



**Course** ATCM 6378.001  
**Course Title** Tactical Media  
**Professor** Josef Nguyen  
**Term** Spring 2020  
**Meetings** Wednesdays, 4:00-6:45PM in ATC 2.901

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### Professor's Contact Information

**Office Location** ATC 1.513

**Email Address** [jdn160330@utdallas.edu](mailto:jdn160330@utdallas.edu)

Please consult this resource for proper email etiquette:

[\[medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087\]](https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087)

Please allow up to 24 hours for responses to emails

**Office Hours** By appointment

### General Course Information

**Course Description** This course provides an introduction to tactical media as simultaneously an interventionist art practice, media practice, and activist practice. Developing in the 1990s, tactical media describes media-based in-situ interventions, resistances, and counters to dominant political and economic forces that include such critical practices as net.art, hacktivism, culture jamming, participatory performance art, and citizen journalism.

So what might tactical media look like, enact, afford, and accomplish in the era of ubiquitous computing, social media profiles, platform capitalism, bio- and wearable technologies, and autonomous devices?

To answer this question, this class engages with foundational examples and critical works in order to explore the history of tactical media, from its emergence in the 1990s and tracing along its ever-evolving contours to the present. Students will explore tactical media practices suited to new and emerging media technologies, especially in relation to shifting challenges that arise from corporate and state interests in interactive, participatory, and personalized media. The course itself is not bound to particular categories of media technologies; instead, the course is interested in the possibilities of tactical media activism as critical practice in our contemporary media and technology landscape. Students will consider tactical media use and creation within their own everyday encounters with media technologies as well as in political and activist work. Readings will cover examples of tactical media, theories of tactical media and media activism, as well as various frameworks for critical creative practice.

**Learning Outcomes** Students will:

- Understand the history of tactical media
- Situate the development and use of media technologies within cultural, geopolitical, and material contexts
- Integrate critical theory and creative practice
- Incorporate existing scholarship and creative work into their own original research and creative practice

- Required Texts & Materials**
- Rita Raley. *Tactical Media*, [ISBN: 9780816651511]
  - Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum. *Obfuscation: A User’s Guide for Privacy and Protest*, [ISBN: 9780262529860]
  - Mary Flanagan. *Critical Play: Radical Game Design*, [ISBN: 9780262518659]
  - Steve Goodman. *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*, [ISBN: 9780262517959]

Lucas Pope. *Papers, Please*, [<https://papersplea.se/>]

All other readings, games, and related materials will be available online through this link: [<https://utdallas.box.com/v/atcm6378-spring2020>]

**Course Policies**

**Grading Criteria**

Class Participation and Discussion	25%
Midterm Synthesis Assignment	25%
Final Paper and Presentation	50%
-Abstract (5%)	
-Annotated Bibliography (5%)	
-In-Class Presentation (10%)	
-Research Paper (30%)	

**Accommodation**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to utilize the on-campus resources at the Office of Student AccessAbility. You can contact the office at 972-883-6104 or by email: studentaccessability@utdallas.edu. Their office is located in the Student Service Building (SSB), suite 3.200. They can provide documentation and details for accommodations to address your individual needs. If you need any special accommodations to complete this course successfully, please provide me with this information as soon as possible, so we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Classroom Citizenship**

It is our responsibility to work together to produce a classroom environment where everyone can share, discuss, and question the materials at hand as well as create and contribute their own work respectfully and productively.

Disagreements and conflicting perspectives will, unavoidably, emerge. To ensure that participants feel comfortable contributing a diverse set of thoughts, comments, and views, we will not use oppressive or harmful language, tolerate harassment, personal attacks, and other forms of actions and expressions that unduly distract from the educational mission and inflict emotional, physical, or psychological harm on those involved.

Part of the role of encouraging a diverse learning environment is acknowledging that individuals should feel safe and respected to contribute to the classroom in good faith. This involves not only allowing everyone opportunities to contribute their thoughts but to be mindful of how we recognize and address others. Do not assume things about others’ identities, backgrounds, or experiences—whether that is age, race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, etc... Refer to people by their names, pronouns, and other identifiers that they disclose. Avoid insisting on imposing identity markers onto others. Allow people to self-identify as they feel comfortable.

What you discuss in, create for, and share with this class reflects not only you as both a student and a civic subject, but it also reflects on me as your instructor, the class as a learning community, and UT Dallas as an academic institution.

Please discuss with me any concerns you have regarding an unsafe or hostile classroom environment, particularly if something arises that causes distress.

- Late Work** Late work will be penalized 10% (a full letter grade) for each 24-hour period beyond the deadline. If you need an extension, let me know well in advance, so we can make arrangements.
- Academic Honesty** All work must be original for this class. Unless you are specifically told to collaborate with classmates, complete your graded work individually. Plagiarism is using the words and materials of others as if they were your own. It is a serious offense with serious consequences. Use proper citation to indicate the use of other people’s work to support and strengthen your own. All suspicions of plagiarism will be investigated.
- For more information on academic honesty, please consult [\[utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm\]](http://utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm)
- Class Attendance** Attend class regularly and in full. Any absences should include documentation of a valid excuse (family or medical emergency, for example). Unexcused absences may impact course grades. Discuss upcoming potential absences with me to make appropriate arrangements.
- Arriving more than 30 minutes late or leaving more than 30 minutes early, without prior clearance, may be grounds for marking that day as an absence. Failure to prepare for class participation (such as not having done the necessary reading) will also be regarded as conditions for an absence.
- Technology in the Classroom** Laptops and computers can be used in the classroom solely for purposes directly pertinent to the activities and discussions at-hand. Do not use computers for other tasks, including but not limited to idle web-surfing, social media management, and completing work for other courses. The use of cell phones is prohibited during class time. I should not see them on your desk or in your hand at any point. Excessive misuse of technology in the classroom will result in an absence for the day.
- Campus Carry** For more on campus carry policy, see [\[utdallas.edu/campuscarry/\]](http://utdallas.edu/campuscarry/)
- Comet Creed** *This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:  
“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”*
- UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures** *The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to [\[go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies\]](http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies) for these policies.*

**Assignments & Academic Calendar**

**Week 1: Wednesday, 15 January 2020**

**Strategies and Tactics** READINGS:

Louis Althusser. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*  
Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding”  
Michel de Certeau. “General Introduction” and “Making Do: Uses and Tactics,” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*

EXAMPLE:

Nicky Case. *We Become What We Behold*, [\[https://ncase.itch.io/wbwwb\]](https://ncase.itch.io/wbwwb)

**Week 2: Wednesday, 22 January 2020**  
**Situatedness, Temporality, Ephemerality**

READINGS:

- Uli Meyer and Ingo Schulz-Schaeffer. "Three Forms of Interpretative Flexibility"  
Peggy Phelan. "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproducibility," in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*  
Claire Bishop. "Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?," in *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (ed. Nato Thompson)

EXAMPLES:

- Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello. *Teetertotter Wall*,  
[[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/see-saws-us-mexico-border\\_uk\\_5d4023d4e4b0db8affae339e](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/see-saws-us-mexico-border_uk_5d4023d4e4b0db8affae339e)]  
Hong Kong Protesters, [<https://futurism.com/the-byte/hong-kong-protesters-lasers-facial-recognition>]  
The Institute for Applied Autonomy. *iSee*, [<https://vimeo.com/6163268>]  
The Critical Engineering Working Group. *Packetbridge*,  
[<https://criticalengineering.org/projects/packetbridge/>]  
James Bridle. *Autonomous Trap 001*, [<https://vimeo.com/208642358>]

**Week 3: Wednesday, 29 January 2020**  
**Tactical Media**

READINGS:

- Rita Raley. *Tactical Media*  
Alex Cummings. "Tactical Media (Review)"  
Kirsten Forkert. "Book Review: Rita Raley, *Tactical Media*"

EXAMPLES:

- AdBusters. SpooF Ads, [<https://www.adbusters.org/spooF-ads>]  
Mark Sample. @NSA\_PrismBot,  
[<https://www.samplereality.com/2015/10/03/a-protest-bot-is-a-bot-so-specific-you-cant-mistake-it-for-bullshit/>]  
Ewa Nowak. *INCOGNITO*, [<https://www.boredpanda.com/face-recognition-algorithms-incognito-mask-jewelry-ewa-nowak/>]  
Google Will Eat Itself, [<http://www.gwei.org/index.php>]  
Michael Mandiberg. *Oil Standard*, [<http://www.mandiberg.com/oil-standard-2/>]

SUGGESTED OPTIONAL READINGS:

- Josh Belinfante, Hannah Blyth, and Emma Simonsen. "A Question of Tactical Media," [<https://temporaryculture.wordpress.com/a-question-of-tactical-media/>]  
David Garcia and Geert Lovink. "The ABC of Tactical Media,"  
[<http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9705/msg00096.html>]  
Tactical Media Files. "The Concept of Tactical Media,"  
[<http://www.tacticalmediafiles.net/articles/44999>]  
We Are Everywhere, [<http://artactivism.members.gn.apc.org/stories.htm>]  
Alexander R. Galloway, "Tactical Media," in *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization*

**Week 4: Wednesday, 5 February 2020**  
**Tactical Edges**

READINGS:

manuel arturo abreu. "We Need to Talk about Social Practice,"  
[<https://www.artpractical.com/column/we-need-to-talk-about-social-practice/>]  
Mark Dery. "Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs," [[http://markdery.com/?page\\_id=154](http://markdery.com/?page_id=154)]  
Beatriz da Costa. "Reaching the Limit: When Art Becomes Science,"  
*Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience*

EXAMPLES:

The Yes Men. *GWBush.com*, [<https://theyesmen.org/project/limits-freedom>]  
Guerilla Girls, [<https://www.guerrillagirls.com/projects>]  
Hibbert-Jones, Dee and Nomi Talisman. *Psychological Prosthesis*,  
[<http://www.psychologicalprosthetics.com/AboutPP.htm>]  
Byron Rich and Mary Tsang. *Open Source Estrogen*,  
[<http://www.byronrich.com/filter/tactical-media/Open-Source-Estrogen-2015-2017>]  
Critical Art Ensemble, Beatriz da Costa, and Claire Pentecost. *Molecular Invasion*, [<http://critical-art.net/hello-world-2/>]

**Week 5: Wednesday, 12 February 2020**  
**Surveillance and Obfuscation**

READINGS:

Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum, *Obfuscation: A User's Guide to Privacy and Protest*  
Tony Doyle. "Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum: Obfuscation: A User's Guide to Privacy and Protest"  
Rico Neumann. "Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum, *Obfuscation: A User's Guide to Privacy and Protest*"

EXAMPLES:

*Profiling the Profilers*, [<http://profilingtheprofilers.com/>]  
*CryptoParty*, [<https://www.cryptoparty.in/>]  
Preemptive Media. *Swipe*,  
[<http://www.preemptivemedia.net/swipe/index.html>]  
Tactical Tech. *Data Detox Kit*, [<https://datadetoxkit.org/en/home>]  
*Adversarial Fashion*, [<https://adversarialfashion.com/>]

**Week 6: Wednesday, 19 February 2020**  
**Critical and Tactical Play** READINGS:  
 Mary Flanagan. *Critical Play: Radical Game Design*  
 Dundee Lackey. "Reviewed Work: *Critical Play: Radical Game Design* by Mary Flanagan"  
 Cynthia Haynes. "Unplaying an Unreview of Critical Play,"  
[\[http://gamestudies.org/1001/articles/haynes\]](http://gamestudies.org/1001/articles/haynes)

EXAMPLES:  
 xtine burrough. *Walk on Wire*, [\[http://www.missconceptions.net/walk-on-wire/\]](http://www.missconceptions.net/walk-on-wire/)  
 Christian Croft and Kate Harman. *Energy Dérive Shoes*,  
[\[http://www.xncroft.com/energy-harvesting-derive\]](http://www.xncroft.com/energy-harvesting-derive)  
 Joseph de Lappe. *Dead-in-Iraq*, [\[http://www.delappe.net/project/dead-in-iraq/\]](http://www.delappe.net/project/dead-in-iraq/)  
 Natalie Jeremijenko. *Feral Robotic Dogs*,  
[\[https://www.nyu.edu/projects/xdesign/feralrobots/\]](https://www.nyu.edu/projects/xdesign/feralrobots/)  
 RTMark. *Barbie Liberation Organization*,  
[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVT4T7OR3iQ\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVT4T7OR3iQ)

**Week 7: Wednesday, 26 February 2020**  
**Tactical Vibrations** READINGS:  
 Steve Goodman. *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*  
 Mark Egan. "Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear"  
 Kevin Blankenship. "Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear,"  
[\[https://www.ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/journal/volume/16/piece/466\]](https://www.ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/journal/volume/16/piece/466)

EXAMPLES:  
 Human Microphone, [\[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_microphone\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_microphone)  
 Teen Buzz,  
[\[https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5434687\]](https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5434687)  
 SP&CE Media. *Campus Carry Doorbell*,  
[\[https://issuu.com/criticalmaking/docs/protest-hertz-201705052135-20180108/48\]](https://issuu.com/criticalmaking/docs/protest-hertz-201705052135-20180108/48)  
 Electronic Disturbance Theatre. *Transborder Immigrant Tool*,  
[\[https://vimeo.com/6109723\]](https://vimeo.com/6109723)  
 Ultra-red. *Second Nature*, [\[http://ultrared.org/pso2b.html\]](http://ultrared.org/pso2b.html)

**Week 8: Wednesday, 4 March 2020**  
**Midterm Preparation** Lucas Pope. *Papers, Please*, [\[https://papersplea.se/\]](https://papersplea.se/)

**Week 9: Wednesday, 11 March 2020**  
**NO CLASS MEETING** Midterm Assignment Due Online by 7:00PM

**SPRING BREAK** **Wednesday, 18 March 2020**  
 NO CLASS MEETING

**Week 10: Wednesday, 25 March 2020**  
**Final Paper Proposals** Abstract Due Online Sunday, 22 March 2020 by 10:00PM  
In-class Abstract Workshop

**Week 11: Wednesday, 1 April 2020**  
**NO CLASS MEETING**

**Week 12: Wednesday, 8 April 2020**  
**Queer Walking Simulators and Glitch Art** Visit with Guest Whitney Pow (Northwestern University)  
4:00-5:15PM - Presentation by Whitney Pow in ATCM 3320 - Critical Media Theories (ATC 2.918)  
5:30-6:45PM - Guest class led by Whitney Pow (ATC 2.901)

READINGS:

Whitney Pow. "Reaching Toward Home: Software Interface as Queer Orientation in the Video Game *Curtain*"

Bonnie Ruberg. "Straight Paths Through Queer Walking Simulators: Wandering on Rails and Speedrunning in *Gone Home*"

Michael Betancourt. "The Invention of Glitch Video: *Digital TV Dinner*"

EXAMPLE:

Dreamfeel. *Curtain*, [<https://dreamfeel.itch.io/curtain>]

**OPTIONAL Thursday, 9 April 2020**  
Hands-on Workshop led by Guest Whitney Pow (Northwestern University)  
  
"Queer and Trans Spatial Politics of the Walking Simulator"  
11:00AM-12:45PM  
Location TBD

**Week 13: Wednesday, 15 April 2020**  
**NO CLASS MEETING** Individual Skype/Office Meetings to Be Scheduled this Week  
Annotated Bibliography Due Online 24 Hours before Individual Meeting

**Week 14: Wednesday, 22 April 2020**  
**In-Class Presentations** Paper Presentation Due in Class

**Week 15: Wednesday, 29 April 2020**  
**NO CLASS MEETING** Individual Skype/Office Meetings to Be Scheduled this Week

**FINALS WEEK Friday, 8 May 2020**  
**RESEARCH PAPER DUE ONLINE BY 11:59PM**

*The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.*

**Addendum – 18 March 2020**

In-person class sessions cancelled following Spring Break.

Please consult update Final Research Paper Milestones instructions for online abstract workshop guidelines as well as updated deadlines for the final research paper.