

Viral Media
EMAC 4372: Special Topics in Emerging Media and Communication
Fall 2015

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Instructor.

Course Information

Class No. 86953
Meets: W 10am - 12:45pm
Location: ATC 1.305
Credit Hours: 3

Contact Information

Instructor: Kim Knight
Email (preferred method of contact): kim.knight@utdallas.edu
Phone: 972-883-4346.

Office Hours:

- Drop In (no appointment necessary) : Tue 2:30 pm - 3:30 pm
- Schedule appointments via <http://purplekimchi.youcanbook.me>

Contact policies:

- I respond to email M-F, generally within 24 hours.
 - If I do not respond within that time frame, check my email address and re-send it.
- Use official UTD email only.
- I will not respond to
 - Email messages that request information found on the syllabus or assignment sheets.
 - Twitter direct messages.

Course wiki: viralmedia.pbworks.com

Twitter tag: #utdviral

Twitter archive:

Course Description

In this course, we will explore the concept of "the viral" in relation to emerging media, art, literature, and communication. The course will begin with a look at the history of the term and its definitional and metaphorical operations, particularly in relation to biology and computation. We will then situate the term within the contemporary media landscape that produces "viral structures" that influence our engagement with media, institutions, and one another. Finally, we will examine viral structures in operation in the realms of entertainment and activism.

Throughout the semester we will consider "viral media" both as it circulated in operation, and as it is represented through the lenses of film, literature, and digital art.

No prior experience with digital media is necessary.

Course Goals

In this course, students will:

- ✓ Understand the biological and computational origins of the viral metaphor.
- ✓ Apply theoretical readings to the analysis of viral media objects.
- ✓ Communicate with the emerging media community through the use of blogs, microblogs, social bookmarking, live presentations, etc.
- ✓ Utilize the existing research on emerging media in their own work.

Required Textbooks and Materials

- Johnson, Steven. *The Ghost Map*. ISBN-10: 9781594482694
- Parikka, Jussi. *Digital Contagions*. ISBN-10: 0820488372
- Kunzru, Hari. *Transmission*. ISBN-10: 0452286514
- Rettberg, Jill Walker *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology*. ISBN-13: 978-1137476647 (The ebook version is free from Amazon (Kindle) or Rettberg's website (pdf))
- Graedon, Alena *The Word Exchange*. ISBN-13: 978-0345806031

Various chapters and essays, available online or through course reserve.

You will also need the following: a UTD email account (that you check frequently), a Twitter account, a wordpress blog, a PBWiki account.

Course Policies

Attendance: Some of the most valuable take-away from this course will come out of our class discussions. Your participation is necessary for our success. It is important that you come to every class prepared and on time. To be "prepared" means that you have read the reading, developed and considered questions, and are prepared to discuss it in class. Bring questions, comments, observations, disagreements, examples, etc.

Because your presence in class is important, more than one absence (i.e. missing more than 1 week of class) will negatively affect your participation grade. In most cases, more than four absences (i.e. missing more than 1 month of class) will result in a failing participation grade. Missing more than 8 classes (more than 2 months in class) will result in a failing course grade. There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Use that one freebie wisely. If you need to miss class for religious reasons, please speak to me ahead of time. Absences for

religious purposes do not count against the permitted number (as long as prior notification is given).

Lateness is also unacceptable; if you arrive more than thirty minutes late to class you will be marked as absent. If you leave more than 30 minutes early, you will be marked absent. In addition, please try to be as fully present and engaged as possible – silence cell phones, don't send or receive texts or emails, etc. Excessive distraction may be counted as an absence.

Accommodation: If you have a disability that requires accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act -2008(ADAAA), please present your letter of accommodations from the Office of Student AccessAbility and meet with me as soon as possible so that I can support your success in an informed manner. If you would like to know more about the University of Texas at Dallas, Office of Student AccessAbility, please contact the office at 972-883-6104 or email: studentaccessability@utdallas.edu. Their office is located in the Student Service Building (SSB), suite 3.200.

Online Due Dates: All online assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date listed, unless otherwise noted.

Late work: You should make a concerted effort to turn in all work on-time, in the format outlined on the assignment sheet. Work submitted in formats other than that listed on the assignment sheet will not be accepted. Work emailed during class session will be considered late.

- **Blogs:** Work associated with the blog assignment will not be accepted late.
- **Cool Hunting:** Work associated with the cool hunting assignment will not be accepted late.
- **Research Paper:** Late submission of proposals and drafts will result in a loss of 1/3 of a grade on the project for each late item. Research papers will be marked down one letter grade for each day (or fraction thereof) that they are late.

It is your responsibility to complete your work early enough to allow time for any technical difficulties. Work that is turned in late due to technical difficulties is subject to late penalties.

Respectful behavior: Our many discussions and online assignments will require vigilance to ensure that we are always preserving an atmosphere of mutual respect in which everyone is welcome to learn. Disagreements may arise and consensus may not be possible. We can, however, respect each person's right to respectfully express themselves and to have the opportunity to learn. Name calling, harassment, or menacing behavior will not be tolerated.

Online identity: This class asks students to participate in publicly accessible blogs and other forms of public writing. Writing in public has several advantages for student learning. It creates a closer analogue to the offline environments, and allows for the creation of writing that is designed to be shared with an actual audience, instead of just an instructor. It also allows students

to learn from each other. However, some students may have legitimate privacy concerns about participating in publicly accessible assignments. These students may choose to participate in public assignments under a pseudonym, or assumed name. If you wish to request this accommodation for any reason, please contact me immediately.

Academic Honesty: From the UT-D Handbook of Operating Procedures: “The university expects from its students a high level of responsibility with respect to academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends on the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student maintain a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work. The dean may initiate disciplinary proceedings under subchapter C against a student accused of scholastic dishonesty upon complaint by a faculty member or a student.” (<http://www.utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm>)

Plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students. Possible disciplinary action by the university may include failing the assignment, failing the course, expulsion, etc. If you have any questions regarding the proper use of outside sources or the distinction between sampling and plagiarism, I encourage you to meet with me.

University Policies: Please visit <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for the University’s policies regarding all courses.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

Grading Scale:

A Range: Excellent A, A-	B Range: Good B+, B, B-	C Range: Fair C+, C, C-	D: Needs Improvement D+, D, D-	F: Failing F
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Assignments:

Participation – 25%

Participation includes attendance and class discussion, which may be supplemented with online discussion.

Blogs - 25%

Each student is required to develop a blog as the center of his/her own online “presence” in the course. This will serve as a place for weekly discussion of the class reading. Blog responsibilities include writing original blog content as well as responding to the blogs of peers.

Cool Hunting - 15%

Students will create a wiki entry to document and analyze a viral structure in a case study format. They will present their example and analysis in class.

Research Paper - 35%

Each student will be responsible for producing a 7 - 10 page research paper that reflects on, builds upon, and engages one of the issues surrounding viral media that we have covered in class. More on this after the midpoint of class.

General Requirements: This class involves a lot of theoretical reading. My hope is that you will apply the ideas from that reading to our discussions and analysis of art, literature, and media. You will be most successful in this class if you are able to have an open mind and take a critical approach to our topics. Please note that being “critical” does not necessarily mean being negative, but it does mean that you are willing to question assumptions and explore the implications of the seemingly mundane and minute aspects of contemporary media culture. Openness to experimentation and play and a willingness to try and fail are critical to the study of emerging media.

Academic Calendar

(DRAFT: Always check the course website for up-to-date assignments)

Unit One: Origins of the Metaphor

Week One

Wed, Aug 26: Introduction

Week Two: Biological Viruses

Wed, Sept 2

- Before Class
 - Read Oldstone, *Viruses, Plagues and History* Ch 1, 2, 14
 - <http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=1905>
 - Watch biological viruses playlist
 - <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEF7EA07CDA7E1F08>
 - Play <http://www.centreofthecell.org/interactives/flu/index.php>
 - Create accounts on Pbworks, Twitter, and Wordpress
 - Complete Syllabus scavenger hunt
 - Blog post – A Bloggers

Saturday, Sept 5

- Blog responses due – B & C bloggers

Week Three: Epidemiology

Tue, Sept 8

- Before Class
 - Reading Johnson, *The Ghost Map*
 - Blog post due before class – B Bloggers

Sat, Sept 12

- Blog responses due – A & C bloggers

Week Four: Computer Viruses

Wed, Sept 16

- Before Class
 - Read Parikka, *Digital Contagions* Selections TBA
 - <http://kimknight.com/readings/parikka-digitalcontagions.pdf>
 - Also available in a print copy on 3-day course reserve at the McDermott Library
 - Browse Solanki, *The Lovers* (images in the left sidebar are links. Follow all of them to see screenshots and simulations of the installation)
 - Blog post – C Bloggers

Sat, Sept 19

- Blog responses due – A & B bloggers

Week Five: Representations

Wed, Sept 23

- Before Class
 - Blog post – A Bloggers
- In Class
 - Viewing and discussion: Peterson, dir. *Outbreak*

Event of Interest: Sept 25 Deadline for Undergraduate Research Awards

Sat, Sept 26

- Blog responses due – B & C bloggers

Unit Two: Toward a Theory of the Viral Structure

Week Six: Media Ecologies

Wed, Sept 30

- Before Class
 - Read Fuller, *Media Ecologies* Intro, Ch 3
 - <http://utdallas.docutec.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=1905>
 - Blog post – B bloggers

Sat, Oct 3

- Blog responses due – A & C bloggers

Week Seven: Representations

Wed, Oct 7

- Before Class
 - Read Kunzru, *Transmission*
 - Blog post – C bloggers

Sat, Oct 10

- Blog responses due – A & B bloggers

Week Eight: Web 2.0 and Participatory Culture

Wed, Oct 14

- Before Class
 - Read Burgess and Green, “The Entrepreneurial Vlogger: Participatory Culture Beyond the Professional-Amateur Divide.”
 - <http://kimknight.com/readings/burgressgreen-entrepreneurialblogger.pdf>
 - Read Grusin, “YouTube at the End of New Media”
 - <http://kimknight.com/readings/grusin-youtubeatendofnewmedia.pdf>
 - Blog post – A bloggers

Sat, Oct 17

- Blog responses due – B & C bloggers

Week Nine: Seeing Ourselves Through Media

Wed, Oct 21

- Before Class
 - Read Rettberg, *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology* Ch 1, 2
 - Blog post – B bloggers

Sat, Oct 24

- Blog responses due – A & C bloggers

Week Ten: Representations

Wed, Oct 28

- Before Class
 - Read Graedon, *The Word Exchange*
 - Blog post - C bloggers

Event of interest: Wed, Oct 28, 7:30pm - A rare sighting: Dr. Knight gives a lecture: “Viral Anxieties in Art and Antiviral Technology,” sponsored by the Center for Values in Medicine, Science, and Technology

Sat, Oct 31

- blog responses due – A & B bloggers

Week Eleven: Theory of the Viral Structure

Wed, Nov 4

- Before Class
 - Read Knight, *Viral Structures* Intro
 - Blog post – A bloggers

Sat, Nov 7

- Blog responses due – B & C bloggers

Week Twelve: Representations

Wed, Nov 11

- Before Class
 - Browse Ring Transmission Timeline <http://kimknight.com/ring>
 - Blog post due – B bloggers
- In Class
 - Viewing and Discussion: Nakata, dir. *Ringu*

Sat, Nov 14

- Blog responses due – A & C bloggers

Unit Three: Viral Structures in Action

Week Thirteen: Viral Structures in Activism

Wed, Nov 18

- Before Class
 - Read Castells, Networks of Outrage and Hope, “Opening”
 - <http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=1905>
 - Read Audre Lorde, “Learning from the 60s”
 - <http://www.blackpast.org/1982-audre-lorde-learning-60s>
 - Read Owens, “We Have to Make Them Feel Us: Open Letters and Black Mothers’ Grief”
 - <http://aaihs.org/we-have-to-make-them-feel-us-open-letters-and-black-mothers-grief/>
 - Watch Smooth, “The Illipsis: on Ferguson, riots, and human limits”
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v-Pd62hq0w>
 - Read Craven, “Please Stop Telling Me that All Lives Matter”
 - http://www.huffingtonpost.com/julia-craven/please-stop-telling-me-th_b_6223072.html
 - Watch Bland, “Sandy Speaks - April 8, 2015 (Black Lives Matter)”
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIKeZgC8lQ4>
 - Read Berger, “In Ferguson, Photographs as Powerful Agents”

- <http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/08/20/in-ferguson-photographs-as-powerful-agents/?smid=tw-share&r=0>
- Read Johnson, “After Baltimore and Ferguson, Major Momentum for Criminal Justice System Reform”
 - <http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/05/14/406768355/after-baltimore-and-ferguson-major-momentum-for-criminal-justice-system-reform>
- Blog post due – C bloggers

Sat, Nov 21

- Blog responses due – A & B bloggers

Nov 23 - 27: Fall Break

Week Fourteen: Viral Structures in Entertainment

Wed, Dec 2

- Before Class
 - iamamiwhoami playlist
 - <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL756F5DEF8352AD43>
 - The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl, Season 1
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIVa9lxkbus&list=PL854514FC0EBDCD8E>
 - The Guild, Season 1
 - <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=ELsUoi5Pu-0R0>
 - Keller, “Fiercely Real? Tyra Banks and the Making of New Media Celebrity”
 - <http://flowtv.org/2010/08/fiercely-real-tyra-banks/>

Week Fifteen: Other Viral Structures

Wed, Dec 9

- Before Class
 - Blackburn, “The Irony of YouTube: Politicking Cool”
 - <http://harlotofthearts.org/index.php/harlot/article/view/36/23>
 - TBD something about cats and/or viral cuteness
 - Rossolatos, “The Ice-Bucket Challenge: The Legitimacy of the Memetic Mode of Cultural Reproduction Is the Message”
 - <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/679520>

Wed, Dec 16: Research paper uploaded to the course wiki no later than 11:59pm