

# LMC 6316:HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO MEDIA THEORY<sup>i</sup>

Monday/Wednesday 1230-2-15p – CoVid Spring 2022

**INSTRUCTOR: ANDRÉ BROCK**

**Room: Stephen C. Hall [Hall] 102**

Office Hours: Thursdays (Zoom/Slack) 1-3pm by appt. Office: 326 Skiles

Course Level: graduate

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***This syllabus subject to change at the discretion of the instructor<sup>ii\*</sup>***

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## BEFORE WE BEGIN

This is an unusual and stressful time for all of us, both in our personal lives and in our work and school lives. We are all improvising as we adjust to our “new normal”, knowing life won’t be the same for quite some time. We’ll all likely make mistakes or have difficulties, and that’s okay. We’ll figure it out. Our primary goal is our own safety and health. While we are mandated to meet in-person this semester, I am also opening a Slack channel for this course should we have to move to remote learning.

While the educational work of this course is important, it comes second to making sure we’re safe and healthy, both mentally and physically. Know that flexibility (with deadlines and other issues) is available. Accommodations with assignments are available. If you need more flexibility or an accommodation I haven’t thought of, please let me know. If you find yourself overwhelmed or otherwise in a place of difficulty, please contact me to discuss flexibility and/or accommodations. You will get what you need.

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## COURSE OVERVIEW

How do we understand, and write about, our media past? What are the differences between a history of technology, and a technology of history? This course examines the connections between digital media and earlier media through various histories. The course will therefore explore the historical and material relationships between language, print, videogames, multimedia, and online cultures.

Students will consider concepts such as the relationship between analog and digital media technologies, as well as the shifting sites of production, distribution, and reception of digital media. By establishing a comparative approach to digital media’s past and present, students will learn to consider the historical, social, and institutional forces that have engendered myriad forms of the digital media, discover the roots of our contemporary mediascape, and gain a greater understanding of digital media’s place in culture and society. These relationships will be further addressed through the combination of close readings of media forms and artifacts with conceptual rubrics such as failure, obsolescence, glitch, intermedia, multimedia, remediation, medium specificity, and technological determinism. By the end of the course, students will be able to discuss and use

several historiographic modes and put them to use in the historical, cultural, and material analysis of media—not to mention as inspiration and influence for media design, no matter the material.

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## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### MS in Digital Media

1. Demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate existing digital media histories, artifacts, and environments using formal knowledge, and to explain and defend one's critical evaluation.
2. Analysis: Can analyze digital media as historical and cultural objects
3. Evaluation: Can summarize their work orally and in written form using formal terminology.

### PhD in Digital Media

1. Students have knowledge, comprehension and ability to apply historical concepts to the study of digital media.
2. Knowledge: Identify the historical and cultural roots of digital media through the study of the moving image.
3. Knowledge: Identify the major historical concepts contributing to scholarly discourse about the moving image and digital media.
4. Comprehension: Discuss and distinguish among historical contexts for multiple media forms

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## TEACHING STYLE AND EXPECTATIONS

This is a seminar-style course, where discussion is the primary mode of instruction and learning. That requires a different kind of learning style necessitating that YOU have done the readings and approach discussions with a sense of curiosity and inquiry. It also means that you are required to complete all written assignments to the best of your capacity. Participation in class discussion allows you to explore the class readings and concepts with your peers and, in the process, discover meanings and issues that you would not discover on your own. In-class participation challenges you to continuously question, refine, and articulate your own ideas and interpretations. Please note I do not expect each of you to have fully formed and nuanced understandings of each assigned reading, but I do expect you to engage with each reading to the best of your abilities (e.g. asking questions, applying concepts to your own experiences, thinking of relevant examples, etc.).

**Office Hours: will be held virtually. Please use this link to schedule time with me (for office hours or just to chat): <https://calendly.com/andre-brock/30min>**

I do not take attendance. In a perfect world, the course can be completed without attending any of the class meetings - but I believe that your writing won't be as strong. If you know you will have personal conflicts or scheduling issues that will interfere with any deadlines, please email me ahead of time so we can discuss alternate arrangements.

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## COVID-19/DELTA/OMICRON INFORMATION

Students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the Institute guidelines, information, and updates related to Covid-19. Find campus operational updates, FAQs, and details on campus surveillance testing and vaccine appointments on the [Tech Moving Forward site](#).

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## ACCESSIBILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS

I will make every effort to accommodate any needs around health and accessibility, particularly around learning support, or mental or emotional health issues. However, in order to support you, you must register with ADAPTS. Once you have done so, please email me so we can figure out the best means to support you: <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/Course Materials>

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## [SOME] REQUIRED TEXTS

- Durham and Kellner [DK] *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*
- Balbi and Magaudda [BM] *A History of Digital Media*
- Lister, Dovey, Giddings et al. [GL] *New Media: A Critical Introduction*
- Turner *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*
- Braidotti and Hlavajova [BH] *Posthuman Glossary*

**All readings can be found on the course Perusall site in either PDF or ePub form (but not both).** Feel free to buy physical copies to support the authors, but note that your annotations on the Perusall versions is part of your grade. The readings above are not exhaustive; other supplemental readings will be incorporated or suggested by your classmates.

Students are expected to have read the assigned readings prior to the day they are being discussed. Writing assignments (see [page 3](#)) should be completed **before** class on the day assigned so the student is prepared to participate in class discussion. If you are a student with a disability and would like to discuss special academic accommodations, please contact the instructors during their office hours or via email at the beginning of the semester.

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## DISCUSSION AND PARTICIPATION TOOLS

### ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

I don't like Canvas' Discussion tool - it's clunky. Therefore, we'll use **Piazza** to post reading discussions, original posts, or questions for me. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates and myself. Rather than emailing me questions I encourage you to post your questions on Piazza. If you have any problems or feedback for the developers, email [team@piazza.com](mailto:team@piazza.com).

**Find our class Piazza page on the Canvas course site**

### ANNOTATION

#### Perusall

I am a firm believer in annotating readings; that is, making notes in the margins while I read through a text. In previous semesters, I've had great success showing students how to use **Perusall** to

annotate each assigned reading as a class. Perusall is an annotation layer for any online content; this tool is intended to allow y'all to collaborate on your reading, synthesis, and understanding of the reading selections across the semester. You are automatically enrolled in the course Perusall instance; I'll explain how we'll use this tool during class.

In addition to highlighting snippets of text that you find interesting (or confusing), Perusall also allows the use of images and other multimedia content within your annotations. I am inclined to offer extra credit for those whose annotations include compelling, relevant multimedia content illustrating difficult or interesting concepts in the reading.

Your annotations will count as 25% of your participation grade. To get full participation credit, you must annotate every reading with at least ONE note.

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## MY EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS

ASK QUESTIONS.

Be thoughtful and civil to classmates and the instructor.

Attend class: attendance is not optional.

Keep up on all readings.

Turn in all assignments.

Participate in discussions.

Check Canvas/Slack/Piazza regularly.

Check email, Perusall, and Canvas regularly for announcements, assignments, and updates.

Drink coffee or eat (quietly) if you're hungry.

Please note that **I am a mandated reporter** and am legally obligated to report any sexual violence reported to me. Georgia Tech offers confidential support for sexual or relationship violence through VOICE, which also contains links to local and non-GT resources: <https://healthinitiatives.gatech.edu/resources>

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## HONOR CODE AND PLAGIARISM POLICY

The Georgia Tech Honor Code is very explicit about plagiarism as “the deliberate use of any outside source without proper acknowledgment,” “appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts of passages of his or her writings, or language or ideas of the same, and passing them off as the product of one's own mind.” If caught plagiarizing, you will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code. The full GT Honor Code is available online: <http://osi.gatech.edu/content/honor-code>.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ATTRIBUTION

Thanks to Myriam Asad, Gregory Zinman, Ian Bogost, and Miriam Sweeney for their advice and support in building this syllabus

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course grade will be based on the following elements:

Reading Discussion Leader

**Percentage**

**20%**

Portfolio - Reading Reflections and responses

**40%**

Annotations/Class Participation

**40%**

Grade	Discussion Leader	Discussion Leader Responses	Annotations
<b>A</b>	1+ completed satisfactorily	Respond satisfactorily to at least 75% of discussion leader posts	Annotate 80% of readings
<b>B</b>	1 completed satisfactorily	Respond satisfactorily to at least 60% of discussion leader posts	Annotate 70% of readings
<b>C</b>	1 completed	Respond to less than 50% of discussion leader posts	Annotate 50% of readings

## READING SCHEDULE

WK	DATE	READING
1	M 1/10	Introduction: Interpersonal and Reading for Class Huber, "Shadow Syllabus" Hicks, "Reading Tips for History Classes"
1	W 1/12	Introduction: Technology and Assignments "Annotating a Text" Canvas, Perusall, Piazza, Slack
2	M 1/17	<b>MLK Day Observed</b>

	W 1/19	Darnton "Good Way to Do History" Reading Discussion selection day
3	M 1/24	BM "Why Study the History of Digital Media and How"
	W 1/26	Manovich, Language of New Media
4	M 1/31	Ong
	W 2/2	Ong
5	M 2/7	Pacey "Culture of Technology" Bush "As We May Think"
	W 2/9	Carey "A Cultural Approach to Technology" Carey "Technology and Ideology"
6	M 2/14	McLuhan
	W 2/16	McLuhan
7	M 2/21	Gitelman
	W 2/23	Gitelman
8	M 2/28	Goffman, Presentation of Self

1	W 3/2	Webster, Theories of the Information Society Ch 1-3
9	M 3/7	Russell, Glitch Feminism Knight-Steele, Digital Black Feminism
	W 3/9	Russell, Glitch Feminism Knight-Steele, Digital Black Feminism
10	M 3/14	Wilderson, Red White and Black – Introduction ,
	W 3/16	Mills, "The Illumination of Blackness
11	M 3/21	Spring Break
	W 3/23	Spring Break
12	M 3/28	Brock, Ratchetry and Racism Ott, Relocating Pleasure
	W 3/30	McGlotten, Black Data Towns,
13	M 4/4	Lippold, "Control" Lippold, "Subjectivity"
	W 4/6	Browne, Dark Matter
14	M 4/11	Webster, Theories of the Information Society Ch 11"

W 4/13	Bogost, "Unit Operations" L Parisi "Computational Turn"	
M 4/18	Carey and Quirk, "The Mythos of the Electronic Revolution" Artificial Intelligence Algorithmic Studies	
W 4/20	Brock, "The Black Technocultural Matrix" Amaro, "Afrofuturism"	
M 4/25	Braidotti, "Ethics of Joy" Macharia "Black (beyond negation)"	

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## ASSIGNMENTS

### DISCUSSION LEADER

To demonstrate mastery and comprehension of course material, you and your group members must lead a discussion of a randomly assigned reading.

NUMBER OF ASSIGNMENTS PER GROUP: ONE (I THINK)

**There are multiple aspects of this assignment:**

1. Your group must post your reading response and discussion questions to **Piazza** by the class date **before** the assigned date of the reading (see more details below).
2. Your group must provide an **analysis** of the arguments made in your assigned reading.
3. You must also provide at least **ONE discussion question** (see below) with your analysis
  - a. Post your analysis and discussion questions to Piazza. Your post should be titled using the format “Author - Class Date Assigned” (e.g., “Brock - May 19”)
  - b. You must also ANSWER your question using your experiences, knowledge of, or reactions to the subject matter of the reading.
4. In Slack/Teams **on the day the reading is assigned, your group will lead the discussion** by offering a (brief) media example (TikTok, GIF, meme, social media post) that highlights an element or argument found in the reading.

Your discussion question can/should be based on current (or recently completed) readings.

*Suggestions for Discussion questions:*

- What are some running themes or recurring concerns in these pieces?
- What is the central argument?
- How is that argument constructed? What is the methodology/approach to history employed?
- What historical or theoretical models do these authors find useful? What are the gaps in your own historical or theoretical training that you need to fill in order to read this work better?
- What patterns, if any, do you notice? Where might you make an intervention?
- What kinds of rhetorical moves do you notice these authors making? Do these moves change over time?
- Are there particular passages that stand out to you? Can you offer a reading of one or more of these passages?
- Can you offer an application of the reading to current Digital Media projects/objects,

**Monday reading responses must be posted by Friday at 11PM. Comments to these posts should ideally be made no later than midnight Sunday.**

**Wednesday reading responses must be posted by Monday at 11pm. Comments to these posts should ideally be made no later than midnight Tuesday.**

- whether they're yours or someone else's? (Provide links if/when applicable).

Your discussion leader post will comprise 30% of your grade. The above criteria are the rubric on which you'll be evaluated.

This assignment is designed to elicit your reading comprehension, argumentation, knowledge acquisition, and application of course material to sociohistorical context.

## DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION

DUE: MULTIPLE DATES

**If you're not the discussion leader, you should follow, post, and contribute to the Canvas/Piazza discussion for the reading for every class.** To pass the course, you should post a MINIMUM of five (5) comments on your classmates' posts during the semester.

Participation online can include:

- Posting questions or responding to other students' forum postings
- Providing examples and counter-examples
- Performing scholarly, constructive criticism of the assigned reading
- Proposing additional literature, websites or resources
- Sharing current news items and media reports that are relevant to class topics

The best comments will respond actively to the topic of discussion, or extend discussions from section or even lecture. Thread-jacking or trolling will not be tolerated and will result in a grade reduction.

These comments will comprise 60% of your grade for the entire course; they demonstrate informal thinking, informal writing, participation, engagement, and mastery.

## DISCUSSION PORTFOLIO

DUE: APRIL 30

Goal: This assignment gives the student an opportunity to reflect on challenging class readings and topics.

Your Discussion Leader post(s), any Original Posts, plus your **THREE** best responses to another classmate's discussion post or threaded comment, will comprise a major portion of your final grade.

Submitted posts, comments, and reading responses will be assessed based on clarity of argument, skill in framing the issue, and the weight of supporting evidence drawn from course materials and lectures. Attempting to complete this assignment in its entirety in the first few (or the last few) weeks of the semester will be considered SPAM and will result in a reduction of your grade.

**NB: Canvas tracks your participation across the semester. Your participation counts will affect your grade. This means that you should not wait until the end of the semester to write comments.**

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## **GENERAL POLICIES**

### **GRADE POLICIES**

A good grade requires thoughtful, informed participation in class and online, well executed arguments in writing, and an outstanding portfolio. Readings will be DISCUSSED on the day marked on the syllabus. Assignments are due as scheduled.

### **EMAIL POLICY**

E-mail is not a substitute for meeting with me during office hours. E-mail should be used to schedule an appointment outside of office hours or for short questions clarifying class assignments or specific items from the lecture. In-depth questions about course readings or an entire day's lecture, etc. are not appropriate for e-mail.

### **ABSENCE POLICIES**

I expect you to attend class regularly. If you **MUST** miss class, please let me know in advance; if you had to miss class unexpectedly, please let me know by email.

It is the policy of the Institute to make every reasonable effort to allow members of the Institute community to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss classes as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to make-up missed academic work. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates on which they will be absent. When the absence coincides with an exam or other assignment due date, the options to make up that missed work may be limited and will be determined by the instructor within the boundaries of the respective class.

For GT athletes and others traveling to represent the Institute, your team staff will give you paperwork to provide to your instructors. Notify me within the first two weeks of class.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

For any student needing an accommodation for any sort of disability: please visit the Office of Disability Services to obtain an accommodation letter. Once you have that, make an appointment to see me during my office hours; you must bring your accommodation letter. The Office of Disability Services for Students offers a variety of resources for students with disabilities. Learn more about the ADAPTS program here: <http://adapts.gatech.edu>.

### **HONOR CODE**

The penalties for plagiarism (submitting other people's words or ideas as your own) are severe. I will report all cases of academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Integrity. Please adhere to the Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code. You may review that code at [www.honor.gatech.edu](http://www.honor.gatech.edu).

### **STUDENT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY**

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage anyone dealing with sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need.

Confidential support and academic advocacy can be reported to the Institute's VOICE advocates, located in the Office of Health Initiatives (<http://healthinitiatives.gatech.edu/contact-voice>) General

information is collected for campus safety statistics without revealing information that would identify the victim.

If information is provided that would identify the Respondent, the Institute will endeavor to use that information to conduct appropriate follow-up.

Alleged violations can be **non-confidentially** reported to the Title IX Coordinator/Deputy Coordinator (<http://titleix.gatech.edu/>) or to ANY other Responsible Employee of the Institute, as defined in this Policy. Upon the report of an alleged violation, the Responsible Employee will inform the victim of:

- the Responsible Employee's obligation to report the alleged violation to the Title IX Coordinator; and
- the victim's option to discuss available resources, including counseling, support and investigation, with the Title IX Coordinator or a confidential VOICE Advocate; and
- the victim's right to file a complaint with the Institute and to report a crime to Georgia Tech and/or local police.

A victim may file a report with Georgia Tech Police Department or local police for a criminal investigation, which may be sought in addition to a Georgia Tech investigation. The Office of the Dean of Students (including the Women's Resource Center) can provide to a student victim a VOICE Advocate in the Office of Health Initiatives who can assist students with reporting to Georgia Tech Police Department or local police. Advocates are confidential and available 24 hours per day.

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<sup>i</sup> This syllabus would not be possible without the brilliance of Dr. Miriam Sweeney (Univ. of Alabama) or Dr. Eve Ewing (University of Chicago)

<sup>ii</sup> With as much advance notice as possible. There may be typos. I reserve the right to make any changes to accommodate class progress.