**CUST-MDST 1535H Introduction to Media Studies**

Winter 2022 | Trent University

**Course Description**

Media is everywhere. It shapes our personal relationships and professional lives and constructs our identities. In recent years, academics have cobbled together relevant methods and theories in the hopes of better understanding contemporary media culture. Some have chosen to examine media through a critical engagement with experiences. Our course focuses on applying approaches derived from experience as a way of coming to terms with the complex media environments in which we live. The selected readings and weekly topics directly address your experience, while course assignments invite you to develop critical perspectives on widespread social, cultural, and political practices involving media.

**Class schedule**

Our weekly lecture is scheduled on Fridays 10:00-11:50am.

Our weekly tutorial sessions are scheduled at various times. Please adhere to the tutorial you’ve been assigned.

W01: Tuesday 6pm: Skyler Mlotek-Marion  
W02: Monday 1pm: Sarah Rayner

W03: Monday 12pm: Sarah Rayner

W04: Monday 11am: Swati Mehta   
W05: Tuesday 5pm: Skyler Mlotek-Marion  
W06: Monday 10am: Alexey Zelenskiy  
W07: Monday 9am: Alexey Zelenskiy  
W08: Tuesday 4pm: Swati Mehta   
W09: Friday 12pm: Kees Schuller  
W10: Friday 1pm: Kees Schuller

Email addresses:

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Office hours for the professor are by appointment. Send an email directly to schedule a meeting. Please refer to the following link on etiquette for emailing your professor: <https://marktomforde.com/academic/undergraduates/Email-Etiquette.html>

**Reading materials**

There is a book for this course: McLuhan, M. *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. London: Bantam, 1967. You may obtain a copy of this textbook at the Trent Bookstore. You may also find this book available at major booksellers online, and second-hand, where possible. Alternatively, you can find this book for free online.

Although reading this book is essential, most required readings are available for free through Blackboard, or through links online, as indicated in the Reading Schedule. You are asked to have all material read before your weekly lecture and tutorial. Readings will be the main subject of our conversations.

**Learning Objectives**

• Develop critical perspectives on digital media, including social media.

• Evaluate how new media informs perceptions of time, space, and society.

• Enhance your writing skills by providing summaries and convincing arguments.

• Test your speaking and presentation skills.

**Evaluation criteria**

**Analytical paper**

Due date: Feb 4

Weight: 15%

In this assignment, you are asked to develop a short analytical paper focusing on one aspect of Marshall McLuhan’s book, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. Choose one of the following themes: 1) Global village, 2) Print culture, 3) Media infrastructure, 4) Sensorium/the body.

Scour the book for as many references, direct or indirect, of your chosen theme, and have a look at the other materials that we cover in the first few weeks of lecture, too. Critically examine these references, and situate them in relation to YOUR understanding of McLuhan’s work, including (but not limited to) his motives, the critical reception of his ideas, and any specific outcomes of his work that you think are relevant. In addition, your paper should find considered points in which you can extend your dialogue to include issues in the present. How does your analysis reflect a contemporary concern?

This assignment should be 1,000 words, not including bibliographic information. The paper must adhere to a method of referencing (eg. MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). The method that you choose doesn’t matter, but please be consistent throughout. Please note as well that most referencing styles include conventions for in-text citations, bibliography, and formatting. Please use .docx format when uploading to Blackboard.

You will receive extensive feedback on these assignments. The reason is because this paper is an incubator for learning about your unique style of writing, and it provides us the best opportunity to identify any red flags that need to be addressed right away. If you receive a lot of feedback on your work, don’t despair, it’s part of the process!

**2. Doing things with social media!**

Due dates: Mar 4

Weight: 10%

In this assignment, you will pitch an idea for engaging with social media. This can be \*any\* idea under the sun: a political intervention, a cool new app, a platform solution, a business model, a hack. Let your imagination run wild. Just make sure that your idea is A) clearly communicated and carefully written, B) linked with one of the critical approaches explored in Weeks 4, 5 or 6. In other words, you must make a direct reference to at least one of the readings assigned during these weeks, incorporating them into your overall proposal. Do not tack on a reference at the end; rather, demonstrate your thorough knowledge of the material you have cited, including the critical approach it engages. The pitch must be 500 words (750 maximum), not including bibliographic information. Basically, it should be a full page, single spaced.

**3. Argumentation Paper**

Due date: Mar 25

Weight: 25%

In this assignment, you are asked to develop a strong, provable argument in a medium-length paper that engages material either from Weeks 7, 8, or 9. Anchor your paper in a specific event, topic, theme, individual, or phenomenon. Take a position on it, and then use evidence from the course reading material to support your argument. Demonstrate your thorough knowledge of the material by skillfully positioning it in relation to your own ideas. This is not a research paper, but you may draw from secondary source material as needed. This paper should be around 1,500 words (2,000 maximum), not including bibliographical material. The paper must adhere to a method of referencing (eg. MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). The method that you choose doesn’t matter, but please be consistent throughout. Please note as well that most referencing styles include conventions for in-text citations, bibliography, and formatting. Please use .docx format when uploading to Blackboard.

**4. Final Exam**

Due date: Exam period

Weight: 35%

A final exam will be held during the Exam Period. *Students are expected to be available during this period*. The content will be based mainly on required course readings, but also on lectures, discussions, forum contributions, etc. It will include two (2) sections: i) multiple choice) questions, and ii) essay questions. The exam will be 2 hours in length. More details will be provided closer to the end of term.

**5. Participation**

Due date: Ongoing

Weight: 15%

We expect you to be present both in lectures and tutorials, but we also expect you to join in the conversations to the best of your ability. While there are opportunities to speak in lecture, the bulk of this grade will be earned in tutorials. If you have questions or concerns going forward, please let me know as soon as possible. You will receive a mid-term evaluation for this assignment prior to the drop date.

**Policies**

**Academic misconduct:**

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from failure on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University’s *Academic Integrity Policy*. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent’s Academic Integrity website to learn more: [www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity).

**Late policy:**

Students will have a grace period of 2 days to submit late assignments, followed by a penalty of 2% per day. Extensions must be negotiated beforehand. Further restrictions may be imposed by your tutorial leaders.

**Schedule and Readings**

**MODULE 1: MEDIA ECOLOGIES**

**Week 1: Introduction: What is media studies?**

Jan. 14

Required reading:

Misri, A. “This is the Internet We Were Promised.” *The Walrus*. 2020. <https://thewalrus.ca/this-is-the-internet-we-were-promised/>

Media (in class):

Hall, S. “The Founding of Cultural Studies,” video. (Excerpt)

Petersen, C. *Viral Aesthetics: Before and After COVID-19.* 2020, video: <https://vimeo.com/427389635>

**Week 2: Media ecologies 1: Sensorium/the body & print culture**

Jan. 21

Required reading:

McLuhan, M. *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. London: Bantam, 1967. *(Start reading)*.

Media (in class):

McMahon, K. and Sobelman, D. *McLuhan’s Wake*. 2002, video. (Excerpts)

**Week 3: Media ecologies 2: ‘Global village’ & media infrastructure**

Jan. 28

Required reading:

McLuhan, M. *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. London: Bantam, 1967. *(Finish reading)*.

**MODULE 2: METHODS OF MEANING**

**Week 4: Being online: How we read**

Feb. 4

Required reading:

Hayles, N. K. “How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine.” *ADE Bulletin*, No. 150, 2010, pp. 62-78. <https://goo.gl/6hPpEl>

Turkle, S. “Growing Up Tethered.” *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other*. New York: Basic Books, 2011, pp. 171-186. <https://goo.gl/kqZIHc>

In class:

McCulloch, G. *Because Internet: Understanding the New Rules of Language* (video excerpt).

**Week 5: Signs, images & memes: Reading through visual culture**

Feb. 11

Required reading:

Berger, J. et. al., *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books, 1972, pp. 7-34. (Blackboard)

Giffen, E.M. “Semiotics of Roland Barthes,” *A First Look at Communication Theory*, 8th ed., New York: McGraw Hill, 2012, pp. 332-343. (Blackboard)

Recommended:

Cady Lang, “How the ‘Karen Meme’ Confronts the Violent History of White Womanhood.” *Time*, 2020: <https://time.com/5857023/karen-meme-history-meaning/>

**Week 6: Being-*with* online: Audiences then and now**

Feb. 18

Required:

Hall, S. “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse,” University of Birmingham, 1973, n. pag. (Blackboard)

Croteau, D. R. and Hoynes, W. D. “Active Audiences and the Construction of Meaning.” London: SAGE, 2014, pp. 260-293. (Blackboard)

Horning, R. “How TikTok Turns Status Games into Spectator Sports.” *Frieze*, 2020. <https://frieze.com/article/how-tiktok-turns-status-games-spectator-sports>

**READING BREAK**

**Feb. 21-25**

**MODULE 3: POLITICS AND PARTICIPATION**

**Week 7: Politics and participation**

Mar. 4

Required reading:

Pickard, V. “Media and Politics in the Age of Trump.” *Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2016, n. pag. <http://origins.osu.edu/article/media-and-politics-age-trump>

Usher, N. “Why Spreadable Doesn’t Equal Viral: A Conversation with Henry Jenkins.” *NiemanLab*, 2010.<https://goo.gl/lfI6Cx>

Wark, M. “Agony (On *the Cave*),” *Gamer Theory*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, n. pag. (Blackboard)

**Week 8: Tech, labour, supply chain**

Mar. 11

Required reading:

Klein, N. “Screen New Deal: A High Tech Coronavirus Dystopia.” *The Intercept*, 2020. <https://theintercept.com/2020/05/08/andrew-cuomo-eric-schmidt-coronavirus-tech-shock-doctrine/>

Pupo, M. “Animal House.” *Toronto Life*, 2018. <https://torontolife.com/tech/truth-tech-insider-got/>

Media (in class):

Berardi, F. “After the Future” (video).

*Silicon Valley* (television).

**Week 9: Privacy, community, ideology**

Mar. 18

Required reading:

Chun, W. H. K. “The Leakiness of Friends, or Think Different Like Me.” *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017. pp. 103-128. (Blackboard)

**MODULE 4: TECHNOLOGY, EMBODIMENT, RESISTANCE**

**Week 10: Algorithms, automation, AI**

Mar. 25

Required reading:

Seaver, N. “Knowing algorithms.” *Media in Transition 8*, 2014, n. pag. <https://goo.gl/bz1T3T>

Warwick, K. “The Philosophy of AI.” *Artificial Intelligence: The Basics*. New York: Routledge, pp. 60-88. (Blackboard)

Media (in class):

Crawford, K. *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. (video interview)

**Week 11: Technology, embodiment, resistance 1: Cyborg**

Apr. 1

Required reading:

Haraway, D. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.” *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 149-181 (*Read at least the first 5 pages*). (Blackboard)

Mann, S. and Niedzviecki, H. “The Right to Think.” *Cyborg: Digital Destiny and Human Possibility in the Age of the Wearable Computer*. Toronto, Doubleday, 2001, pp. 215-240.(Blackboard)

Media (in class):

Lynch, P. *Cyberman*, 2001. (video)

**Week 12: Technology, embodiment, resistance 2: Spatial media**

Apr. 8

Required reading:

de Souza e Silva, A. and Gordon, E. “Introduction.” *Net Locality: Why Location Matters in a Networked World*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, pp. 1-15.

(Blackboard)

Paul Kingsbury, “Walter Benjamin’s Dionysian Adventures on Google Earth.” *Geoforum*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2009, pp. 502-513: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0016718508001735>

Recommended:

Katherine Cross, “Augmented Reality games like Pokémon Go need a code of ethics—now.” *Wired*, 2016. <https://goo.gl/3f3E92>