UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO - VICTORIA COLLEGE
2018 SPRING

VIC327H1S - Digital Material Culture
PR 306; Wednesday, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Alan Galey, Faculty of Information
CONTACT INFORMATION: alan.galey@utoronto.ca
OFFICE HOURS: Thursdays, 10:00 – noon in Bissell 646 (near Robarts), and Wednesdays after class
COURSE WEBSITE: https://portal.utoronto.ca

Accessibility Needs (www.accessibility.utoronto.ca)
If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

It is not uncommon for university students to experience a range of health and mental health issues that may result in barriers to achieving their academic goals. The University of Toronto offers a wide range of services that may be of assistance. You are encouraged to seek out these resources early and often.

On Campus: Your college Registrar’s Office, and / or Dean of Students’ Office
Student Life - http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca
Health and Wellness Centre - http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc

Off-Campus: Good2Talk - a post-secondary (24/7) helpline (1-866-925-5454).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Do the materials of digital culture being created today have a future as cultural heritage? This course explores the materiality of digital objects, from image and music files to digital documents to video games and other software, and considers their past, present, and future status as artifacts of material culture. The course involves the primary study of digital objects themselves, but also considers the technological infrastructures, cultural contexts, and signifying systems in which they are produced, circulated, and interpreted. What does it mean to treat a video game as future cultural heritage? How is digital rights management shaping the born-digital cultural record? Who determines how digital materials are archived and curated for the future? How does understanding the materiality of digital objects affect social and power relationships in the present?

The course will also reconsider popular and scholarly ideas about digital materiality, including some key categories: analog vs digital objects; born-digital vs digitized content; critical vs mass digitization; and ephemerality vs longevity of digital materials. Readings will be drawn from a range of fields that study digital materiality, which may include media studies, information studies, digital humanities, video game studies, semiotics, sound studies, internet history, bibliography and textual studies, museology, digital curation and preservation, and copyright law and internet policy.

The course will involve primary study of digital objects at a technical level, which may include introductory-level analysis of code, but no prior coding knowledge is required.
Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. contextualize materials from digital culture within the broader debates about future cultural heritage and meaning-making in the present, including the key theoretical, technical, and social factors that shape contemporary ideas about digital materiality;
2. navigate among the various disciplinary perspectives that come to bear upon digital materiality; and,
3. use introductory-level digital tools, individually and collaboratively, to understand key technical aspects of digitized and born-digital materials, with the aim of envisioning their interpretation and curation in different social and historical contexts.

REQUIRED READINGS
All course readings will be made available through Blackboard, either as scans or links to files accessible through the U Toronto Libraries catalogue. Students are not required to purchase any textbooks.

COURSE WORK AND GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tool</th>
<th>Grading Weight</th>
<th>Due Date(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation (incl. assigned questions on readings)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital artifact profile</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>noon on Friday, Feb. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital archive profile</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>noon on Friday, Feb. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed outline &amp; bibliography for final essay</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>noon on Friday, March 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>noon on Monday, April 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class mini-conference</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>March 28 &amp; April 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detailed assignment instructions will be made available via Blackboard.

Assignments

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Assignments are due via Blackboard by noon on the appropriate date noted above. Late assignments will be subject to a 5% late penalty per day (including weekends), starting after noon on the due date. Assignments will no longer be accepted seven days after the due date.

If there are extenuating circumstances (illness, death in family) that prevent you from completing an assignment on-time you must email the instructor as soon as possible, preferably BEFORE the deadline and NO LATER than one week after the due date. Requests for extensions will be granted if there are legitimate medical or compassionate grounds only. Documentation (such as the official UofT medical form, which can be found here: www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca) must be submitted.
**Participation**
There are no marks are awarded this course for general in-class participation, but the expectations for students’ engagement in the course are: active attention and constructive class interaction, clear evidence of familiarity with assigned readings, and focused attention and participation in the seminar and assignments. The success of the course is based on reasoned, thoughtful and informed contributions to this course.

The participation grade will be assessed through two questions that students submit for certain assigned readings, with 5% of the course grade based on each question. Over the course of the term, each student will share with the class a total of two discussion questions based on two different assigned readings (see the schedule below). A signup sheet will be made available via Blackboard in the first week of class. You will need to sign up for two readings in any of the available slots during the term, but you cannot sign up for the same reading twice; i.e. you cannot submit two questions on the same reading, though you could sign up for two different readings in the same week. Students must email the instructor a written version of their question by noon on the day after their question is due in class (late penalties apply).

Your question should be based on the reading, and should be designed to encourage class discussion about the reading. The goal of this assignment is partly to encourage all students to do the course readings, but also to give students practice with the art and craft of asking good questions. Given the nature of our course, it is especially important to be able to read the assigned articles critically, but also to be able to find new questions to ask about digital material culture.

A weak question:
- can be answered with a yes or a no;
- can be answered with a Google search;
- doesn’t specifically engage with the article (e.g. “do you agree with the author?” is too easy a question to ask)

A good question:
- arises specifically from your reading of the article;
- isn’t easy to answer, such that two (or ten) different intelligent and informed people might have two (or ten) different answers worth thinking about;
- requires us to think about the evidence we’d use to answer it;
- might take the article’s approach, or argument, or vocabulary, or theoretical framework, or basic assumptions, and apply them to contexts or materials that the author didn’t consider;
- may not have an answer, but we learn something by wrestling with it.

Students who sign up for questions on a given day will be asked to share them in class, and must email the instructor a written version of their question by noon on the following day. Our job as a class will be to take up each student’s question and explore it through class discussion. For this reason, it is essential that we all read the assigned articles for each week, and leave ourselves enough time to think about them before coming to class.

**Academic Misconduct** ([http://uoft.me/CodeofBehaviour](http://uoft.me/CodeofBehaviour))
The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. **Teaching Assistants and Instructors are required to report any instance of suspected academic dishonesty to the Program Office.**
Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:
- Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

On tests and exams:
- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else’s answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor’s notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the College Writing Centers writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/, the Academic Success Centre www.asc.utoronto.ca, or the U of T Writing Website www.writing.utoronto.ca.

--- WEEKLY SCHEDULE ---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPICS &amp; READINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 10</td>
<td><strong>Introduction: What Is Digital Material Culture?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 17</td>
<td><strong>Digital Materiality in Theory and Practice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research workshop with Colin Deinhardt &amp; Agatha Barc (Pratt Library)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Jan 24 | **Digitizing Material Culture**    | Field trip to Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. Logistical details will be shared several days beforehand via Blackboard. Students must email the instructor with their idea for the digital artifact profile by **noon on Tuesday Jan 23rd**. Read:  
| Jan 31 | **Digital Archives**               | Digital Artifact Profile due this week, by noon on Friday, Feb. 2 Read:  
| Feb 7  | **E-books and Literary Apps**      | Students must email the instructor with their idea for the digital archive profile by **noon on Tuesday Feb. 6th**. Read:  
| Feb 14 | **Understanding File Formats**     | Guest speaker: Christoph Becker (Director, Digital Curation Institute, Faculty of Information) Read:  
| Feb 21 | **Reading Week: no class**        | Digital Archive Profile due this week, by noon on Friday, Feb. 2  
  I will hold regular office hours during Reading Week, and will be reachable as usual by email. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Course Topic</th>
<th>Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 7</td>
<td>Digital Music and Performance</td>
<td>Field trip to Media Commons. Logistical details will be shared several days beforehand via Blackboard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Final essay outline &amp; bibliography due this week, by noon on Friday, March 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 4</td>
<td>In-class mini-conference</td>
<td>Final essay due this week, by noon on Friday, April 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: March 14 is the last day to withdraw without academic penalty.