreadable Media* (select chapter)
Clark and Abrash – Social Justice Documentary: Designing for Impact (pp. 1-22, skim appendices)

Week 5: February 17 - Narrative Power Analysis

Submit website template & campaign outline

*Screening: *A Burning Question: Propaganda & the denial of climate change**

Demo #3: T.B.D.

Reading: Canning and Reinsbourough - *Re:Imagining Change: How to use story-based strategy to win campaigns, build movements, and change the world*

Week 6: February 24 - (Pop) Culture Jamming

Demo #4: T.B.D.

Case Study #2: T.B.D.

Readings: Jenkins - "Cultural acupuncture": Fan activism and the Harry Potter Alliance (online)
Lievrouw – Monkeywrenching the media machine: Culture jamming
Knobel and Lankshear – Remix: The Art and Craft of Endless Hybridization

Week 7: March 3 - Media Education & Civic Engagement

Blog Post 1 Due

Demo #5: T.B.D.

Case Study #3: T.B.D.

Readings: Selections from *Civic Life Online* (Bennett Ed.)

Week 8: March 10 - Hashtag Activism

Fact-finding analysis due & brief presentations

Readings: Hill – The hashtag revolution
Loza - Hashtag Feminism, #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, and the Other #FemFuture (online)
The Year in Feminist Hashtags (commentary from special issue of *Feminist Media Studies*)

Week 9: March 17 - Spring Break

No readings – have a fun and safe break!

Week 10: March 24 - Representation

Infographics due

Screening: *Miss Representation*

Demo #6:

Readings: Dewey - The Only Guide to Gamergate You Will Ever Need to Read (online)
Papy - Slutwalk: The Media, The Message, and the Gaze (online)

Week 11: March 31 - Commodity Activism

Campaign update due

*Screening: *Pink Ribbons, Inc.**

Demo #7: T.B.D.

Reading: Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser – *Commodity Activism* (Introduction, Chapters 2, 4, & 11)

Week 12: April 7 - Slacktivism & Inequity

Blog Post #2 due

Screening: *Kony 2012*

Case Study #4: T.B.D.

Readings: Pepper - *Invisible Children* and the Cyberactivist Spectator

Christensen – Political activities on the internet : Slacktivism or political participation by other means? (online)

Hargittai & Walejko – The Participation Divide: content creation and sharing in the digital age

Week 13: April 14 - Networked Identity

Case Study #5: T.B.D.

Reading: Sandvig – Corrupt Personalization (online)

Costa – To be or not to be, the importance of digital identity in the networked society

Pegrum – “I Link, Therefore I am”: Network literacy as a core digital literacy

Week 14: April 21 - (Mis)Information

***Campaign Updates ***

Case Study #6: T.B.D.

Reading: Fieldhouse & Nicholas – Digital Literacy as Information Savvy (Ch. 3 in Lankshear & Knobel)

Rheingold – Crap Detection 101

Starbrid et al., Rumors, False Flags, and Digital Vigilantes: Misinformation on Twitter after the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing

Week 15: April 28 - Free Speech, Censorship, & Hacktivists

Blog Post #3 due

Case Study #7: T.B.D.

Reading: Cartalucci – Beware: Facebook’s ‘soft censorship’ (online)

Sabadello – The role of new media for the democratization processes in the Arab world

Coleman – Anonymous – from the lulz to collective action (online)

Week 16: May 5 – Out-of-class work day

No readings/no class

Week 17: May 12 - Finals Week

Presentations & Final Projects due

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