AMST 2980: Digital Media and Cultural Politics in a Global World

Instructor: Dan Greene

• Office: 4115 Susquehanna Hall

• Office hours (via appointments on Canvas Chat): noon to 2 on Mondays and Wednesdays

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Class Meetings: Online

Pre- or co-requisites: None

"When we get the remote Russian village online, what will get people to the Internet is not going to be reports from Human Rights Watch. It's going to be pornography, 'Sex and the City,' or maybe funny videos of cats." – Evgeny Morozov (2009)

Course Description:

This course explores how globalization happens. It doesn't wash over us as a series of unstoppable social waves. Rather, a variety of different globalizations are made, remade, and unmade through everyday actions. We focus on how using, buying, making, displaying, seeking, and censoring digital media such as smartphones, the Web, PC's, and videogames crosses some cultural borders and firms up others. Though they're never the whole story, these technologies become key sites for the adoption or refusal of global trends in politics, economics, and society. Our course opens with a grounding in globalization studies and digital media studies before transitioning to focused weeks on popular, subcultural, and political digital networks. Throughout, we focus on the historical roots of these trends and communities, their actions online and offline, and how the smallest acts of watching porn alone or leveling up in *World of Warcraft* can in fact involve many people crossing many different cultural borders. We take advantage of the online setting of the course to practice a number of different kinds of writing (blogging and blog comments, collaborative note-taking, summaries, field notes, research papers, and editing) and engage in 'virtual ethnographies' of online communities, where participant-observation and interviewing is largely carried out on the internet.

Key Course Questions:

This is some of what we'll be debating and researching this semester:

- Is there such a thing as 'internet culture'? Or are there many different internets?
- How does someone like Psy go viral? And does he mean the same thing to everyone everywhere?
- Are Facebook and Twitter inherently democratic and anti-establishment?
- What are the physical roots of digital media?
- Can you feel like a neighbor to someone you're chatting with an ocean away?
- What is globalization, if it is one thing, and how does it work?
- How do subcultures make safe spaces online? How do trolls make online spaces unsafe?
- What does 'local' mean in a global world?

Course Goals

After completing this course, students should be able to:

• Demonstrate familiarity and facility with fundamental terminology and concepts in the fields

- of globalization studies, media studies, and cultural studies used to produce knowledge about global media cultures.
- Demonstrate understanding of the methods used by scholars in the study of global media.
- Conduct research on a topic in digital media studies using a variety of global sources and technologies.
- Demonstrate the ability to formulate a thesis related to a specific topic in globalization studies and media studies and to support the thesis with evidence and argumentation.
- Analyze how global media forms and different communications technologies are adopted differently depending on different cultural, historical, political, and social contexts.
- Articulate how particular policies regulating communications technology, or their political and economic context, create or inhibit the formation and functioning of plural societies.
- Use information technologies to access research and communicate effectively about plural societies.

General structure of the class

Our online three-credit class lasts six weeks. A usual in-person three-credit class meeting on Tuesdays and Thursdays lasts 15 weeks, with 29 class sessions total. Our online class will have 18 class 'sessions', three each week, that are each roughly equivalent to 1.5 in-person days ($18 \times 1.5 = 27$) in terms of material covered and activities completed. We'll take advantage of the online format by practicing different kinds of writing, using different kinds of media as evidence, and researching different cultural groups in their online homes. Canvas is our classroom and every time students log in they should act as though they are entering the classroom. The type of writing you do here is similar to a business memo or written essay. It is not a Facebook post or text message.

Every week will look like the below. All deadlines are 10 PM on the listed day.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
 Blog post for Monday's readings due Monday quiz due Comment on Friday's blogs due Instructor posts Wednesday notes and lecture 	Comment on Monday's blogs due	 Blog post for Wednesday's readings due Wednesday quiz due Instructor posts Friday notes and lecture 	Comment on Wednesday's blogs due	 Blog post for Wednesday's readings due Friday quiz due Instructor posts Monday notes and lecture Weekly research benchmarks due

The instructor will supplement each week's readings with a short podcast, accompanied in some cases by visual materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides, some photographs or short videos) and a series of notes on what to pay special attention to in each reading, and what you can choose to avoid. The purpose of this is to help you focus on the salient points of the readings and the main themes of the course will testing the same in your own research. They will not substitute for actually doing the reading, and both blog posts and quizzes will be impossible to complete without having done so.

Grading and assignments

All assignments have their own grading rubrics, but students will be able to get a sense of what they offer from the below. All assignments have a point value, with everything adding up to 1000, so

students should be able to estimate their grade at any point in the semester—though grades will be regularly updated on Canvas' gradebook. ELMS is only an unofficial record of grades, the instructor's copy is final. Extra credit is built into the blogging assignments. All written assignments should be polished products with few, preferably no, spelling or grammar errors. Students will receive detailed feedback on the style, composition, structure, and argumentation of their writing. Many students have not received this sort of line-by-line criticism before. It's the best way to improve your writing, but it can also be a bit of a shock the first time. That's OK: Both essays and blogs have specific conventions you have to learn and getting suggestions about what works and what doesn't work in your writing isn't a comment on you, its a comment on some words you put on the page. We'll work together to make the words on the page better represent the complex understanding you all already have, and will continue to hone, about digital media and global cultures.

Quizzes-100 points

A brief quiz will be due on most but not all class days. These will test reading comprehension through matching or fill-in-the-blank questions about different key terms and main points.

Online participation — 400 points

We don't meet in person, so our blogs replace the kind of discussions we would otherwise have in a seminar. Students must post a 350-word (2-3 paragraph) blog post to the Discussions section of Canvas three times a week. The instructor will start the discussion with a prompt and some brief guides for the relevant readings. Students will also have to post a 150-word comment to another student and respond to any comments on their original post.

Blogs are more important than quizzes, and the points show it, because they are where you take course ideas and apply them to new materials or problems that are important to you. Research shows that this leads to more persistent learning than basic recall. Though you're responding to a specific prompt, blogs should also be thought of as trial runs for your research paper: Every post should have a thesis statement, supporting evidence, and links to course texts. The instructor will grade each post out of 5 points according to the rubric with a brief comment and will discuss specific comments or trends in them in lectures.

Extra credit is built into the blogging system (see the rubric for more info). Do more blogs, get more points. At any time, students can choose to do a 250-word media post where they use a contemporary film, TV series, book, album, commercial, etc. to help explain some of the ideas for the week. They will get up to 5 extra points for this. Students doing a book review (see below) can choose to do a media post or to answer the prompt with a normal blog post for up to 5 extra points. Students can accrue up to 50 points worth of extra credit.

Book Review — 100 points

One of the skills we develop in this class is summarizing complex arguments and expressing them to other people in a way that interests them. This is crucial for most any job and will be practiced here with book reviews. Each session one or two students (schedule included with rubric) will get to skip blogging and will have to write a 750-word report on a book chosen from a list prepared by the instructor and post it to the course discussion site. These books are often those from which everyone else reads a chapter that week, plus of mix of contemporary and historical critiques that we don't have room for in the class. These books are available from academic libraries and through online retailers and should be tracked down far in advance of the due date, so that you have the time to read. All book report writers must schedule a Canvas Chat with the instructor to discuss their book. This meeting can take place at any stage of the process (e.g., from choosing a book to discussing a draft review.)

Research Paper — 400 points

Students will bring together the skills and ideas they've developed in the class and put them to the test in an 8-page final paper on an online community with global membership. This community can be from anywhere on the Web as long as it's active, global, and embodies some of the themes of the class as well as adding new ones. We use our online setting to our advantage and practice a sort of virtual ethnography, or online participant-observation of the community's online space. The final draft takes the place of a final exam, and will be due on our final class session. The different research benchmarks build to the final product: brainstorming, field notes, annotations, an introduction, a first draft, edits, and a final draft. This helps the student to manage their time and the instructor to advise them along the way. Our six Research Benchmarks add up to 400 points together. Rubrics will be available for each Benchmark and students will be working with the instructor and peers the entire time because good writing is a skill honed through practice, revision, and critical feedback.

Semester grades will be based on the following University scale:

Letter Grade	Description	
A+ (970-1000 points), A (930-969 points), A- (900-929 points)	"Denotes excellent mastery of the subject and outstanding scholarship."	
B+ (870-899 points), B (830-869 points), B- (800-829 points)	"Denotes good mastery of the subject and good scholarship."	
C+ (770-799 points), C (730-769 points), C- (700-729 points)	"Denotes acceptable mastery of the subject and the usual achievement expected."	
D+ (670-699 points), D (630-669 points), D- (600-629 points)	"Denotes borderline understanding of the subject. These grades denote marginal performance, and they do not represent satisfactory progress toward a degree."	
F (0-599points)	"Denotes failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance."	

With hard work and careful attention to the texts, classroom discussion, and the course themes and objectives, every student is capable of above-average work. Work that just 'gets by' on the requirements will be rewarded with a 'C' or less. It takes truly exemplary work to earn an 'A' grade. All assignments are issued well in advance of their well-advertised due date. **Because of this, computer problems are not an excuse for late work and late work will not be accepted.** If students feel they will not be able to meet a deadline due to extreme circumstances, they should contact the instructor a week in advance to discuss possible alternatives.

Absences

Per University policy, absences may be excused for religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, inclement weather (announced on the University's homepage) and serious medical illness . Absences for reasons of illness must be accompanied by a signed note. Once per semester this note may be self-signed with the honor pledge appended, at all other times it must be accompanied by a doctor's signature. Details of the University's medical absence policy may be found here:

http://www.provost.umd.edu/announcements/StudentMedicalAbsences.cfm Unexcused absences result in a '0' for participation that day. An excused absence mean that day does not count towards your final participation grade (e.g., final attendance is calculated out of *n*-1 days instead of *n* days).

Statement on Diversity, Respect, and Classroom Language

This class will touch many 'hot-button' subjects such as race, gender, and sexuality, and will encourage personal refection to link those issues to contemporary cultural debates and personal experiences. In the discussion of politically complex and charged issues, it is often necessary to explore terminology and concepts that, on occasion, may make us uncomfortable. Please understand that it is necessary to engage in these discussions in order to to come to a critical and comprehensive understanding of our topic so that, subsequently, we can learn how to deconstruct and assuage the themes contained therein. This means that online and in-class spaces are safe ones, where the expression of personal identity is encouraged and respected. Students should afford each other the same respect they desire in turn. Insults and disrespectful language will not be tolerated. Uncomfortable topics may be broached, but always in relation to course themes and objectives and never for shock value. If you become particularly distressed about any discussion, please contact the instructor immediately. The instructor will give the class a heads up when any particularly graphic topics are going to be brought into discussion.

Disability Accommodation and Learning Support

Students requiring accommodations for classroom activities or assessments must provide the instructor with the appropriate documentation from Disability Support Services (DSS) in the first two weeks of the semester. Individual solutions will be negotiated from there. DSS can be reached at http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/ or 301-314-7682. Students experiencing serious difficulties adapting to the demands of the college workload are encouraged to make use of the Counseling Center's other resources in the Learning Assistance Service (LAS; for developing effective college learning skills) or Counseling Services (for professional support around personal, interpersonal, and vocational issues). They can be reached at 301-314-7693 and 301-314-7651 respectively.

Digital and Written Communication

Students will recognize that the norms of communication are different in a scholarly community, compared to a social one. You are not going to write and act the same way in class spaces and in communication with the professor as you would on Facebook or through text messages or instant messages to friends. Major course announcements will be emailed. Email is also the best way to contact your instructor with any questions or concerns. All emails should have a subject line with the course title, a greeting, and a signature. To learn more about email norms, and other college how-to's, Wellesley College's "<u>How to Email a Professor</u>" posts (and the whole Netiquette series) are priceless. I check my email regularly, but I get a lot of it. Between Monday and Friday, I will endeavor to respond to emails within 12 hours. Detailed discussions are best saved for office hours. When composing a blog post, be sure to write at a college level, draw evidence from the texts, and communicate your ideas clearly to your intended audience with the understanding that reading a response is different from hearing it explained in person. Students are expected to improve their writing skills throughout the semester, but will be graded at a college level—so style, structure, readability, and spelling and grammar will factor into grading. For guides on effective writing strategies, check out this MLA-based online guide (http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/mla/index.shtml) or the classic Strunk & White Elements of Style. Students desiring more personalized support are encouraged to make an appointment with the University Writing Center (http://english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter).

Academic Honesty

The University has approved a *Code of Academic Integrity* (http://www.jpo.umd.edu/Info/Faculty/AcadHonorPledge.aspx) which prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, facilitating academic dishonesty, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. All quotations taken from other authors, including Web-based sources, must be indicated by quotation marks and referenced. Paraphrasing must be referenced as well. Using any source without a reference constitutes plagiarism in this course. Any intentional plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment and may result in a failing grade for the course. All Research

Projects should conform to a scholarly citation style (e.g., MLA, Chicago, or APA). If students are even slightly confused about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, review the guidelines at http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/whatisplag.php or contact the instructor. Correctly citing other people's ideas is, of course, a skill with a learning curve. To reflect that, this course distinguishes between the following types of plagiarism:

Category A: Sloppiness. Automatic "0" on paper, with option to rewrite for no better than a "C" Category B: Ignorance. Automatic "0" on paper, with option to rewrite for no better than a "C" Category C: Obvious Conscious Cheating. Automatic "0" on paper, with no option for rewriting

Students caught plagiarizing a second time will be asked to leave the class and will receive an automatic "0" in the course. For those of you who are not aware of what constitutes plagiarism, here is a breakdown of the various types: 1) Buying papers, borrowing papers, or recycling former papers unrevised and claiming these types of papers as your own for your assignment in this course. (This constitutes a Category C offense) 2) Cutting and pasting parts of a webpage or borrowing passages from a book for your paper without properly citing these parts and claiming the material as your own for the expressed intent of cheating. (This constitutes a Category C offense) 3) Failing to use proper citation style for material you borrow, accidentally. (This constitutes either a Category A or B offense).

Canvas automatically processes all written work through TurnItIn, a plagiarism-detection software that shows the instructor what percentage of a given work matches internet sources.

Course Texts, Copyrights, and Costs:

Both textbooks are available at the University of Maryland campus bookstore. Students will also be responsible for additional readings uploaded to the ELMS website, which have been designated on the course schedule.

- Andy Carvin. Distant Witness: Social Media, The Arab Spring, and a Revolution in Journalism. New York, NY: CUNY Journalism Press, 2013.
 - Readings from this account of Carvin's online involvement with the Arab Spring are labelled 'Carvin' in the syllabus.

About half of the readings for the course (scholarly, creative, and journalistic) will be either available on the open Web or uploaded to Canvas as PDFs. All course materials *not* produced by the instructor (e.g., readings, films, etc.) are copyrighted under the licenses included within those materials.

All course materials produced *by the instructor* (e.g., this syllabus, rubrics, slides, etc.) are licensed under a <u>Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported</u> license, you can feel free to reuse or re-purpose these materials as long as you give due credit and don't get paid for it.

Week 1: What is Globalization?

Monday July 14: Get to know each other

- Introduce the course and main ideas about digital media, globalization, and cultural politics.
- Blog post 1

Wednesday July 16: How do we describe globalization?

Holton, Making Globalization Chapter 1 "Introduction"

- Paul Mason, "Twenty Reasons Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere." BBC News February 5, 2011 http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/paulmason/2011/02/twenty-reasons-why-its-kick-ing.html
- Blog post 2

Friday July 18: What exactly has changed?

- Holton Chapter 2 "When Did Globalization Begin?"
- Anne McLintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising" in Nicholas Mierzoeff (ed.) *The Visual Culture Reader*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1999. 304-316
- Blog post 3
- Research Benchmark 1: Identify community of interest, obtain informed consent

Week 2 How Does Digital Media Connect Us?

Monday July 21: What's new about new media?

- Manuel Castells, "The Information Technology Revolution" in *The Rise of the Network Society* (2nd ed.). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 28-69
 - Everyone will read pages 28-38. The class will be divided into 4 groups to produce collaborative notes on the remaining sections via Google Docs, an important collaborative tool for many distributed working groups. These notes and a few sentences of reflection on them will take the place of your blog post for today
- Bonnie Nardi "Prologue" and "An Ethnographic Investigation of World of Warcraft" in *My Life* as a Night Elf Priest: An Anthropological Account of World of Warcarft. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.8008655.0001.001

Wednesday July 23: Flows of people and products

- Saskia Sassen, "Global Cities and Survival Circuits." in Radway, Janice, Kevin Gaines K., Barry Shank and Penny Von Eschen, eds. American Studies: An Anthology. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009. 185-194
- Giles Slade, Introduction and "Cell Phones and e-Waste" in Made to Break: Technology and
- Obsolescence in America. Harvard University Press, 2006. 1-8, 261-281.
- Watch Andrew Blum's September 2012 TED talk"What is the Internet, really?" http://www.ted.com/talks/andrew-blum-what-is-the-internet_really.html
- Blog post 5

<u>Friday July 25:</u> Space and time in the network

- Manuel Castells, "The Space of Flows, Timeless Time, and Mobile Networks" in in Castells, Manuel, Mirela Fernandez-Ardevol, Jack Linchuan Qiu and Araba Sey, Mobile Communication and Society: A Global Perspective. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007. 171-179
- James Ball and Symeon Brown, "Why BlackBerry Messenger was rioters' communication method of choice." *The Guardian* December 7, 2011 http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/dec/07/bbm-rioters-communication-method-choice
- Listen to (or read) "UCSD Artists Develop Tool To Guide Illegal Border Crossers To Water" *KPBS Radio*, January 11, 2010 http://www.kpbs.org/news/2010/jan/11/ucsd-artists-develop-

tool-guide-illegal-border-cro/

- Blog post 6
- **Research Benchmark 2:** First set of field notes, start annotated bibliography.

Week 3: Global Popular Cultures

Monday July 28: Scaling popular culture

- Simon During, "Popular Culture on a Global Scale: A Challenge for Cultural Studies?" *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 808-833
- Racialicious. "PSY and The Acceptable Asian Man." September 20, 2012 http://www.racialicious.com/2012/09/20/psy-and-the-acceptable-asian-man/
- Marx Fisher. "Gangnam Style, Dissected: The Subversive Message Within South Korea's Music Video Sensation." *The Atlantic*, August 23, 2012
 http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/08/gangnam-style-dissected-the-subversive-message-within-south-koreas-music-video-sensation/261462/
- Blog post 7

Wednesday July 30: How and why we spread popular culture

- Cornel Sandvoss, "Fans Online: Affective Media Consumption and Production in the Age of Convergence" and
- Christian Christensen, "The Everyday War: Iraq, YouTube, and the Banal Spectacle" in Miyase Christensen, Andre Jansson, and Christian Christensen (eds) *Online Territories*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2011. 49-74, 17-30.
- Blog post 8

<u>Friday August 1:</u> The work of global popular culture

- Andrew Ross,"In Search of the Lost Paycheck"and
- Lisa Nakamura, "Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in *World of Warcraft" in* Trebor Scholz (ed.) *Digital Labor*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012. 13-32, 187-204.
- Blog post 9
- Research Benchmark 3: Second set of field notes, finish annotated bibliography

Week 4: Finding Subcultures Online

Monday August 4: What are subcultures and where do they go?

- J.A. McArthur, "Digital Subculture: A Meaning of Style." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 33.1 (2008): 58-70
- Yasser Mattar, "Virtual Communities and Hip-Hop Music Consumers in Singapore: Interplaying Global, Local, and Subcultural Identities." *Leisure Studies* 22.4 (2003): 283-300

- Mimi Nguyen. "Tales of an Asiatic Geek Girl: Slant from Paper to Pixels" in Tu, Thuy Linh, Alondra Nelson and Alicia Hedlam Hines (eds.) *Technicolor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life.* New York, NY: NYU Press, 2001. 177-190
- Blog post 10

Wednesday August 6: Safe sex spaces

- Katrien Jacobs. "Pornography in Small Places and Other Spaces" *Cultural Studies* 18.1 (2004): 67-83
- Elizabeth Bernstein. "The State, Sexuality, and the Market" in *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007. 142-165
- Watch Ursula Biemann's *Remote Sensing* (2011) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPSwEGdZuew
- Blog post 11

Friday August 8: Don't feed the trolls

- Gabriele de Seta, "Spraying, fishing, looking for trouble: The Chinese Internet and a critical perspective on the concept of trolling" *Fibreculture* 22 (2013) http://twentytwo.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-167-spraying-fishing-looking-for-trouble-the-chinese-internet-and-a-critical-perspective-on-the-concept-of-trolling/
- Whitney Phillips, "LOLing at Tragedy: Facebook Trolls, Memorial Pages and Resistance to Grief Online." First Monday 16.12 (2011) http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3168/3115
- Blog post 12
- **Research benchmark 4:** Third set of fieldnotes, research paper introduction

Week 5: Cultural Politics and Digital Media

Monday August 11: Global civil society

- Patrick Carmichael "Information Interventions, Media Development, and the Internet"
- Quinn Norton's three-part 2011 series *Anonymous 101* for *Wired* http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2011/11/anonymous-101/all/1
- and Quinn Norton's "How Anonymous Picks Targets, Launches Attacks, and Takes Powerful Organizations Down" Wired July 3, 2012 http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2012/07/ff anonymous/all/
- Blog post 13

Wednesday August 13: Global uncivil society

- Douglas Kellner, "Globalization from Below: Towards a Radical Techno-Politics"
- Watch "Canada's Native Winter" and read the attached Storify on Al Jazeera's *The Stream* http://stream.aljazeera.com/story/201301292348-0022511
- Blog post 14

Friday August 15: Witnessing

- Carvin "Prologue" and "Tunisia"
- Aaron Bady "Spectators to Revolution: Western Audiences and the Arab Spring's Rhetorical Consistency" *Cinema Journal* 52.1 (2012): 137-142
- Blog post 15
- Research benchmark 5: Rough draft

Week 6: Social Movements and Social Media

Monday August 18: Did social media matter for the Arab Spring?

- Carvin "Egypt"
- Malcolm Gladwell, "Does Egypt Need Twitter?" *The New Yorker* February 2, 2011 http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/02/does-egypt-need-twitter.html
- Zeynep Tufecki, "Why the How of Social Organizing Matters and How Gladwell's Latest Contrarian Missive Falls Short" *Technosociology* February 4, 2011 http://technosociology.org/?p=305
- Blog post 16

Wednesday August 20: You can't say that on the internet

- Carvin "Bahrain"
- Evgeny Morozov "You can't say that on the internet." *The New York Times* November 16, 2012 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/18/opinion/sunday/you-cant-say-that-on-the-internet.html?pagewanted=all&r=0
- Watch Morozov's short cartoon lecture "The Internet in Society: Empowering or Censoring Citizens" The Royal Society for the Arts March 14, 2011 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uk8x3V-sUgU
- Blog post 17

<u>Friday August 22:</u> By any means necessary

- One of
 - o Carvin "Syria" or
 - o Carvin "Yemen"
- Carvin "Epilogue"
- Blog post 18
- **Research Benchmark 6:** Final Draft