

INTRODUCING NEW MEDIA

Dr. Elizabeth Swanstrom  
ENGLISH 48A, Spring 2009

Original URL: <http://introducingnewmedia.wordpress.com>

*Description*

The past decade has seen an enormous surge in scholarship devoted to the study of “New Media” within the humanities, and this course offers an orientation to the field. Throughout “Introducing (New) Media” we will consider important theoretical frameworks for understanding the manner in which digital technology relates to cultural production, aesthetic expression, and prior media forms. Throughout the course we will address the following broad set of questions: How does computer technology contribute to the creation and dissemination of literary works? What happens to categories such as “author,” “producer,” “product,” “reader,” and “consumer” in light of works that are generated collectively on line? What happens to the concept of an “original” in a medium that appears to afford perfect and swift reproducibility? How are ideas about identity, race, ethnicity, gender, and class challenged, deferred, and/or re-inscribed in digital works? What, if anything at all, distinguishes “new” media from its analog predecessors—or can we view it more fruitfully as one component within a diverse “media ecology”?

*Expectations*

Careful reading, active participation in class discussions, thoughtful contributions to the online forum, quality responses and presentations. In other words: Come to class, do your work, be prepared, be original, be courteous, be critical, be kind, be on time.

*Grading*

20%: Participation (contributions to discussions, class presentations, online colloquy, general preparedness)

20% Response Papers, Discussion Questions, Quizzes

20% Midterm Paper (take home)

20% Presentation and production of a “Media Map”

20% Final Paper (includes proposal)

*Policies*

Late work will be penalized a full letter grade for each day past due. Scheduling conflicts do arise, so you are welcome to turn in one late paper, no questions asked, within three days of the original deadline. This does not apply for the final project or paper. Please take advantage of my office hours or make an appointment to discuss your ideas for your papers, projects, and general progress—or just to chat.

*Required Texts*

William Gibson. Pattern Recognition.

N. Katherine Hayles. Writing Machines.

Henry Jenkins. Convergence Culture.

Marshall McLuhan. The Medium Is the Massage.

Salvador Plascencia. The People of Paper.

Misc. handouts, provided by Instructor.

Misc. readings, linked from the course website: print these out and bring them to class.

Schedule of Readings, Discussions, Events, Etc.

Note that this schedule will evolve as we make our way through the semester.

Week 14

Monday, April 27

presentations: Emily (game/ARG), Dave (42 Entertainment/ARG)

Homework—work on final paper

Wednesday, April 29 LAST DAY OF CLASS

April 30th, Boston. [“Joel Fights Back”: SONY BMG v. Joel Tennenbaum. Scheduled hearing.](#)

Week 15—No Classes

Final Paper, 8-10 pages, due in my mailbox on Friday, May 8, by 5 p.m. A hard copy is required.

COMPLETED

Week 1

Wednesday, January 14

Introductions

HOMEWORK: read and print Plato's [Phaedrus](#) and bring to class on Tuesday. Read McLuhan's *The Medium Is the Message* and bring to class on Tuesday. Prepare a discussion question for each text. Start thinking about which medium you'd like to research for your presentation / media map. Note that *The Medium Is the Message* should be available for purchase at the bookstore. If they are sold out, you can take a look at [this excerpt](#) until the book comes in.

Week 2

Tuesday, January 20

HOMEWORK:

1. read the Introduction of Jenkins' *Media Convergence* for Wednesday. Prepare a discussion question.
2. Contribute your annotation to the *Phaedrus* (go to <http://thephaedrus.wordpress.com/> and follow the instructions). Due before class on Monday.

Wednesday, January 21

HOMEWORK: read chapters 1, 2, 3, 7 of *Writing Machines* for Monday. Bring reading to class. Prepare a discussion question. Annotation to *The Phaedrus* due Monday.

Thursday, January 22

Special Event: Lisa Gitelman Lecture, "Welcome to the Bubble Chamber"; 5:00 p.m., LOWN 301

## Week 3

Monday, January 26

HOMEWORK: (due Wednesday)

Review Hayles' Writing Machines.

Read [Kafka's "In the Penal Colony"](#) for Wednesday

Read [Twain's "The First Writing Machines"](#) for Wednesday

Read [Butler's "Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions"](#) for Wednesday

Write up a discussion question or a series of questions that engages with the four texts above (1 page, typed, single space). Excellent questions will engage directly with the text via quotation & commentary and draw upon your own interests, expertise, and experience; most important, however, they will foster discussion.

Wednesday, January 28

Homework for Monday:

1. Proposals due
2. Read two short stories by Jorge Luis Borges: ["The Library of Babel"](#); ["The Aleph"](#)

## Week 4

Monday, February 2- Proposals due

Homework: Read [Lev Manovich's "Principles of New Media."](#)

Wednesday, February 4—[Special Debate between St. John's University and the University of Vermont this evening at 8 p.m. in Second Life. The topic: should universities limit tenure?](#)

Homework for Monday: Read the first 10 chapters of Pattern Recognition.

Prepare a discussion q.

## Week 5

Monday, February 9

Homework for Wednesday: Read through chapter 20 of Pattern Recognition. [Prepare a written discussion question and post it here by noon on Wednesday.](#) There is no need to turn in a hard copy.

Wednesday, February 11

Homework for the 23rd. Finish Pattern Recognition. Read [Jean Baudrillard's "The Precession of Simulacra."](#) Work on First Graded Response Paper. Topic: Pattern Recognition. Assignment: Analyze Pattern Recognition in relation to any one of the media theories we have discussed and read for class. 3-5 pages. You are welcome to expand upon the discussion question you posted on the course web site. This paper should be typed, double spaced, and paginated. Due in class on Monday.

## Week 6

Monday, February 23—Response paper due.

Finish discussion of Pattern Recognition

Discuss Baudrillard's essay.

Wednesday, February 25

Watch [Chris Marker's La jetée.](#)

Discuss Midterm.

Homework: Review reading, Post your questions to the Midterm Space before noon on Tuesday. Also, please get back to me about our trip to the MIT museum.

Midterm, due Wednesday, March 4

Week 7–Writing, Text, Begin Presentations

Monday, March 2 Preparation for presentations

Lecture/discussion, From Writing with Words to Writing with Light

Discuss Response Papers

Time permitting: In-class screening of Fernand Léger’s Ballet mécanique

Homework. Read Freud, “A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad” (Handout). Prepare a written response to Freud. Post response to the web site by noon on Wednesday.

Wednesday, March 4

Midterm Examination due in class. Discussion of Freud. Sigmund Freud. “A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad.” (Handout)

Presentations: Luria (Banksy/Graffiti), Doug (Frost/Poem), Kayla (HH Guide/Story)

Homework: Read Andre Bazin’s [“The Ontology of the Photographic Image.”](#) \*note: you can also get this article through JSTOR (Film Quarterly 13.4, 1960), but you will have to access it through Louis.

Read Walter Benjamin’s [“Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”](#)

Prepare a discussion question for each of these works or a series of questions that engages with both. Hard copy required. Due Monday in class.

Special event: Friday, March 6. Geoff Nunberg lecture, “Digital Philology: or, The Plural of Data is Anecdotes,” Friday, March 6 at 1:30, Rapaport Treasure Hall, Goldfarb Library

Week 8, Photography-Film

Monday, March 9

Homework: read William Gibson’s [“Gernsback Continuum”](#) (short story) and [Agrippa: \(a book of the dead\)](#) (poem). Browse supporting materials about the poem on [The Agrippa Files](#) web site. Prepare a response question for each of these works or a series of questions that touches upon them both. Reading quiz on Wednesday on this week’s reading \*only\*? It’s a possibility.

Wednesday, March 11

Presentations: Jenn (Vermeer/Painting-Film)

Homework: Read Part 1 of The People of Paper. (Through p 97) Prepare a written discussion question. Hard copy required.

Week 9, Text-Image-Comics

Monday, March 16. Discussion question due today on the first section of the People of Paper.

Homework for Wednesday:

1) Read part 2 of The People of Paper. (Through p 139)

Prepare a discussion question for Wed. (nothing written required for this).

2) Field trip [poll here](#).

Presentation: Anthony (Loony Tunes/Cartoon Shorts)

Wednesday, March 18 Homework: Finish The People of Paper. Post response to the class website by midnight on Sunday. Start working on response paper 2, 5-7 pages, typed and double spaced. Due Monday, March 30.

Recommended: Scott McCloud. Understanding Comics. On reserve at the library.  
Presentations: Ike (XKCD/WebComic)

Week 10, Radio-Music-Sound

Monday, March 23

Ford Beebe. Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars. (In-class screening of one episode).

Homework for Wed: Listen to Chrisman and Sweets. The Shadow. ["The Man Who Murdered Time."](#) From the [Old Time Radio Radio Fans](#) site.

Listen to Orson Welles. [War of the Worlds](#).

[WotW audio only](#)

[WotW script](#)

Wednesday, March 25

Homework for Monday:

Read Henry Jenkins. Convergence Culture. Chapters 1-2.

Finish response paper 2

Presentations: Aaron (Charles Dodge/AD Conversion)

Recommended reading: Matthew Fuller. "The R, the A, the D, the I, the O: the Media Ecology of Pirate Radio." (chapter 1 of Media Ecologies). On reserve at the library.

Week 11, Advertising

Monday, March 30, Response paper 2 due in class.

Presentations: Rachael (Soundscape), Tal (Robert Johnson/Blues)

Homework: Read Theodore Adorno's ["The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception."](#)

Assignment, due before class on Wednesday:

Post a link in the Colloquy to a site that somehow relates to Adorno's ideas in the "Culture Industry." Note: it will be ridiculously easy to find a site that conforms to some type of commodity structure. Can you identify one that somehow exists outside of it? That may be trickier.

Wednesday, April 1

Presentations: Andrea (GenX/advertising)

Homework: Read [Donna Haraway's "A Manifesto for Cyborgs"](#) (excerpt)

Read [Shariann Lewitt's "A Real Girl."](#)

Read Eric S. Raymond's ["The Cathedral and the Bazaar."](#)

Prepare written response to Haraway, Lewitt, and Raymond. Hard copy required. Due Monday, April 6.

Week 12, Cyborg Subjectivity & Remediation; “Early” Digital Art vs. Convergent Art  
Monday, April 6

Guest Discussion Leader: Erin Erhart

Presentation: Talia ([Dr. Horrible](#)/Whedon); Mike (Sports scandals and “narratives”)

Homework:

Read Henry Jenkins. *Convergence Culture*. Chapters 5-6.

Explore and “Read” the following online works:

Giselle Beiguelman. [“Esc for Escape.”](#)

Ed Falco. [Self-Portrait as Child with Father.](#)

Olia Lialina. [My Boyfriend Came Back from the War.](#)

Wednesday, April 8

Presentations: Leah ([Brotherhood 2.0](#)/video-blog), Dilenia ([Coheed and Cambria](#)/Comic-Music)

Homework over break:

Read Vannevar Bush. [“As We May Think.”](#)

Read Julio Cortazar. [“Continuity of the Parks.”](#)

Read about and explore Wafaa Bilal’s [“Domestic Tension.”](#)

Post a written response to this week’s readings on the colloquy.

Work on final paper.

8-10 pages on a topic of your choice.

Introduction and Skeletal Outline of Final Paper due after break.

BREAK WEEK

Week 13, Games-Interactive Narratives

Monday, April 20—Introduction and Outline due.

Recommended: Ted Nelson. [“Proposal for a Universal Electronic Publishing System and Archive.”](#)

Presentations: Hannah (Kingdom Hearts/game); Adrienne (Alexander McQueen/Fashion)

Wednesday, April 22, No Class, Thursday schedule in effect

Friday, April 24 MIT Field Trip, 3:30-5

Meet at 3:30 at the MIT Museum

[“Connections” Exhibit](#). Blurb: “This new exhibition at the MIT Museum explores the social potential of new communication technologies. Art installations and research projects by the Sociable Media Group challenge visitors to think about the rapidly changing world of social interaction and the ramifications for the future. Avatar chairs, data portraits and an immersive information cityscape are just some of the exciting aspects of this new exhibition.”