



Course	FTVM 619
Course Title	Topics in Digital Media: Working Feelings in the Digital Economy
Professor	Dr. Josef Nguyen (he/him/his)
Term	Winter 2025
Meetings	W, 3:00-6:00pm

PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

Email Address	josefn@umich.edu Please format and address all emails regarding the class professionally, include the course information in the subject line, and allow up to 24 hours for responses (and longer for weekends).
Office Hours	By email appointment, with in-office and online options

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Pre-requisites,	n/a
Co-requisites, & other restrictions	

Course Description	This graduate course examines the twinned meanings of “working feelings” within the context of the digital economy. The first concerns digital forms of emotional labor and affective labor to manage the feelings of ourselves and others. The second explores how we feel, and are encouraged to feel, about work itself, particularly amid increasing conditions of economic precarity and employment insecurity. To do so, this class draws on diverse fields—including digital media studies, science and technology studies, affect theory, feminist and queer theory, critical race and ethnic studies, disability and crip theory, and others—to examine the situated, contextual, and material conditions that shape the work of feelings and the feelings of work in the era of digital and digitized labor. Assigned materials will cover economic anxiety, precarity, and insecurity; ideologies of love and passion for work; the sharing economy; creative labor and creative industries; social media, fandom, and parasocial relations; content moderation; online intimacy; digitally mediated sex work; customer service; work/life boundaries; exhaustion and burnout; and rage against work, among other topics.
---------------------------	---

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Understand a range of theorizations and analyses of the affective and emotional registers of labor in the digital era
- Become familiar with approaches in critical and cultural studies of media and technology
- Integrate existing scholarship into their own original research with awareness of the concerns of academic publishing

Required Texts & Materials

Judy Wajcman, *Pressed for Time: The Acceleration of Life in Digital Capitalism* (University of Chicago Press, 2015) ISBN: 9780226196473

Brooke Erin Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work* (Yale University Press, 2017) – ISBN: 9780300227666

Angela Jones, *Camming: Money, Power, and Pleasure in the Sex Work Industry* (NYU Press, 2020) – ISBN: 9781479829422

Renyi Hong, *Passionate Work: Endurance after the Good Life* (Duke University Press, 2022) – ISBN: 9781478015598

All other readings and materials are available in the Dropbox folder for the course.

Grading Criteria

Thoughtful Class Engagement
Research Paper

60%
40%

COURSE POLICIES

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 contribute their own work respectfully and productively. Conflicting perspectives are unavoidable. 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 that unduly distract from the educational mission and that 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... Address 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 share with and create for 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 the University of Michigan 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.

Sexual Misconduct

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 found with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) on their 24-hour crisis line, 734.936.3333 and at sapac@umich.edu. Alleged violations can be non-confidentially reported to the Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX Office (ECRT) at ecrtoffice@umich.edu.

Class Attendance

Attend class regularly and in full to the best of your reasonable ability.

Inclement Weather

In cases of severe inclement weather that may impede safe travel to campus, we may instead meet on Zoom. In such situations, I will do my best to notify the class by 8am the day of.

For those already on campus or in Ann Arbor and who do not otherwise have a designated space to attend an online course meeting without disruption, our regular classroom will still be available during our scheduled meeting time for such purposes.

Please reach out with any concerns about access to appropriate computing equipment to attend any online class meetings.

Technology in the Classroom

Laptops and computers can be used in the classroom specifically for purposes directly pertinent to the educational activities and discussions at-hand.

Classroom Recording

Unless specified in approved documented accommodations, students are prohibited from recording any part of this course.

Late Work

If you need an extension on assignments, please let me know in advance so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Academic Integrity

The University of Michigan community functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. The college promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. All cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the LSA Office of Student Academic Affairs. Being found responsible for academic misconduct will usually result in a grade sanction, in addition to any sanction from the college. For more information, including examples of behaviors that are considered academic misconduct and potential sanctions, please see lsa.umich.edu/lsa/academics/academic-integrity.html

ACCOMMODATIONS AND STUDENT SUPPORT RESOURCES

Disability Accommodations

The University of Michigan recognizes disability as an integral part of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and is committed to creating as accessible educational environment for students with disabilities/disabled students as possible.

Disability can include mental health conditions, ADHD, learning disabilities, autism, chronic illness, physical conditions, sensory conditions, and more.

If you anticipate or are experiencing barriers based on disability or temporary injuries, Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) (ssd.umich.edu) is the office that students work with to explore reasonable accommodations, tools, and resources.

- If **you are already connected** with SSD and have approved accommodations, please share your letter through Accommodate as soon as possible so that we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. The sooner I know about your disability access-needs, the more equipped I can be to facilitate accommodations. You should reach out to me and/or your Disability Access Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns about your accommodations.
- If **you have not connected** with SSD and anticipate or are experiencing a disability-related barrier, and would like to discuss accommodations and/or resources, please contact SSD by completing their initial information form (ssd.umich.edu/)
- If you have a **temporary medical injury/condition**, such as a broken arm, I may be able to assist in minimizing classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, you should contact the SSD as noted above.

For more information, call 734-763-3000 or email ssdoffice@umich.edu.

Health and Well-Being

While regular attendance and engagement in class are important, it should not be done at the undue expense of student health and well-being. As such, please treat your health and well-being, as well as the health and well-being of others, as a priority, such as by focusing on resting and recovering when ill. It is also important to care for one's needs for rest outside of those typically designated as valid medical illness and injury, such as during periods of high stress, menstruation, or fatigue.

Additionally, university students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressures and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. If the source of your stressors is academic, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. For personal concerns, U-M offers a variety of resources, many of which are listed on the Resources for Student Well-being webpage (wellbeing.studentlife.umich.edu/resources-list). You can also search for additional well-being resources on that website.

Student Parents and Caregivers

If you are a pregnant, parenting student, or primarily responsible for providing care for a loved one or family member, and you are in need of any accommodations, please let me know at your earliest convenience. You may also reach out to mcasp.org and CEW+ for resources and community support.

ASSIGNMENTS & ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Week 01: Wednesday, 8 January 2025

- Beginnings** Tiziana Terranova, “Free Labor,” *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*
Julia Ticona, “Introduction: Precarious Inclusion in the Digital Economy,” *Left to Our Own Devices: Coping with Insecure Work in a Digital Age*
Greg Goldberg, “Anxiety and the Antisocial,” *Antisocial Media: Anxious Labor in the Digital Economy*

IN CLASS:

Syllabus Overview
Class Introductions

Week 02: Wednesday, 15 January 2025

- Work /?/ Life** Mary F. Hoffman and Renee L. Cowan, “The Meaning of Work/Life: A Corporate Ideology of Work/Life Balance”
Agnieszka Wodzińska, “Drown Your Laptop: On Office Sirens, Working from Home, and Aesthetics of Refusal,”
[\[networkcultures.org/longform/2024/09/23/drown-your-laptop/\]](https://networkcultures.org/longform/2024/09/23/drown-your-laptop/)
Aubrey Anable, “Rhythms of Work and Play,” *Playing with Feelings: Video Games and Affect*

Week 03: Wednesday, 22 January 2025

- Working Passion** Renyi Hong, *Passionate Work: Endurance after the Good Life*

Week 04: Wednesday, 29 January 2025

- Creative Labors** Angela McRobbie, “Unpacking the Politics of Creative Labour,” *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*
Ergin Bulut, “Introduction: For Whom the Love Works in Video Game Production?” *A Precarious Game: The Illusion of Dream Jobs in the Video Game Industry*
Michael Siciliano, “Disappearing into the Object: Aesthetic Subjectivities and Organizational Control in Routine Cultural Work”

Week 05: Wednesday, 5 February 2025

- Digital Service Work** Kalindi Vora, “Call Center Agents: Commodified Affect and the Biocapital of Care,” *Life Support: Biocapital and the New History of Outsourced Labor*
Sarah T. Roberts, “I Call Myself a Sin Eater,” *Behind the Screen: Content Moderation in the Shadows of Social Media*
Alexandrea J. Ravenelle, “Sharing is Caring,” *Hustle and Gig: Struggling and Surviving in the Sharing Economy*

- Week 06: Wednesday, 12 February 2025**
Feeling Included Christina Dunbar-Hester, “Working Imaginaries: ‘Freedom from Jobs’ or Learning to Love to Labor,” *Hacking Diversity: The Politics of Inclusion in Open Technology Cultures*
Roopika Risam, “Diversity Work and Digital Carework in Higher Education,” [doi.org/10.5210/fm.v23i3.8241]
Hong-An Wu, “Pedagogical Encounters with Structural Whiteness in Games: Tales and Reflections from a Game Studies Classroom”
- Week 07: Wednesday, 19 February 2025**
Feeling Rushed Judy Wajcman, *Pressed for Time: The Acceleration of Life in Digital Capitalism*
- Week 08: Wednesday, 26 February 2025**
Social Media Work, Part I Brooke Erin Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work*
- SEMESTER BREAK Saturday, 1 March 2025 – Sunday, 9 March 2025**
NO CLASS MEETING
- Week 09: Wednesday, 12 March 2025**
Social Media Work, Part II Gabriella Lukács, “The Labor of Cute: Net Idols in the Digital Economy,” *Invisibility by Design: Women and Labor in Japan’s Digital Economy*
Tobias Raun, “Capitalizing Intimacy: New Subcultural Forms of Micro-celebrity Strategies and Affective Labour on YouTube”
Crystal Abidin, “Grief Hypejacking: Influencers, #ThoughtsAndPrayers, and the Commodification of Grief on Instagram”
- IN CLASS:**
Introduce Research Paper Assignment
- Week 10: Wednesday, 19 March 2025**
Online Sex Work Angela Jones, *Camming: Money, Power, and Pleasure in the Sex Work Industry*
- Week 11: Wednesday, 26 March 2025**
Exhaustion and Burnout Sarah Thorne, “#Emotional: Exploitation & Burnout in Creator Culture”
Jussi Parikka, “Dust and Exhaustion: The Labor of Media Materialism,” [journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ctheory/article/view/14790]
Tung-Hui Hu, “Start When It’s Too Late,” *Digital Lethargy: Dispatches from the Age of Disconnection*

Week 12: Wednesday, 2 April 2025
Work on NO CLASS MEETING
Research Paper
Abstract **Research Paper Abstract due Wednesday, 2 April 2025 by 11:59PM**

Week 13: Wednesday, 9 April 2025
Rage and Refusal Gavin Mueller, “High-Tech Luddism,” *Breaking Things at Work: The Luddites Are Right about Why You Hate Your Job*
Trebor Scholz, “On Selective Engagement,” *Uberworked and Underpaid: How Workers Are Disrupting the Digital Economy*
Sarah Jaffe, “Conclusion: What Is Love?” *Work Won’t Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone*

Week 14: Wednesday, 16 April 2025
Work on Final NO CLASS MEETING
Assignment

FINALS WEEK **Research Paper due Thursday, 1 May 2025 by 11:59PM**

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