

Digital Media and Society

MRTS 3620

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Dr. Cameron Irby
Email: Cameron.Irby@unt.edu (or message through Canvas)
Office & Hours: RTFP 289, Mondays, 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM

TA Information

Rashid Shahriar
Email: RashidShahriar@my.unt.edu

Class Information

Room: RTFP 135 on Wednesdays, 2:25 PM to 5:15 PM

What You'll Be Learning

Digital media—here referring to works that are “digitized” into the 0s and 1s of binary code and thus rendered machine-readable—continues to become more accessible and ubiquitous in our day-to-day lives. This course provides an overview of development, organization, and operation of different digital media technologies, platforms, and industries. Additionally, this course analyzes how digital media shapes and is shaped by social contexts such as identity, privacy, intellectual property, and ethics.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to...

- Identify past and present discourse about the intertwining of technology and society.
- Discuss current scholarly research that critically addresses global digital cultures.
- Explain how competing stakeholders, interests, and modalities of governance influence the development, use, and regulation of digital media technologies.
- Express compelling, evidence-based opinions about digital media in an academic style.
- Create an original work that investigates a notable intersection of digital media and society.

Course Materials

No textbooks are assigned for the course, as I am all too aware of how strenuous textbooks can be for one's financial wellbeing. Instead, all assigned readings will be made available for free via Canvas. All supplemental media for this course will also be available on Canvas or in class, including my slides and other notable resources. This course does *require the use of a computer and Internet* for online assignments and for engaging with the course materials. If this may be an issue for you, please remember that you have access to the University's library network, which can provide both for you. If this requirement impacts your participation in this class, we can discuss alternatives.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty

By participating in this class, you agree to abide by all the standards of academic integrity as found in the [UNT Honor Code](#). In keeping with [UNT policy on AI](#), this course prohibits the use of large language models (LLMs) or other “AI” services to complete assignments, projects, and papers. As such, I also do not use AI services to develop any of my course materials or grade anyone’s work.

Accommodations

I endeavor to make this class accessible to every student, and I pledge to do my best to make this class fit your needs. Regardless of ability or documentation, I can provide multiple points of access to course materials and adjust content formats (e.g. increasing font size). If you need special arrangements for a documented disability, please contact the [Office of Disability Access](#), who can inform me on how best to proceed. If you would like to share pertinent medical information, request special arrangements for class seating, or need special assistance in the event of a building evacuation, please contact me within the first two weeks of class or as soon as possible.

Basic Needs & Security

If you are struggling to secure food or housing, please contact the Dean of Students for support. For immediate food assistance, visit the UNT Food Pantry. For emergency housing needs, contact the [Dean of Students Office](#) or [United Way of Denton County](#). The Student Affairs website also has links to additional [Wellbeing and Safety Services](#). As your instructor, I am ready and able to make course accommodations and assist in providing resources based on your circumstances. If you are comfortable with doing so, please let me know if and when you need help.

Instructor Availability & Response Time

As an adjunct faculty member, I do not have an established office and commute to campus on Mondays and Wednesdays. However, I host “office hours” in [Location] from 12:30pm to 2:30pm on Mondays. Feel free to drop in and chat with me face-to-face during this time. If you would like to make a virtual appointment via Teams, please contact me via email or Canvas. I also generally respond to emails within 24 business hours. If I do not answer your query within 24 hours, you are welcome to remind me, though note that I am a human being who needs sleep and a weekend, too!

Subject to Change Statement

I reserve the right to modify the course requirements and other related policies as circumstances may dictate, and with sufficient notification to all students. Even your professor can have an unanticipated emergency, and the university (or the community at large) may experience an emergency that requires changing the class schedule or requirements. Any changes will also be posted to Canvas.

Campus Resources

You will be writing constantly throughout the semester, and you may find that you want or need help revising your work. I can do my best to assist during office hours, but I have limited time. I thus encourage you to sign-up for in-person or online tutoring at the [UNT Writing Center’s website](#). Academic writing takes time to learn, and even I have to ask for help sometimes! I also highly recommend visiting the [Media Library](#), which houses the UNT Library’s non-print and audiovisual collections and [The Nest](#), an eSports and game design space.

Assignment Summaries

Attendance/Participation: 10%

As we only meet once a week, regular attendance ensures that you have thorough knowledge of the course material. However, I would rather you come to class late than not at all, so your participation in the course will be tracked through a sign-out sheet. Failing to sign out will be registered as an absence without sufficient evidence of participation.

Digital Diaries: 20% total

To facilitate our in-class discussions, you will create entries in a “digital diary” that traces your current understanding of the week’s topic and records your growing knowledge of the course materials. These responses can take the form of written text, podcasts, videos, or some other form of digital media.

Projects 1-4: 15% each

Our course is divided into four major “modules,” covering a group of related topics and associated readings. By the end of each module, you will submit a project that synthesizes our discussions and readings into an original work. You may be asked to write an argumentative essay, create a video essay, or whatever fits the module’s overall theme, so be prepared to spend some time working on these!

Final Reflection: 10%

In lieu of a traditional final, you will be tasked with looking back on your time in this class and demonstrating your grasp on the course materials through a reflective essay. This essay will draw from our readings, your Projects, and your Digital Diaries to showcase how you believe digital media has changed society, how society shapes social media, and/or how the two co-construct one another.

Grading Policy

As students, you are actively learning how to create academic work, and courses like this frequently find well-traveled students engaging with fresh faces just starting to figure out citation styles. Likewise, granular grading can lead to focusing on making work that looks “good” but lacks the critical thinking this course wants to encourage. To promote transparency in your grades and to encourage taking creative risks, all assignments will be graded along the following guidelines (may differ from project to assignment):

If you believe a grade is applied in error, you may respond with a one-page paper detailing why your grade is incorrect. I will respond as soon as possible (within one week) with a final decision. Note that re-grading does not guarantee a better grade.

Absence Policy

Numerous reasons exist for not attending class, though, ranging from other university business to having tickets for a Hatsune Miku concert. I also do not want students who are ill to feel forced to choose between their health (and the health of the class!) or their grade. If you inform me of your absence prior to the start of class and provide [sufficient evidence in accordance with UNT policy](#), you may be excused and negotiate new due dates for your assignments. In addition, **all students in my classes are granted one (1) “freebie” absence, no questions asked.** You do remain responsible for turning in all assignments by their assigned date, and further unexplained or unexcused absences will lower this grade by one letter grade each. Excessive absences (4 or more) could result in a failure to pass the course.

F - Failed to turn in anything.

D – Dissatisfactory work that does not meet set expectations.

C - Completed the assignment.

B - Completed the assignment and went **Beyond** by referencing class discussions.

A - Completed the assignment, went Beyond by referencing class discussions, and did **Amazing** by drawing citations and references from our readings.

Revision Policy and Late Work

This course features multiple projects that will significantly impact your final grade. At the same time, I am aware that life happens. Perhaps you missed a deadline due to illness or rushed to turn something in while dealing with a family emergency. In recognition of this, I offer a 72-hour grace period for all assignments wherein no penalties will be applied and work can be resubmitted without question. Following this, any late work will not be accepted without talking to me first. If you have verifiable cause (e.g. jury duty) and provide sufficient evidence, we can negotiate a new deadline.

Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Key Media	Assignments Due
Week 1: 8/19	Class Intro and Q&A	The Syllabus!	N/A
Week 2: 8/26	Remediation & Convergence	YouTube/Netflix	Digital Diary 1
Week 3: 9/2	Digital Media Literacy	The Canvas Hack	Digital Diary 2
Week 4: 9/9	Algorithms & Platforms	Google Search	Digital Diary 3
Week 5: 9/16	Learning & Education	Wikipedia	Digital Diary 4; Project 1 Due
Week 6: 9/23	Work & Labor	The Gig Economy	Digital Diary 5
Week 7: 9/30	Relationships & Romance	Dating Apps	Digital Diary 6
Week 8: 10/7	Living (Massively) Online	VRChat & MMOs	Digital Diary 7; Project 2 Due
Week 9: 10/14	Living (Life) Online	Twitch	Digital Diary 8
Week 10: 10/21	Living (Private) Online	Social Media	Digital Diary 9
Week 11: 10/28	Obsolescence	Adobe Flash	Digital Diary 10; Project 3 Due
Week 12: 11/4	Digital Preservation	Archive of Our Own	Digital Diary 11
Week 13: 11/11	The Obligatory AI Talk	ChatGPT	Digital Diary 12
Week 14: 11/18	Class Choice	???	Digital Diary 13
Week 15: 11/25	Fall Break	N/A	N/A
Week 16: 12/2	Catch-Up Week	You!	Project 4 Due
Week 17: 12/9	Finals Week	N/A	Final Reflection Due