

MRTS 3620: Digital Media and Society

Fall 2025

Wednesdays 11:00 a.m. – 1:50 p.m.

RTFP 135

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Office Hours: By appointment.

Office Location: Online

Course Description

This hybrid lecture/seminar course is a critical evaluation of the ever-evolving relationship between digital media and society. Digital media—referring explicitly to works and technologies that use the “digits” of 0 and 1 by computer processes to mediate information—continues to shape and be shaped by the people that use it to survive and thrive in our world as these technologies become more accessible and ubiquitous. Our scholarly inquiry addresses now-commonplace practices and technologies such as digital video production, social media, the Internet, and video games. Together, we will cover a range of communicative contexts (journalism, leisure, political, etc.) and perspectives on digital media and our society.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

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

Required Readings & Materials

1. 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.**
2. All supplemental media for this course will also be available on Canvas or in class, including my slides and other notable resources.
3. 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.

Assignment Details

Attendance/Participation. This 3000-level course encourages reading academic texts, examining a variety of digital media, and creating works in a scholarly manner. As this course will be a mixture of lectures and seminar discussions, your attendance is required to meet the learning objectives of the course and will be marked via a sign-out sheet. After all, I can't hold a discussion by myself, and you'll miss out on opportunities to ask questions and dig deeper into our lessons.

While there will be no pop quizzes, I call upon participants frequently to contribute their own thoughts and perspectives on each week's materials. To facilitate interesting and well-informed discussions during class, I encourage everyone to prepare for active participation by taking time to read the week's assigned readings.

Digital Diary

To facilitate our in-class discussions, you will create entries in a "digital diary" that explore the week's topic. These responses can take the form of blog posts, podcasts, TikTok videos, and the like and are designed to help you engage with the assigned readings by making further connections to authors, works, and personal experiences from outside our course.

Project #1

This project builds on the skills from your Digital Diary entries by tasking you with expanding on the discussions held in Part I of the course via the creation of an original work.

Project #2

Same as Project #1, but it will cover the material discussed in Part II of the course.

Final Project

The Final Project further expands on your use of digital tools and the research skills you've developed throughout the course to create and present a case study on a topic of your choice. To ensure that everyone has a chance to do their best work, Part III of this course is dedicated to providing resources, advice, peer review, and discussion on how best to manage your project.

Final Grade

Your final grade, as seen in the chart above, will be based on your completion and craft of your Digital Diary and your projects, as well as your continued attendance and participation in class. As such, I encourage you to read the assigned materials, be present, take detailed notes, and ask questions constantly.

Note: the point totals of all assignments should add up to 100 points. This makes calculations for your grades as simplistic as possible on my end and, I hope, on yours as well.

MRTS 3620 Assignments

Attendance/Participation	10 p
Digital Diary	20 p
Project #1	20 p
Project #2	20 p
Final Project	30 p

Course Policies

Communication

- As a professional courtesy, please address me as Dr. Irby, Dr. Cameron, or simply “Professor” in and outside of class.
- Please check the syllabus first before emailing me. Consider it my F.A.Q.
- I will often reply to emails as soon as I receive them. However, I reserve the right to respond within 48 hours to allow for a healthy work/life balance. This does not count the weekend; if you email me on Friday, expect a response from me by Tuesday at the latest. In addition, I will only respond to emails sent from your UNT email due to security procedures, so please check what email you are using before sending.
- If you have questions about assignments, please ask them at least 48 hours prior to the deadline. I may not answer you in time otherwise (because I’ll be busy grading).
- If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from your peers. Jot down their contact information in the spaces below as a reminder:

Classmate Name: _____
Classmate Contact: _____

Classmate Name: _____
Classmate Contact: _____

- Beyond simple clarification questions, I cannot discuss anyone’s grades via email; if you are concerned about your grade, talk to me before or after class, or schedule a meeting.

Attendance & Participation

- Everyone starts with ten points for attendance. Unexcused absences will cost one point.
- I will not deduct any points if you have a documented and excused absence as designated by UNT (e.g. religious holy days, active military service, official university functions, illness, pregnancy/parenting, etc.). If you contact me at least 48 hours before class with a decent reason (ex. include “My Chemical Romance is playing”), I may also excuse these.
- As a show of courtesy and respect, I grant everyone a single freebee day that will not penalize your attendance score. You may use it for whatever reason you see fit, and you do not need to request permission for it.
- Life happens. If you need a mental or physical health day, take it. Use the freebee day to catch up on sleep, food, friends, family, etc. If you’ve already used it, I’d rather you finish with a 99 in the class than run yourself ragged trying to keep a perfect score.
You will always matter more than points.
- If we are unable to attend class together due to weather or unforeseen circumstances, I will adjust the syllabus as necessary, including potential online assignments.

Late Assignments

- All assignments are due as specified in the syllabus.
- The first 24 hours after the deadline are a grace period to allow for post-submission (or Oh Sh*t) edits and technical issues. Assignments turned in after this grace period will only be accepted on a case-by-case basis following a discussion with me.
- While technical difficulties can and will happen, you are still responsible for meeting the deadlines established in this course. If you have problems and I am unavailable, ask a classmate for help, Google the issue for some troubleshooting tips, and, if all else fails, contact the UNT Canvas support desk. If the technical difficulties cannot be resolved by the end of the 24-hour grace period, we can work out a reasonable alternative for you.
- In addition, any assignments not turned in by 5 p.m. on December 12th (the last day of Finals Week) will be given an automatic 0 with no opportunity for a redo.

Academic Integrity

- Plagiarism refers to the unattributed usage of others' intellectual efforts, intentional or not. As scholars, proper attribution can be what makes or breaks our academic credibility.
- Accidental plagiarism is not uncommon for students learning how to properly cite and integrate research into their academic practices, and I will do my best to catch these and provide gentle correctives to prevent them in the future.
- In accordance to [UNT's academic integrity policy](#), if I determine that you have intentionally and egregiously plagiarized the work of others on any part of any assignment, I will inform you of my findings and give your work a 0. You may request a meeting to contest this ruling within five business days. This meeting could result in a full reversal of the ruling or an opportunity to present an alternative assignment. If the ruling remains after five business days, I will email you and cc Dr. Harry Benshoff with a description of my findings, following the Office of Academic Integrity's instructions. If UNT determines that this is not your first infraction, you may fail the course outright and could face expulsion from the university.
- Assignments submitted to Canvas may also be submitted to Turnitin, a plagiarism and AI detecting software that allows us to verify the academic integrity of your work by comparing it to other submitted works, publicly available websites, and other texts. Highlights in Turnitin do not necessarily indicate plagiarism, but they can reveal instances of bad paraphrasing, uncited text, and copy/pasting from Wikipedia.
- ChatGPT or any other generative AI "help" is not allowed, under any circumstances or to any extent, in this course. Excluding the prominent arguments about generative AI and LLMs, this is a course built around expanding your knowledge and understanding of digital media and assisting you in developing a critically informed perspective. I want to spark your curiosity and help you build skills, not [plug hallucinated answers](#) into Canvas.

UNT Policies and Resources

Respect

Everyone should show up prepared to participate in weekly discussions. Show respect by giving your peers and me your full attention, speaking clearly, and keeping distractions to a minimum. At all times within and outside the course, we will treat each other with respect. You are encouraged to challenge ideas presented in the course by other students or myself, but I will not tolerate anti-social behaviors and speech, such as harassing an individual or community based on their gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and so forth; dismissing or starting arguments “just because”; and provoking or attempting to provoke unnecessary confrontations.

All students are expected and required to abide by the [UNT Student Code of Conduct](#). Be aware that this policy is taken very seriously on our campus and that failure to abide can result in sanctions and expulsion from the University.

Chosen Names & Pronouns

Everyone will be referred to in class by their chosen name and pronouns. Everyone deserves to be known for who they are. Please be courteous as you get to know each other and forgive the occasional lapse in memory should I forget. However, anyone who flagrantly disregards an individual’s name and pronouns shows a lack of respect that will not be tolerated in this course.

Emergency Notifications

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to your UNT email account for contingency plans for covering course materials.

UNT Email

The use of a UNT email address is required for any communication related to all classroom business, including course material, discussions, grades, questions, and more. Inquiries from non-UNT or non-Canvas (connected to your UNT student account) cannot be answered due to privacy protection policies.

ODA Notifications

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the [Office of Disability Access](#) (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding specific course needs.

You may request accommodation at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided to all of your professors as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester, and you must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. See the ODA website for more information.

Seeking Help

If you are facing challenges securing food or housing and believe this may affect your performance in this course, I urge you to contact the Dean of Students for support at deanofstudents@unt.edu or 940-565-2648. The [UNT Food Pantry](#) is free for all students.

The [Student Health and Wellness Center](#) is the on-campus medical clinic for UNT students. The clinic offers treatment for injuries, illnesses, and other medical issues with convenient access to on-site laboratory testing, and x-rays. They also offer health education services to keep you healthy, in class, and on the path to graduation and professional success.

If you are struggling with mental health, an abusive relationship, trauma or PTSD, or other personal challenges that are negatively affecting your studies, contact the [UNT Counseling Center](#) at 940-565-2741 or the CARE team at 940-565-4373. [Denton County Friends of the Family](#) has a 24-hour crisis hotline for anyone experiencing relationship violence or abuse (940-383-7273). [Cumberland Counseling & Family Services](#) offers affordable/sliding scale counseling services to individuals, couples, and families (940-382-5112).

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. [Survivor Advocacy](#) can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648.

Student Life

Use the resources available to you! These include our R1-level libraries as well as numerous resources provided by the Division of Student Affairs. They have programs to enhance and support the experiences of students including the [Eagle Engagement Center](#), [Student Veterans' Affairs](#), and numerous [Student Organizations](#) that host regular events throughout the semester.

One Last Thing

This syllabus is a living document, and as such the information presented can and will change as necessary for our class to provide an exemplary educational experience. As the instructor of the course, I reserve the right to modify this document at my discretion. If you have any questions or suggestions pertaining to the syllabus, please talk to me or email me: Cameron.Irby@UNT.edu.

Tentative Schedule	
WEEK	Class Topic & Readings
Week 1: Aug 20	Syllabus Reading & Class Introductions <i>Assignment Start: Digital Diary</i>
Part 1: Into the Digital World	
Week 2: Aug 27	The Digital Shift <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Henry Jenkins, "Introduction: 'Worship at the Altar of Convergence'" Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin, "Introduction: The Double Logic of Remediation"
Week 3: Sep 3	Video Gone Digital <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheila Murphy, "From Tube to a 'Series of Tubes'" T.L. Taylor, "Networked Broadcasting"
Week 4: Sep 10	Society Online <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alice Marwick and danah boyd, "Networked privacy: How teenagers negotiate context in social media" Susanna Paasonen, "A Midsummer's Bonfire: Affective Intensities of Online Debate" Jessica Sage Rauchberg, "#Shadowbanned: Queer, Trans, and Disabled Creator Responses to Algorithmic Oppression on TikTok" <i>Assignment Start: Project #1</i>
Week 5: Sep 17	Who's Getting Played? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carly Kocurek, "The Microcosmic Arcade" Bryan Gardiner, "How Gamification Took Over the World" Janet H. Murray, "The Metaverse & Other Digital Delusions"
Week 6: Sep 24	If It's Free, You're the Product <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor" Helen Nissenbaum, "Keeping Track and Watching over Us"
Week 7: Oct 1	Project #1 Due (NO CLASS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due by 2 p.m. on Oct 1st. Details via Canvas

Part 2: Digital Deep Dive	
Week 8: Oct 8	<p>Case Study: Internet Archive VS Ao3 & <i>Rogue Archives</i> by Abigail De Kosnik</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Ch.1: Memory Machine Myth • Ch.3: Queer and Feminist Archival Cultures
Week 9: Oct 15	<p>Case Study: <i>World of Warcraft & My Life as a Night Elf Priest</i> by Bonnie Nardi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prologue • Ch.1: What is <i>World of Warcraft</i> and Who Plays It? • Ch.4: A New Medium • Ch.9: Culture: <i>WoW</i> in China... and North America
Week 10: Oct 22	<p>Case Study: Google & <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> by Safiya Umoja Noble</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch.1: A Society Searching • Ch.2: Searching for Black Girls • Ch.4: Searching for Protections from Search Engines <p><i>Assignment Start: Project #2</i></p>
Week 11: Oct 29	<p>Case Study: Documentary Media & <i>Where Truth Lies</i> by Kris Fallon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch.1: Seeing in the Dark • Ch.3: Networked Audiences • Ch.4: “States of Exception”
Week 12: Nov 5	<p>Case Study: Class’s Choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ??? • ??? • ???
Week 13: Nov 12	<p>Project #2 Due (NO CLASS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due by 2 p.m. on Nov 5th. • Details via Canvas.

Part 3: Final Project	
Week 14: Nov 19	Final Project Overview & Brainstorming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring whatever supplies you need to read, work, and research.
Week 15: Nov 26	Fall Break (NO CLASS)
Week 16: Dec 3	Project Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your works-in-progress with peers and get feedback!
Week 17: Dec 10	Final Project (NO CLASS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due by 2 p.m. on Dec 10th. • Details via Canvas.