Sociology S3671, Summer 2016 (Session 1: 5.23 to 7.1)
Location: Knox Hall, room 103
Instructor: Ryan Hagen | ryan.a.hagen@columbia.edu
Mon/Wed 1:00pm – 4:10pm

Media, Culture & Society
in the Age of the Internet

> "There is no way by which the events of the world can be directly transmitted or recorded in our brains…. [We] assimilate what we read, what we are told, what others say and think and write and paint, as intensely and richly as if they were primary experiences. It allows us to see and hear with other eyes and ears, to enter into other minds, to assimilate the art and science and religion of the whole culture, to enter into and contribute to the common mind, the general commonwealth of knowledge. This sort of sharing and participation, this communion, would not be possible if all our knowledge, our memories, were tagged and identified, seen as private, exclusively ours. Memory is dialogic and arises not only from direct experience but from the intercourse of many minds."
>
> - Oliver Sacks[i]

This course examines social relations through culture embedded in media. It is about how our world is shaped by the symbols and stories we encounter and share, in person or at a distance. We will consider the impact of televisual, interactive and social media on our experiences, decisions, and work. What are the politics of data? Does technology isolate or connect us? Does media consumption enrich or sap our creativity and intellect? The purpose of the course is to give students conceptual tools to think critically about technology and mediated culture in society. The structure of the course is as follows: In Week One we will read provocations from cultural critics and social scientists arguing that media is dangerous and necessarily corrosive to social life. In Week Two, we step back to take a sociological perspective on the question – what role does mediated culture really play in social life? In Week Three we will learn a theoretical framework for understanding technology, called Actor Network Theory. Then applying this framework, through which we can see that all media are constructed by both technological devices and social conventions, we will consider the development of clock-time as a medium from the industrial revolution to the present. Armed with ideas about what media are and how they function, we look in Weeks Four and Five at content in the media: we will read Herb Gans's classic analysis of popular culture and explore the changing nature of journalism through a series of studies of the *New York Times*. Then we will consider how media shape the way we work, and how the games we play reflect the way we see the world. Finally in Week Six we apply what we've learned through a consideration of social media in *It's Complicated*, danah boyd's groundbreaking ethnographic study of networked teenagers.

Reading material:

Assigned readings will consist of academic journal articles, popular press articles, and three monographs. Students are expected to purchase these three books: *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* by Herbert Gans, *Making News at the New York Times* by Nikki Usher, and danah boyd's *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens.* All of these books are available for purchase at Book Culture, 536 West 112th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam (or online: bookculture.com). Copies of all other assigned readings will be available for download on the course Wiki: https://mcs16.wikispaces.columbia.edu/

In-Class Technology policy:

In the interest of promoting group solidarity and focus, the use of personal digital devices such as laptops and tablets in the classroom is allowed only if the device's Internet connectivity is disabled. Students are encouraged, though not required, to place mobile phones in 'airplane' mode during class sessions. It is strongly recommended that students print reading material and bring copies with them to class. Internet-connected printers are available in all Columbia libraries.

Office Hours:

Office hour appointments are available every Tuesday from 2pm to 4pm in Knox Hall, room 709. Students are always welcome to make an appointment to discuss the course material, assignments, or any other topic. Appointments are scheduled in Google calendar, available through the course Wiki. For increased flexibility, the calendar offers appointment slots of 15 minutes in length. Students are welcome to sign up for multiple contiguous slots.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

As a Columbia student, you are bound by a pledge to uphold the academic integrity of our intellectual community. The pledge, as ratified by the Columbia College Student Council, is as follows:

We, the students of Columbia University, hereby pledge to value the integrity of our ideas and the ideas of others by honestly presenting our work, respecting authorship, and striving not simply for answers but for understanding in the pursuit of our common scholastic goals. In this way, we seek to build an academic community governed by our collective efforts, diligence, and Code of Honor.

In addition, all Columbia College students are committed to the following honor code:

I affirm that I will not plagiarize, use unauthorized materials, or give or receive illegitimate help on assignments, papers, or examinations. I will also uphold equity and honesty in the evaluation of my work and the work of others. I do so to sustain a community built around this Code of Honor.

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Assessment Criteria:

1) Attendance and Participation (20%)
   All seminars are dependent on the collective efforts of their participants. To receive a top grade for participation, students should routinely participate in class discussions, asking questions and offering comments about the ideas and texts covered in the course, and engaging constructively with their peers. Quizzes will be administered to gauge reading comprehension. Each individual quiz will be fairly low-stakes, but cumulatively they will influence the overall course grade. Finally, students should attend each class session. Because of the compressed time frame of the course, **only one excused absence will be permitted**. Additional absences will result in a small grade penalty.

2) Reading Responses (20%)
   For the readings in each session, students will be responsible for making a contribution to the course wiki. There are three categories of contribution: (A) Summarizing the assigned reading, drawing attention to the central thesis and key points; (B) Formulating and asking five questions about the readings (at least one for each reading); (C) Writing answers to two of the questions posed by other students.

3) Midterm Essay: Media breaching experiment (30%)
   In Week Three, in an exercise meant to sensitize participants to how fully their experience of the world is mediated by complex socio-technical systems in modernity, students are challenged to take a day "off the grid," exploring New York City without recourse to modern media. They will handwrite field notes documenting their experience as it happens, taking careful note of: the obstacles they encounter that are routinely overcome or obscured by media technology; how the quantity and quality of their interactions with others are different in the absence of mediating technologies; how people around them do or do not try to 'repair' their behavior; how their experience of time and geographic space is different. They will write a 1,500 – 2,000-word essay reflecting on their experience, drawing specific illustrations from their field data, and interpreting it in the context of theoretical material from the readings where appropriate. **The midterm must be submitted by June 15 at 1pm.**

4) Final Exam: take-home (30%)
   Students will complete the course with a take-home final exam. The exam will be cumulative. Prompts will be a mixture of short answer and essay questions requiring a total of perhaps 1,750 – 2,250 words to answer fully. **The final exam will be posted at the end of class on Wednesday, June 29, and must be submitted by Friday, July 1 at 11:59pm.**

5) Extra Credit
   Students may earn extra credit through a number of optional assignments that may be assigned over the course of the semester, which will involve interpreting city resources or outside materials in light of the assigned texts and concepts taught in class.

Week 1 // Black Mirror (provocations)

5.23 Session One | A play of surfaces
Readings
 a. Wallace, David Foster. (1993). "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction." *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13:151-194.
 b. Smith, Zadie. (2010). "Generation Why?" *The New York Review of Books*, November 25.
 c. Davis, Ben. (2014). "Ways of Seeing Instagram." *Artnet*, June 24.

 IN CLASS: Berger, John. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. Ep.1. British Broadcasting Corporation.

5.25 Session Two | Waves and radiation
Readings
 a. Holman, E. Alison, Dana D. R. Garfin, and Roxane R. C. Silver. (2014). "Media's Role in Broadcasting Acute Stress Following the Boston Marathon Bombings." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111:93-98.
 b. Turkle, Sherry. (2007). "Authenticity in the Age of Digital Companions." *Interaction Studies* 8:501-517.
 c. Andrejevic, Mark. (2002). "The Work of Being Watched: Interactive Media and the Exploitation of Self-Disclosure." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19:230-248.

 IN CLASS: Berger, John. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. Ep.4. British Broadcasting Corporation.

Week 2 // The Self & Society (the promise of Sociology)

5.30 Memorial Day | No Class – We meet instead on Wednesday, June 1 and Friday, June 3.

6.1 Session Three | Sociable media
Readings
 a. Schudson, Michael. (1989). "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols." *Theory and Society* 18:153-80.
 b. Hampton, Keith, and Barry Wellman. (2003). "Neighboring in Netville: How the Internet Supports Community and Social Capital in a Wired Suburb." *City & Community* 2:277-311.
 c. Tufekci, Zynep. (2013). "The Social Internet: Frustrating, Enriching, but Not Lonely." *Public Culture* 26:13-23.

6.3 Session Four | The power of imitation and distinction
Readings
 a. Simmel, Georg. (1957). "Fashion." *American Journal of Sociology* 62:541-558.
 b. Koppman, Sharon. (2015). "Different Like Me: Why Cultural Omnivores Get Creative Jobs." *Administrative Science Quarterly* (online ahead of print).
 c. Bail, Christopher A. (2016). "Cultural Carrying Capacity: Organ Donation Advocacy, Discursive Framing, and Social Media Engagement." *Social Science & Medicine*. Online ahead of publication.

Week 3 // Technology (spooky action at a distance)

6.6 Session Five | The politics of artifacts and data
      Readings
- a. Latour, Bruno. (1992). "Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts." In W. E. Bijker & J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping Technology / Building Society: Studies in sociotechnical change* (pp. 225-258). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- b. Law, John. (1992). "Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity." *Systems Practice* 5:379-93.
- c. Humphreys, Ashlee. (2006). "The Consumer as Foucauldian 'Object of Knowledge'." *Social Science Computer Review* 24:296-309.

6.8 Session Six | A brief social history of time
      Readings
- a. Thompson, E. P. (1967). "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism." *Past & Present* 38:56-97.
- b. Zerubavel, Eviatar. (1982). "The Standardization of Time: A Sociohistorical Perspective." *American Journal of Sociology* 88:1-23.
- c. Johnson, Nicola F., and Helen Keane. (2015). "Internet Addiction? Temporality and Life Online in the Networked Society." *Time & Society* 1-19.

Week 4 // Fact & Fiction

6.13 Session Seven | Public culture, high and low
      Readings
- a. Pages 3-100 in Gans, Herbert J. (1999). *Popular Culture & High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*. New York: Basic Books.

6.15 Session Eight | Newspapers in person, in wood pulp, and in silicon
      Readings
- a. Park, Robert E. (1923). "The Natural History of the Newspaper." *American Journal of Sociology* 29:273-289.
- b. Darnton, Robert. (1975). "Writing News and Telling Stories." *Daedalus* 104 (2): 175-194.
- c. Pages 30-48, 186-241 in Usher, Nikki. (2014). *Making News at the New York Times.* University of Michigan Press.

IN CLASS: Rossi, Andrew. (2011). *Page One: Inside the New York Times.* Magnolia Pictures.

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Week 5   //   Labor & Leisure

6.20 Session Nine | The internet of (doing) things
    Readings
        a. Benkler, Yochai and Helen Nissenbaum. (2006). "Commons-based Peer Production and Virtue." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 14 (4): 394-419.
        b. Law, John. (1986). "On the Methods of Long Distance Control: Vessels, Navigation, and the Portuguese Route to India." In John Law (ed). *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge? (*pp. 234-63). Routledge.
        c. Levy, Karen E. C. (2015). "The Contexts of Control: Information, Power, and Truck-Driving Work." *The Information Society* 31: 160-174.
        d. Vertesi, Janet. (2012). "Seeing like a Rover: Visualization, Embodiment, and Interaction on the Mars Exploration Rover Mission." *Social Studies of Science* 42 (3): 393-414.
        e. Maness, Carter. (2016). "The Deactivation of the American Worker." *The Awl*, February 23.

6.22 Session Ten | Games as cultural systems
    Readings
        a. Pages 17-31, 71-72 in Goffman, Erving. "Fun in Games." (1961). In Erving Goffman. *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction* (pp. 17-72). Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company.
        b. DiCicco-Bloom, Benjamin, and David D. R. Gibson. (2010). "More Than a Game: Sociological Theory from the Theories of Games." *Sociological Theory* 28:247-271.
        c. Kasumovic, Michael M, and Jeffrey J. H. Kuznekoff. (2015). "Insights Into Sexism: Male Status and Performance Moderates Female-Directed Hostile and Amicable Behaviour." *PLoS One* 10:e0131613.
        d. Wong, Julia Carrie. (2014). "Dropbox, AirBnB, and the Fight over San Francisco's Public Spaces." *The New Yorker*, October 23.

Week 6   //   The Self in an Age of Digital Representation

6.27 Session Eleven | Identity, privacy, addiction, danger
    Readings
        a. Pages 1-127 in boyd, danah. (2014). *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

6.29 Session Twelve | Bullying, inequality, literacy, publics
    Readings
        a. Pages 128-214 in boyd, danah. (2014). *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

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[i] Sacks, Oliver. (2013). "Speak, Memory." *The New York Review of Books*. February 21.

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