



Course ATCM 4320.001
Course Title Political Economy of Digital Media
Professor Josef Nguyen
Term Fall 2018
Meetings Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00-2:15PM in ATC 1.305

Professor's Contact Information

Office Phone 972-883-7552
Office Location ATC 1.513
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Please consult this resource for proper email etiquette:
medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087
Office Hours By appointment
Other Information Please allow up to 24 hours for responses to emails
Please do not leave voicemail messages on the office phone

General Course Information

Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, & other restrictions EMAC 2322 - Theories of Emerging Media and Communication, or ATCM 3320 – Critical Media Theories, or Instructor Permission

Course Description This course investigates interrelations among digital media technologies, economic practices, governmental institutions, and sociopolitical logics. Topics covered include global industries and supply-chains for digital technologies, intellectual property and copyright, labor and leisure in digital culture, environmental and economic impacts of digital technologies, as well as emerging economies and virtual currencies.

Learning Outcomes Students will:

- Understand a range of topics at the intersection of political economy and digital media
- Situate political and economic analysis of digital media phenomena in their respective historic and geographic contexts
- Advance proficiencies in critical thinking, research, and writing skills both individually and collaboratively
- Incorporate insights from existing scholarship into their own research and creative practice

Required Texts & Materials All readings, games, videos, and other materials will be available online through the learning management system.

Course Policies

Grading Criteria	Group campus infrastructure report	20%
	Online content generation and reflection	25%
	Final research paper	30%
	Class participation and discussion	25%

Accommodation Students with disabilities are encouraged to utilize the on-campus resources at the Office of Student AccessAbility. You can contact the office at 972-883-6104 or by

email: studentaccessability@utdallas.edu. Their office is located in the Student Service Building (SSB), suite 3.200. They can provide documentation and details for accommodations to address your individual needs. If you need any special accommodations to complete this course successfully, please provide me with this information as soon as possible, so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Classroom Citizenship It is our responsibility to work together to produce a classroom environment where everyone can share, discuss, and question the materials at hand as well as create and contribute their own work respectfully and productively.

Disagreements and conflicting perspectives will, unavoidably, emerge. To ensure that participants feel comfortable contributing a diverse set of thoughts, comments, and views, we will not use oppressive or harmful language, tolerate harassment, personal attacks, and other forms of actions and expressions that unduly distract from the educational mission and inflict emotional, physical, or psychological harm on those involved.

Part of the role of encouraging a diverse learning environment is acknowledging that individuals should feel safe and respected to contribute to the classroom in good faith. This involves not only allowing everyone opportunities to contribute their thoughts but to be mindful of how we recognize and address others. Do not assume things about others' identities, backgrounds, or experiences—whether that is age, race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, etc... Refer to people by their names, pronouns, and other identifiers that they disclose. Avoid insisting on imposing identity markers onto others. Allow people to self-identify as they feel comfortable.

What you discuss in, create for, and share with this class reflects not only you as both a student and a civic subject, but it also reflects on me as your instructor, the class as a learning community, and UT Dallas as an academic institution.

Please discuss with me any concerns you have regarding an unsafe or hostile classroom environment, particularly if something arises that causes distress.

Late Work Late work will be penalized 10% (a full letter grade) for each 24-hour period beyond the deadline. If you need an extension, let me know well in advance, so we can make arrangements.

Academic Honesty All work must be original for this class. Unless you are specifically told to collaborate with classmates, complete your graded work individually. Plagiarism is using the words and materials of others as if they were your own. It is a serious offense with serious consequences. Use proper citation to indicate the use of other people's work to support and strengthen your own. All suspicions of plagiarism will be investigated.

For more information on academic honesty, please consult utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm

Class Attendance Attend class regularly and in full. Any absences should include documentation of a valid excuse (family or medical emergency, for example). Unexcused absences may impact course grades. Discuss upcoming potential absences with me to make appropriate arrangements.

Arriving more than 30 minutes late or leaving more than 30 minutes early, without prior clearance, may be grounds for marking that day as an absence. Failure to prepare for class participation (such as not having done the necessary reading) will also be regarded as conditions for an absence.

- Technology in the Classroom** Laptops and computers can be used in the classroom solely for purposes directly pertinent to the activities and discussions at-hand. Do not use computers for other purposes, including but not limited to idle web-surfing, social media management, and completing work for other courses. The use of cell phones is prohibited during class time. I should not see them on your desk or in your hand at any point. Excessive misuse of technology in the classroom will result in an absence for the day.
- Campus Carry** For more on campus carry policy, see utdallas.edu/campuscarry/
- Comet Creed** *This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:*
- “As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”*
- UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures** *The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies for these policies.*

Assignments & Academic Calendar

Week 1: Monday, 20 August 2018

Beginnings Course introduction

(unacknowledged labor) **Wednesday, 22 August 2018**

- Goldsmith, Kenneth. “The Artful Accidents of Google Books,” [\[newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-artful-accidents-of-google-books\]](http://newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-artful-accidents-of-google-books)
- Wilson, Andrew Norman. “Workers Leaving the Googleplex,” [\[andrewnormanwilson.com/WorkersGoogleplex.html\]](http://andrewnormanwilson.com/WorkersGoogleplex.html)
- Chen, Adrian. “The Laborers Who Keep Dick Pics and Beheadings Out of Your Facebook Feed,” [\[wired.com/2014/10/content-moderation/\]](http://wired.com/2014/10/content-moderation/)
- Golumbia, David. “The Amazonization of Everything,” [\[jacobinmag.com/2015/08/amazon-google-facebook-privacy-bezos/\]](http://jacobinmag.com/2015/08/amazon-google-facebook-privacy-bezos/)
- Ghosh, Shona. “An Amazon Staffer Is Posting YouTube Videos of Herself Living in a Warehouse Parking Lot after an Accident at Work,” [\[businessinsider.nl/amazon-warehouse-vickie-shannon-allen-homeless-injury-2018-7/\]](http://businessinsider.nl/amazon-warehouse-vickie-shannon-allen-homeless-injury-2018-7/)

INFRASTRUCTURES

Week 2: Monday, 27 August 2018

- (primitive accumulation; expropriation) Marx, Karl. “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation,” and “Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land,” *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy – Volume I, Book One: The Process of Production of Capital*
- Shaw, Will. “Tantalum Memorial: An Analogue Response to Congo’s Coltan War,” [\[thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2009/01/tantalum-memorial-an-analogue-response-to-congos-coltan-war\]](http://thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2009/01/tantalum-memorial-an-analogue-response-to-congos-coltan-war)

Introduce Group Infrastructural Report

- (global supply chain, racialized labor; planned obsolescence) **Wednesday, 29 August 2018**
 Lisa Nakamura. “Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture”
 Beaumont, Clandine. “Foxconn Suicide Rate Is Lower than in the US, Says Apple’s Steve Jobs,” [telegraph.co.uk/technology/steve-jobs/7796546/Foxconn-suicide-rate-is-lower-than-in-the-US-says-Apples-Steve-Jobs.html]
 Williams, Matt. “Foxconn Audit Finds Illegal Overtime and Unpaid Wages at Apple Factory,” [theguardian.com/technology/2012/mar/29/apple-foxconn-audit-labour-violations]
 France-Presse, Agence. “Apple under Fire Again for Working Conditions at Chinese Factories,” [theguardian.com/technology/2014/dec/19/apple-under-fire-again-for-working-conditions-at-chinese-factories]
 Molleindustria. *Phone Story*, [phonestory.org]

Week 3: Monday, 3 September 2018
NO CLASS IN OBSERVANCE OF LABOR DAY

- (e-waste; racialized labor; planned obsolescence) **Wednesday, 5 September 2018**
 Minter, Adam. “The Burning Truth Behind an E-Waste Dump in Africa,” [smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/burning-truth-behind-e-waste-dump-africa-180957597/]
 Parikka, Jussi. “Dust and Exhaustion: The Labor of Media Materialism,” [ctheory.net/ctheory_wp/dust-and-exhaustion-the-labor-of-media-materialism/]
 storyofstuffproject, “The Story of Electronics (2010),” [youtube.com/watch?v=sW_7i6T_H78]

- Week 4: Monday, 10 September 2018**
 (information economy; knowledge work) Bush, Vannevar. “As We May Think”
 Weiser, Marc. “The Computer of the 21st Century”
 Brunner, Theodore F. “The Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: Classics and the Computer”

- (digital divide; technological sovereignty) **Wednesday, 12 September 2018**
 Duarte, Marisa Elena. “The Overlap between Technology and Sovereignty,” *Network Sovereignty: Building the Internet across Indian Country*

- Week 5: Monday, 17 September 2018**
 (gendered labor) Misa, Thomas J., “Gender Codes: Defining the Problem,” *Gender Codes: Why Women Are Leaving Computing* (ed. Thomas J. Misa)

- (domestic labor; gendered labor) **Wednesday, 19 September 2018**
 Dyer-Witford, Nick, and Greig de Peuter. “Cognitive Capitalism: Electronic Arts,” *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*
 Chalk, Andy. ““Rockstar Wives’ Complain About Working Conditions,” [escapistmagazine.com/news/view/97391-Rockstar-Wives-]

[Complain-About-Working-Conditions](#)]

Williams, Ian. "After Destroying Lives For Decades, Gaming Is Finally Talking Unionization,"

[\[waypoint.vice.com/en_us/article/7xdv5e/after-destroying-lives-for-decades-gaming-is-finally-talking-unionization\]](http://waypoint.vice.com/en_us/article/7xdv5e/after-destroying-lives-for-decades-gaming-is-finally-talking-unionization)

Friday, 21 September 2018

Group Infrastructural Report due by 5:00PM

EMBODIMENTS

Week 6: Monday, 24 September 2018

(labour-power;
laboring body)

Marx, Karl. "The Sale and Purchase of Labour-Power" and selections from "Machinery and Large-Scale Industry," *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy – Volume I, Book One: The Process of Production of Capital*

White, Michelle. "Afterword: The Flat and the Fold," *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship*

Introduce Online Content Generation and Critical Reflection

Wednesday, 26 September 2018

NO CLASS

Work on Online Video Genre Assignment

Friday, 28 September 2018

Online Video Genre Assignment due by 5:00PM

Week 7: Monday, 1 October 2018

(gendered labor;
racialized labor; self-
branding)

Pham, Minh-Ha T. "The Racial and Gendered Job Performances of Fashion Blogger Poses," *Asians Wear Clothes on the Internet: Race, Gender, and the Work of Personal Style Blogging*

Hunt, Elle. "Essena O'Neill Quits Instagram Claiming Social Media 'Is Not Real Life,'" [\[theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/03/instagram-star-essena-oneill-quits-2d-life-to-reveal-true-story-behind-images\]](http://theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/03/instagram-star-essena-oneill-quits-2d-life-to-reveal-true-story-behind-images)

Cerón, Ella. "The Model Who Quit Social Media Reveals How Much Makeup Was Behind Her Perfect Selfies,"

[\[teenvogue.com/story/essena-oneill-breaks-down-her-perfect-makeup-selfies\]](http://teenvogue.com/story/essena-oneill-breaks-down-her-perfect-makeup-selfies)

Yurieff, Kaya. "Instagram Star Isn't What She Seems. But Brands Are Buying In," [\[money.cnn.com/2018/06/25/technology/lil-miquela-social-media-influencer-cgi/index.html\]](http://money.cnn.com/2018/06/25/technology/lil-miquela-social-media-influencer-cgi/index.html)

(gendered labor;
social media labor)

Wednesday, 3 October 2018

Duffy, Brooke Erin, and Becca Schwartz, "Digital 'Women's Work?': Job Recruitment Ads and the Feminization of Social Media Employment"

This American Life. "Prologue" and "Act One: Finding the Self in Selfie," in "573: Status Update" (0:00-14:00), [\[thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/573/status-update\]](http://thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/573/status-update)

This American Life. "Prologue" and "Act One: Finding the Self in Selfie," in "573: Status Update--Transcript," [thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/573/transcript]

Hempel, Jessi. "How Social Media Became a Pink Collar Job," [wired.com/story/how-social-media-became-a-pink-collar-job/]

Friday, 5 October 2018

Extra Credit Opportunity
Minh-Ha T. Pham guest lecture
2:30-3:45PM, ATC 2.602

Week 8: Monday, 8 October 2018
(professionalization) Taylor, T.L. "Computer Games as Professional Sport," *Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming*

(monetization; platform) **Wednesday, 10 October 2018**
Postigo, Hector. "The Socio-Technical Architecture of Digital Labor: Converting Play into YouTube Money"

Week 9: Monday, 15 October 2018
(injury and litigation; gendered occupational hazards) Jain, Sarah S. Lochlann. "Keyboard Design: The Litigation Wave of the 1990s," *Injury: The Politics of Product Design and Safety Law in the United States*
MacLellan, Lila. "Open-Plan Offices Have a Surprising Effect on Workplace Communication," [work.qz.com/1322146/a-harvard-business-school-study-found-open-plan-offices-have-a-surprising-effect-on-our-collective-intelligence/]
Schwab, Katharine. "The Subtle Sexism of Your Open Plan Office," [fastcodesign.com/90170941/the-subtle-sexism-of-your-open-plan-office]
Brightman, James. "The Games Industry Responds to #MeToo," [gamesindustry.biz/articles/2017-10-18-game-industry-vets-respond-to-metoo]
Fitzgerald, Jonathan D. "Stop Yelling at Alexa: In The Age Of #MeToo, Digital Assistants Deserve Our Respect," [wbur.org/cognoscenti/2018/03/14/metoo-robot-jonathan-fitzgerald]

Wednesday, 17 October 2018

NO CLASS

Work on Online Content Generation and Critical Reflection

Week 10: Monday, 22 October 2018
(racialized labor) Browne, Simone. "B®anding Blackness: Biometric Technology and the Surveillance of Blackness," *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*
Leonard, David J. "High Tech Blackface: Race, Sports Video Games and Becoming the Other"

(attention economy) **Wednesday, 24 October 2018**
Banner, Olivia. "Algorithms, the Attention Economy, and the Breast Cancer Narrative," *Communicative Biocapitalism: The Voice of the*

Patient in Digital Health and the Health Humanities

Friday, 26 October 2018

Online Content Generation and Critical Reflection due by 5:00PM

EXCHANGES

Week 11: Monday, 29 October 2018

(commodity fetishism; use and exchange value; wage) Marx, Karl. "The Commodity," *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy – Volume I, Book One: The Process of Production of Capital*
Terranova, Tiziana. "Free Labor," in *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*

Introduce Final Research Paper

(social media labor) **Wednesday, 31 October 2018**

Wages for Facebook, [wagesforfacebook.com/]
Horning, Rob. "Social Media, Social Factory," [thenewinquiry.com/social-media-social-factory/]

Week 12: Monday, 5 November 2018

(fan labor) Kücklich, Julian. "Precarious Playbour: Modders and the Digital Games Industry," [five.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-025-precariou-playbour-modders-and-the-digital-games-industry/]
De Kosnik, Abigail. "Interrogating 'Free' Fan Labor," [spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/]

(user-content generation; gentrification) **Wednesday, 7 November 2018**

Zukin, Sharon, Scarlett Lindeman, and Laurie Hurson, "The Omnivore's Neighborhood? Online Restaurant Reviews, Race, and Gentrification"

Week 13: Monday, 12 November 2018

(sharing economy; platform capitalism) Castronova, Edward. "Free Commerce," *Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games*
Scholz, Trebor. "The Future of Work: The People's Uber," [psmag.com/economics/the-future-of-work-the-peoples-uber]
Rosenblat, Alex. "The Truth About How Uber's App Manages Drivers," [hbr.org/2016/04/the-truth-about-how-ubers-app-manages-drivers]
Olma, Sebastian. "Never Mind the Sharing Economy: Here's Platform Capitalism," [networkcultures.org/mycreativity/2014/10/16/never-mind-the-sharing-economy-heres-platform-capitalism/]

(ownership; copyright; intellectual property) **Wednesday, 14 November 2018**

Geere, Duncan. "The History of Creative Commons," [wired.co.uk/article/history-of-creative-commons]
Schwartz, Aaron. "Guerilla Open Access Manifesto," [archive.org/details/GuerillaOpenAccessManifesto]
Laskow, Sarah. "The Rise of Pirate Libraries," [atlasobscura.com/articles/the-rise-of-illegal-pirate-libraries]

FALL BREAK 19-23 November 2018
NO CLASSES FOR FALL BREAK

Week 14: Monday, 26 November 2018
(media industry) Moreno Esparza, Gabriel Alberto. “Televisa and Univision, 50 Years of Media Post-Nationalism”
Piñón, Juan, and Viviana Rojas. “Language and Cultural Identity in the New Configuration of the US Latino TV Industry”
Conger, Kater, David Uberti, and Laura Wagner. “Univision Is A Fucking Mess,” [specialprojectsdesk.com/univision-is-a-fucking-mess-1825836622]

(production model; Wednesday, 28 November 2018
cooptation) Lipkin, Nadav. “Examining Indie’s Independence: The Meaning of ‘Indie’ Games, the Politics of Production, and Mainstream Cooptation”

Week 15: Monday, 3 December 2018
(blockchain, Golumbia, David. “Zealots of the Blockchain,”
cryptocurrency; theaffler.com/salvos/zealots-of-the-blockchain-golumbia]
virtual economy) Popper, Nathaniel. “Venture Capitalists Seek ‘Safe Harbor’ for Virtual Currencies,” [nytimes.com/2018/04/19/technology/virtual-currency-securities.html]
Hosia, Hilary, and Nick Perry. “Marshall Islands Creates Its Own Virtual Money to Pay Bills,” [apnews.com/40ef6833c4444631b8dc531ec923e01e]
Fontaine, Paul. “Bitcoin Mining In Iceland: What We Know, And How Iceland Could Benefit,” [grapevine.is/news/2018/02/15/bitcoin-mining-in-iceland-what-we-know-and-how-iceland-could-benefit/]
Hern, Alex. “Bitcoin’s Energy Usage Is Huge – We Can’t Afford to Ignore It,” [theguardian.com/technology/2018/jan/17/bitcoin-electricity-usage-huge-climate-cryptocurrency]
Malmo, Christopher. “One Bitcoin Transaction Consumes As Much Energy As Your House Uses in a Week,” [motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/ywbbpm/bitcoin-mining-electricity-consumption-etherEum-energy-climate-change]

(virtual currency; Wednesday, 5 December 2018
goldfarming; Nakamura, Lisa, “Don’t Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in *World of Warcraft*”
racialized labor) Wong, Joon Ian. “A New Report Says Egypt Is Secretly Forcing Citizens to Mine Cryptocurrency,” [qz.com/1225371/egypt-may-be-hijacking-citizens-computers-to-secretly-mine-cryptocurrency-a-new-report-claims/]

Finals Week Monday, 17 December 2018
Final Research Paper due by 11:59PM*

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.