

ATCM 3320
Critical Media Theories
Spring 2020 REVISED SYLLABUS

Professor: Dr. Juan Llamas-Rodriguez

Office Hours: Online by appointment.

Email: juan.llamasrodriguez@utdallas.edu

Please allow 24 hours for responses to email; 48 hours on the weekend or holidays.

Course Description.

The central question of this course is: How do we navigate the current age of technomediation? We investigate this question by thinking through the connections between infrastructures, media technologies, and human practices. Class consists of screenings, theory readings, and practical case studies. These will cover a range of contemporary relevant topics such as algorithms, content regulation, artificial intelligence, and social media. Finally, the latter part of the class turns toward building alternative technological worlds. How does media allow us to speculate about a more equitable and just society?

Course Objectives.

- Understand key concepts in media theory and their relevance for everyday practices.
- Articulate how technologies shape social forms of thinking and how politics influence media infrastructures and protocols.
- Critically analyze how scholarly texts and media productions configure digital cultures, and practice alternative ideas for technological futures.

Required Texts.

- Course readings and screenings found through eLearning and Box.

Principles for this new course set-up.

1.- Nobody signed up for this.

- Not for the sickness, not for the social distancing, not for the sudden end of our collective lives together on campus.
- Not for an online class, not for teaching remotely, not for learning from home, not for mastering new technologies, not for varied access to learning materials.

2.- The humane option is the best option.

- We are going to prioritize supporting each other as humans.
- We are going to prioritize simple solutions that make sense for the most.
- We are going to prioritize sharing resources and communicating clearly.

3.- We cannot just do the same thing online.

- Some assignments are no longer possible

- Some expectations are no longer reasonable
- Some objectives are no longer valuable

4.- We will foster intellectual nourishment, social connection, and personal accommodation.

- Accessible asynchronous content for diverse access, time zones, and contexts.
- Optional synchronous discussion to learn together and combat isolation.

5.- We will remain flexible and adjust to the situation.

- Nobody knows where this is going and what we'll need to adapt.
- Everybody needs support and understanding in this unprecedented moment.

Assignments already completed.

<input type="checkbox"/> Participation	15%
<input type="checkbox"/> Theory Sketches	20%
<input type="checkbox"/> Midterm Exam	15%

Assignments left to complete.

☐ Discussion Posts (20%)

These short activities will ask you to apply concepts from the week's readings in a creative manner. More details in each weekly prompt. All activities will be due on Sundays at midnight. You may have already done discussion posts for the first half of the semester. You're welcome to do as many as you need from the second half to fulfill the total of **five** submissions.

☐ Theory Sketch #3 (10%)

For this final assignment, I will encourage you to think about how the concepts we have learned in class can help you make sense of the ongoing changes to everyday life. You may use any current event, news item, or social trend and write a 750-word reflection tying it to the course concepts. Assignment will be due on eLearning by Sunday April 26 at midnight.

☐ Final Exam (20%)

The final take-home exam will consist of short answer essay questions like the ones we had in the midterm. It will test your comprehension of the main concepts and arguments of the class as well as your ability to analyze the media examples in relation to these concepts. The questions will be available starting on Wednesday April 29 and will be due on Sunday May 10 at midnight.

Weekly Plan for the remainder of the semester:

- On Sundays at midnight, an activity will be due related to a reading for the week.
- On Monday, you'll watch a short video related to the topic of the week.
- On Wednesday, I'll host a session on eLearning during the regular class time (4:00-5:15pm) where I'll address the activities submitted, the video, and explain any concepts from the readings that need elaboration. I'll send the conference link Wednesday morning so you can join to ask questions or add comments.

In reality, you can watch the video on your own time, and if you're unable to join the eLearning session on Wednesday, I'll upload a summary of the discussion afterwards. So the only strict deadline is submitting the activity on eLearning by Sundays at midnight. I am proposing the plan above for those (like me) who benefit from a learning routine.

(Revised) Schedule.

PART 4: PARTICIPATION

Week 10 — NO CLASSES [extended Spring Break]

Week 11 — Hail the Maintainers

SUN 03/29	DUE BY MIDNIGHT activity based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew Russell and Lee Vinsel, "Innovation is overvalued. Maintenance often matters more," <i>Aeon</i> (April 7, 2016), https://aeon.co/essays/innovation-is-overvalued-maintenance-often-matters-more
MON 03/30	Watching session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>BURN-E</i> (Angus MacLane, 2008)
WED 04/01	To-do before eLearning live session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vicki Mayer, "Labor," from <i>Keywords for Media Studies</i>, 115-118.

Week 12 — Broken World Thinking

Sunday 04/05	DUE BY MIDNIGHT activity based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steve Jackson, "Rethinking Repair," in <i>Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society</i> (MIT Press, 2014): 221-239.
Monday 04/06	Listening session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>99% Invisible</i>, "A Year in the Dark" (October 30, 2018), https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/a-year-in-the-dark/
Wednesday 04/08	To-do before eLearning live session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a look at the selection of students' meme submissions.

Week 13 — Animated Futures

Sunday 04/12	DUE BY MIDNIGHT activity based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Joel Mckim, “Speculative Animation: Digital Projections of Urban Past and Future,” <i>Animation</i> 12.3 (November 2017): 287-305.
Monday 04/13	Watching session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>World of Tomorrow</i> (Don Hertzfeldt, 2015)
Wednesday 04/15	To-do before eLearning live session: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Take a look at the selection of students’ animation submissions.

Week 14 — Indigenous Knowledges

Sunday 04/19	DUE BY MIDNIGHT activity based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Marisa Elena Duarte, “Network Thinking,” from <i>Network Sovereignty: Building the Internet Across Indian Country</i> (University of Washington Press, 2017): 9-25.
Monday 04/20	Watching session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Time Traveller</i> (Skawennati, 2010) http://www.timetravellertm.com/
Wednesday 04/22	To-do before eLearning live session: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ross Perlin, “Cyborg Tongues,” <i>Logic</i> #4 (Spring 2018): 189-198.Explore the 68 Voces project https://68voces.mx/

Week 15 — Finals

Sunday 04/26	DUE BY MIDNIGHT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Theory Sketch #3
Monday 04/27	Watch session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>I Dream in Another Language</i> (Ernesto Contreras, 2017)
Wednesday 04/29	Final Exam prompt available on eLearning.
Final Exam due <u>SUNDAY MAY 10</u> on eLearning.	