RESEARCH METHODS FOR DIGITAL MEDIA

Course Instructor: Carl DiSalvo
Office: 317-C TRSB
Contact: cdisalvo@gatech.edu
Office Hours: tbd

Course Times: Mondays and Wednesdays 12:05 – 1:25pm
Course Location: tbd

Course Description
This course provides an introduction to research methods for studying digital media. This includes methods for studying digital artifacts and systems, studying practices of making digital artifacts and systems, and studying the use of digital artifacts and systems. It is oriented toward graduate students who will pursue research careers in academia or industry. The course focuses on qualitative and interpretive methods drawn from the social sciences and humanities, with an emphasis on methods and theories from science and technology studies. In particular, we will cover multiple modes of ethnography, methods for the analysis of technical objects, and “inventive methods” that explore the intersection of design and interpretive social science. Through the course students will experiment with multiple research methods and write a research proposal. The course is open to graduate students from any major. Students should be prepared for significant readings in social science and the humanities and a significant amount of writing.

Required Books
The Craft of Research, Booth, Colomb, & Williams
Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw
How Users Matter: The Co-construction of Users and Technology, Oudshoorn & Pinch (eds)
Seeing Like a Rover: How robots, teams, and images craft knowledge of Mars, Vertesi

Attendance & Participation
Class attendance and participation is mandatory. Participation in class discussion is imperative because it allows you to explore the readings, projects, and themes collaboratively, and in the process, discover meanings and issues that you probably would not discover on your own. Participation in class also challenges you to continuously question, refine, and articulate your own ideas and interpretations.
Grading
If you complete all of the requirements for the assignment reasonably well, you should expect to earn a B. In order to earn an A, you must complete and go “above and beyond” all of the requirements and your work must be exceptional across multiple grading factors.

Absence from more than three classes will result in the loss of 1-letter grade for the course.
Tardiness for more than four classes will result in the loss of 1-letter grade for the course.

Assignments and Their Value
Mini Ethnography: 100 points
10 Research Questions: 100 points
Mini Lit Review: 100 points
Essay Review: 100 points
Research Presentation: 100 points
Research Proposal: 200 points

Information for Students with Disabilities
Please notify the instructor if you have any disabilities with which you need special assistance or consideration. The campus disability assistance program can be contacted through ADAPTS: http://www.adapts.gatech.edu

Honor Code Statement
Students are expected to adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code: honor.gatech.edu

PhD Learning Objectives
• Develop the knowledge, comprehension and ability to apply historical, cultural, and theoretical concepts to the study of digital media
• Demonstrate the ability to identify the major theoretical traditions contributing to scholarly discourse about digital media
• Discuss and distinguish among historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts for digital media
• Apply theoretical concepts to specific digital media works

COURSE OUTLINE
Aug 17 Introduction to the Course
Aug 19 What is Research?
The Craft of Research, Prologue thru Chapter 4 (pages 1 – 67)
Aug 24 Introduction to Ethnography I
Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures, Chapters 1 & 15
Aug 26  Introduction to Ethnography II


Aug 31  Fieldwork
Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Chapters 1 – 3

Sep 02  Ethnography of Science and Technology I
Vertesi Seeing Like a Rover, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

Sep 07  LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

Sep 09  Ethnography of Science and Technology II
Vertesi Seeing Like a Rover, Chapters 3, 4, & 6

Sep 14  Studying Users I
Oudshoorn, N. & Pinch, T. “How Users and Nonusers Matter.” In How Users Matter

Wyatt, S. M. E. “Non-users Also Matter: The construction of users and non-users of the Internet.” In How Users Matter

Lindsay, C. “From the Shadows: Users as designers, producers, marketers, distributors, and technical support.” In How Users Matter

Sep 16  Studying Users II
Pinch, T. “Giving Birth to New Users: How the minimoog was sold to rock and roll.” In How Users Matter

Van Oost, T. “Materialized Gender: How shavers configure the users' femininity and masculinity.” In How Users Matter

Sep 21  CLASS TBD

Sep 23  Finding Research Questions
The Craft of Research, Chapters 5 & 6

Sep 28  Engaged Ethnography I


**Sep 30**

**Engaged Ethnography II**


**Oct 05**

**Making Arguments**

*The Craft of Research, Section III*

**Oct 07**

**CLASS TBD**

**Oct 12**

**FALL BREAK – NO CLASS**

**Oct 14**

**Design Anthropology I**


**Oct 19**

**Design Anthropology II**


**Oct 21**

**CLASS TBD**
Oct 26  Communities and Publics I

Oct 28  Communities and Publics II

Nov 02  Media & Exploratory Methods I
Pink, *The Future of Visual Anthropology*, Chapters 1 & 2

Nov 04  Media & Exploratory Methods II

Nov 09  Project Workshops
In-class group work on projects

Nov 11  CLASS TBD

Nov 16  Media & Exploratory Methods III

Nov 18  Nov 09  Project Workshops
In-class group work on projects
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