

Spring, 2017 ENG 6810 0001: Texts & Technology Theory
OTC 134, 6:00 – 8:50 PM Tuesdays

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T&T Theory Course description

We will examine how theoretical discourse has evolved through shifting technological platforms, with particular attention to the challenges software, code, and networks present to our understanding of texts. We will engage with examples of complex procedural works ranging from video games to electronic literature and social media. Each of these new platforms challenges our understanding of knowledge and how knowledge is circulated, curated, and redefined in a web-centric culture.

Throughout the course, students will engage with current book-length scholarship on a variety of digital media subjects using a range of methodologies. Students will develop their skills at framing long-form scholarly objects in preparation for their dissertation projects.

Course Goals

- To learn how to read theoretical works and incorporate theory in your own writing.
- To enter and understand both “classic” theorists and the changing theoretical discourse surrounding evolving platforms, and engage with the interdisciplinary skillset required to make a meaningful study of technology.
- To write persuasively about the “how” and “why” of critical and theoretical work, particularly your own. Theory and criticism have features as a genre, rhetorics, and intertextualities. You will learn to explain and justify how you engage with them in your own writing.

Required Texts

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. 2016. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Kirschenbaum, Matthew G. 2016. *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Manovich, Lev. 2013. *Software Takes Command*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Phillips, Whitney. 2015. *This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Shifman, Limor. 2013. *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Sousanis, Nick. 2015. *Unflattening*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Grading

- 150 points** **10x Weekly Exams Summary**
In 10 of 15 weeks of their choice, students will write a 1-page memo summarizing the required readings as if for a candidacy exam. This is due 3 hours before class time to allow the instructors to review them as we prepare.
- 200 points** **Fantasy Committee: Due February 14**
In the spirit of Fantasy Football, you will “draft” 3 T&T faculty members to be on your Candidacy or Dissertation committee by looking for those who share similar research interests as you via the T&T website. You’ll then read at least one academic article written by each member and write up a short paper explaining why those professors would be appropriate to help guide you toward your degree.
- 150 points** **Final Paper Proposal/Background Reading: Due March 21**
You will identify a journal or a call for papers suitable to your research and submit a 2-page proposal of a research question (empirical papers) or an area and a position (theoretical papers), a plan for how you intend to complete the project, and a brief justification for why your work is a good fit to be published in that venue. You will also write an annotated bibliography or literature review of existing scholarly writing relevant to the project.
- 50 points** **Final Paper Draft: Due April 11**
Produce a complete draft of your article (ballpark 8,000 words, unless your target journal has another length requirement) for peer review. Do not include any identifying information on the draft, because these drafts are going to be used for blind peer review.
- 100 points** **Peer Review: Due April 18**
You will receive the papers of two other students to conduct double-blind peer review of the sort one is called to do for journals in an academic career. You’ll tell your colleague what about their paper works, what doesn’t work, and what you suggest to remedy whatever weaknesses it may have. You will be graded based upon the quality of your contribution to your classmate.
- 50 points** **Conference Presentation: Due April 18**
On the last scheduled day of class we will have a mini-conference and invite the department to attend. You’ll be organized into panels, speak, and field questions. The idea is for you to use the feedback you get in the Q&A alongside the peer review in making your revisions, much like one will take a paper to a conference before publishing it in a journal.
- 300 points** **Final Paper: Due April 26**
Based on the feedback of the peer reviewers and on the presentation, submit a revised version of the paper. Your final submission will include a practice letter to the editor of the journal to which you intend to submit, explaining what revisions you have made and why you feel they make the paper stronger.
- 1000 points** **Total**

Course Policies

- **Classroom Behavior:** Proper classroom behavior is expected at all times. Students must follow UCF standards for personal and academic conduct as outlined in The Golden Rule. As a matter of common courtesy, please arrive on time prepared to stay for the entire class. Proper classroom conduct also entails creating a positive learning experience for all students; therefore, sexist, racist, homophobic, or other derogatory remarks will not be tolerated. My top priority is to provide a safe environment for learning.
- Your participation in class discussions is **required** and is expected at each and every class meeting. This is a discussion-based, student-centered class; it only works if you, the student, take responsibility for your learning by showing up prepared and engaged. Full preparation means you have read the assigned material and wrote or thought about it and you have brought your course materials to class with you.
- Attendance is crucial because of the vital role discussion plays in this course. You will drop your grade a whole letter for every two unexcused absences. Absences will be excused in cases of emergency or for prior arrangements of short duration. You must contact me ASAP once you know you will be absent.
- Make-up work is available at the professor's discretion for excused absences only. No make-up work will be given for unexcused absences. Students are responsible for raising the issue of make-up work with the professor.
- Late assignments will lose 30% of the total possible points per class meeting after due date.
- All work is to be done individually unless otherwise noted by the instructor.
- All papers must be proofed, printed, and stapled. Incomplete papers will be returned.
- Responses to emails may take up to three days, especially on weekends. Please be patient.
- No incompletes will be given in this course.
- Complaints about assignment grades should be discussed with me within two weeks after return.
- **Plagiarism and Cheating:** All work that you submit for this class must be your own, and it must be written exclusively for this course. Also, any sources consulted for your writing must be properly documented. "Rewriting," in which a student consults a source, changes a few words, and presents the ideas as his/her own, is plagiarism. Plagiarism and cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment and may also lead to an "F" for the entire course. Plagiarism and cheating subjects a student to referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule (<http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>). I will adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so please do not expect me to change your grade illegitimately or to break rules.
- **Disability Accommodation:** The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Rm. 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823- v.

Standards for Written Work

- An “A” text is exceptional. It presents sophisticated and significant critique and is guided by a meaningful argument. It contains the required elements of the assignment, is written in an engaging style, is arranged in a logical manner, is memorable, and is visually appealing. It is free of mechanical errors.
- A “B” text is strong. It contains all required elements of the assignment. It is generally above average in terms of the criteria mentioned above, but falls short of excellence in one or more category. It has few mechanical errors.
- A “C” text is competent. It contains all required elements of the assignment. It is generally average in terms of the major criteria listed above. It has some mechanical errors.
- “D” work is weak. It does not include the required elements of the assignment and it falls below average in terms of one or more of the major criteria.
- “F” work fails in terms of one or more of these criteria.

Schedule

January 10

Stanfill, Mel. "Finding Birds of a Feather: Multiple Memberships and Diversity Without Divisiveness in Communication Research." *Communication Theory* 22, no. 1 (2012): 1–24. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2011.01395.x.

Dreyfuss, Simeon. "Something Essential about Interdisciplinary Thinking." *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies* 29 (2011): 67-83. PDF

How to Read for Grad School <https://miriamsweeney.net/2012/06/20/readforgradschool/>

January 17

Sousanis, Nick. 2015. *Unflattening*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press:

- flatness
- flatland
- the importance of seeing double...
- the shape of our thoughts
- our bodies in motion

McCloud, Scott. 1993. *Understanding Comics*. PDF.

Abbott, Edwin. *Flatland*. <http://www.eldritchpress.org/ea/FL.HTM>

January 24

Sousanis, Nick. 2015. *Unflattening*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press:

- the fifth dimension
- ruts
- strings attached
- vectors
- awaking

Lautour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. PDF

Wilkins, Peter and Damon Herd. "Unpacking Unflattening"

<http://www.comicsgrid.com/articles/10.5334/cg.bi/>

January 31

Manovich, Lev. 2013. *Software Takes Command*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

- Introduction
- Alan Kay's universal media machine
- Understanding metamedia

Kay, Alan and Adele Goldberg. "Personal Dynamic Media." PDF

Wardrip-Fruin, Noah. *Expressive Processing*. PDF

February 7

Manovich, Lev. 2013. *Software Takes Command*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

- Soft Evolution
- Media Design
- Conclusion

Montfort, Nick and Ian Bogost. "Platform studies: Frequently questioned answers." PDF

Marino, Mark. "Critical Code Studies."

<http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/codology>

February 14

Kirschenbaum, Matthew G. 2016. *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Word Processing
- Perfect
- Around 1981
- North of Boston
- Signposts
- Typing on Glass

Cecire, Natalie. "Ways of Not Reading Gertrude Stein." - PDF

Fantasy Committee Due

Library Workshop Day

February 21

Kirschenbaum, Matthew G. 2016. *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Unseen Hands
- Think Tape
- Reveal Codes
- What Remains
- After Word Processing

Kittler, Friedrich. Selections from *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. PDF

Pathfinders Traversals - <https://vimeo.com/channels/elitpathfinders/page:21>

February 28

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. 2016. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press: Introduction, Ch1, Ch3: 70 pages

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. New York: Cambridge University Press: 72-87, 159-171: 27 pages - PDF

Althusser, Louis "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: (durham and kellner = 9)

March 7

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. 2016. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press: Enemy of my Enemy; I Never Remember; Ch4: 44

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1993. "Epistemology of the Closet." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin, 45-61. New York, NY: Routledge: 17 - PDF

Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage: 195-170, 209-200: 34 - PDF

March 14 - Spring Break

March 21

Shifman, Limor. 2013. *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press: Ch 1-5 (64)

Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York, NY: Routledge: 1-16 - PDF

Carey, James W. 1992. "A Cultural Approach to Communication." In *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, 13–36. New York: Routledge. - PDF

Final Paper Proposal/Background Reading Due

March 28

Shifman, Limor. 2013. *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press: Ch 6-8 (86)

Combahee River Collective. 1981. "A Black Feminist Statement." In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 210–18. Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press. - PDF

Lorde, Audre. 2007. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 110–14. Berkeley, Calif: Crossing Press. - PDF

April 4

Phillips, Whitney. 2015. *This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press: Ch1-4 70

Marx, Karl. 1978. "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 319–29. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Hebdige, Dick. 2001. "(I) From Culture to Hegemony; (Ii) Subculture: THE Unnatural Break." In *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner, 198–216. Malden, MA: Blackwell. (19)

April 11

Phillips, Whitney. 2015. *This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press: Ch 5-8

Dyer, Richard. 1997. "Lighting for Whiteness." In *White*, 89–102. London, UK: Routledge. (13)

Connell masculinities? Kimmel?

Final Paper Draft Due

April 18

Peer Review Due

Conference Presentation Due

April 26

Paper Due