

# ENG 6810: Theories of Texts and Technology

Section 0001, Course # 10905, 3 credit hours

Spring 2010, T 7:30-9pm and online, CNH 203

Professor Saper

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CNH

T 6:30-7:30, W 2:30-3:30PM  
and by appt.

## Description

In this course, part of the core T&T curriculum, we will build on your work in Introduction to T&T and reference History of T&T to explore key theories. Indeed, some of our readings are in direct conversation with readings from the Intro course. Focusing on the interaction among texts, technologies, and actors who shape and are shaped by both, the readings and theories we examine come out of various scholarly traditions, and focus on various types of technological “assemblages”—including workplace networks, hypermedia compositions, virtual reality, and cyborgs. Despite this range, designed to introduce you to a broad repertoire of theories to “think with”, parts of the course will focus on the agency of technology “users,” teaching theories of texts and technology (because attempting to teach something is one of the best ways to internalize it), and the more specific relationship between bodies and embodiment as it relates to T&T. Your final project for this course will examine this body-embodiment relationship in a specific type of T&T interaction and, in the process, develop your own conceptual contribution to the field.

Each week we will collectively take up specific questions from the reading(s) and develop more specific questions ourselves, but we might begin our inquiry with the following broader questions:

- How do emergent technologies (i.e., new media) interact with older ones to rearticulate authorship, texts, writing, and other elements of communicative practices?
- How does this interaction affect larger shifts in consciousness and embodied practice?
- How might we conceptualize and (re)shape the power dynamics among technologies and the actors who shape and use them?
- How might theories of T&T inform the teaching of interpretive and composing practices?
- How might we conceptualize the roles of bodies and forms of embodiment in T&T interactions?

We will sometimes use various technologies, such as a course blog and WebCourses class management system, to extend our inquiry online, to develop collaborative projects, and to store/retrieve our collective work for the course. Let me know if you cannot access our WebCourses site.

## Course Objectives

- Begin to develop a theoretical “toolbox” and set of concrete resources (e.g., report handouts, concept maps) for future T&T work, including exams and dissertation.
- Engage in scholarly conversation about the course texts and concepts they take up, in the process improving interpretation, writing, and argumentation skills.
- Continue developing T&T project ideas, including a possible publication from the final paper in this course.
- Use new media to better understand and teach the ways this media rearticulates forms of communication and embodied interaction with technology.
- Build new theory through connecting and applying course concepts to a specific type of T&T interaction.

## Required Texts

The following books (available at the UCF Bookstore) are required. See the schedule for the parts of each book on which you should focus your reading.

- O'Gorman, Marcel. *E-Crit: Digital Media, Critical Theory and the Humanities*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.
- Rice, Jeff. *The Rhetoric of Cool: Composition Studies and New Media*
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *Electronic Literature*
- McGann, Jerome. *Radiant Textuality*
- Brown, Bob. *The Readies*. Rice Universities Press, 2009. <http://rup.rice.edu/readies.html> [free online]
- Brown, Bob. *Words*. Rice University Press, 2009. <http://rup.rice.edu/words.html> [free online]

## Assignments and Grading

### Major Assignments and Percentage of Overall Grade

1) Response Papers	30%
2) Book Review	30%
3) Final Paper	30%
4) Class Participation	10%

### Grading Criteria

- An *A* text makes a sophisticated, polished argument and a persuasive, insightful contribution to a conversation about theories of T&T. It is exceptional in its fulfillment of assignment criteria and execution of textual elements (i.e., development, arrangement, style, delivery). It has no major flaws.
- A *B* text is well-conceptualized, well-crafted, and solidly argued. It is generally above average in its fulfillment of assignment criteria and execution of textual elements, but it falls short in one area.
- A *C* text makes a competent, adequately crafted argument and contains all required elements. It is generally average in its fulfillment of assignment criteria and execution of textual elements, but it has multiple flaws.
- A text earning *C-* or below is poorly conceptualized and crafted. It fails to contain required elements.

### Assignment Descriptions

#### 1) Responses

Responses to readings will be graded, so compose them with care. They should be 500-750 words (though they can include images), should be posted on the course blog (<https://theory6810.wordpress.com/>) or the WebCourses area. Each response should not simply be a summary but should demonstrate substantial engagement with the reading (documented with citations of specific pages or URLs), relating it to your views, experience, or research. As long as it engages the reading, your response can also extend a discussion started by a classmate, in which case you would reply to her/his response. Because we will use responses to guide our in-class discussion, your response should include at least one specific question about a key concept from the reading.

#### 2) Book Review

You are required to write a publishable book review of a theoretical text in new media studies or texts and

technology approved by Prof. Saper. It is a relatively short review of 1,000 words, but it must be of the highest quality, relevant to the latest research in this area, and meet the editorial approval of Professor Saper to receive ANY grade. If it is not publishable, then you will have to re-write it until it is perfect. You must have Professor Saper approve the book to review before beginning. If you have ideas, then contact professor Saper as soon as the semester starts.

## 5) Final Project

This final, individual project combines a scholarly paper (in either print or hypertext version, depending on your targeted forum) with a multimedia interface or exhibition. Regardless of form, you must register your resources for this project on <http://del.icio.us/>, <http://citeulike.org/>, <http://www.librarything.com/>, or another Web-based citation networking site to facilitate conversation with scholars beyond our campus.

The paper should be slightly longer than conference length (15-18 double-spaced pages), be written for a specific scholarly forum, include an abstract (100-150 words), and use theory explored in the course to analyze and make an argument about a particular type of interaction.

The exhibition, which can be set up in the T&T lab or another appropriate space, should offer viewers/participants a reflection-inducing perspective of the technology-text-embodiment relationship.

## Course Policies

- I am always happy to meet with you about the course or your larger T&T program of study. If my office hours are not convenient for you, we can certainly schedule alternative times to meet in person or virtually (via Google Talk or another IM tool).
- We will mostly follow the syllabus and schedule, but they are subject to minor changes, about which I will apprise you.
- In order for the class to be a success, you must be well prepared for and actively engaged in all class meetings. I will take notes about your level of preparation and participation.
- Because this is a discussion-oriented class, attendance and punctuality are crucial. Beyond affecting your participation grade, missing more than one class will result in your overall course grade being lowered. Missing more than two classes will likely cause you to fail the course.
- All UCF students are responsible for upholding standards of academic integrity as explained by The Golden Rule (<http://www.ucf.edu/goldenrule>). When it amounts to academic dishonesty, plagiarism can have dire consequences such as failing a paper or the course.
- As a rule, except in cases of documented medical emergencies, I will not accept late assignments or papers, and I will not grant extensions or incompletes.
- Students with disabilities will be fully accommodated in this course. Please let me know at the beginning of the term about any such needs, and I will make adjustments and help you locate resources to aid your performance in the course.

Schedule		
Date	SORRY -- Nothing here yet	But by the first day of class
Jan.		
Jan.		
Jan.		
Feb.		
Feb.		
Feb.		
Feb. 24		
March 3		
March 17		
March 24		
March 31		
April 7		
April 14		
April 21		
April 28		
Final Exam		