



Course ATCM 4320.001
Course Title Political Economy of Digital Media
Professor Josef Nguyen
Term Spring 2021
Modality Virtual/Remote, with optional synchronous online meetings

Professor's Contact Information

Email Address 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

Class Platform Course readings, assignment instructions, and other materials are available via Box (see below). Course announcements and assignment submissions are handled on eLearning.

Optional class participation, lectures, and interactions on Discord. Please contact the instructor by email for access to the course Discord server.

Required Texts & Materials All readings, games, videos, and other materials will be available online through this link: [\[https://utdallas.box.com/v/atcm4320-spring2021\]](https://utdallas.box.com/v/atcm4320-spring2021)

Course Policies

Grading Criteria	Weekly Worksheets (Weeks 02-05, 07-10, 12-15 @ 5% each)	60%
	Paper 01: Digital Infrastructures Primer	10%
	Paper 02: Content Creation and Reflection	20%
	Paper 03: Critical Documentary Analysis	10%

Class Protocol This course is primarily designed to accommodate asynchronous online participation, with optional synchronous online meetings.

Reading and assignment instructions will be available through the course Box site.

As per the course schedule (below), there are worksheet assignments for each week with assigned readings, media, etc. While the assigned readings and media will be available on Box well in advance, worksheet assignments and guides will be available beginning the first day of the corresponding week outlined on the course schedule and then due the following week, by 12:00pm.

You will have the entire week to review the assigned readings and media and use that week's guide in order to complete the weekly worksheet assignment. Guides structure the week, providing background information and showing examples necessary for completing the worksheet. Completed worksheets must be submitted to eLearning.

As an optional resource, the instructor will conduct a weekly online session on Wednesdays from 10:00-11:15AM on the course Discord server to go over the guide for that week and to answer student questions.

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 Conduct 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 I will automatically apply a no-penalty extension of 2 days for the first 3 late weekly worksheets that you turn in.

After those 3 no-penalty extensions have been exhausted, late submission of weekly worksheets will be penalized 10% (a full letter grade) for each 24-hour period beyond the deadline. Late submissions of major papers will be penalized 10% for each 24-hour period beyond the deadline. If you need any extensions, let me know well in advance, so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Late work will not receive written feedback by default, even if a no-penalty extension is applied. For feedback on a late assignment, please send an email request.

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.

Please consult [utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm]

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

UNIT 0: INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

Week 01: Tuesday, 19 January 2021

Introductory Business Available: Week 01: Introductory Business Worksheet

Week 01: Introductory Business Worksheet due
Monday, 25 January 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 20 January 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

UNIT I: INFRASTRUCTURES

Week 02: Monday, 25 January 2021

Material Conditions Read: Karl Marx, 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*

Read: Erin Banco, "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/>]

Read: Clandine Beaumont, "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>]

Read: Adam Minter, "The Burning Truth Behind an E-Waste Dump in Africa," [<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/burning-truth-behind-e-waste-dump-africa-180957597/>]

Play: Molleindustria, *Phone Story*, [<http://www.phonestory.org>]

Available: Week 02: Material Conditions Worksheet including introduction of Paper 01: Digital Infrastructures Primer

Week 02: Material Conditions Worksheet due Monday, 1 February 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 27 January 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 03: Monday, 1 February 2021
Affordances and Constraints

Read: Hector Postigo, "The Socio-Technical Architecture of Digital Labor: Converting Play into YouTube Money"

Watch: Christophe Haubursin, "It's Not You. Phones Are Designed to Be Addicting," [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUMa0QkPzns>]

Watch: storyofstuffproject, "The Story of Electronics," [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sW_7i6T_H78]

Available: Week 03: Affordances and Constraints Worksheet

Week 03: Affordances and Constraints Worksheet due Monday, 8 February 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 3 February 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 04: Monday, 8 February 2021
Labor as Infrastructure

Read: Jennifer S. Light, "When Computers Were Women"

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

Read: Jonathan D. Fitzgerald, "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>]

Read: Nicole Karlis, "Apple Programmed Siri to Avoid the Word 'Feminism,'" [<https://www.salon.com/2019/09/09/apple-made-siri-avoid-the-word-feminism/>]

Available: Week 04: Labor as Infrastructure Worksheet

Week 04: Labor as Infrastructure Worksheet due Monday, 15 February 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 10 February 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 05: Monday, 15 February 2021
Access and Autonomy Watch: RealLifeLore2, “How a Few Undersea Cables Connect the Entire Internet,” [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTBLIYJSzdc>]
Read: Marisa Elena Duarte, “The Overlap between Technology and Sovereignty,” in *Network Sovereignty: Building the Internet across Indian Country*
Read: Oliver L. Haimson 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>]
Available: Week 05: Access and Autonomy Worksheet

Week 05: Access and Autonomy Worksheet due
Monday, 22 February 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 17 February 2021, 10:00-11:15AM
Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 06: Monday, 22 February 2021
Work on Paper 01 No Weekly Worksheet
Work on Paper 01: Digital Infrastructures Primer

Paper 01: Digital Infrastructures Primer due
Monday, 1 March 2021 by 11:59PM

UNIT II: EMBODIMENTS

Week 07: Monday, 1 March 2021
Bodies and Machines Read: Karl Marx, “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*
Read: Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter, “Machinic Subjects: The XBox and Its Rivals,” in *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*
Read Gita Jackson, “How to Play Video Games without Messing Up Your Body,” [<https://kotaku.com/how-to-play-video-games-without-messing-up-your-body-1824219174>]
Available: Week 07: Bodies and Machines Worksheet including introduction of Paper 02: Content Creation and Reflection

Week 07: Bodies and Machines Worksheet due
Monday, 8 March 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 3 March 2021, 10:00-11:15AM
Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 08: Monday, 8 March 2021

Online Performances

Listen: *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>]

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

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

Read: Minh-Ha T. Pham, “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*

Watch: Safiya Nygaard, “I Dressed Like YouTubers For a Week,”

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

Read: Elle Hunt, “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>]

Available: Week 08: Online Performances Worksheet

Week 08: Online Performances Worksheet due

Monday, 22 March 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 10 March 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

SPRING BREAK Monday, 15 March 2021 – Sunday, 21 March 2021

Week 09: Monday, 22 March 2021

Branding and Surveillance

Read: Apryl Y. Williams and Beatriz Aldana Marquez, “The Lonely Selfie King: Selfies and the Conspicuous Prosumption of Gender and Race”

Play: Robert Yang, *Cobra Club HD*,

[<https://radiatoryang.itch.io/cobraclub>] (NSFW)

Read: Simone Browne, “B(®)anding Blackness: Biometric Technology and the Surveillance of Blackness,” in *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*

Available: Week 09: Branding and Surveillance Worksheet

Week 09: Branding and Surveillance Worksheet due

Monday, 29 March 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 24 March 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 10: Monday, 29 March 2021

Attention Economies

Watch: Gina Barton, “Why Your Netflix Thumbnails Don’t Look Like Mine,” [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axCBA3VD5dQ>]

Read: Olivia Banner, “Algorithms, the Attention Economy, and the Breast Cancer Narrative,” in *Communicative Biocapitalism: The Voice of*

the Patient in Digital Health and the Health Humanities

Read: Michele White, "Too Close to See, Too Intimate a Screen: Men, Women, and Webcams," in *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship*

Available: Week 10: Attention Economies Worksheet

Week 10: Attention Economies Worksheet due
Monday, 5 April 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 31 March 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 11: Monday, 5 April 2021
Work on Paper 02 No Weekly Worksheet
Work on Paper 02: Content Creation and Reflection

Paper 02: Content Creation and Reflection due
Monday, 12 April 2021 by 11:59PM

UNIT III: EXCHANGES

Week 12: Monday, 12 April 2021

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

Read: Rob Horning, "Social Media, Social Factory,"

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

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

Available: Week 12: Goods Worksheet
including introduction of Paper 03: Critical Documentary Analysis

Week 12: Goods Worksheet due
Monday, 19 April 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 14 April 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 13: Monday, 19 April 2021

Free Labors Read: Abigail De Kosnik, "Interrogating 'Free' Fan Labor,"
<http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/>

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

Available: Week 13: Free Labors Worksheet

Week 13: Free Labors Worksheet due
Monday, 26 April 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 21 April 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 14: Monday, 26 April 2021

Media Industries Read: Juan Piñón and Viviana Rojas, “Language and Cultural Identity in the New Configuration of the US Latino TV Industry”
Read: Kater Conger, David Uberti, and Laura Wagner, “Univision Is a Fucking Mess,” [<https://specialprojectsdesk.com/univision-is-a-fucking-mess-1825836622>]
Read: Alex Rosenblat, “The Truth About How Uber’s App Manages Drivers,” [<https://hbr.org/2016/04/the-truth-about-how-ubers-app-manages-drivers>]
Read: Trebor Scholz, “The Future of Work: The People’s Uber,” [<https://psmag.com/economics/the-future-of-work-the-peoples-uber>]
Watch: Left Left Up, “Platform Capitalism, Immaterial Labour, Games Industry Workers Conditions,” [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksyGKEz0-AU>]
Available: Week 14: Media Industries Worksheet

Week 14: Media Industries Worksheet due
Monday, 3 May 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 28 April 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

Week 15: Monday, 3 May 2021

Virtual Currencies Read: Duncan Geere, “The History of Creative Commons,” [<http://www.wired.co.uk/article/history-of-creative-commons>]
Read: Sarah Laskow, “The Rise of Pirate Libraries,” [<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-rise-of-illegal-pirate-libraries>]
Watch: CBC News, “Cryptocurrency Explained,” [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mvrq8hLjcRk>]
Read: Alex Hern, “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>]
Available: Week 15: Virtual Currencies Worksheet

Week 15: Virtual Currencies Worksheet due
Saturday, 15 May 2021 by 11:59PM

Wednesday, 5 May 2021, 10:00-11:15AM

Optional: Online session on the course Discord server

**FINAL WEEK Paper 03: Critical Documentary Analysis due
Saturday, 15 May 2021 by 11:59PM**

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