



**Course** ATCM 4320.001  
**Course Title** Political Economy of Digital Media  
**Professor** Josef Nguyen  
**Term** Spring 2020  
**Meetings** Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00-2:15pm in ATC 2.918

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### Professor's Contact Information

**Office Location** ATC 1.513  
**Email Address** [jdn160330@utdallas.edu](mailto:jdn160330@utdallas.edu)  
Please consult this resource for proper email etiquette:  
[\[medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087\]](https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087)  
Please allow up to 24 hours for responses to emails  
**Office Hours** By appointment

### General Course Information

**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
- 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 this link: [<https://utdallas.box.com/v/atcm4320-spring2020>]

### Course Policies

<b>Grading Criteria</b>	Active and Meaningful Class Participation	20%
	Paper 1: Digital Media Infrastructures Primer	15%
	Paper 2: Content Creation and Critical Reflection	30%
	Paper 3: Critical Documentary Analysis	35%

**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](mailto: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 [\[utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm\]](http://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 tasks, 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/](http://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](http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies)] for these policies.*

**Assignments & Academic Calendar**

**UNIT 0: BEGINNINGS**

**Week 1: Monday, 13 January 2020**  
**Course** IN CLASS:  
**Introduction and Initial Exploration** Syllabus  
 Introductions

**Wednesday, 15 January 2020**

- BEFORE CLASS:  
 Goldsmith, Kenneth. “The Artful Accidents of Google Books,” [<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-artful-accidents-of-google-books>]  
 Wilson, Andrew Norman. “Workers Leaving the Googleplex,” [<http://www.andrewnormanwilson.com/WorkersGoogleplex.html>]  
 Branigin, Anne. “Black Facebook Workers Write Open Letter to Company: We Are Treated Every Day ‘As If We Do Not Belong Here’,” [<https://www.theroot.com/black-facebook-workers-write-open-letter-to-company-we-1839776402>]  
 Chen, Adrian. “The Laborers Who Keep Dick Pics and Beheadings Out of Your Facebook Feed,” [<https://www.wired.com/2014/10/content-moderation/>]  
 Golumbia, David. “The Amazonization of Everything,” [<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/amazon-google-facebook-privacy-bezos/>]  
 Ghosh, Shona. “Undercover Author Finds Amazon Warehouse Workers in UK ‘Peed in Bottles’ over Fears of Being Punished for Taking a Break,” [<http://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-warehouse-workers-have-to-pee-into-bottles-2018-4>]

**UNIT I: INFRASTRUCTURES**

**Week 2: Monday, 20 January 2020**  
**NO CLASS MEETING FOR MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY**

**Material Conditions** **Wednesday, 22 January 2020**  
BEFORE CLASS:  
 Marx, Karl. Selections from “Division of Labor and Manufacture,” “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation,” and “Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land,” in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy – Volume I, Book One: The Process of Production of Capital*

- Molleindustria. *Phone Story*, [<http://www.phonestory.org>]
- Banco, Erin. "Is Your Cell Phone Fueling Civil War in Congo?," [<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/07/is-your-cell-phone-fueling-civil-war-in-congo/241663/>]
- Beaumont, Clandine. "Foxconn Suicide Rate Is Lower than in the US, Says Apple's Steve Jobs," [<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/steve-jobs/7796546/Foxconn-suicide-rate-is-lower-than-in-the-US-says-Apples-Steve-Jobs.html>]
- Minter, Adam. "The Burning Truth Behind an E-Waste Dump in Africa," [<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/burning-truth-behind-e-waste-dump-africa-180957597/>]

IN CLASS:

Introduce Paper 1: Digital Media Infrastructures Primer

**Week 3: Monday, 27 January 2020**

**Labor as Infrastructure**

BEFORE CLASS:

- Light, Jennifer S. "When Computers Were Women"
- Fitzgerald, Jonathan D. "Stop Yelling At Alexa: In The Age Of #MeToo, Digital Assistants Deserve Our Respect," [<http://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2018/03/14/metoo-robot-jonathan-fitzgerald>]
- Karlis, Nicole. "Apple Programmed Siri to Avoid the Word 'Feminism,'" [<https://www.salon.com/2019/09/09/apple-made-siri-avoid-the-word-feminism/>]

**Wednesday, 29 January 2020**

BEFORE CLASS:

- Nakamura, Lisa. "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture"

**Week 4: Monday, 3 February 2020**

**Access and Autonomy**

BEFORE CLASS:

- RealLifeLore2. "How a Few Undersea Cables Connect the Entire Internet," [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTBLIYJSzdc>]
- Duarte, Marisa. "The Overlap between Technology and Sovereignty," in *Network Sovereignty: Building the Internet across Indian Country*

**Wednesday, 5 February 2020**

BEFORE CLASS:

- Haimson, Oliver L., and Anna Lauren Hoffmann. "Constructing and Enforcing 'Authentic' Identity Online: Facebook, Real Names, and Non-normative Identities," [<https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/6791/5521>]

**Week 5: Monday, 10 February 2020**

**Platform Affordances and Constraints**

BEFORE CLASS:

- Haubursin, Christophe. "It's Not You. Phones Are Designed to Be Addicting," [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUMa0QkPzns>]
- Postigo, Hector. "The Socio-Technical Architecture of Digital Labor:"

Converting Play into YouTube Money”

**Wednesday, 12 February 2020**

BEFORE CLASS:

storyofstuffproject. “The Story of Electronics,”

[[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sW\\_7i6T\\_H78](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sW_7i6T_H78)]

Blevis, Eli. “Sustainable Interaction Design: Invention & Disposal, Renewal & Reuse”

**Saturday, 15 February 2020**

**PAPER 1 DUE ONLINE BY 5:00PM**

## **UNIT II: EMBODIMENTS**

**Week 6: Monday, 17 February 2020**

**Bodies and Machines** BEFORE CLASS:

Marx, Karl. “The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power” and selections from “Machinery and Modern Industry,” in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy – Volume I, Book One: The Process of Production of Capital*

*This American Life*. “Prologue” and “Act One: Finding the Self in Selfie,” in “573: Status Update” (0:00-14:00),

[<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/573/status-update>]

Hempel, Jessi. “How Social Media Became a Pink Collar Job,”

[<https://www.wired.com/story/how-social-media-became-a-pink-collar-job/>]

IN CLASS:

Introduce Paper 2: Content Creation and Critical Reflection

**Wednesday, 19 February 2020**

BEFORE CLASS:

Dyer-Witheford, Nick, and Greig de Peuter. “Machinic Subjects: The Xbox and Its Rivals”

Jackson, Gita. “How to Play Video Games without Messing Up Your Body,” [<https://kotaku.com/how-to-play-video-games-without-messing-up-your-body-1824219174>]

**Week 7: Monday, 24 February 2020**

**NO CLASS MEETING**

**Online Performances** **Wednesday, 26 February 2020**

BEFORE CLASS:

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

Nygaard, Safiya. “I Dressed Like YouTubers For A Week,”

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dY0TVzNXH6U>]

Hunt, Elle. “Essena O’Neill Quits Instagram Claiming Social Media 'Is Not Real Life,'”

[\[https://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/03/instagram-star-essena-oneill-quits-2d-life-to-reveal-true-story-behind-images\]](https://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/03/instagram-star-essena-oneill-quits-2d-life-to-reveal-true-story-behind-images)

**Week 8: Monday, 2 March 2020**  
**Branding and Surveillance** BEFORE CLASS:  
Williams, Apryl A., and Beatriz Aldana Marquez. “The Lonely Selfie King: Selfies and the Conspicuous Prosumption of Gender and Race”  
Yang, Robert. *Cobra Club HD*, [\[https://radiatoryang.itch.io/cobraclub\]](https://radiatoryang.itch.io/cobraclub) (NSFW)

**Wednesday, 4 March 2020**  
BEFORE CLASS:  
Browne, Simone. “BRanding Blackness: Biometric Technology and the Surveillance of Blackness,” in *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*  
Leonard, David J. “High Tech Blackface: Race, Sports Video Games and Becoming the Other”

**Week 9: Monday, 9 March 2020**  
**Attention Economies** BEFORE CLASS:  
Barton, Gina. “Why Your Netflix Thumbnails Don’t Look Like Mine,” [\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axCBA3VD5dQ\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axCBA3VD5dQ)  
Banner, Olivia. “Algorithms, the Attention Economy, and the Breast Cancer Narrative,” in *Communicative Biocapitalism: The Voice of the Patient in Digital Health and the Health Humanities*

**Wednesday, 11 March 2020**  
BEFORE CLASS:  
White, Michele. “Too Close to See, Too Intimate a Screen: Men, Women, and Webcams,” in *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship*

**SPRING BREAK NO CLASS MEETINGS**  
**Monday, 16 March 2020**  
**Wednesday, 18 March 2020**

**Week 10: Monday, 23 March 2020**  
**Workplaces** BEFORE CLASS:  
Lochlann Jain, Sarah S. “Keyboard Design: The Litigation Wave of the 1990s,” in *Injury: The Politics of Product Design and Safety Law in the United States*

**Wednesday, 25 March 2020**  
BEFORE CLASS:  
Edwards, Phil. “Open Offices Are Overrated,” [\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-p6WWRarjNs\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-p6WWRarjNs)  
MacLellan, Lila. “Open-Plan Offices Have a Surprising Effect on Workplace Communication,” [\[https://work.qz.com/1322146/a-harvard-business-school-study-found-open-plan-offices-have-a-surprising-effect-on-our-collective-intelligence/\]](https://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,"  
[<https://www.fastcodesign.com/90170941/the-subtle-sexism-of-your-open-plan-office>]

Brightman, James. "The Games Industry Responds to #MeToo,"  
[<https://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2017-10-18-game-industry-vets-respond-to-metoo>]

**Saturday, 28 March 2020**  
**PAPER 2 DUE ONLINE BY 5:00PM**

### **UNIT III: EXCHANGES**

**Week 11: Monday, 30 March 2020**

**Goods** BEFORE CLASS:

Marx, Karl. "Commodities," in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy – Volume I, Book One: The Process of Production of Capital*

Horning, Rob. "Social Media, Social Factory,"

[<https://thenewinquiry.com/social-media-social-factory/>]

*Wages for Facebook*, [<http://wagesforfacebook.com/>]

IN CLASS:

Introduce Paper 3: Critical Documentary Film Analysis

**Wednesday, 1 April 2020**  
**NO CLASS MEETING**

**Week 12: Monday, 6 April 2020**

**Free Labors** BEFORE CLASS:

De Kosnik, Abigail. "Interrogating 'Free' Fan Labor,"

[<http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/>]

Kücklich, Julian. "Precarious Playbour: Modders and the Digital Games Industry," [<http://five.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-025-precariou-playbour-modders-and-the-digital-games-industry/>]

**Wednesday, 8 April 2020**

BEFORE CLASS:

Velkova, Julia. "Open Cultural Production and the Online Gift Economy: The Case of Blender,"

[<http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/6944>]

**Week 13: Monday, 13 April 2020**

**Media Industries** BEFORE CLASS:

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," [<https://specialprojectsdesk.com/univision-is-a-fucking-mess-1825836622>]



**Wednesday, 15 April 2020**

**BEFORE CLASS:**

Scholz, Trebor. "The Future of Work: The People's Uber,"

[<https://psmag.com/economics/the-future-of-work-the-peoples-uber>]

Rosenblat, Alex. "The Truth About How Uber's App Manages Drivers,"

[<https://hbr.org/2016/04/the-truth-about-how-ubers-app-manages-drivers>]

Olma, Sebastian. "Never Mind the Sharing Economy: Here's Platform Capitalism,"

[<http://networkcultures.org/mycreativity/2014/10/16/never-mind-the-sharing-economy-heres-platform-capitalism/>]

**Week 14: Monday, 20 April 2020**

**Digital  
Commodities and  
Currencies**

**BEFORE CLASS:**

Faden, Eric. *A Fair(y) Use Tale*,

[<http://cyberlaw.stanford.edu/blog/2007/03/fairy-use-tale>]

Geere, Duncan. "The History of Creative Commons,"

[<http://www.wired.co.uk/article/history-of-creative-commons>]

Laskow, Sarah. "The Rise of Pirate Libraries,"

[<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-rise-of-illegal-pirate-libraries>]

**Wednesday, 22 April 2020**

**BEFORE CLASS:**

CBC News, "Cryptocurrency Explained,"

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mvrq8hLjcRk>]

Popper, Nathaniel. "Venture Capitalists Seek 'Safe Harbor' for Virtual Currencies,"

[<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/19/technology/virtual-currency-securities.html>]

Fontaine, Paul. "Bitcoin Mining In Iceland: What We Know, And How Iceland Could Benefit,"

[<https://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,"

[<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/jan/17/bitcoin-electricity-usage-huge-climate-cryptocurrency>]

**Week 15 NO CLASS MEETINGS**

**Monday, 27 April 2020**

**Wednesday, 29 April 2020**

**FINALS WEEK Friday, 8 May 2020**

**PAPER 3 DUE ONLINE BY 11:59PM**

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