Digital Culture
Instructor: Professor David Arditi

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office Hours	By appointment	Web Page	Course content: http://blog.uta.edu/digitaldialectic

Description

Idealist thinking marked the development of the Internet and digital technologies, especially in the 1990s. Writers, both academic and popular, imagined a more democratic world where information would be unrestricted, communication would erase space, and technologies would free our time. In many ways, rhetoric about the Internet and other digital technologies parallel the uncritical hope many found in the technological inventions of the scientific revolution and philosophical edicts of the Enlightenment. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer demonstrate that the exact developments in science and technology heralded by enlightenment thinkers as elevating freedom actually resulted in greater oppression of the masses.

This course will look at the contradictions inherent in digital technologies and big data. Students will critically examine the rhetoric surrounding digital technologies. Ultimately, students will analyze questions about democracy, freedom, and equality.

Student Learning Outcomes for Course

Students will demonstrate the ability to:
- Identify the contradictions of digital technologies.
- Understand how meaning is created about digital technologies.
- Critique the way that power operates with digital media.
- Distinguish the social media from mass media.
- Examine issues of privacy on digital networks.
- Situate social media within the broader picture of global capitalism.

Textbook and Other Course Materials Requirements

Books for purchase:

Arditi, David and Jennifer Miller, eds. 2019. *The Dialectic of Digital Culture*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Grading Policy

The following scale will be applied to both individual assignments and to the course grade as a whole:

A= 90-100 points. An "A" reflects consistent excellence in the course, strong initiative, and the student's commitment to his or her own learning and success.
B=80-89 points. A "B" reflects work that is consistently above the minimum.
C=70-79 points. A "C" reflects minimum proficiency in the main objectives of the course.
D=60-69 points. A "D" reflects the fact that a student has not adequately engaged with the material of the class or has not given the instructor a sufficient basis for judgment because of unexcused failure to complete course work.
F=<60 points. A failing grade will typically reflect missed assignments, academic honesty violations, and/or a lack of engagement with the course.

Grading rubrics will be made available for each assignment and will be posted in electronic form on the Blackboard page for each assignment. Students should consider the rubrics as guidelines for the expectations of the assignment and be aware that their grade will depend on fulfilling the criteria set forward in the rubric.

The student's grade for the course will be based on the following:

Individual	Points
Final Essay – the final paper will be a 10-12 page research paper that focuses on your engagements with the texts from the semester.	30
Midterm Paper	20
Digital Technology Critique	20
In-class participation exercises, attendance, etc.	30
Total	**100**

Late Work Policy
- All due dates on the syllabus are firm and are defined to the minute.
- **Late work will not be accepted**
  Exceptions may be made when students present documentation of an unforeseeable, significant, and unavoidable situation that prevented their completion of the assignment on time.

The Instructor reserves the right to modify assignments with due notice.

COURSE CALENDAR

*Note – Reading assignments should be done by the day that they are listed on the syllabus

Week 1
Social Construction of Media
- Introductions
- "The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts" – Trevor Pinch and Wiebe Bijker
- Marshall McLuhan – "The Medium is the Message" (Blackboard)

Week 2
Dialectics of Digital Technology
- Dialectic of Enlightenment (Excerpts) – Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno
- "Introduction: The Logic of Digital Culture" – Arditi and Miller in *The Dialectic of Digital Culture* (*DDC*)

Week 3
Power in the Digital Era
- "Digital Hegemony: Net Neutrality, The Value Gap and Corporate Interests" – David Arditi in *DDC*
- "Facebook study says it's mainly your fault–not theirs–that you read things you already agree with" http://wapo.st/1JSUoQJ
- "Capitalism and the Information Age: The Political Economy of the Global Communication Revolution." (Robert W. McChesney, Ellen Meiksins Wood & John Bellamy Foster, editors.) New York: *Monthly Review Press*.

Week 4
Power in the Digital Era
- "Dialectics of Degradation and Datafication: The Cultural Politics of Ecological Footprints in Earth System Governance" – Timothy W. Luke in *DDC*
- "About the Project" – Earth System Governance https://www.earthsystemgovernance.org/about-the-project/

Week 5
Power in the Digital Era
- "Government vs. Corporate Surveillance: Privacy Concerns in the Digital World" – Brian Connor and Long Doan in *DDC*
- Hello (hackable) Barbie http://wpo.st/GFru0
- How Apple is trying to protect your privacy as its products get more personal http://wapo.st/1MDaMnz
- Companies know where you went online. Now, they can follow you around in real life. http://wapo.st/1z9B6NV

Week 6
Politics in the Digital Era
- "Digital Culture, Media Spectacle, and the Ascension of Donald J. Trump" – Douglas Kellner in *DDC*
- Andrejevic, M. (2015). Personal Data: Blind Spot of the "Affective Law of Value*"?. The Information Society,* 31(1), 5-12.

Week 7
Politics in the Digital Era
- "The Role of Memes in Politics" https://www.brownpoliticalreview.org/2016/03/role-memes-politics/

- "The Mainstreaming of Political Memes Online"
  https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/09/technology/political-memes-go-mainstream.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=DD36FFD1ADE46D63F6FBFF4F173295AA&gwt=pay

Week 8
Politics in the Digital Era
- "Queering the Straight World?: Mommy Blogs, Queer Kids, and the Limits of Digital Advocacy" – Jennifer Miller in *DDC*
- Lori Duron – RaisingMyRainbow.com

Week 9
Politics in the Digital Era
- The (Digital) Future is Female: Between Individuality and Collectivity in Online Feminist Practices" – Ariella Horwitz and Lisa Daily in *DDC*
- #MeToo Movement - https://metoomvmt.org/

Midterm Paper Due

Week 10
Culture in the Digital Era
- "On the Cultural Power of the 'Mariana's Web' Meme" – Robert W. Gehl in *DDC*
- David Kushner - The Darknet: Is the Government Destroying 'the Wild West of the Internet?'

Week 11
Culture in the Digital Era
- "Photography, Bibliography, Digitality, Paradox" – Timothy Morris in *DDC*
- Excerpts from Jodi Dean's *Blog Theory*

Week 12
Culture in the Digital Era
- "The New Old: Vinyl Records and Digital Media" – Michael Palm in *DDC*
- "Vinyl Records Rise with the Hipster Movement"-
  http://www.theshorthorn.com/life_and_entertainment/vinyl-record-sales-rise-with-hipster-movement/article_ce46f5bc-f61d-11e6-a61a-07ce5e96c20e.html

Week 13
Being Human in the Digital Era
- "Digitized Music and the Aesthetic Experience of Difference" – Nancy Weiss Hanrahan in *DDC*

Week 14
Being Human in the Digital Era

- "Keeping Commerce Human? Contradictions of Digital Sharing Economy Platforms" – Michele Krugh in *DDC*
- "Here's What It's Really Like to Make a Living on Etsy" - https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-make-money-etsy-secrets_n_5be9f95ee4b0caeec2bc9e91

Week 15
Being Human in the Digital Era
- "From the Wild West to Silicon Valley: Shifting Models of Reproductive Medicine in North America" – Amy Speier in *DDC*
- **Digital Technology Critique Due**

Exam Week
FINAL ESSAY DUE

"As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course." –David Arditi