

NCLC 249 (Section 01) - Fall, 2014
Digital Literacy: 4 Credits
Mondays/Wednesdays: 3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.
Innovation Hall, Room 326

Instructor: Kristin Scott, Assistant Professor

Office location & hours: Enterprise Room 349 / By appointment

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Cell: 703-254-9194 (please feel free to text me with short messages; just indicate who you are and what class you are from when you do)

Course Description:

This course investigates information literacy, the mobile web, and interactive and immersive media, including gaming, social networking, blogging and micro-blogging, intellectual, political and civic collaborations, digital aesthetics and emerging digital cultures and art forms. Explores major theories of digital literacy and culture and introduce diverse social, artistic, theoretical and cultural practices that characterize today's digital domains and virtual environments.

Materials:

- All readings for this course will be available online, on blackboard.

Class Participation:

Because of the collaborative nature of NCC, your ideas are expected and greatly valued by your professor and your peers. Each individual possesses unique personal experiences and unique patterns of reading, thinking and learning that will us to understand more thoroughly the nature of digital literacy.

In a collaborative learning community, we each carry a responsibility to share those ideas, as well as an equal responsibility to foster an atmosphere conducive to productive collaboration, in which everyone feels safe to express openly ideas, opinions, questions and doubts. As a result, a portion of your grade will be based on class participation. If you miss classes, it affects your participation grade. In addition, your participation grade will be based on my overall assessment of your engagement in the class and your engagement in various in-class projects and workshops. Part of your participation grade will also be based on your regular and thoughtful participation on our class Facebook group page.

Academic Policies:

This learning community seeks to build a community, where collaborative learning and the sharing of knowledge are vital! Thus you are expected to attend class, prepare thoroughly for any class activities or assignments, respond generously to peers, and complete assignments on time. *As late work impinges not only on your own learning, but also on that of all your classmates,*

unless otherwise stated, assignments will lose one full letter grade (B to C to D, for example) for each day they are late. If you encounter a genuine medical emergency, such as illness or hospitalization of yourself or a close family member, or some other family crisis, please contact me as soon as possible. Please submit a doctor's certificate for any medical absences. Finally, in this learning community, e-mail forms a vital line of communication among us. As faculty, we are allowed to communicate with you only via your George Mason e-mail account. You are responsible for information that gets disseminated through your GMU email account, so be sure to check it often and that your account is not over-quota.

NCC's Commitment to Diversity Statement:

New Century College is an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and strives to have faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or physical ability. Please note: This commitment is practiced in various public ways by faculty, staff and students in New Century College. Through diversity workshops, intentional job search processes and a standing committee of faculty, staff and students, this college is serious about this commitment.

Email and Inclement Weather Policy:

In compliance with a University-wide initiative, NCC faculty and staff will correspond electronically with students only through their GMU assigned email accounts. No assignments will be accepted via email unless specifically requested. Please check your email account regularly for updates and important announcements. If inclement weather threatens, check the [GMU website](#) to see if, and how, it will affect class schedules. If classes are cancelled, make sure to check your e-mail for any instructions I might send out about how to prepare for the next class and how we will handle the lost time.

Academic Honesty and Collaboration:

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. This is especially true in New Century College. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct.

As in most learning communities and in many other classes, a number of projects in this class are designed to be completed by a group. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Collaborative projects may be divided up so that individual group members complete different portions of the whole, provided that group members take sufficient steps to ensure that the pieces are fairly divided and fit together conceptually in the end product. If there are disagreements or you have concerns about group projects, address them immediately, rather than waiting until the assignment is due. Group difficulties are much easier resolved early on.

Other projects are designed to be undertaken independently. In this case, you may discuss your ideas with others and conference with peers on drafts of the work; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format.

Relevant Campus and Academic Resources:

Writing Center:

(703-993-1200, Robinson A, Room 114) The University Writing Center provides, at no charge, tutors who will help you to brainstorm, structure, revise and edit written work (and help you compile and check your citation of sources!). Although the Writing Center may sometimes accommodate walk-in appointments, you are more likely to see a tutor at a time convenient to you, and your assignment deadline, if you telephone in advance for an appointment. You may also consult the Writing Center online. For further information, e-mail wcenter@gmu.edu.

Counseling Services:

(703-993-2380, SUB I, Room 364) Professional counselors provide individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with emotional and relational issues. In addition, the Learning Services Program (703-993-2999) offers academic skill-building workshops and a tutor referral service.

Office of Disability Services:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703-993-2474 / (SUB I, Room 222). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. ODS assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will provide a form to give to your instructor at the beginning of every course. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

STAR-Multimedia Computer Lab:

(703- 993-8990; Johnson Center, Room 229) STAR mentors help students to learn new software packages and improve their command of familiar software, as well as offers free multimedia application (Dreamweaver, Flash, Photoshop, etc.) workshops throughout the semester. They also loan out audio and video recording equipment for class purposes. http://doit.gmu.edu/studentSection.asp?page=multimedia_lab

Information about Drop/Add Period:

The deadlines for dropping or adding courses in this semester are provided below:

Last day to Add (Full-Semester Course): September 2nd

Last day to Drop with 33% Tuition Penalty (Full-Semester Course): September 16th

For the full Fall 2014 Semester Calendar, please see:

<http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/fall-2014/>

Grade Breakdown:

Weekly Responses	30%
Peer Teaching Assignment	20%
Class Participation/Workshops/Assignments	20%
Final Research / Experiential Learning Project	30%

A	= 95-100
A-	= 90 - 94
B+	= 87 - 89
B	= 84 - 86
B-	= 80 - 83
C+	= 77 - 79
C	= 74 - 76
C-	= 70 - 73
D+	= 67 - 69
D	= 64 - 66
D-	= 60 - 63
F+	= 57 - 59
F	= 54 - 56
F-	= 0 - 53

Description of Assignments:

Weekly Responses:

At least six times throughout the semester, you will be expected to write a two page response to the readings for the week/s of your choosing, providing relevant and contemporary examples outside of class materials, as well as some reference to one outside source. These responses are due IN CLASS (on paper) on the Monday of that week. More information on this will be provided in class.

Peer Teaching Assignment:

For this assignment, you will have the choice of doing one of two things. You will either give a mini-lecture to the class to teach them about some aspect of digital literacy that we will not cover (at least, in detail) during the course of the semester. OR, You will teach the class some kind of hands-on skill that will make them more digitally literate – for example, how to jail-break an iPhone, or how to edit an audio file. If you choose to give a mini-lecture, you should display a bibliography with at least five sources at the end of your presentation, to show where you got your information. At least two of the sources should be scholarly and the others should come from other authoritative sources (see under Final Research Project for examples). Either way, you will have around 20-25 minutes to present to the class. For this assignment, you should form groups of 2-3 based on similar interests.

Final Research Project:

This project is a group assignment. Groups will be formed early in the semester and should include 3-4 people. The assignment is comprised of FOUR primary parts:

1. **Research:** each group must research an area of concern or debate that deals with issues around the use of digital technologies in everyday life and addresses, in large part, significant factors of “literacy.” “Literacy” involves various processes of communication using digital technologies and includes the abilities to identify, locate, understand, organize, evaluate, and analyze information and texts (both written and visual) using digital technologies. Whatever you choose to focus on, you will need to be sure to address how your project speaks to specific issues of digital literacy. To give you an idea of what larger areas are open for continued discussion, all you have to do is look at how the syllabus is organized (the sections—i.e. social networking or collective intelligence). You must include, within the body of your final project and accompanying paper, at least TEN sources, only three of which can be from class readings. At least five sources must be scholarly; and the remaining five can be gathered from other authoritative sources (including blogs, news articles, websites, etc.). Your research, furthermore, should be driven by a significant research question.
2. **Field / Experiential Study:** In the course of your examination of the issue, your group must spend at least 10 hours doing field investigation. What, exactly, that means will depend upon your project. I will consult with each group to help you determine what this will, should, or can entail. But if, for example, you were to be doing research on how MMOs (Massively multiplayer online games) help develop digital literacy skills –or, conversely, hamper or significantly impact, traditional forms of literacy and cognition, then part of your work for this project would involve either playing an MMO and/or watching others play—taking notes on what you observe and how you connect your research with your observations and investigation of the topic in the “field.” Once you determine your project goals, I will help you better determine what form of field investigation will be most beneficial to your project.
3. **Produced and published online:** each of your group projects must be “produced” digitally and made available online to the general public. The medium is your choice (i.e. a video, a website, a Facebook page, a wiki, etc.), but you must make sure that your chosen venue offers all the information you gathered and your research in a compelling, visually dynamic, clear, and engaging way, allowing for outside commentary and/or interaction. Again, as with the field / experiential study, the medium and method you choose to present your research will likely be influenced by the topic you choose to address. I will consult with each group on this, as well. Additionally, you must each post a link to your project on the class FB page.
4. **Synthesis paper:** each group must produce a 3-4 page paper that synthesizes their research findings, the process of collecting data and research—and what was learned in the various processes, how this project significantly addresses digital literacy, and adds to the larger “conversation” we’ve had in class and through the readings (what other readings or discussion does your project intersect with, how, and how does it build upon or deepen your understanding of the subject?).

Timeline:

Nov 3rd: Project Proposals DUE. These must be an outline / summary of your intended research goals (what question is driving your project), an annotated bibliography of at least five sources, what you hope to accomplish in your field / experiential investigation (and how), and your medium (how you intend to publish your research and using what digital tools).

Nov 17th: Update on progress thus far DUE. By this date, more than half of your research should be accomplished and synthesized (notes), and you should have begun your field/experiential investigations.

Dec 1st: Final check-up DUE. Most of your project should be completed (certainly all of your research and field work), and you should be able to show me, in class, your progress thus far in creating a digital online publishable project. (For instance, half a video completed, a website created and half the materials up, etc.).

Dec 6th: All projects should be delivered to me via email (links to published work).

Schedule:



Week 1: (Aug 25 and 27) Introduction to the Course

- Imagining the Internet - "[1960s-1990s Internet](#)"
- J.P. Barlow - "[A Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace](#)"

Sept 1 – LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

Week 2: (Sept 3) What does digital literacy mean?

- Some concepts: Wikipedia, [Digital Literacy](#) (all sections)
- Carr, Nicholas. "[Is Google Making Us Stupid?](#)" *The Atlantic*, July/August, 2008.
- Bowman, James. "[Is Stupid Making Us Google?](#)" *The New Atlantis*, Number 21, Summer 2008.
- Thompson, Clive. "[On the New Literacy](#)," *Wired Magazine* 17.09
- Yoffe, Emily. "[Seeking: How the brain hard-wires us to love Google, Twitter, and texting. And Why that's dangerous.](#)" *Slate*, August 12, 2009.

Week 3: (Sept 8 and 10) Digital literacy continued

- "Introduction: Why You Need Digital Know-How—Why We All Need It," in Howard Rheingold, *Net Smart: How To Thrive Online*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (Blackboard)

Week 4: (Sept 15 and 17) Promises & Perils of Digital Technologies

- Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore. *The Medium is the Massage* (blackboard)
- David Lyon, "Surveillance in the City," from *The Cybercities Reader* (blackboard)
- Watch: *The Matrix* (available on Netflix, Amazon Instant, and iTunes)

Week 5: (Sept 22 and 24) Case Studies

- In groups of 4-5 (final project groups), students will be giving 10 – 15 minute presentations on their understanding of digital literacy (what it is, why it's important to be digitally literate), using examples. This is a chance to summarize and better ground yourselves in the concept before starting your final projects.

Peer Teaching Proposals Due Sept 22nd

Week 6: (Sept 29 and Oct 1) Mobile Culture; Digital Technologies and Physical Spaces

- Sherry Turkle, “[Can You Hear Me Now?](#)” Forbes (May 5, 2007)
- “Digital Urban Health & Security: NYC’s Got An App For That,” Kristin Scott (on blackboard)

Week 7: (Oct 6 and 8) Privacy, Piracy, Regulation and Net Neutrality

Project Proposals Due Oct 6th for final research project

- Honan, Mat. “[Kill the Password: Why a String of Characters Can’t Protect Us Anymore.](#)” *Wired Magazine*. November 15, 2012.
- Watch: “[Steal This Film \(Full Documentary\)](#)”
- savetheinternet.com. “[Net Neutrality 101](#)”
- Watch: “[Net Neutrality](#)” and “[Humanity Lobotomy – Second Draft](#)”
- Anti, Michael. “[Behind the Great Firewall of China](#)”

Week 8: (Oct 13 – COLUMBUS DAY / NO CLASS)

Oct 15: Bridging the “Digital Divide”

- “[United Nations Declares Internet Access a Basic Human Right](#),” *The Atlantic*, June 3 2013.
- “[Why We Think the Internet is a Human Right](#),” Motherboard, Aug. 21, 2013
- “[Most of U.S. is Wired, but Millions Aren’t Plugged In](#),” *The New York Times*, Aug. 18, 2013.
- “[Wasting Time is New Divide in Digital Era](#),” *The New York Times*, May 29, 2012.

Week 9: (Oct 20 and 22) Digital Democracy & Digital Revolutions

Peer Teaching Update Due Oct 20th

- Nicholson, Judith A. “[Flash! Mobs in the Age of Mobile Connectivity](#),” *Fibreculture Journal*, Issue 6.
- Smith, Aaron. “[The Internet’s Role in Campaign 2008](#).” *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, April 15, 2009.
- Lasar, Matthew. “[The Internet has not transformed civic engagement . . . yet.](#)” *Ars Technica*, September 1, 2009, via the *Pew Internet & American Life Project*
- SpaceChimp Media, “[How Occupy Wall Street is Using Social Media](#)”
- Watch: “[Occupy Wall Street: America’s Own Arab Spring?](#)”
- Watch: “[BBC How Facebook Changed the World The Arab Spring.](#)”

Week 10: (Oct 27 and 29) Open Data / Privacy Concerns

- “Open Data / Open Government?” Kristin Scott (on blackboard as “NYChapt_Open Data”)
- Richard Grusin, “[Premediation](#)”
- Browse the [NYC Open Data Platform](#); choose two data sets that you feel are potentially violating privacy and be prepared to explain why
- “[Facebook Is Under Investigation For Mood Manipulation Study](#),” Reuters, July, 2014 (be sure to also watch video on page)

Week 11: (Nov 3 and 5) Peer Teaching Presentations

Project Proposals Due Nov 3rd for final research project

Week 12: (Nov 10 and 12) Peer Teaching Presentations

Week 13: (Nov 17 and 18) Collective Intelligence and Convergence

- Chocano, Carina. “[The Dilemma of Being a Cyborg](#),” *The New York Times*. January 27, 2012.
- Watch: “[Interview with Henry Jenkins](#),” “[Jimmy Wales on the Birth of Wikipedia](#),” and “[Howard Rheingold: The New Power of Collaboration](#)”
- “[The Internet of Things](#)”

Update on Progress Due Nov 17th for final research project

Week 14: (Nov 24 and 26) NO CLASSES / THANKSGIVING WEEK

Week 15: (Dec 1 and 3) Work on Final Research Project / In-Class Consultations & Workshops

Final check-up DUE Dec. 1st for final research project

Dec 6th – Final Research Project Due via email