IS 180: Topics in Information Studies
The Alternative and Activist Internet
SYLLABUS

Dr. Leah A. Lievrouw
Winter 2007 / Monday & Wednesday 1:00 – 2:50 p.m. / Moore Hall 3027
Department of Information Studies, UCLA
Office: 216 GSE&IS Bldg.
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10 am - noon or by appointment
Office Phone: 5-1840 / E-mail: llievrou@ucla.edu
Instructor's Website: http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/llievrou/LeahHome.html
Class Website: http://courses.gseis.ucla.edu

Course Description

Historically, a handful of major firms and cultural institutions have dominated the American media and information industries. Although they continue to play a major role in mainstream culture and politics, these firms, institutions and their interests have been challenged over the last decade as people have turned to new media technologies to extend their social networks and interpersonal contacts, to produce and share their own "DIY" information, and to resist, "talk back to," or otherwise engage with and participate in the prevailing culture. An ongoing cycle of capture, co-optation, and subversion of information resources, media content, and system uses characterizes online culture today, pitting the more-concentrated, mainstream "center" against diffuse but increasingly interactive and participatory "edges." This lecture course will focus on major genres of alternative and activist Internet projects, their historical roots, and their social and political agendas, including culture jamming and tactical media, alternative computing, social media, indymedia, and tagging/folksonomies.

Objectives

As a result of taking this course, students should be ready to:

• Summarize the general social and technical history of the types of alternative and activist Internet projects as presented in the course;
• Identify and discuss the main social, economic and/or political issues associated with these projects;
• Describe and critique the major points of view or debates addressed through alternative and activist Internet projects; and
• Assess the basic design, organization and effectiveness of the various types of projects, and support their views using specific examples.

Requirements

Readings.
Required and recommended readings for each week are listed below under Weekly Topics and Readings. Items from the texts are listed, as well as other materials that are available at the course website. Students are expected to make cogent and prepared contributions to class discussions based on the assigned readings, which must be completed before class. There are two required textbooks:


Students may also want to purchase one recommended text:


All textbooks are available from the UCLA online bookstore, or at the LuValle Commons bookstore. The course website is accessible only to class members; in special cases the instructor may allow access to guests. Students may not distribute or share class materials outside of class without the instructor’s permission.

**Examination.**
There is one take-home, mid-term examination, which will be available on the class website Friday, February 2 (Week 4), and will be due no later than midnight on Sunday, February 18 (Week 6).

**Case Study.**
Students are required to complete a case study of a single alternative/activist Internet site, either as an individual or group project. Projects will be due on the last day of class and presented to the class during final exam week. Students may choose to submit their case studies either as term papers, or as web-based resources. Both types of submissions will be posted or linked to the class web site. More information about the case study assignment will be provided in class and on the website.

**Course Policies**

**Grading Formula and Notification.**
Grading for the course will be based on the following formula: Midterm examination: 35%; case study, 35%; in-class and online participation, 30%. Grades for assignments and final grades for the course will be posted on the course website and at http://my.ucla.edu.

**Office Hours.**
Office hours will be held Wednesdays 10 am to noon, or by appointment, 216 GSE&IS Building. Students must sign up at least one day in advance for 30-minute appointments by sending email to Prof. Lievrouw, AND signing up for a time slot on the sheet on Prof. Lievrouw’s office door.

**Students with Disabilities.**
Students with a documented disability who wish to discuss academic accommodations should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities [(310) 825-1501] and Prof. Lievrouw at the start of the quarter so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged and coordinated with the OSD well in advance of course assignments and due dates.
Weekly Topics and Readings

Students are required to come to class having read the materials for that week’s meeting.

**Week 1**
**January 8 & 10**  
**What/How/When is the Alternative/Activist Internet?**

**TEXT:** Meikle, Chapters 1, 2


**Week 2**
**January 15**  
**NO CLASS MEETING: MLK Holiday**

**January 17**  
**Alternative/Underground Media and the Internet**

**TEXTS:** Atton, Chapter 1; Meikle, Chapter 3


**RECOMMENDED:** Downing, Chapter 13

**Week 3**
**January 22 & 24**  
**Activist Art and the Internet**


RECOMMENDED: Downing, Chapter 14
Histories of Internet Art [http://art.colorado.edu/hiaff/home.htm]

Week 4
January 29 & 31 Culture Jamming and Tactical Media

[Take-home midterm exam available online Friday, February 2]

TEXT: Meikle, Chapter 5

[http://www.nyu.edu/fas/projects/vcb/case_911/reverberations/braman2.html]


RECOMMENDED: Downing, Chapter 12

Week 5
February 5 & 7 Alternative Computing

IN-CLASS VIDEO: Revolution OS

TEXT: Meikle, Chapter 6.


Week 6
February 12 & 14  Indymedia

[Take-home midterm exam due by midnight Sunday, February 18]

TEXTS: Atton, Chapter 2; Meikle, Chapter 4.


Week 7
February 19  NO CLASS MEETING: Presidents’ Day Holiday
February 21  Tagging and Folksonomies


**Week 8**  
**February 26 & 28**  
**Social Media and Mobilization**

**TEXT:**  
Atton, Chapter 4

**CLASS WEBSITE:**  


**RECOMMENDED:**  


**Week 9**  
**March 5 & 7**  
**The Legal Landscape of the Oppositional/Activist Internet**

**CLASS WEBSITE:**  
http://eon.law.harvard.edu/property99/history.html

http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue6_1/kahin/index.html

[http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.html]

[http://www.ala.org/alaorg/olif/freeread.html]

**RECOMMENDED:**  

Illegal Art, *Electronic End User License Agreement*.  
[http://illegal-art.org/contract.html]


[http://www.digital-copyright.com/]
Week 10  
March 12 & 14  
Reconfiguration, Remediation  

[Case Studies due at start of class Wednesday, March 14]  

[http://mitpress.mit.edu/books/chapters/0262522799chap1.pdf]  

Exam Week  
Date & Time TBA  
Case Study Presentations