

**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:

Atton, C. (2004). *An Alternative Internet: Radical Media, Politics and Creativity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (Distributed by Columbia University Press).

Meikle, G. (2002). *Future Active: Media Activism and the Internet*. New York and London: Routledge.

Students may also want to purchase one recommended text:

Downing, J.D.H. (2001). *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*. London: Sage.

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

CLASS WEBSITE: Kahn, R. and Kellner, D. (2005). Oppositional politics and the Internet: A critical/reconstructive approach. *Cultural Politics*, 1(1), 75-100.

Lievrouw, L.A. (2006). Oppositional and activist new media: Remediation, reconfiguration, participation. In G. Jacucci, F. Kensing, I. Wagner and J. Blomberg (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Participatory Design Conference, PDC 2006: Expanding Boundaries in Design*, Vol. 1, pp. 115-124. Trento, Italy, July 31-August 5. Palo Alto, CA: Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility and Association for Computing Machinery.

RECOMMENDED: Star, S.L. and Bowker, G.C. (2006). How to infrastructure. In L.A. Lievrouw and S.M. Livingstone (Eds.), *The Handbook of New Media* (Updated Student Edition), pp. 230-245. London: Sage.

Week 2

January 15

January 17

NO CLASS MEETING: MLK Holiday

Alternative/Underground Media and the Internet

TEXTS: Atton, Chapter 1; Meikle, Chapter 3

CLASS WEBSITE: Critical Art Ensemble (1994). Chapter 2: Nomadic power and cultural resistance. In *The Electronic Disturbance*, pp. 11-30. New York: Autonomedia. [<http://www.critical-art.net/books/ted/>]

Bey, Hakim (1991). *The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia. [http://www.hermetic.com/bey/taz_cont.html]

RECOMMENDED: Downing, Chapter 13

Week 3

January 22 & 24

Activist Art and the Internet

CLASS WEBSITE: Debord, G. (1956) A user's guide to détournement. (Trans. K. Knabb). *Les Lèvres Nues*, 8, May. [<http://www.bopsecrets.org/Sl/detourn.htm>]

Viénet, R. (1981 [1967]). The Situationists and the new forms of action against politics and art. In K. Knabb (Ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, pp. 213-216. (Reprinted from *Internationale Situationiste* #11, October 1967). Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets. [<http://www.bopsecrets.org/Sl/11.newforms.htm>]

Dada show at National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2005-06
[<http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2006/dada/cities/index.shtml>]

Perl, Jed (2006, April 17). A defense of Dada. *The New Republic*, 234(4761), 21-25.

RECOMMENDED: Downing, Chapter 14
Histories of Internet Art [<http://art.colorado.edu/hiaff/home.htm>]
Viola, B. (1982). Will there be condominiums in data space? *Video*, 80(5), 36-41.

Week 4

January 29 & 31 Culture Jamming and Tactical Media

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

TEXT: Meikle, Chapter 5

CLASS WEBSITE: Braman, S. (2002). *Defining tactical media: An historical overview*.
[http://www.nyu.edu/fas/projects/vcb/case_911/reverberations/braman2.html]

Dery, M. (1993). *Culture jamming: Hacking, slashing and sniping in the empire of signs*. Westfield, NJ: Open Magazine Pamphlet Series. [<http://www.levity.com/markdery/jam.html>]

Garcia, D. and Lovink, G. (1997). The ABC of tactical media.
[http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors2/garcia-lovinktext.html]

RECOMMENDED: Downing, Chapter 12

Week 5

February 5 & 7 Alternative Computing

IN-CLASS VIDEO: *Revolution OS*

[8-minute excerpt at <http://www.ifilm.com/ifilmdetail/2419320?htv=12>]

TEXT: Meikle, Chapter 6.

CLASS WEBSITE: Stallman, R. (1985). The GNU Manifesto. *Dr. Dobbs's Journal*, 10(3), 30.
[<http://www.gnu.org/gnu/manifesto.html>]

Nelson, T.H. (1974). Excerpts from *Computer Lib/Dream Machines*. In N. Wardrip-Fruin and N. Montfort (Eds.), *The New Media Reader*, pp. 303-338. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

Taylor, P. (2005). From hackers to hacktivists: Speed bumps on the global superhighway? *New Media & Society*, 7(5), 625-646.

Wark, M. (2004). *A Hacker Manifesto*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
[http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors0/warktext.html]

RECOMMENDED: Thomas, J. (2005). The moral ambiguity of social control in cyberspace: A retro assessment of the "golden age" of hacking. *New Media & Society*, 7(5), 599-624.

Wikipedia entry: *Ted Nelson* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ted_Nelson]

Week 6

February 12 & 14 Indymedia

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

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

CLASS WEBSITE: Deuze, M. (2003). The web and its journalisms: Considering the consequences of different types of news media online. *New Media & Society*, 5(2), 203-230.

Hyde, G. (2002). Independent Media Centers: Cyber-subversion and the alternative press. *First Monday*, 7(4), April. http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_4/hyde/index.html.

Platon, S. and Deuze, M. (2003). Indymedia journalism: A radical way of making, selecting and sharing news? *Journalism*, 4(3), 336-355.

RECOMMENDED: Atton, C. (2004). What is 'alternative' journalism? *Journalism*, 4(3), 267-272.

Week 7

February 19 **NO CLASS MEETING: Presidents' Day Holiday**

February 21 **Tagging and Folksonomies**

CLASS WEBSITE: Shirky, Clay (2005). *Ontology is Overrated: Categories, Links, and Tags*.
[http://www.shirky.com/writings/ontology_outrated.html]

Ideant (2005, April 26). Tag Literacy. [http://ideant.typepad.com/ideant/2005/04/tag_literacy.html]

Tony Hammond, Timo Hannay, Ben Lund, and Joanna Scott (2005). Social bookmarking tools (I). *D-Lib Magazine*, 11(4), April. [<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/april05/hammond/04hammond.html>]

RECOMMENDED: Vander Wal, Thomas (2005, November 2). *Folksonomy Definition and Wikipedia*.
<http://vanderwal.net/random/entrysel.php?blog=1750>

Mathes, Adam. (2004). *Folksonomies: Cooperative Classification and Communication Through Shared Metadata*. Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. [<http://www.adammathes.com/academic/computer-mediated-communication/folksonomies.html>]

Week 8

February 26 & 28

Social Media and Mobilization

TEXT: Atton, Chapter 4

CLASS WEBSITE: Van de Donk, W., Loader, B.D., Nixon, P.G., and Rucht, D. (2004). Introduction: Social movements and ICTs. In W. van de Donk, B.D. Loader, P.G. Nixon, and D. Rucht (Eds.), *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements*, pp. 1-25. London: Routledge.

boyd, d. (2004). Friendster and publicly articulated social networks. *Conference on Human Factors and Computing Systems (CHI 2004)*. Vienna: ACM, April 24-29.
<http://www.danah.org/papers/CHI2004Friendster.pdf>

Kumar, R., Novak, J., Raghavan, P., and Tomkins, A. (2004). Structure and evolution of blogspace. *Communications of the ACM*, 47(12), December, 35-39.

Wasik, B. (2006). MY CROWD, Or, Phase 5: A report from the inventor of the flash mob. *Harper's Magazine*, 312(1870), March, 56-66.

RECOMMENDED: Garrido, M. & Halavais, A. (2003). Mapping networks of support for the Zapatista movement: Applying social-networks analysis to study contemporary social movements. In M. McCaughey & M.D. Ayers (Eds.), *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice*, pp. 165-184. New York and London: Routledge.

Week 9

March 5 & 7

The Legal Landscape of the Oppositional/Activist Internet

CLASS WEBSITE: Fisher, W.W. III (1999). The growth of intellectual property: A history of the ownership of ideas in the United States. In *Eigentumskulturen im Vergleich* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).
<http://eon.law.harvard.edu/property99/history.html>

Kahin, Brian (2001). The expansion of the patent system: Politics and political economy. *First Monday*, 6(1), January. http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue6_1/kahin/index.html

U.S. Copyright Office (2000, September). *Circular 1: Copyright Basics*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. [<http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.html>]

American Library Association. *Freedom to Read Statement*. [<http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/freeread.html>]

RECOMMENDED: Stallman, R. (1997). The right to read. *Communications of the ACM*, 40(2), 85-87.

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

Lipinski, T. (1999). The commodification of information and the extension of proprietary rights into the public domain: Recent legal (case and other) developments in the United States. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 22, 63-80.

Litman, J. (2001). *Digital Copyright*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. Chapter 2, "The art of making copyright laws." [<http://www.digital-copyright.com/>]

Week 10

March 12 & 14

Reconfiguration, Remediation

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

CLASS WEBSITE: Bolter, J.D. and Grusin, R. (1999). Immediacy, hypermediacy, and remediation. In *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, pp. 20-50. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
[<http://mitpress.mit.edu/books/chapters/0262522799chap1.pdf>]

Exam Week

Date & Time TBA

Case Study Presentations