



ENGL 6815/7815: Topics in Composition and Rhetoric – Digital Rhetoric and Writing

3 credit hours

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Eric Detweiler
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Office Hours: Mondays 4 – 6, Tuesdays 1 – 2:30, and by appointment

COURSE INFORMATION

Description

Students in this course will explore the rich intersections between recent work in the digital humanities and the field of rhetoric, composition, and writing studies (RCWS). RCWS scholars have been working in the area once called “computer-assisted instruction” since at least the 1980s. But in recent years, the field’s digital work has extended well beyond computers and pedagogical concerns. In this course, students will study technologies related to artificial intelligence, accessibility, games, and hacktivism, as well as the connections between digital work in RCWS and interdisciplinary fields like media studies and software studies. In addition to studying digital theories and methods, students will produce projects using digital technologies (with no prior knowhow necessary!).

Objectives

This course is designed to:

1. Introduce students to digitally oriented RCWS scholarship's established theories, methods, and debates,
2. teach students to create scholarship using digital media, and
3. help graduate teaching assistants develop new strategies for incorporating digital technologies into their pedagogical and professional practices.

Topics Covered

The intersections of digital media and RCWS, including but not limited to computer hardware and software, game studies, digital pedagogy, and theories of digital rhetoric.

Requirements

Students will need regular access to a computer capable of accessing the course and running basic software.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Textbooks

There are three required texts for this course:

- Benjamin, Ruha. *Race After Technology*. Polity, 2019.
- Faris, Michael J., and Steve Holmes, editors. *Reprogrammable Rhetoric: Critical Making Theories and Methods in Rhetoric and Composition*. Utah State UP, 2022.
- Petersen, Jennifer. *How Machines Came to Speak: Media Technologies and Freedom of Speech*. Duke UP, 2022.

As a reminder, all of these books are available as ebooks through Walker Library.

Supplementary Materials

We will be using a few supplemental files and pieces of software this semester, including some of *Reprogrammable Rhetoric's* "[Supplemental Design Materials and Programming Scripts.](#)" All files and software (e.g., [Twine](#), [Arduino IDE](#)) will be open-source and/or free to you, with links available via D2L.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Grading Procedure

Your grade for this course will be tied to four major projects as well as D2L discussion posts. I will assess and respond to your work based on your developing familiarity with digital rhetoric and writing as a field of study, your engagement with course content and technologies, and your writing.

Grading Scale

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

A: 90-100 B+: 87-89 B: 83-86 B-: 80-82	C+: 77-79 C: 73-76 C-: 70-72 D+: 67-69	D: 63-66 D-: 60-62 F: 59 and under
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Assignments and Projects

I will provide more detailed prompts for each of these four assignments. Those prompts will be available via D2L, and we will discuss them in detail in class.

- **Digital Literacy Narrative** (12%): A short piece of writing describing your relationships to/experiences with digital technologies, due early in the course. You will write the final version using HTML and CSS, which we'll cover in class.
- **Technology Review and How-To** (17%): Pick a digital technology (broadly defined), then author a two-part document that (1) reviews the rhetorical/compositional possibilities and limitations of the technology and (2) provides a brief how-to guide for RCWS scholars interested in using that technology.
- **Remediation Project** (22%): Read a book-length scholarly work selected from a list (to be included with the full prompt for this assignment), then remediate that book using a digital medium or platform of your choice.
- **Final Project** (32%): A piece of digital scholarship. Final projects can be created individually or collaboratively, and they will be accompanied by a piece of reflective writing. The scope of the final project will differ for MA and PhD students.

In addition to the projects above, you will also be responsible for the following:

- **Reading Discussions** (17%): For this course, you will set up an account at a WordPress site: digitalwriting.site. On days when there are reading assignments for this course (11 total), you will be able to post a piece of reflective writing about that day's reading(s). To get full credit for this aspect of the course, you'll need to post 10 times, leaving one week you can miss without consequence. Your initial posts are due by noon on the day the readings are listed in the course calendar. Those posts should be approximately 500 words. They do not need to be highly polished pieces of writing. They can include questions, connections to other readings or coursework, summary, analysis, etc. As long as these initial posts deal with the reading(s) in a substantive manner, you're good. You must also post a reply to at least one of your classmate's discussion posts from that week. Those replies are due by 11:59 p.m. on Fridays. You can address their questions or ask your own, elaborate on their analyses, and so on. I am fine with you writing one long reply to a single classmate or shorter replies to a few. All I ask is that your replies, whether you post one, three, or five times,

total approximately 250 words. To summarize: An initial post about the reading(s) made by noon on Monday, plus replies to classmates' posts totaling at least 250 words by 11:59 p.m. on Friday. Full credit if you do this 10 of the 11 weeks with assigned readings.

Feedback

- In general, I will provide feedback on your projects within a week of the due date. That feedback will be posted in the D2L dropbox where you submitted the project. I typically record audio feedback, but let me know if that isn't an accessible option for you and I'm happy to provide written feedback instead. I am also willing to look at and respond to early drafts of projects prior to the final due date.
- Major projects should be submitted to the corresponding D2L dropbox and will not be accepted via email. If one of your projects cannot be readily submitted via D2L because of file size restrictions, etc., send me an email and we can figure out a solution.

Attendance

I ask that you miss no more than two days of class. This will be a highly participatory and hands-on course, so it is easy to fall behind if you're absent. That said, I know illness and personal emergencies happen. If you do miss more than two classes, you will need to schedule a one-on-one meeting with me to make sure you have a path forward in the course and that we agree on what that entails. If you don't schedule that meeting, you won't pass the course.

Late Work

If you anticipate needing an extension on a project or a reading discussion, just let me know and we can determine an appropriate deadline.

OTHER POLICIES

Academic Integrity/Misconduct

Please review the information on [Academic Integrity and Misconduct](#). The instructor will be submitting materials to an online service (Turnitin.com) which will review the work for plagiarism. Students should also review the report generated for each assignment and self-check for plagiarism. Information on how to cite work correctly is provided within the course modules or through the [University Writing Center](#). You may read more about how to avoid plagiarism from the [Office of the University Provost](#).

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting as one's own work, themes, reports, drawings, laboratory notes, computer programs, or other projects prepared by another person

- Knowingly assisting another student in obtaining or using unauthorized materials
- Submitting assignments previously used in other courses where you received credit for the work
- Improperly crediting or lack of crediting an original author's work

Students guilty of academic misconduct are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class. In addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions (including expulsion from the university), which may be imposed through the regular institutional procedures as a result of academic misconduct, the instructor has the authority to assign an "F" or zero for an activity or to assign an "F" for the course. Students guilty of plagiarism will be immediately reported to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

I am True Blue

As a member of this diverse community, I am a valuable contributor to its progress and success. I am engaged in the life of this community. I am a recipient and a giver. I am a listener and a speaker. I am honest in word and deed. I am committed to reason, not violence. I am a learner now and forever. I am a BLUE RAIDER. True Blue!

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades are given rarely and only in extenuating circumstances. The information below can be found in the Graduate Catalog under [Academic Regulations](#).

- The grade I indicates that the student has not completed all course requirements due to illness or other uncontrollable circumstances, especially those which may occur toward the close of the term. Mere failure to make up work or turn in required work on time does not provide a basis for the grade of I unless the extenuating circumstances noted above are acceptable to the instructor. When a student fails to appear for a final examination without known cause, the grade to be reported should be determined as follows: If the student has done satisfactory work to that point, the grade I may be reported on the assumption that the student was ill or will otherwise present sufficient reason for official excuse; if the student has attended irregularly and has not done satisfactory work to that point, the grade F should be reported.
- The "incomplete" must be removed during the succeeding semester, excluding summer. Otherwise, it converts to a grade of F. A student should not make up the "incomplete" by registering and paying again for the same course. The I grade carries no value until converted to a final grade.

Email

For email communication, please contact me at eric.detweiler@mtsu.edu. In cases where email correspondence includes discussion of student education records protected by the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), I will follow up with you via

D2L email. I am not permitted to respond to student emails via a non-institutional assigned email, so please contact me using your MTMail addresses.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Technical Support

[D2L Resources](#) are available to MTSU Online Students. You can also find help for some of the basic functions of D2L used most often directly in your D2L course under the module titled D2L Help for Students.

Students with Disabilities

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the [Disability & Access Center \(DAC\)](#) website and/or contact the DAC for assistance at 615-898-2783 or [DAC Email](#).

Tutoring

MTSU Online supports multiple [Online Student Services](#).

Grade Appeals

[University Policy 313, Student Grade Appeals](#), provides an avenue for MTSU students to appeal a final course grade in cases in which the student alleges that unethical or unprofessional actions by the instructor and/or grading inequities improperly impacted the final grade.

Title IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against or been the victim of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking should contact a Title IX/Deputy Coordinator at 615-898- 2185 or 615-898-2750 for assistance or review [MTSU's Title IX website](#) for resources.

MTSU faculty are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are legally obligated to share reports of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking with the University's Title IX coordinator to help ensure student's safety and welfare. Please refer to [MTSU's Title IX website](#) or contact information and details.

COURSE CALENDAR

This calendar includes deadlines for reading assignments and major projects. With the exception of the three assigned books (Benjamin, Faris and Holmes, and Petersen), all readings will be available via D2L as PDFs and/or links to open-access webtexts. Readings and projects are listed on the day they're due.

Because your initial reading discussion posts are due by noon on Mondays, plan to finish each week's readings by noon the day we meet.

Week 1	
Aug. 28	Introductions, Overview of RCWS, and Prompt for Digital Literacy Narrative
Week 2	
Sept. 4	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS
Week 3	
Sept. 11	<u>What Was/Is Digital Rhetoric?</u> • Mari Lee Mifsud – “On Network” • Angela Haas – “Wampum as Hypertext” • Richard Lanham – <i>The Electronic Word</i>, Chapter 1 • Kathleen Blake Yancey – “Made Not Only in Words” • Elizabeth Losh – <i>Virtualpolitik</i>, Chapter 2 • Jennifer Petersen – <i>How Machines Came to Speak</i>, Introduction • Ruha Benjamin – <i>Race After Technology</i>, Introduction
Week 4	
Sept. 18	<u>Virtual Guest Speaker: Michael Faris (Discussion Points: Rhetoric and Games, Digital Publishing)</u> • <i>Reprogrammable Rhetoric</i> – Introduction, Chapter 10 (Faris), and Chapter 11 (Sierra) • Karl Stolley, “The Lo-Fi Manifesto” • “The Kairos Style Guide” (skim, no need to read this word for word) • W3Schools – HTML Tutorial (HOME, Introduction, Editors, and Basic sections) • W3Schools – CSS Tutorial (HOME, Introduction, Syntax, Selectors, and How To sections) In class: Hands-on experimentation with HTML and CSS
Week 5	
Sept. 25	<u>(Pre-)Digital Modalities</u> • Jacqueline Rhodes and Jonathan Alexander – <i>On Multimodality</i>, Chapter 1 • Jennifer Petersen – <i>How Machines Came to Speak</i>, Chapters 1 and 2

	• <i>Reprogrammable Rhetoric</i> – Chapters 1 (Hammer) and 2 (Sheridan)
Week 6	
Oct. 2	<u>Critical Text Mining</u> • <i>Reprogrammable Rhetoric</i> – Chapters 3 (Itchuaqiyag), 4 (Gray and Holmes), 5 (Omizo), and 6 (Beveridge and Van Horn) In class: experiment with text-mining tools <i>Due Date: Digital Literacy Narrative</i>
Week 7	
Oct. 9	<u>Digital Games</u> • <i>Reprogrammable Rhetoric</i> – Chapter 12 (Gerdes) • Ian Bogost – “Procedural Rhetoric” • James J. Brown, Jr. – “Crossing State Lines: Rhetoric and Software Studies” • Jessica Masri Eberhard – “‘What Do You Mean None of My Choices Mattered?’: Collaborative Composition and the Ethics of Ownership in Games – A Case Study of <i>Mass Effect 3</i>”
Week 8	
Oct. 16	FALL BREAK – NO CLASS
Week 9	
Oct. 23	<u>Technology and Free Speech</u> • Jennifer Petersen – <i>How Machines Came to Speak</i>, Chapter 3– Conclusion
Week 10	
Oct. 30	<i>Due Date: Tech Review & How-To</i>
Week 11	
Nov. 6	<u>Digital Methods and Methodologies</u> • Crystal VanKooten – “Methods and Methodologies for Research in Digital Rhetoric” • Laura Aull – “Language Policing to Language Curiosity: Using Corpus Analysis to Foreground Linguistic Diversity” • Laurie Gries – “Iconographic Tracking: A Digital Research Method for Visual Rhetoric and Circulation Studies” • Sara West – “Student Perceptions of Anonymous Applications”
Week 12	
Nov. 13	<u>Digital Pedagogy</u>

	• Kara Poe Alexander – “Reconceptualizing Literacy: Experimentation and Play in Audio Literacy Narratives” • Jacqueline Rhodes and Jonathan Alexander – <i>On Multimodality</i>, Chapter 2 • <i>Reprogrammable Rhetoric</i> – Chapters 7 (Halm and Rieder), 13 (McGregor), and 14 (Jones)
Week 13	
Nov. 20	<i>Due Date: Remediation Project</i> Meet in Makerspace (2 nd floor of Walker Library) for Arduino workshop.
Week 14	
Nov. 27	<u>Digital Delivery</u> • James Porter – “Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric” • Kristin L. Arola – “The Design of Web 2.0: The Rise of the Template, the Fall of Design”
Week 15	
Dec. 4	Final Project Workshop <u>Digital Activism</u> • <i>Race After Technology</i> – Chapters 1–5 • <i>Reprogrammable Rhetoric</i> – Chapter 9 (Morey and Khan)
Finals	
Dec. 11	Present on Final Projects (6 – 8 p.m.) <i>Due Date: Final Project – 11:59 p.m. on Thurs., Dec. 14</i>