

Spring 2019
ATCM 6383

Digital Culture:
Sites/Sights of Violence

Dr. Wendy Sung
Thursdays 4:00-6:45 PM in ATCM 3.502

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

Office location: ATC 2.913

Office Hours: T/TH by appointment

Email: wendy.sung@utdallas.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate course examines digital culture and its pre-histories through the themes of violence, technology, and media. The aim of this class is to introduce students to interdisciplinary methods and sub-fields such as visual culture, critical prison studies, critical race studies, and feminist studies, and how they intersect with the broader subject of digital and networked media. Each week we will engage in student-lead discussions about scholarly work that tackle ideas of spectatorship and ways of seeing. We will investigate if and how new forms of technology have created different ways of engaging with violence and/or reformulated its epistemologies. For instance, how might sites such as prisons and museums be in dialogue with online life? Topics include online trolling, algorithmic identity and oppression, the visual economies of death and violence, and racial and gendered surveillance.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Simone Brown, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*

Caren Kaplan, *Aerial Aftermaths: War from Above*

Safiyah Nobel, *The Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*

Whitney Philips, *This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture*

Other articles and chapters will be posted to the class Box Folder, which can be found on the eLearning site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are required to bring all course readings to class for each class session.

Participation (25%):

Your participation, both verbal and written, is vital to this course. Each week, you will be expected to turn in a single-spaced written summary or synthesis of the reading/readings, using the Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking as suggested guidelines/questions to guide your writing. In the summary, you will discuss the major interventions and thesis of the articles/chapters; its contribution to the field and/or literature; the methods and assumptions the author uses/makes; the relevance or usefulness of the work to your own research or work, and your critiques and questions. Some other questions to consider: how could the work be strengthened? Are the texts

well-chosen or can you think of other texts/objects/theories that could be utilized to enrich or complicate the work?

This is to ensure engagement with the course materials, but also to encourage a routine writing practice that hones your critical thinking skills. You are expected to engage respectfully with your peers and the instructor, and be ready to expand on your thoughts. In addition, you will email me or your peer presenter with 1-2 questions about the reading the night before that you would like to pose to the class to stimulate discussion. These questions can be part of your reading summary write up.

If you miss more than one class session, your grade will be effected.

In-Class Presentation (20%):

During the course of the semester seminar participants are required to make a formal presentation (at least 30 minutes in length) of the assigned readings and lead class discussion. Signing up for these presentations will begin in the fourth week of the semester. When it is your presentation week, you will not have to produce the 1-page summary.

You have two options for this assignment:

- 1) Design a Lecture: Imagine you are giving a lecture on the material in an undergraduate course. How would you present the material in a way that undergraduates could understand? What outside materials would you bring into your presentation? Would you use power point? A film or other audio/visual aid? Would you break them up into groups and have them do specific activities?
- 2) Deliver a conference paper: Imagine you have submitted an abstract to an academic conference. Write an 8-10-page paper (double-spaced), or put together a 20-30-minute power point that analyzes the assigned materials. Your presentation can and should bring your own research into play. It might also include other materials (books, visual culture, etc). Your presentation can also critique the book, pointing out any erasures, omissions, or problems in the text. Whatever direction you choose, your presentation should first articulate the main argument presented in the readings.

Book Review (15%):

On April 18, each student will present a review of one of the books listed on the last page of the syllabus or, if applicable, a book that is related to the course and can be used for your final paper. You are expected to produce a synopsis and critique of the book in a 2- to 3-page written summary, in the genre of a book review. These summaries will be distributed to all class members.

Final Paper (40%): Each student will be expected to produce a 20- to 25-page research paper and present a shortened version to the seminar (20 minutes).

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 17): Introductions

The Miniature Guide for Critical Thinking

Week 2 (Jan 24): On Seeing: Historical Perspectives

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*

Jacqueline Goldsby, *A Spectacular Secret*, “Introduction” and Chapter 4 (214-281)

Week 3 (Jan 31):

Caren Kaplan, *Aerial Aftermaths: War from Above*
Book Review on *Aerial Aftermaths*

Week 4 (Feb 7): *Reproduction, Surveillance, Violence*

Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Race, Class, and Gender in American Visual Culture*, Introduction and Chapter 4: “A Baby’s Picture is Always Treasured”

Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, Introduction and Chapter 2 “The Dark Side of Birth Control”

Sayanantani Dasgupta and Shamita Das Dasgupta, “The Public Fetus and the Veiled Woman: Transnational Surrogacy Blogs as Surveillant Assemblage” (150-168)

Week 5 (Feb 14):

Simone Brown, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*
Womack, “Visuality, Surveillance, and the Afterlife of Slavery” Book Review

Suggested Reading: Leon Hilton, “Avonte’s Law: Autism, Wandering, and the Racial Surveillance of Neurological Difference”

Week 6 (Feb 21): *Spaces: Prisons/Critical Prison Studies*

AQ Review of the Field: Critical Prison Studies article
Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* excerpts

Listen: Ear Hustle podcast (<https://www.earhustlesq.com/>)

Suggested Readings: Ruthie Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*; Naomi A. Paik, *Rightlessness*

Week 7 (Feb 28): *Spaces: Museums/Performance*

Jennifer Doyle, *Hold it Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art*, Introducing Difficulty, Chp 3 Thinking Feeling, Chp 4 Feeling Overdetermined

Jose Munoz, “Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts”

Suggested Reading: Jose Munoz, *Disidentifications*

Week 8 (March 7): *Museums Day 2*

Museum readings to be announced according to student focus
Lisa Nakamura, “I Will Do Everything That Am Asked: Scambaiting, Digital Show-Space, and the Racial Violence of Social Media”

Week 9 (March 14): NO CLASS (SCMS Conference)

On your own, please read Lisa Nakamura's *Digitizing Race*

Week 10 (March 21): No class Spring Break

Week 11 (March 28): Digital Media and Mortality

Jennifer Malkowski, *Dying in Full Detail: Mortality and Digital Documentary*, Intro, Chapter 1, Chp, and Chp 4

Amanda Phillips, "Shooting to Kill: Headshots, Twitch Reflexes, and the Mechropolitics of Video Games"

Week 12 (April 4): Algorithms

Safiyah Nobel, *The Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*

Week 13 (April 11): NO CLASS

Please post book reviews to the discussion board. Presentations of the book reviews will be on the 18th. Also, please email me articles/book titles that you would like to be considered for April 25th open reading forum

* April 17: If possible, please attend Dr. Nobel's talk at the Center for Medical Values at 7:30 at the Jonsson Performance Hall

Week 14 (April 18): *Note: class will begin at 5:30pm instead of 4 this session

Book Review Presentations

Alexis Lothian, *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility* excerpt

Week 15 (April 25): Remediated Violence

Whitney Philips, *This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture* (excerpts)

Articles/Book Chapters/ Topics selected by students

Week 16 (May 2): Conference presentations of rough drafts

Final Papers due May 9th at 4pm

Book Review Options:

Jennifer Terry, *Wartime Attachments*

Jose Munoz, *Cruising Utopia*

Wendy Kozol, *Distant Wars Visible: The Ambivalence of Witnessing*

Pooja Rangan, *Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary*

Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*

Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*

Wendy Chun, *Control and Freedom*

You also may suggest a title relevant to your research, subject to my approval.