AMST328U Perspectives on Identity & Culture

Internet and Social Media Cultures: An Exploration of Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality?

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Office Hours: Online by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW:

So much of our everyday lives are played out in online spaces and through mobile phones. Theorists of new media call this constant and everyday use of the internet a state of ubiquitous computing or pervasive computing. This course will be an examination of the overlapping dimensions of difference and identity in internet and social media cultures focusing on sites such as YouTube videos, internet communities, mobile apps, and the mobile internet. We will focus on sites that are often labeled as “virtual” and “digital” to examine how, why, and to what end individuals and communities (mis)use them in their everyday lives; keeping in mind that both the virtual and the digital are always connected to and must be studied through the embodied lenses of race, class, gender, and sexuality. This course frames internet and social media cultures, whether conceived of as peoples’ systems of shared meanings, attitudes, and values or as the texts and practices of everyday life, as vital to unpacking and understanding how power, inequality, and resistance work in relation to what we watch, download, and stream everyday. Contemporary forms of internet and social media cultures can reveal much about social and cultural tensions in and across time. In other words people shape and negotiate cultural messages and values, economic activity, institutions, and the social relationships that underlay local, national, and international communities through the ways they use, play, ignore, and create in online spaces. In this way the internet and social media cultures can always be thought of as sites of cultural production and meaning making.

Course Structure.
This is a summer course and as such it will be fast paced and exciting. Our class meets over a six-week period this summer from Tuesday May 28th to Sunday July 7th. Because we do not meet in person in a classroom, students will complete their work for the course online through our Canvas course site. Students will experience and study contemporary
internet and social media cultures by reading fiction and scholarly works, watching films, listening to music, and constructing critical and thoughtful posts and responses to our Canvas site (both visual and written) each week. Sustained and critical engagement with the themes and texts for this course are vital.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Demonstrate understanding of critical concepts to the study of contemporary and emerging forms of internet and social media cultures.
- Demonstrate understanding of the methods, theories, and sources used by scholars of internet and social media cultures.
- Demonstrate critical thinking in the evaluation of sources and arguments in the study of internet and social media cultures.
- Identify, assess, and communicate self-reflexively your own values, beliefs, and practices regarding contemporary forms of internet and social media cultures within the terms of class discussions, posts, and written arguments.
- Complete a research project/paper on an approved topic within contemporary internet and social media cultures, using a variety of sources.
- Formulate a thesis related to a specific topic in the study of contemporary popular internet and social media cultures and support the thesis with appropriate evidence and argumentation.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Articles, Chapters, Films, and Music: There is one required texts for this course:

1.) *Moxyland*


All other films, articles, chapters, and hyperlinks will be provided on our classes’ Canvas site. **Note:** because this is an online course be sure to develop a system that will allow you to refer to main points and quotes from the readings and various texts we explore so you can be successful in writing critical posts and participating in online class discussions with your classmates and I.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES:

**Keep Up with the Course Readings.**

The readings are the foundation of this course. Our classroom discussions, midterm exam, written assignment and final project will all be based on the readings, so if you want to do well in the course, it is crucial that you keep up with the readings.

**When Online be Prepared.**

Readings and assignments are to be completed by the designated date and time. I will not be accepting late assignment for credit.

**Maintain a Respectful Classroom Environment.**
In this class, we will discuss issues dealing with race, gender, sexuality and other sensitive topics. It is important to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable to voice their critical ideas and thoughts about the subjects and themes we are exploring. Mean-spirited and disrespectful remarks (or remarks that are not grounded in critical thinking and show a sustained engagement with course materials) made either to me, the instructor, or other students will not be tolerated. You are entitled to free speech and expression, and I ask you to recognize that everyone has those rights as well.

**Digital Communication.**
Because this is an online class it is important to be clear about communicating through writing on the Canvas site. You are not going to write the same way in communication with the instructor as you would on Facebook or through text messages or instant messages to friends. When composing a blog post, be sure to write at a college level, draw evidence from the texts, and communicate your ideas clearly to your intended audience with the understanding that reading a response is different from hearing it explained in person.

**Turn in Assignments on Time.**
You are required to turn in each assignment at the designated date and time it is due per the syllabus. If you are not able to post, upload, or email your response at the designated time then you need to arrange to get it emailed to me ahead of time. If you do not submit an assignment on time, I will not accept it late.

**Contesting a Grade.**
If a student wishes to contest a grade of an assignment they may contact the instructor within 48 hours of the time an assignment is graded with a thoughtful and respectful message or email through the Canvas site.

**Re-Writes.**
I always welcome opportunities for students to rewrite their work. Request for a rewrite must also be made within 48-hours time frame.

**If You Need Help…Ask!**
I encourage students to ask me questions about the course content. Because this is an online course you are welcome to contact me to have a one-on-one chat or video chat to discuss struggles you may be having or for clarification of ideas and themes we may be covering. I am here to help, so please do not hesitate to ask.

**Students With Disabilities.**
If you have registered a learning or physical disability with UMD’s Disability Support Services (http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/), please tell me by Wednesday May 29, 2013 at midnight, so we can make suitable accommodations.

**Excused Absences.**
Excused absences include illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of University Authorities, and compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control.
For every medically necessary absence from class, you should make a reasonable effort to notify me in advance of the class. At the next class period, you or a medical professional must email me identifying the date of and reason for the absence acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate.

If you are absent on a day when a test is scheduled, a paper is due, or any other major graded event occurs, you should notify me in advance, and upon returning to the course, bring documentation of the illness, signed by a health care professional.

**Academic Integrity.**
Violations of expected academic conduct include plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, dishonesty in examinations (in-class or take-home), dishonesty in papers, work done for one course submitted to another, deliberate falsification of data, interference with other students’ work, and copyright violations. These violations are all defined in the University of Maryland’s Honor Code (http://www.jpo.umd.edu/aca/honorpledge.html). Please familiarize yourself with entirety of this code if you have not already.

When in doubt regarding appropriate academic conduct, including scholarly citations and other issues, please consult me rather than waiting for a problem to develop.

“The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html.”

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **Online Participation in Canvas 100 Points Possible:**
   - **In-Class Participation:** Regular participation and contributions are expected in each week through posting to our *Moxyland Discussion Thread* on Canvas. 50 points possible
   - **Reading Quizzes:** I will give 6 reading quizzes over the summer semester. You will have a limited amount of time to complete the quizzes. These quizzes will help assess completion of reading assignments and allow me to see how you are working with the material we are covering. 50 points possible

2. **Research Project 50 points possible:** This research project will be worked on over the course of the summer semester. In this project you will formulate a thesis related to a specific topic covered in *Moxyland* and one of the readings we have covered in class, supported with appropriate evidence and argumentation. To reach a higher level of analysis in your research project you will be working on it in a series of sections. Each section will be graded, evaluated, and count toward the overall grade for the project. The research project will be completed in the following sections (note: no late assignments will be accepted and
you must complete each section before continuing on to the section even if you are not getting credit for it due to a late turn in).

- **Section One:** For this section of the project you must pick a focus from topics we are going to explore from internet and social media cultures to put in conversation with one of the topics we will discuss in *Moxyland*, and in writing tell me in a paragraph or two why you want to study it. You must also write and turn in the thesis statement for your paper as well as giving me an annotated bibliography of 4 sources you plan on using in your paper using Chicago Notes Style (note: one source must be an article I have assigned in the course documents and your other sources must be scholarly articles or books). This means that Wikipedia and websites are not valid sources for this section of the paper. 10 points possible

- **Section Two:** For this portion of the paper you will need to turn in the introduction of the paper with a thorough outline of the rest of your research paper. A thorough outline will show me how you plan to argue the rest of the paper, show me the sources that you plan on using and where, and hint at how you plan on concluding the paper. 10 points possible

- **Section Three:** For this section of the paper you will need to turn in a rough draft of the paper. The rough draft should be well developed at this point. You must also set up a meeting with me on Canvas to discuss your paper. I would like to meet by talking via video chat in canvas, but I understand that technology limitations may hinder that, so an online live voice chat is next preferable, and my last choice is to conduct this via chat. Our meetings will most likely last 15 to 20 minutes and you must let me know ahead of time when you plan on meeting with me. 20 points possible

- **Section Four:** For this section of the paper you will submit your final draft for grading. The final draft should be polished, have no grammar or punctuation errors, have a clear thesis in the introduction, and have properly cited sources and formatting. 10 points possible

You will have plenty of time to complete this project, but you should be generous with your time and treat it with the seriousness that you would place on a final exam. This project is taking the place of the final for this class; as such it will be graded and taken with the utmost seriousness by your fellow classmates and I.

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**COURSE GRADING:**
Your final grade will reflect your accumulation of X amount of points out of XXX points possible. The following scale will designate your final grade:

- **A+** 100%-97%
- **A** 96.9%-93%
- **A-** 92.9%-90%
- **B+** 89.9%-87%
- **B** 86.9%-83%
B- 82.9%-80%
C+ 79.9%-77%
C 76.9%-73%
C- 72.9%-70%
D 69.9-60%
F 59.9% and below

An A-, A, or A+ indicates excellent mastery of the subject and outstanding scholarship.
A B-, B, or B+ indicates good mastery of the subject and good scholarship.
A C-, C, or C+ indicates satisfactory mastery of the subject and average expected achievement.
A D indicates borderline comprehension of the subject and marginal performance.
An F indicates failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance.

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**COURSE CALENDAR**
(The readings here are subject to change)

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<th>Week 1 – Tuesday May 28th to Friday May 31st</th>
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Sun. July 7: Last Official Day of the Course