ENGW 3332

Writing Online

Spring '16 :: JBWS 361 :: M/W 2:00-3:15 pm

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Sorin Hall, room 118
Tues 11 am-12:30 am
Fri 10-11:30 am

Goals

Today, college faculty struggle with how to incorporate emerging digital technologies into their courses. On one hand, this struggle reflects professors' fears that by devoting attention to these technologies in their courses, then something else--traditional, tried-and-true practices and skills--will end up getting short shrift. On the other hand, many professors fear that they don't know enough about the technologies to do an effective job teaching students how to use them ethically and creatively. It is with those fears in mind that I've designed our course this semester. This semester, our overarching goal is two-fold: (1) to critically examine how people, specifically fans, use digital technologies to develop innovative writing practices and communities, and (2) to experiment with some of the composing practices we find through this examination.
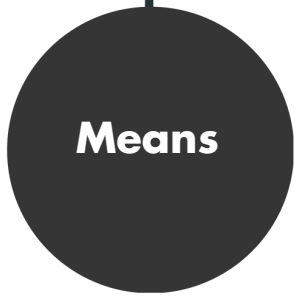
Means

To that end, we will begin by looking at the historical development of the internet, how leading programmers and engineers at that time supported opposing views of where these technologies would take us (AI vs extended mind), and ongoing arguments about the role internet technologies play in shaping culture. Is the internet a democratizing force, or is it eroding our culture?

Working from this foundation, we'll look at how fans creators in various communities reconceptualize writing: you will research these practices and write an academic paper analyzing them, but you will also try your hand at creating some of the texts we commonly encounter online, e.g., microblogs, infographics, and memes.

Outcomes

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- understand some of the main arguments pertaining to how digital technologies are changing global culture and communication;

- use these technologies to engage with and research a fan community; and,

- use these technologies to deliver your research findings to academic and non-academic audiences.

Assignments & Grading

Assignments

There are four major assignments, or projects, in this course.

In the first project, you will develop a microblog to document your notes from readings and your individual research throughout the course. In lieu of quizzes or short essays, you'll post to your blog responding to weekly prompts throughout the semester. Additionally, you'll use the blog to compile resources that you will use for subsequent projects. We'll discuss the blogs in detail in the first week of the course. (Note: Because of the nature of the project, I will give periodic feedback throughout the semester, but I will not grade the blog until the course ends.)

In the second project, you'll choose a fan community to investigate, develop a research question related to that community, and propose an academic research project based on that question. I will provide a format for this proposal at the outset of the project.

In the third project, you will complete the project you proposed previously.

Finally, for the fourth project you will create a multimedia presentation for a public audience that draws from your academic research in Project 3. This presentation might involve video, a photo essay, an infographic, etc. In other words, you might all be using very different technologies and software to complete Project 4.

Grading

Each project is worth 100 points. Prior to beginning each project we will discuss its assignment sheet, calendar, and grading rubric in class.

Project 1: Microblog	100
Project 2: Research Proposal	100
Project 3: Research Paper	100
Project 4: Remediated Research Paper	100
Total Points	**400**

Table 1. Assignment point values.

Each of your project grades can be translated into a percentage out of 100 with a corresponding letter grade listed in Table 2.

Final letter grades will be determined using the scale illustrated by Table 2. To ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. For example, a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999.

A+	4.0	100—97
A	4.0	96—94
A-	3.67	93—90
B+	3.33	89—87
B	3.0	86—84
B-	2.67	83—80
C+	2.33	79—77
C	2.0	76—70
D	1.0	69—60
F	0.0	59—0

Table 2. Letter grades, GPA, and percentage equivalents.

Readings

Course readings come from a few a number of different sources and include alphabetic texts, videos, and podcasts that will be posted to the course Canvas site. The assignment sheet for each project contains a detailed calendar with readings listed.

You are not required to buy any textbook.

Readings by Topic

Weeks 1 & 2: Development of PC (Extended mind/Artificial intelligence split)
Week 3: Development of Arpanet and the Internet
Week 4: Development of the Web (2.0 and beyond) (Democratizing force v. Cult of the amateur)
Week 5: How the Internet Changes Writing
Week 6: Researching Writing Online
Weeks 7 & 8: Researching Fan Communities
Weeks 9-11: Using Digital Tools in Research
Weeks 12 & 13: Remix and Remediation
Weeks 14-16: Read for/Work on Your Projects

Course Policies

Attendance

You are expected to attend every meeting of the classes for which you are enrolled. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. I also know that life happens, so here is the attendance policy for all my courses:

1. You may miss a maximum of one week of class without penalty and with no questions asked. However, you still must turn in your work on time and keep up with the course. Because our class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays only, this means you may miss two (2) class meetings without penalty.

2. Each absence after this one week maximum will lower your final course grade by half a letter grade, regardless of how well you otherwise perform. If you miss four (4) or more class meetings, I reserve the right (but do not take on the obligation) to drop you from the course with a grade of "WA." If you remain on the roster after the drop deadline and "disappear," you will likely earn a grade of "F."

ProTip: The tl:dr Version

1. Absent is absent: there is no difference in excused or unexcused.

2. In-class assignments or activities, including quizzes, cannot be made up.

3. If you "disappear" (stop attending) but do not officially drop the course, you will likely earn a WA or an F.

4. If you have a legitimate reason to leave early or arrive late, please talk to me in advance.

Late Work

I deduct 10 points for each day your final projects are late unless you make arrangements with me prior to the due date. Problems can arise, but the key to their successful resolution is communication. Keep me informed; avoid simply not turning in projects or assignments.

Participation

You will complete much of your work for this course in small groups, and I expect you to fulfill your fair share of group work and interact courteously with your peers at all times. Most of our class sessions will be conducted in discussion/workshop format, and many of these workshops cannot be "re-created" outside of class, so regular attendance and active participation are essential to your success. Active participation may also include successful completion of reading quizzes, which will be used to assess your preparedness for a class meeting.

I recommend that you save absences for when you are sick or have an emergency. If you find that an unavoidable problem prevents you from attending class, please discuss the problem with me as soon as possible. If you plan to be absent for a religious or holy day, please plan with me in advance.

ProTip: How to Deal with an Absence

1. Email/upload any work due that day in class.

2. Email a classmate for notes & changes to assignments so you are prepared the next day.

3. Check the syllabus and course website, and complete the work assigned in class

Communicating with Me & Office Hours

The best way to contact me is by email. Please email me whenever you have questions. I also will email you regularly with reminders, instructions, and late breaking information. Therefore, a requirement of this class is that you check your SEU email & the course site daily, especially the day before and morning of class. Also, I am happy to meet with you by appointment if you cannot make it to office hours. Email me about setting up an appointment.

If you have an emergency, email me.

Learning Software vs. Learning How to Learn Software

Experience tells me that the most frustrating part of this course is going to be our use of software to complete the major projects. I understand this: however, software can allow us to communicate in ways that we simply can't in older media. There is a benefit to working with, rather than against, technology. But, technology changes. Rapidly. Our focus in this class is not on you all becoming expert users of particular software. I want you to gain more experience in learning how to learn software. Why? Because when you get into a professional setting, you're likely going to be asked to use software that is unfamiliar or didn't exist when you were in college. I want you to have your own methods for dealing with this experience.

What does that mean for this class?

To help you learn how to work with the different kinds of software we'll be using this semester, I have arranged for Instructional Technology to come into our class to offer tailored workshops for our major projects. We're going to start with the "human assets" we have on campus, and let the experts from OIT guide us through some basic concepts.

When you ask me a question, my first question will most likely be, "Did you Google it?" I am not doing this to deflect your question. I will ask what steps you took to learn something because experts aren't always going to be available (and there will be times when you don't want someone to know what you don't know). So, I'll be asking you to use all those free, online resources to help you find answers because googling just might help you land a job one day. How much you learn and how quickly will be determined by you and what you hope to get out of this class. Just know that your grade will always be determined by how well you work with the principles and concepts we discuss in class, not how well you use the software.

Challenges & Accomdations

If you have a confirmed medical, psychiatric, or learning disability that I need to accommodate in teaching you, please see me right away. I want to help you succeed, so please come see during office hours or make an appointment, preferably during the first week of classes. You will need to prove your disability by submitting certain documents to Student Disability Services in Moody Hall 155. Please note that I cannot accommodate any disability without a "504 letter," nor can I accommodate disabilities retroactively. If you do have a 504 letter to submit, my preference would be for you to come by during my office hours. This will give you and I some privacy, and it will allow me to make a copy of your letter for my files.

Please also remember that a 504 letter entitles you to reasonable accommodations, not to an easier course. You should read the reverse side of the 504 letter for information about your duties and responsibilities. I will ask you to sign the reverse side of the letter.

In addition, if you are under a great deal of stress or you just want someone to talk to confidentially, see the staff in the Health & Counseling Center (Lady Bird Johnson Hall, Suite 100). They can help you develop strategies for personal success and coping with challenges.

Academic Counseling and Exploration (ACE), located in Moody Hall 155, also offers services to help students develop and use effective skills for successful academic performance, including low-cost tutoring for most subjects.

Note: This syllabus is subject to change. Students will be notified on the course website and/or by email of changes made to the policies or syllabus.

Academic Integrity

The Student Handbook states, "St. Edward's University expects academic honesty from all members of the community, and it is our policy that academic integrity be fostered to the highest degree possible. Consequently, all work submitted for grading in a course must be created as a result of your own thought and effort. Representing work as your own when it is not a result of such thought and effort is a violation of our code of academic integrity. Whenever it is established that academic dishonesty has occurred, the course instructor shall impose a penalty upon the offending individual(s). It is recognized that some offenses are more egregious than others and that, therefore, a range of penalties should be available. Whenever possible, it would also be important to try to determine the intent of the offender, since the error could be a result of careless work rather than an intent to deceive. The maximum penalty for a first offense is failure in the course, and if that penalty is imposed, the student does not have the option of withdrawing from the course. In cases of mitigating circumstance, the instructor has the option of assigning a lesser penalty."

The St. Edward's University Undergraduate Bulletin and the Student Handbook state that a student who is dishonest in any work may receive the maximum penalty of an F for that course. SEU does not allow students to withdraw from a course where an F in the course for academic dishonesty has been imposed. Students caught committing academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties as described in the bulletin and handbook.

At St. Edward's, plagiarism includes turning in as your own work any drafts, papers, journals, or homework that incorporates any ideas or actual writing done by others (or from the internet) without acknowledging the source you used. The availability of documents and information on the internet has made it increasingly tempting to plagiarize, so please maintain a rigorous sense of academic honesty.

Calendar Overview

Classes Begin	Mon., Jan. 11
Last Day to Change/Add Classes	Fri., Jan. 15
MLK Day	Mon., Jan. 18
Last Day for Unrecorded Drop	Wed., Jan. 27
Project 1 Check-In	Wed., Jan. 27
Project 2 Due	Sun., Mar. 6
Spring Break	Mar. 14-18
Easter Break	Mar. 24-28
Project 3 Due	Sun., Apr. 7
Last Day of Class	Wed., Apr. 27
Projects 1 & 4 Due	During Our Final Exam Time

Detailed calendars that list class work and homework will be included with each project assignment sheet.