Spring 2020 Dr. Cary Elza

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**COMM 354: Special Topics in Media Studies: YouTube: Producing Digital Identities**

For many of us, YouTube has become the first stop for learning about anything, from how to caulk a bathtub to the history of the phonograph. And for many of us, keeping up with the entries of prominent YouTubers and the comments they inspire is nearly a full-time job. The prevalence of video-sharing sites in everyday life necessitates that more attention be paid to participatory media literacy and practices. How can we use sites like YouTube to enhance our lives and communities—advocating for positive change—as well as provide a platform for the creative expression of identity? This class familiarizes students with basic concepts of social media from both a cultural/theoretical and a practical perspective, providing tools to create effective content while at the same time questioning how those tools have developed within particular historical, social, and cultural contexts. Along the way, students will complete exercises designed to enhance their understanding of mediated identity, the economic and cultural context of “content production,” interpersonal connections through social media, and the use of video-sharing sites for both professional portfolios and personal expression.

By the end of this course, students should:

--Demonstrate an understanding of social, political, cultural, technological, historical, and economic factors that shaped and continue to shape YouTube

--Demonstrate an understanding of social media, especially YouTube, from an industry/practitioner’s perspective

--Identify and analyze the aesthetic (formal and stylistic), narrative, and thematic characteristics of various genres of YouTube videos

--Create and maintain a YouTube channel, collaborating with other students to create original content, develop a brand identity, and solicit engagement

--Develop critical reading and writing skills by engaging with a variety of readings, screenings, and class discussions

**Requirements (total of 100 points)**

Participation/attendance 15 points

Weekly assignments (total of 6, 5 points each) 30 points

Curation project and presentation 15 points

Midterm project/report 15 points

Final project/report 25 points

**Grading Scale**

A: 94-100 B-: 80-83 D+: 67-69

A-: 90-93 C+: 77-79 D: 64-66

B+: 87-89 C: 74-76 F: 0-63

B: 84-86 C-: 70-73

**Readings and Weekly Assignments**

Readings will be posted on Canvas. All readings should be completed by the week they are listed.

Each week, an assignment will be available on Canvas; the activity might address the readings, the screenings, or something we’ve discussed in class. During the semester, you are expected to turn in **SIX** assignments**. If a given assignment is MANDATORY it will be marked as such**; all other assignments are optional (but remember, you must do at least SIX in total). Some might involve writing, and some might involve some other form of message production. These will be due to me at the start of class on Tuesday via Canvas.

**Presentations:**

Each student will be required to present the results of your curation project at some point throughout the semester. More details on the curation project will be provided on a separate handout.

**Midterm/Final Project:**

For this class, you will be designing, creating, and running a YouTube channel in a group. Each of you will be expected to contribute original content to this channel over the course of the semester, but the frequency and length of those videos is up to your group. At a MINIMUM I will expect weekly videos on your channel, but I recommend more frequent posting. At the midterm update, you will have a channel in place with a clear brand identity and at least two pieces of original content. By the final update, you should have maintained the content on your channel for seven weeks. More information on this project will be provided in a separate handout.

**Requirements for Written Assignments:**

Written assignments will be due via Canvas. Late assignments drop by 10% for each 24 hours it’s late, whether it’s the weekend or a weekday (i.e., a 100-point paper one day late will be penalized 10 points before I grade it). Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for personal emergencies, but ONLY if you ask me IN ADVANCE of the actual due date.

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory, and will be taken at the beginning of every class. If you are late, it is your responsibility to make sure I’ve marked you down as present. If you need to miss class, let me know *in advance*. Absences will be excused on a case-by-case basis. You are allowed one unexcused absence, then after that each unexcused absence reduces your attendance/participation grade by one point.

**Class Environment**

Students are expected to contribute to a respectful, productive learning environment. This includes being on time, being attentive, participating in class discussions, and being nice to everyone, regardless of their views. Technology is a big issue these days, but rest assured that it’s pretty easy to tell whether a student is actually taking notes on a laptop or checking email/whatever. If you’re going to use a laptop, please use it for class purposes only, and please turn your cell phone off. Also, no texting in class, please. Any violation of the above will impact your attendance/participation grade.

**Guidelines for Assessing Participation Grades**

--Tardiness: degree and frequency.

--Engagement: not just frequency, but quality of comments. Is it evident that you have done the readings and engaged with the material? Did I have to drop something loud to wake you up?

--Decorum: consideration for other students and their points of view.

--Technology use: disrespectful or reasonable? Did I have to yell at you to take out earbuds?

**Disability Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP’s policies, check here: http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way that I can. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here: http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/

**Statement of Academic Integrity**

UW-Stevens Point values a safe, honest, respectful, and inviting learning environment. In order to ensure that each student has the opportunity to succeed, we have developed a set of expectations for all students and instructors. This set of expectations is known as the Rights and Responsibilities document, and it is intended to help establish a positive living and learning environment at UWSP. Click here for more information: http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Pages/rightsandresponsibilities.aspx

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. Don’t do it! The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. For more information, see the UWSP “Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures” section of the Rights and Responsibilities document, Chapter 14, which can be accessed here: http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf

I should add that if you use Wikipedia, or anything online, you have to CITE IT. I don’t care whether you use MLA or Chicago style citations, but please be consistent. When in doubt, CITE THE SOURCE. I cannot stress this enough. Consequences for plagiarism are severe: the first time a student is caught, they receive an F on the assignment, and the second time results in failure of the entire course.

**Terms of Enrollment**

This syllabus is a contract. By taking this class, you agree to the policies listed here. I reserve the right to change the syllabus, but only within reason, and with notification to students.

**Course Schedule**

**Week One: Introduction**

Tuesday, 1/21

**Week Two: Origins of YouTube and Basic Concepts of Participatory Culture**

Tuesday, 1/28

**Readings:** --Burgess and Green, ch. 1

--Strangelove, ch. 1

--Tripp, "From TVTV to YouTube" (OPTIONAL)

**Week Three: New Media, Personal Connection, and Cultural Anxieties**

Tuesday, 2/4

**Readings:** --Baym, ch. 1

--Burgess and Green, ch. 2

**Week Four: YouTube Genres: Popularity, Categorization, Measurement**

Tuesday, 2/13

**Readings:** --Ha, ch. 3

--Strangelove, ch. 2

--Ha, ch. 11

**Week Five: Vlogging, Identity, and Self-Branding**

Tuesday, 2/18

**Readings:** --Baym, ch. 5

--Strangelove, ch. 3

--Maguire, "Self-Branding, Hotness, and Girlhood"

**Week Six: Gender, Sexuality, and Self-Representation**

Tuesday, 2/25

**Readings:** --Strangelove, ch. 4

--Steeves, "Pretty and Just a Little Bit Sexy, I Guess"

--Kyncl, ch. 4

**Week Seven: Intro to the Comment Section: Feedback**

Tuesday, 3/3

**Readings:** --Reagle, ch. 4

**Week Eight: MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS**

Tuesday, 3/10 ***MIDTERM PROJECT/REPORT DUE***

**Week Nine:** **SPRING BREAK**

Tuesday, 3/17 **NO CLASS**

**Week Ten: The Audience: Community, Commenting, Communication**

Tuesday, 3/24

**Readings:** --Reagle, ch. 1

--Baym, ch. 4

**Week Eleven: Race, Globalization, and Identity**

Tuesday, 4/1

**Readings:** --Leurs, "Affective Geographies on YouTube"

--Balance, "How it Feels to be Viral Me"

--Kyncl, ch. 5

**Week Twelve: Kids on YouTube**

Tuesday, 4/7

**Readings:** --Lange, ch. 1 (and ch. 2 OPTIONAL)

--Banet-Weiser, "Branding the Post-Feminist Self"

--Christie, "YouTube U"

--Krischer, "With Hair Bows and Chores"

--Burroughs, "YouTube Kids" (OPTIONAL)

**Week Thirteen: Politics, YouTube, and the "Rabbit-Hole Effect"**

Tuesday, 4/14

**Readings:** --Jahromi, "The Fight for the Future of YouTube"

--Tufekci, "YouTube, the Great Radicalizer"

--Roose, "The Making of a YouTube Radical"

--Ledwich, "Algorithmic Radicalization"

**Week Fourteen: The Dangers of Microcelebrity**

Tuesday, 4/21

**Readings:** --Jerslev, "In the Time of the Microcelebrity"

**Week Fifteen: Do What You Love and Other Platitudes: Labor and YouTube**

Tuesday, 4/28

**Readings:** --Kyncl, ch. 8

--Cannel and Travis, ch. 6

--Duffy and Wissinger, "Mythologies of Creative Work"

--Homant and Sender, "Queer Immaterial Labor in Beauty Videos" (OPTIONAL)

**Week Sixteen: FINAL PRESENTATIONS**

Tuesday, 5/5

**EXAM PERIOD: Monday, May 11, 8-10am**