Digital Literacies
Professor Jessica Pressman
ENG 563, Section 1
Fall 2014

What does it mean to be "literate" in the age of digital data, screens, and hyperattention? What does "reading and writing" describe in the age of Twitter, Facebook, and mobile digital narratives? What, if any, kinds of contemporary communication practices are uniquely "digital"? And, the big one: How do digital technologies and the Internet affect the way we read, write, and think? In order to address these questions—indeed, in order to think critically about our digital culture-- we need to know our media history.

This class pursues digital literacy as a concept and a practice, a topic and a skill-set. Our goal is to gain the critical perspective and literacy tools needed to understand, critique, and actively participate in—rather than just blindly and passively use—our contemporary digital media. Students will learn to think critically and creatively about cultural, communicative, and cognitive consequences of the digital shift. Together, we will explore, analyze, and historicize the complicated sets of literacies that the digital both promotes and demands. Towards this end, we study contemporary discourse about attention/distraction, hyper/deep reading, mobile/stationary media, convergence culture, etc. by putting it in context and tracing its precursors.

We read and view a wide range of genres across medial formats: media studies scholarship, cultural criticism, digital literature, youtube animations, interface design, and more. In the process, we will learn to think critically and creatively about cultural, communicative, and cognitive consequences of digital technologies and our contemporary technoculture. We will not only study digital literacy but acquire it.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will acquire the ability to:
-recognize and engage new modes of reading and writing, including digital literature, data visualization, and blog-writing
-practice basic HTML and Wikipedia editing
-understand how to conduct and validate online sources
-reflect critically on their ability to employ different modalities of attention
-build web-based multimedia and multimodal analytical essays

Course Meetings: T/Th 2 - 3:15 p.m. Room: AH-1120	Course website: Blackboard and Wordpress http://jessicapressman.com/sdsuFall2014
Pressman's email: jessicapressman0@gmail.com *see caveat to emailing below	Office Hours: T/Th 10-1 or by appt. Office: AL 242

ASSIGNMENTS
Participation 40% (in class 20%, blogs 20%)
Midterm Essay 20%
Final Essay Project 40%
**See grading rubrics for all assignments on our course website*

Participation 40%
The success of this class and of your personal development in it depends upon your active participation. This means that you will need to: (1) attend *all* class meetings; (2) participate in class discussions; (3) complete all required assignments thoughtfully and thoroughly by the due date. 4) participation also requires active commenting on the blog posts of fellow classmates.

Weekly Blog posts 20%
Instead of writing an essay or two for a single reader (i.e. me), you will instead write throughout the term and write for our learning community (your classmates). You will write **11 posts** (during the 15 weeks), and these 300-500 word online writing activities will serve as a stimulus for in-class discussion as well as a means of practicing the components of critical digital literacy. You should use the blogs to respond to readings and work out ideas (which you can then use in your midterm and final essay).

 **Specific blog assignments will be posted to the course website.
Blog assignments are due at *6 pm EVERY MONDAY*.
**You will be required to comment on *at least one* of your peer's posts each week (due before class on Thursday).
** *Late blog posts receive NO credit*.**
**Individual blog posts will *not* receive individual grades but a holistic grade for completion and content. That holistic grade will be presented at midterm and, again, at the end of the term. It will be determined based on the following:

Blog Post Grading Rubric
Completion
A= 11 posts
B= 9-10 posts
C= 7-8 posts
D= 5-6 posts
F= 4 or less

Content
A= Contains a clear thesis and close analysis of a specific quotation, visual aspect, idea, etc. Displays thoughtful reflection and a careful attempt to communicate.
Comment on peer's blog is thoughtful, polite, and substantial.
B= Contains an attempt at a thesis or organizing insight but is largely summary of the reading or conjecture. Examines a specific quotation, visual aspect, etc. but does not

develop an opinion about it.

Comment on peer's blog lacks substance or insight.

C= Reads as a hurried attempt to get the assignment done, perhaps with spelling mistakes.

D= Brief or incoherent post with incomplete sentences lack of focus.

Media Archaeology Midterm Essay 20%

In this midterm essay (2500 words/5 pages, posted to your blog), you will excavate the history of a particular media form or platform (the typewriter, wi-fi, the QWERTY keyboard, etc.) and pose an argument about why knowing this history matters. Rather than a superficial history of a media form (presented as an encyclopedia summary), this thesis-driven essay will explore a specific aspect of the medium (e.g. the role of hot-spots in the development of wifi or why HTML is in English) and make an argument about it (e.g. that hot-spots represent the intervention of corporation ownership over the Web, or that recognizing that HTML is in English reminds us the WWW is actually not world-wide). We will read exemplary works of media archaeology, including the excerpts by Lisa Gitelman and Janet Abate, and discuss why this approach is so important to media history and literacy.

Final Digital Project 40%:

Final Essay 30%, Written Proposal 5% and Design Mock-up Presentation 5%

This 3,500-5,000 word essay (7-10 pages) provides an opportunity to *use* digital technologies to show how media informs message and to deeply explore the question or topic that most intrigued you in our discussions. You will write an analytical (i.e. thesis-driven) essay that uses *at least two* of the texts from the syllabus (texts you did not use in the midterm), and the essay will be presented in the form of a website or web-based application. This final assignment enables students to explore the intersection of creative and critical thinking, to build and curate as modes of analyzing, and to otherwise explore how the technologies involved in shaping, presenting, and accessing literature also affect learning and analysis. You will be graded on how well your analytical argument is supported by the web-based design; in other words, on how well the form of your essay supports its content.

Since this is a multi-dimensional project—one that involves developing an analytical argument with text and then developing building an interactive way of accessing the essay—we will rely on the following benchmarks to support our process:

1) You will propose your essay topic in a formal proposal (3 pages) and meet with me to discuss the structure and implementation **5%**
2) You will then develop a design mock-up for your essay, present that proposal in a document and short oral presentation (3 minutes) to the class **5%**
3) Finally, you will build your essay so that form supports content, designing its appearance and interaction in order to implement your rhetorical argument **30%**

Final projects will be displayed on a website, and selected final projects will (hopefully) be exhibited to a university-wide audience in a larger exhibition forum.

**Extra Credit: attend ThatCamp Digital Humanities Conference at SDSU, October 24-5

Conferences:
You are required to meet with me at least once during the semester, but you are certainly encouraged to consult me either in office hours or by email.

Tech Support
See our course website for information on where to seek technical assistance.
No programming or computer knowledge is necessary. However, all students should be advised that you will be required to engage with new media technologies and spaces.

Student Computing Center: http://library.sdsu.edu/computing

Email Correspondence
This class focuses on how technologies and technical formats for writing effect rhetorical content, so you need to be mindful of your own use of email. Consider email for what it is— an epistolary form of text-based communication. Craft your emails to me and to other students accordingly: with respect and with respectful use of language. This means that the email must include a subject line, an address, thoughtful and respectful prose in the body paragraph, and a signature. Also, although email is a nearly instantaneous mode of communication, do not expect my responses to be so. Do not expect me to respond within 24 hours to any email and certainly not one sent on the eve of a deadline; this means that you need to plan in advance in order to receive the kind of feedback and attention you need before deadlines approach.

Technology Etiquette
Please turn off your cell phone before class and do not leave it on the desk during class. Our study of digital technologies and literacies demands that we intentionally determine when to use these technologies and when not to do so. I allow and encourage the use of computers, tablets, etc. in class for taking notes but NOT for socializing during class. This means you should log out of Facebook, Twitter, IM and the message boards you follow **before** class begins. Studies show, as we will learn, that these activities distract and disable our ability to learn and participate. You may visit our blog, Wikipedia or research sites to assist in our class lesson, but be prepared to be called upon at any point to explain to the class why your Internet use has value to the entire class in that particular moment.
**If you are socializing online or on your phone (including texting), you will be considered absent, and your participation grade will suffer.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and, *at a minimum,* **a plagiarized piece of work will receive 0 points (an 'F'). *An F in the course also may result*** and might have administrative repercussions. Part of digital literacy is learning to avoid plagiarism and valid sources, so be sure to ask questions about

what constitutes plagiarism if you are at all uncertain. See also: http://csrr.sdsu.edu/cheating-plagiarism.html

Students with Disabilities
If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated. Student Disabilities Services: http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/sds/

Writing Center
The SDSU Writing Center is a great, free resource for SDSU students. You can make an appointment or simply stop by for a drop-in session: http://writingcenter.sdsu.edu/

COURSE & READING SCHEDULE
*This class is an emergent learning experience, so the below schedule is subject to change.

Required text:
The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media
eds. Marie-Laure Ryan, Lori Emerson, and Benjamin J. Robertson
Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2014
ISBN: 978-1-4214-1224-5 paperback

*All other readings are available on our class website as PDFs or active weblinks

Week 1: Introduction
8/26: Introduction
8/28: Nicolas Carr, "Is Google Making us Stupid" (Atlantic, 2008)

Week 2:
---First blog post due, Monday @ 6 pm
9/2: N. Katherine Hayles, "Hyper and Deep Attention" *(Profession*, 2007)
---First blog comment due, Thursday @ 2 pm
9/4: "Remediation" and "Code" in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media (JHGDM)*

~~**Part I. Digital Media—Definitions and Histories** ~~

Week 3: New Media
9/9: Lev Manovich, "What is New Media?" (from *Language of New Media*, 2002): 25-
        48
9/11: "History of Computers" in *JHGDM*

Week 4: Interfaces and Databases
9/16: Steven Johnson, *Interface Culture: How New Technologies Transform the Way We Create and Communicate* (1997): 14-23, 42-52, 76-85
9/18: "Data" and "Database" in *JHGDM*

Week 5: Media Archaeology
9/23: Lisa Gitelman, excerpt from "New Media </Body>"
9/25: No class. Rosh Hashanah.
"Media Ecology" in *JHGDM*

Week 6: The Internet
9/29: Janet Abate, introduction to *Inventing the Internet* (MIT Press, 1999): 1-6
10/2: "Cyberspace" in JHGDM

Week 7: The Web
10/7: Chris Anderson and Michael Wolff, "The Web is Dead: Long Live the Internet"
10/9: Alexander Galloway, "Protocol" (in *New Media/Old Media*): 317-320

Midterm Due

Week 8: Convergence Culture
10/14: Henry Jenkins, "Convergence Culture" (Chapter 1)
10/16: **"**Participatory Culture," "Copyright," and "Remix" in JHGDM

 ∿**Part II. The Digital Humanities** ∿

Week 9: What is the Digital Humanities?
10/21: Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner, Jeffrey Schnapp, *Digital_Humanities* (MIT Press, 2012): Chapter 1, pp. 3-26
10/23: "Digital Humanities" in JHGDM

Extra Credit: ThatCamp Conference (10/24-25 @ SDSU)

Week 10: Distant Reading
10/27: Franco Moretti, "Distant Reading" (*New York Times*, 2011)
10/29: Lev Manovich and Jeremy Douglass: "Cultural Analytics - Mark Rothko Paintings on the 287-Megapixel HiPerWall" (Youtube)
"Reading Strategies" in JHGD**M**

Final Project Proposal Due*

Week 11: Digital Literature
11/4**:** Katherine Hayles, "Electronic Literature: What is it?" (2007)
11/6: Explore ELC Vol. 1 & Vol. 2: http://.eliterature.org

Week 12: Peer Review
11/11: Veteran's Day. No class.
11/13: Professor Pressman away. Guest teacher & Peer Review of final proposals

Week 13: The Human(ities)
11/18: "Cyborg and Posthuman" in JHGDM
11/20: Naomi Baron. *Always On* (Oxford UP, 2008): Chapter 10: "The People we
         Become"
Building of student projects

Week 14: Project Building
11/25: Building of student projects
11/27: No class. Thanksgiving

Week 15: Presentations
12/2: Presentations & Building
12/4: Presentations & Building

Week 16: Conclusion
12/9: Conclusion

FINAL PROJECT DUE (uploaded to course website): December 19 @ noon