

SYLLABUS

THEORIES OF MEDIA, DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

SPRING 2024

Course code: DM-GY 6043 A (Theories and Cultural Impact of Media & Design)

Course instructor: Ahmed Ansari, aa7703@nyu.edu

Class day, time and room: Mondays, 2:00p to 4:50p EST, Room 307

Appointments & Emails: I keep office hours by appointment, so please email me to schedule time. I am generally available and respond to emails throughout the week, except on weekends between 5pm Fridays to 8pm Sundays (if you email me on a Friday night or Saturday I may not be able to reply until Sunday evening).

Course Description

Welcome to *Reading & Understanding Theory!*

Every aspect of our everyday lives is mediated by technologies and media forms, and by designed tools and infrastructures. How do these things affect us? How do they order the ways in which we live, communicate, and interact? What goes into their making and production? How do they affect our lives as they play out in their social, ethical and political dimensions? These are the questions that philosophers, historians, critical theorists, and social scientists alike have raised time and time again, in an effort to better understand the relation between media and technology forms and human societies.

Technology, of course, cannot be separated from making. Designers, artists, technologists etc. all seek to shape and mold technological artifacts to realize specific aims, needs, and desires. This makes a deeper understanding of technology imperative for design and media students, and this course has thus also been designed as an interrogation of the products of our making. This course deals with two things. The first of its goals will have us engaging in a critical exploration and interrogation of how the things we make create shape us, creating possibilities, practices, and values, as well as encountering and exploring histories of changing values, practices and possibilities. The second goal has to do with helping us become better readers and writers through guided strategies for reading through complex texts and becoming better writers through peer review and editorship.

As a seminar, the course primarily involves using texts from the humanities and social sciences as lens with which to think and understand media and technology infrastructures. Over the course of the semester, we will learn both how to articulate and structure critical and analytical arguments technological artifacts, as well as put our new ways of understanding technology to use, through lectures, workshops, and assignments.

Course Goals

This course intends to give you an overview of, and exposure to, critical discourses and perspectives on media and technology infrastructures over the 20th and 21st centuries. We will cover many different perspectives from many different fields and disciplines: philosophy,

anthropology, history, science and technology studies, media theory, and design studies, and many different genealogies of thought and movements within them, in order to do this. I hope that through an assortment of readings and exercises, you will gradually come to develop a more nuanced and rich understanding of the scope and implications of artificiality in the modern world, the agency of man-made technology and media landscapes and their role in shaping and molding the human condition, and the diverse epistemological approaches to understanding these landscapes. I also hope, through the workshops and assignments, that you will improve in both how you read insightful fiction and non-fiction, and in academic writing. By the end of this course, I hope that you be able to use your deeper understanding of the world made by humans to reflect more deeply on the nature and impact of the work that you do as creative technologists.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this class, you should:

1. Have a rich critical understanding of the general landscape of historical and contemporary discourses and issues around technology and artifice;
2. Have a grasp of different disciplinary approaches of framing and thinking about the design and production of functional and media artifacts as well as their impacts and political and ethical issues of use and consumption;
3. Cultivate a rich vocabulary for articulating said critical understanding;
4. Be able to apply your understanding to critically analyze, assess and reflect on the impact of specific technologies and media forms and think through and argue for how to design and develop them in more thoughtful ways;
5. Developing better reading skills and strategies, and consequently, better writing and editing skills, learning how to develop sustained, carefully constructed arguments in writing about issues concerning technology and society.

Course Schedule

The schedule below has both the topics we intend to cover, as well as resources to read or view for each of the classes. Please do the readings in the recommended order. The course content is not set in stone, and may change as per the judgement of the instructor. You are expected to come to each class having done the required homework.

Jan 22. Introductions, Going Over The Syllabus, Reading

In-Class

We will read through [Ch. 1 \(Pgs 7-11\)](#), from Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958) together

Required

1. Go over the short Medium essay by Nikki Usher, [How to Read Theory](#) (2015)
2. Read Kathleen Flake's [How to Read Academic Texts Critically](#) (2012)
3. Please read Peter A Sherer's essay on skim- and scan-reading, [Skimming and Scanning...](#)(1975)

Additional Texts

This podcast does a great job of covering [Arendt's key arguments](#) in *The Human Condition*

Homework

Create your reflection blog and write your first entry, talking about your expectations for the course and what you're looking forward to in it.

Jan 29. Technological Determinism

Required

1. Watch [Tao Ruspoli, Being in the World \(or here\)](#) (2010) (log into Kanopy with your NYU ID)
2. Read [Jacques Ellul, The Technological Society, Chapter 1 \(Pgs 3-22\)](#) (1954)
3. Read [Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, Chapter 1: The New Forms of Control](#) (1964)
4. Read [Tony Fry, Televisual Designing: Defuturing & Sustainment](#) (2003)

Additional Texts

[Hubert Dreyfus, Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology](#) (1995)
Tony Fry and Natalie Jeremijenko in conversation about design ([Pt 1](#) and [Pt 2](#)) & Fry on [defuturing](#) (2020)

Homework

Reflection due before next class.
Book report given, due Feb 26th.

Feb 05. Media Determinism

Required

1. Watch [This is Marshall McLuhan: The Medium is the Message](#) (2018)
2. Read [Walter Ong, Ch. 3 \(Pgs 31-56\) and Ch. 4 \(Pgs 77-82\), from Orality & Literacy](#) (1982)
3. Read [Isabelle Adam, What Would McLuhan Say About the Smartphone?](#) (2016)
4. Read [James Bridle, The Great Distractor](#) (2021) & (optionally for more elaboration) [Something is Wrong on the Internet](#) (2017)

Optional

[Harold Innis, Paper and the Printing Press, Empire & Communications](#) (1950)
[Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media](#) (1964)
[Megan Mullen, Space Bias\Time Bias...](#) (2009)
Skim through [Eric & Marshall McLuhan, The Lost Tetrads](#) (2017)
Some great resources [here](#) on the Toronto School's legacy

Guest Lecture

NYU Libraries Visit

Homework

Reflection due before next class.

Feb 12. The Cybernetic Society

Required

1. Read [Vannevar Bush, As We May Think](#) (1945)
2. Read either [Roy Ascott, Art & Telematics](#) (1984) or
Read [Christopher Alexander, Notes on the Synthesis of Form](#) (1964) (skim the appendix)
3. Watch [Adam Curtis, All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace, Part II](#) (2003)
4. Watch [Paul Pangaro, Antidotes to Bad AI](#) (2021)

Optional

[Norbert Wiener, The Human Use of Human Beings](#) (1950)
[Morlidge & Player, Important Concepts in Systems & Cybernetics](#) (2012)
[Hugh Dubberly & Paul Pangaro, What is Conversation? How Can We Design for Effective Conversation?](#) (2009)

Homework

Reflection due before next class.
Mid-term project given.

Feb 19. Presidents Day - No Class

Homework

Since there is no class this week, I'd like you to work on finishing up your book report, and start working on your mid-term assignment.

Feb 26. Social Choice & Democratic Technologies

Guest Lecture: Carl Di Salvo

1. Read [Raymond Williams, Television: Technology & Cultural Form, Ch 5 \(2003\)](#)
2. Read [Andrew Feenberg, Democratic Rationalization: Technology, Power and Freedom \(2009\)](#)
3. Read [Richard Stallman's GNU Manifesto \(1985\)](#), [Lloyd Blankenship's Hackers Manifesto \(1986\)](#) and [Timothy C May's Crypto-Anarchist Manifesto \(1988\)](#)
4. Read [Carl Di Salvo, Chapter 1, Design as Democratic Inquiry... \(2022\)](#)

Optional

[Ivan Illich, Tools for Conviviality \(1973\)](#)
[Evgeny Morozov, The Santiago Boys \(2023\)](#)
[Bill Gates, An Open Letter to Hobbyists \(1976\)](#)

Homework

Book report due.

Reflection due before next class.

Mar 04. (Post) Phenomenology, Embodiment & Mediation

Guest Lecture: Cameron Tonkinwise

Required

1. Watch [Hubert Dreyfus on Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception \(Part 1 and Part 2\)](#)
2. Read [Paul Dourish, Where the Action is, Chapters 5 & 6 \(2001\)](#)
3. Read [Peter Paul Verbeek, Beyond Interaction: A Short Introduction to Mediation Theory \(2015\)](#)
4. Read [Elaine Scarry, The Body in Pain, Ch 5, Section 1 \(Pgs 281-292\) \(1985\)](#)

Optional

[Hubert Dreyfus, Why Heideggerian A.I Failed... \(2007\)](#)
Another quick explanation of [mediation](#) by Peter-Paul Verbeek
[Don Ihde on bodies and embodiment in video games](#)
[Cameron Tonkinwise, Exhibiting Animism as Artefact-Based Design Research](#)

Homework

Reflection due before next class.

Mar 11. Affect Theory

Required

1. [Alphonse Lingis, The Pageantry of Things \(2018\)](#)
2. [Watch this short documentary on Kawaii \(2022\)](#)
3. [Sianne Ngai, The Cuteness of the Avante-Garde \(2005\)](#)
4. [Sara Ahmed, Happy Objects \(2010\)](#)

Optional

[Lauren Berlant, Cruel Optimism \(2011\) and Desire\Love \(2012\)](#)
[Plastic Pills, Lacan: The Mirror Stage, Desire, Imaginary and Symbolic 'I' \(2021\)](#)
[Elspeth Probyn, Writing Shame \(2010\)](#)

Homework

Reflection due before next class.

~~* SPRING BREAK *~~

Mar 25. Practices & Taste

Required

1. Watch Then & Now, [Bourdieu: Cultural Capital, the Love of Art & Hip Hop](#)
2. Read Elisabeth Shove, Chapters 1 & 2, from [The Dynamics of Social Practice](#) (2012)
3. [Cameron Tonkinwise, A Taste for Practices](#) (2011)
4. [Johannes Pabmann & Cornelius Schubert, Liking as Taste Making](#) (2020)

Optional

Watch Jabe Bloom, [Social Practice Theory & Transformation](#) (first 50 min)

Pierre Bordieu, [The Forms of Capital](#) (1986)

Christian Hansenet al, [The Engagement-Diversity Connection: Evidence from a Field Experiment on Spotify](#) (2020)

Homework

Mid-term assignment due.

Reflection due before next class.

Final term paper given.

Apr 01. Labor, Work & Capitalism

Required

1. Read Nick Chavez, [The Present and Future of Engineering](#) (2021)
2. Watch the movie by [Ken Loach, Sorry We Missed You](#) (2019) (you'll need to log into Kanopy w/ your NYU ID)
2. Read Pelle Ehn, [Work-Oriented Design of Computer Artifacts, Ch. 12 and Ch 14.](#) (1988)
3. Play at least one videogame:
[Mckinney, Spent](#) or
[Paolo Pedercini, McDonalds Game](#) or
[The Financial Times, The Uber Game](#)

Optional

David Harvey's excellent [podcast](#) on Marxist philosophy and political thought

Read Valeria Vande Penne, [Life Without Money in Detroit's Survival Economy](#) (2017)

Read [Mackenzie Wark, The Vectoralist Class Pt I \(Pt II\)](#)

[Vijay Prashad, Capitalism's Erosion of Morality](#) (2021)

Homework

Reflection due before next class.

Apr 08. Care, Feminism & Social Reproduction

Required

1. Watch [Tithi Battacharya, What is Social Reproduction Theory?](#) (2017)
2. Read [Ruth Cowan, The Industrial Revolution in the Home](#) (1976)
3. Watch [Nancy Fraser, A Crisis of Care?](#) (Start at 6:30m)
4. Read [Arruzia, Bhattacharya, Fraser, Feminism for the 99% Manifesto](#)

Optional

[Chantal Akerman, Jeanne Dielman](#) (You can log into Kanopy w/ your NYU ID)

Nancy Fraser, [Critique of Capitalism](#) (2019)

Homework

Reflection due before next class.

Print and bring your extended abstracts to class next week.

Apr 15. Writing\Researching\Editing Workshop

Please bring your printed extended abstracts to class so that we can work with them today.

Optional

Wayne Booth, *The Craft of Research* [Ch1:Thinking in Print](#), [Ch2:Connecting w/ Your Reader](#), [Ch3: From Topics to Questions](#)

Luke Strongman, *Academic Writing*, [Ch1: Essay Writing Skills](#)

Joli Jensen, *Write No Matter What*, [Ch3: Challenging Writing Myths](#)

NYU has a helpful [citation styles guide](#), including a link to different citation management tools like [Zotero](#) and [Mendeley](#)

Apr 22. Theorizing Power

Required

1. Read [Michel Foucault, Panopticism \(Pgs 195-209\), From Discipline & Punish \(1977\)](#)

2. Watch [Plastic Pills, Control Societies & Cybernetic Posthumanism \(2020\)](#)

3. Read [Jasbir Puar, Preface, The Right to Maim \(2017\)](#)

4. Watch/read one of the following:

[Mahmoud Keshavarz, Material Practices of Power \(2015\)](#) or

[Eyal Weizman, Forensic Architecture \(2022\)](#)

Optional

[The School of Life, Michel Foucault](#)

[Gilles Deleuze, Postscript on the Societies of Control \(1992\)](#)

[Achille Mbembe, Necropolitics \(2003\)](#)

Homework

Reflection due before next class.

Apr 29. Technology Ethics & Politics

Required

1. [L.M. Sacasas, Do Artifacts Have Ethics?](#) (Please go through the list of 41 questions at the end in particular)

2. [Ruha Benjamin, Introduction, Race after Technology \(2019\)](#)

3. [Anne Anlin Cheng, Ornamentalism: A Feminist Theory for the Yellow Woman \(2018\)](#)

4. [Sareeta Amrute, Proprietary Freedoms in an IT Office... \(2014\)](#)

Optional

[Langdon Winner, Do Artifacts Have Politics? \(1980\)](#)

[Meredith Broussard, Safiya Noble et al., The Societal Limits of A.I](#)

Homework

Reflection due before next class.

May 06. Class of Your Choice

Class Votes and Chooses Between

1. *Speculation & The Non-Anglo-European Other (Cultural Studies, Non-Western Being, & Speculative Art & Design)*

2. *Desire & The Political Economy of the Image (Psychoanalysis, Advertising\Marketing & Social Media)*

3. *Governance, or The Lack of It & Social Cooperation (Anarchism, Cooperation & Activism)*

Homework

Reflection due before next class.

May 13. No Class (Exam Week)

Term paper due by 12p (noon) on Friday the 17th.

Assignments

There are five graded components for this class. Each component has a percentile of your grade attached to it. A grading policy and rubric has also been provided below.

1. Weekly Reflections (30%, each post = 2%, due every week after class)

In a written reflection each week, you will develop your own questions, observations and points of discussion based on your experiences with the exercises, lectures and readings over the week, unless specified otherwise. These will offer you a chance to document your own thinking and demonstrate to us that you have been engaging with the readings given and class discussions in the previous week. You will write these reflections on your own over the week after class and upload 500-750 words before Monday at 12pm (noon) onto your blog, before the next class.

I do not expect straight descriptions of the readings or what was done in class — the idea is for you to give us your own thoughts, observations and reflections on content as it relates to what we did that week, how it relates to specific issues of your choice, and how you feel you might use it in your creative practice, rather than reiterating what the instructor taught. For project weeks, you are expected to give updates, insights, and visual documentation. Each reflection (there are 14 overall excluding President's Day and the last week of class) is worth 2 percentile points, with 2 points being reserved for setting up your Medium or Wordpress blog after the first week. Please make sure to email me your blog URL within the first week of class.

2. Visualizing Texts: The "Book Review" (10%, due Feb 26)

For this assignment, I want you to choose one of the books given in the list below, and then spend the next 3-4 weeks reading it with the intent of producing a poster of an illustrated\diagrammatic "book review". This is not supposed to be the conventional book review where you write an essay: the idea is to map, model, and visualize the core ideas or contributions and key arguments of the text, some information on its author and other cited figures, and the intellectual traditions it draws from.

Some tips for selecting a book: the list below has books that have been written by scholars who traverse many fields and disciplines but largely address themselves to their own disciplinary communities: science and technology studies, software studies, information studies, media studies, design studies, game studies, and material and visual culture. You can tell by reading the titles, skimming the abstracts or blurbs, and reading a bit about the authors, what they write about. Pick something that catches your fancy and represents a perspective on a topic you'd be interested in exploring - note that most of the texts chosen are about mediums, skills, themes or subjects we teach at IDM.

Some tips for making notes of what to diagram and map out in a book:

1. Make notes about the author: who are they? Where are they from? What field\discipline? What intellectual genealogies do they follow and build on: which scholars do they draw from, whose ideas do they engage with? What do they mostly write about: what are their projects, their main concerns?
2. As you start to read the text, make sure to read the introduction thoroughly and well. Usually,

introductions, well, introduce what the text is about, its key claims and arguments, and lays out how the author intends to make those arguments chapter by chapter, i.e. what the other chapters are about.

3. Going through each chapter, try and make sense of what the general contributions of each chapter are. Firstly, what is this chapter doing in the book: is it giving (historical, or sociocultural, or disciplinary) context? Is it surveying the state of the field? Is it giving and clarifying core definitions? Is it analyzing or building on other works or using some other technique to make a claim or an argument? What are the other authors or texts being cited?

4. Make notes of what the specific contributions of the chapter are: what are the concepts, ideas, or arguments introduced? What is the claim in each argument, and what reasons and evidence are given to support it?

Your poster must be submitted digitally, but produced in a format the minimum size of which is 18"x24"@200DPI so that it can be printed at scale if need be.

List of Books to Choose From

3. Teaching To Learn: The Zine or Podcast (20%, due Mar 25)

For your mid-term submission, you may choose **one** of the following artifacts to create:

A zine, between 12-20 pages, illustrating and summarizing the work of one contemporary scholar (a theorist) whose work you are interested in exploring. The thinker need not be one we have covered in class, but should be someone whose work is related to art, design, media, and/or creative practice more generally (they could be a theorist, a historian, or a scholarly practitioner). The objective is to do your own work on the genealogy of the oeuvre of the thinker, highlight their key projects and contributions (these could be concepts, ideas, theories etc.), and sketch their biographical and (especially) intellectual history. The goal of the zine is to introduce the theorist and their ideas relevant to design, technology, or media theory to new readers. You may interview the scholar if they are alive, or someone who is an expert on their work if they are dead, and include excerpts of your interview in your zine, and your zine may reference other scholars who have built on, responded to, or otherwise engaged with their work. You may include up to 6 images in your zine to complement your work. Your zine must be well designed (pay attention to layout, visual design and typography), and contain the references that you're citing in the zine formatted in MLA style.

OR

A podcast, between 5-10 minutes long, presenting a critical historical analysis on a technological artifact or medium, focusing on a specific time period, and a specific context. For example, you could choose the Singer sewing machine and look at its impact in Indian textiles or fashion during the colonial period of the Raj. Try and be as specific as possible when you choose your human subjects, i.e. about gender, culture, race, time period, etc. - anything that might affect and present a different narrative, e.g. the sewing machine impacted domestic labor in America and India very differently in the 1940s-50s. You may interview existing historians or other scholars who have produced work on your chosen artifact and include excerpts in your podcast. You may incorporate short clips, sound effects, and music as part of your podcast. You must submit a PDF with your script and all cited works in MLA style with your podcast.

Some examples of past student zines and podcasts (the specifics of the assignment were different but these should still give you an idea of outcomes):

- Ploy Pruekchareon, Nam June Paik

- Selin Meskavi, [Jean Baudrillard](#)
- Yesha Shah, [The Concept of Empathy in Design](#)
- Anika Verma, [The Sewing Machine and its Impact on Upper to Middle-class American Housewives in the Pre and Post-WW2 Context](#)
- Ericka Njeumi, [Wig: An Analysis of Black Women and the Modern Wig Industry](#)
- Diane Tosca, [A Brief Queer Phenomenology of Videogames](#)

Some more interesting resources for you to look at to get a sense of how to talk about and educate lay audiences on difficult concepts (podcasts and channels which discuss the ideas of scholars and trace interesting histories):

- [Philosophize This! \(Podcast\)](#)
- [Acid Horizon \(Podcast\)](#)
- [Theory and Philosophy \(Podcast\)](#)
- [e-flux \(Podcast\)](#)
- [New Books in Art \(Podcast\)](#)
- [New Books in Science, Technology & Society \(Podcast\)](#)
- [Plastic Pills \(Channel\)](#)
- [Overthink \(Channel\)](#)
- [Theoretical Puppets \(Channel\)](#)
- [Philosophy Tube \(Channel\)](#)
- [Anime Philosopher \(Channel\)](#)
- [Then and Now \(Channel\)](#)

4. Critical Writing: The Term Paper (40%, extended abstract due Apr 17 (15%), and second draft due May 17 (25%))

You will write an academic essay, worth 25% of your grade, which is a 3500-4000 word written essay (Times New Roman, 11pts, double spaced, cited in MLA, submitted as PDF file) that makes a sustained argument citing relevant literature and analyzing a contemporary socio-technical phenomenon and/or issue (e.g. the Covid pandemic and treatment drugs, the popularization of the Metaverse, the new NFT art market).

You must use a minimum of at least five scholarly sources (these may be books, journal essays, conference papers etc.) when writing about the issue. You may show how each of these perspectives speaks to, exemplifies, amends, or blends one or more of the theoretical perspectives and approaches we have covered so far in the course, or how the various perspectives intersect with or relate to, critique or complement each other. The idea is to provide a rich and holistic analysis of the phenomenon in question. You should also weave in your own perspective on the topic at hand and how you make sense of the various sources and what they have to say - how have your understanding and opinions been shaped and molded, and how do they relate to the sources you've used?

You may incorporate any images, diagrams or tables you want to use, laying them out in an appendix at the end of your essay, and you must cite all references in MLA format in a bibliography at the end. The extended abstract of this essay which lays out its core arguments and structure is due Apr 17 - please bring it to class for review and so we can work on refining it together. The second draft of this essay, with all amendments and revisions, is due May 17.

Grading Policy

There are five graded components for the class: class attendance and participation; weekly reflections on the readings and discussion in class; a short essay; a mid-term project due halfway through semester, and a term paper for the end of semester. Detailed briefs for these assignments and the grade percentiles allocated to each are given in the relevant section of this website.

Grading Percentiles

A (97% and above)

A-(90 to 96%)

B+ (87%-89%)

B (83%-86%)

B-(80 to 82%)

C+(77%-79%)

C (73%-76%)

C- (70%-72%)

D+ (67 to 69%)

D (60 to 66%)

F(60% and below)

General Grading Rubric

You will be judged on the quality, iteration, completion, and presentation of your thesis project, paper and presentation of your work.

Excellent: A (94-100) or A- (90-93)

Your performance and attendance has been of the highest level, showing sustained excellence in meeting course responsibilities. You show an exceptional grasp of the material covered in the course, with a capacity to make not only good connections but derive interesting and/or novel insights. Your writing and project work has memorable impact, and pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond average goals. The ideas behind your project are original, thoughtful and/or imaginative, and demonstrate your ability to think critically and work independently. Spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors in writing are non-existent. Your work also demonstrates rigorous research and process, and an attention to detail. Your project has gone through several iterations and demonstrated your ability to incorporate feedback from your committee and findings from your research into your process. Your final project has been executed with care and has reached a high level of completeness. You have fully met the requirements of showing your work publicly, in a manner that is appropriate to your discipline.

Good: B+ (87-89) | B (84-86) | B- (80-83)

Your performance and attendance have been good, though not of the highest level. You show a good grasp of the material and can think with it, making good conceptual connections. Your writing and project work is better than average and shows extra effort, with good impact, and demonstrates the utilization of an iterative process with good rigor. Your project employs above average craft and attention to detail. You have met the requirements of showing your work publicly, and written your reflections well.

Average: C+ (77-79) | C (74-76) | C- (70-73)

Your performance and attendance has been adequate, satisfactorily meeting the course

requirements. Average and competent, your grasp of the material covered is adequate, your writing and projects have acceptable levels of impact and conceptual development. Content is sufficiently developed, but lacks thoughtful, original, and imaginative resolution and/or attention to detail and craft. Your work employs process, but does not demonstrate notable solutions.

Below Average: D (60-69)

Your performance and attendance has been less than adequate. Your work is lacking in many or most areas that show any understanding of the material covered. The impact of your writing and project is weak with a lack of rigor, and unsound, unoriginal, or unimaginative thinking. Problems may include lack of interest, procrastination, poor planning and/or poor craft.

Unacceptable: F (59 & Below)

The performance & attendance of the student has not met course requirements. Your thesis shows no overall understanding of the material covered on many levels and/or indicates a severe lack of interest in the course.

Class Policies

Class Participation and Attendance

Class participation is an essential part of class and includes: keeping up with reading, assignments, projects, contributing meaningfully to class discussions, active participation in group work, and coming to class regularly and on time.

Class attendance is mandatory. If an absence is unavoidable, always provide evidence of the reason, such as a doctor's note, and notify the instructor at least one hour in advance of the class, if possible, or soon after. It is the prerogative of the instructor whether to excuse you and allow the absence or not. You are allowed one unexcused absence. Two absences will entail me contacting the Office of Student Affairs. Three unexcused absences will automatically bring you down a full letter grade, i.e. an A into a B. More than three absences over the semester constitutes immediate grounds for failure. The following may also be counted as an absence: sleeping in class, doing other work in class, and using a phone, checking email or browsing during class if not related to class work.

If you need to miss class for any reason, please be in touch with the instructor by email to let them know you can't attend, and file documentation for an excused absence through the Student Advocacy website: <https://engineering.nyu.edu/campus-and-community/student-life/office-student-affairs/procedures-policies-and-forms>. Note that filing this documentation doesn't necessarily mean that your absence will be excused and can be grounds for your grade falling. For each additional absence beyond the second (unless there is mediation from the Office of Student Affairs), your final grade will be reduced by a full grade point (e.g. A to an A-, A- to B+). Absences beyond a maximum of three will result in automatically failing the course.

As discussed in more detail below, you should use the time we have for class discussions productively - use your time in class to listen and think about what your peers and the instructor have to say, and don't feel afraid to raise your hand and add to the conversation! You can disagree and contend with other's perspectives, even argue with them, as long as you do so in a kind and respectful manner. I cannot stress enough that much of the learning in this class will come from discussions with your peers, so don't stay quiet!

Delayed or Rescheduled Classes

In rare instances, the instructor may be delayed arriving to class. If s/he has not arrived by the time class is scheduled to start, you must wait a minimum of thirty minutes before leaving. Please use the time effectively on any current group or individual work. In the event that the instructor will miss class entirely, you will be notified via email indicating activities for making use of class time.

Assignment Submissions

Students are responsible for all assignments, even if they are absent from class. Late assignments, failure to complete the assignments for class discussion and/or critique, and lack of preparedness for in-class discussions, presentations and/or critiques will jeopardize your successful completion of this course. Students must have prior permission from the instructor to submit work late and/or adequate evidence of unforeseeable circumstance, such as a sudden illness. Work is considered late if it is not received before the beginning of class on the date due, or as otherwise detailed by the instructor. Late work, barring exceptional circumstances where the instructor has been informed beforehand and has given permission to submit late, is subject to a grade penalty of a letter grade deduction per day, i.e from an B to an B-, after the original due date. Work submitted more than 3 days after the due date will automatically be graded an F. Grades are final and non-negotiable (I will not entertain requests to take another look at grades or upgrade you without sufficient cause).

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

It is the responsibility of students to know and follow the university's policies for academic integrity and to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including failure of the assignment, failure of the course, or more significant disciplinary action with the university (details [here](#)). Since the bulk of this classes' assessment is in the form of writing, I will be checking for plagiarism. It is not very difficult to catch work that has been copy-pasted from other sources, or generated by an A.I bot, so don't do it.

Class Conduct

I value fostering an inclusive and equitable environment for all our students, where individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations, and abilities will be treated with empathy. It is my believe that all student learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit, and that we all treat each other with kindness, dignity, and respect. I have a zero tolerance policy towards misbehavior, rudeness, and/or oppression (discrimination, bullying, toxic behavior etc.) in any shape or form in the classroom, whether towards me or to peers - indulgence in such behavior may result in my involving the program chair and/or reaching out to Student Advocacy, and may affect your grade.

Sensitive Issues & Topics

This is principally a theory and history seminar. As such, from time to time, in readings, lectures, and discussions, we will be touching on topics, themes, and issues that may be sensitive and/or difficult, and may also challenge your held beliefs, ideas, or opinions. Wherever I feel that course content may be uncomfortable or challenging for reasons related to student identity, I will try to give adequate warning in class.

However, as Gayatri Spivak notes, “*the task of a teacher is to provide a non-coercive rearrangement of desire.*” I would like to really stress that learning in graduate school, and especially in a seminar like this, happens precisely by engaging with perspectives and ideas that challenge your own, and learning to sit productively with feelings of discomfort, in order to reflect on them, question them, and work through and with them. Human societies constantly change, and so do established social and cultural values and norms, and part of the goal of this course is to have you develop the capacity of critical reflection on held ideas, beliefs, feelings and desires, which requires that you learn to use other perspectives - the work of scholars and experts, your instructor's, *and* your peers - as points of reference with which to interrogate your own.

My responsibility is to provide you with the benefit of my expertise and experience, and I will try my best to make sure that I hold a balance between listening to and holding space for all of your diverse perspectives, while also gently challenging you. I would also request that you do the same.

Remote Learning & Asynchronous Content

In the event that we have to go remote, classes will be run on Zoom. These will be recorded sessions that students can go over afterwards — links to both presentations given by the instructor and the Zoom session will be provided after each class in the syllabus below. In case you can't make it for a class due to a valid emergency (see below), please let me know beforehand at least an hour in advance of class, and make sure to catch up on the documentation (it is your responsibility to do so).

Readings & Resources

Each class has a list of specific readings and resources that you will be expected to go through beforehand. The links to all readings and references are also provided in the schedule; specific required readings and examples will be given to you from the list below each session.

It cannot be emphasized enough that you try and do all the readings through. The activities we will do in class revolve around the readings and other resources, and you will not be able to keep apace if you don't do them. We will discuss strategies for better reading, and I expect you to try these out and see if they work for you, at the very least.

School Resources

Academic Accommodations

If you are student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New York University's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Student Advocacy

If you feel the standards we have established for student conduct are not being upheld, please let me know. If you feel like you have been the target of bias, discrimination, harassment, or any other issue that my mediation has not or cannot resolve, and would like to report this incident to the school, you may also reach out to [Deanna Rayment](#) at [Student Advocacy](#), or use the [NYU Bias Response Line](#).