

**Development of Cultural Information Sources Using Digital Multimedia
IS 275**

**Professor Ramesh Srinivasan
Fall 2008-09**

Class meeting time: 9 am – Noon, Mondays (first meeting: Sept 29 2008)
Office hours: 1230-130 pm Mondays, Wednesdays, 222 GSE&IS Building and by appointment.
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Digital media has reached a level of pervasiveness that has altered how we perform our basic social activities. Technological infrastructures have begun to “mediate” and therefore intervene in the interactions one has with other people, information, objects, and architecture. With the mantra of speed, the turnover period for faster, more complex, and more intelligent technologies have decreased in an increasingly competitive global market. However, the questions of design, culture, and communities still lag behind. The “digital divide” describes the inequities associated with access to technology. It has placed certain communities and their traditional modes of perseverance at risk of even deeper isolation from an external world that will begin to define new modes of existence and well-being. These stratifications link to and correlate with cultural difference, particularly to ethnic groups within postcolonial environments. The differences between the “haves and have-nots” who control and are familiar with new technologies could potentially accentuate power dynamics already associated with ethnic difference. Moreover, significant and lasting critiques persist around the circulation of information technologies in diverse cultural domains. This indicates that any object of information is in itself a cultural object, laden with particular cultural assumptions and notions of ordering. And often these objects impose particular understandings upon communities, eroding their local knowledges and realities in lieu of some institutional, often western and scientific, paradigm. Librarians and information professionals, concerned with issues of diversity, information access, community service, and social justice are well aligned to consider these issues and launch relevant interventions.

In this course, we focus as information professionals, scholars, and information creators/designers/architects on questions of culture and community with the goal of engaging students to understand information resources as cultural objects. We will look at the role of cultural heritage institutions within the dynamics presented, but most fundamentally focus on how communities in partnership with information professionals can create, author, and represent information on their own and within their own terms. We will build on a small yet growing set of research studying how new media can begin to serve as a tool of empowerment rather than stratification.

We will begin to study the impacts of technology on larger scales at first through readings and introductory sketches. Course content focuses on the history and theory of digital multimedia production, media and society issues, institutional issues in cultural information, and very basic ethnographic theory. We will also maintain basic training for students in simple multimedia. We will proceed to more concrete readings focusing on the impacts of specific media projects on particular social domains (whether they are artistic/architectural, educational, or community-focused).

We will explore the issues of how to work with different communities from an ethnographic and participatory perspective. The goal of this final project for the course will be the design, mockup, and basic prototype of a technology that can enable this community according to needs that the group may express. This final project will thus be focused on the fieldwork, design, and development of a meaningful technology for the community in question. Through a set of juried reviews, in the tradition of a design studio, work will be evaluated and critiqued. You will work in groups on these projects, and we will do our best to ensure that these groups balance your varied expertises and backgrounds. During our first meeting, we will discuss different community groups that you may be interested in contacting and pursuing projects with. We will then create balanced groups to implement these projects.

The course consists of lectures/discussions, student presentations of the readings, collaborative design brainstorming sessions, labs for basic software training over weeks 2-4, and a final juried review to evaluate final projects at multiple stages.

Please note that this course WILL BE capped at size 30, so please if you are on the waitlist and are not enrolled by week 2, I would suggest going forward with another course.

Pedagogical Objectives

Students will (1) gain a basic conceptual understanding of the implications of new Internet-based concepts of multimedia, information, and culture on multiple levels of scale (institutional, social, urban, ethnic, and community-based), (2) learn and implement important skills of considering the design of digital media with cultural and community realities, literacies, and priorities

Organization of the Course

There will be weekly readings/assignments, a midterm short paper, and the final community-centered technology as a basic prototype. The project will be developed throughout the entire course, within phases: community introduction and fieldwork, case study, scenario design, and prototype. We will devote extensive time to your groups and their project meetings, and I encourage each of you to bring your laptops, if you have them, to class for these meetings. However, please do NOT surf the web or deviate from the course material during this time.

The software required for the assignments – Internet-based sketching tools-- will be tutored. We will show the basics of three software packages: Dreamweaver, I-Movie, Photoshop, but of course use of other software or hardware is welcome and encouraged where appropriate.

The course website is available via courses.gseis.ucla.edu and the Moodle enrollment key shall be: `is275_628451200_srinivasan`

Assignments and grading:

Final Group Project (50%)

The final project will involve the selection, fieldwork, scenario mockup, and basic prototype of a community-empowering/enabling technology. This project will be created throughout the course of the term beginning immediately, and will be presented at a midterm and final juried review. The project will be likely accomplished in heterogeneous (in terms of background) teams of 4 depending on the choice of students. If your team is smaller than this, it would be correspondingly considered. The final project will be due during finals week, and be presented during the final exam session in the review form. Evaluation will be based on level of originality, critical thinking and depth of analysis, integration and mastery of relevant literature, written skills, and general presentation. Students must follow the university policy regarding integrity in research: http://www.adminvc.ucla.edu/appm/public/app_0993_0.html

Students will be expected to present this final project with explicit references to the readings, lectures, and insights gained in the course. Each student, in a 1-2 page paper, due at the final review, will describe the role they held relative to their fellow group members and will be graded accordingly.

Class participation (25%).

For each of the ten weeks, we will 4-5 students (at least) present the readings, their reflections, and any other topics that are closely related that they so choose. Each student will then be responsible for presenting for about 10-15 minutes and/or leading a discussion for around this much time as well. On the first week of class, students will sign up for the slots for each week. Additionally, as this course meets once/week, it is critical students show up and participate actively and reflectively. Evaluations will be based on quality and degree of contribution to class discussion.

Midterm Paper (25%).

Due in week 7's meeting, students will individually be expected to write a 2000 (minimum) word paper that explores the question/s asked for in the midterm take-home examination, which will be distributed at week 5's meeting. This paper must be submitted in print at the in-class meeting as well as e-mailed to the professor as a word document. The file must be titled: LastNameFirstName_IS275.doc. The student will be responsible for handing in a bibliography along with the paper, not counted as part of the 2000 words. The paper will be evaluated on the basis of its quality, relevance, and cohesion.

Reading materials

Reading materials will be assigned on a weekly basis and will include articles and essays from literature, journals and online articles. Readings will be heavily front loaded (no readings due weeks 9 or 10) so as to arm the student with a variety of materials from which project design can follow. Reading materials will be available online linked to the course web site. As described, students will be responsible for presenting the weekly readings, leading and motivating the discussions in the context of the general theme of the course, and enabling a collaborative design process/brainstorm to emerge from the discussion during each class. You will sign up in week 1 to present readings once between weeks 2 and 9 and this will be considered a significant part of your class grade. This presentation will not need to be formal, only involve you speaking about your impressions of the readings, key ideas that the class should interpret, reflections relative to other readings, relation to your project, and more. Even though the course size is fairly large, we will attempt in this regard to operate the course discussion in a seminar-type, informal and collegial fashion.

One textbook will be required (Understanding Comics – Scott McCloud). You can order this as you wish via the web or in a bookstore but I am also trying to see if the UCLA bookstore can also order this.

Workshops

During three class meetings, we will hold workshops for part of the time, CLICC (Powell Library) Classroom C.

Schedule, Readings, Curricula

The below schedule will be subject to minor changes throughout the quarter.

Week 1: 9/29 - Introduction (background, schedule, projects, presentations, decision on final presentation)

Assignment (due week 2):

Precedents of relevant community media projects – present and discuss: Every student must have 1-2 projects that he or she can discuss in detail, ready to present in week 2's meeting.

Contact and suggest a set of communities that the course studio groups can work with.

Week 2 : 10/6 – Metaphors, Interfaces, Old Media, New Media

Mcluhan, Marshall "Understanding Media" chapters (1-2)

Borges, Jorge Luis: "Library of Babel":
http://jubal.westnet.com/hyperdiscordia/library_of_babel.html

Wells, H.G(1938). World brain: The idea of a permanent world encyclopedia. From World Brain: https://sherlock.sims.berkeley.edu/wells/world_brain.html)

Johnson, S. (1999). Interface culture: How new technology transforms the way we create and communicate. San Francisco: HarperEdge. Pp. 1-26.

Hammersley, Martyn and Atkinson, P. "Ethnography – Principles and Practices" – Introductory Chapters.

Jenkins, H. "Convergence Culture" (excerpt) (possibly optional)

(Photoshop Tutorial – Sarah from CLICC)

Week 3: 10/13 - New Media Arts and Cultures

Lovink, Geert, New Media, Art and Science: Explorations beyond the Official Discourse -
<http://laudanum.net/geert/files/1129753681/>

Chun, Wendy - Orienting Orientalism, or How to Map Cyberspace." Matters of Representation: Feminism, Theory and the Arts Conference, University of Buffalo (March-April 2000) -
<http://epresence.tv/Presentation/6>

Manovich, Lev – 5 Principles of New Media

Rheingold, Howard – Excerpt from Virtual Communities: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier- <http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/2.html>

Spradley, James "The Ethnographic Interview", from Participant Observation

(Dreamweaver Tutorial – David Cappoli)

Week 4: 10/20 – Cultures, Representation, and Information Institutions/Technologies

Appadurai, Arjun – "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy"

Srinivasan et al – Diverse Knowledge and Contact Zones within the Digital Museum

James Clifford – "Museums as Contact Zones" – From Routes.

Clifford – "Varieties of Indigenous Experience: diasporas, homelands" (possibly optional)

(I-Movie Tutorial – Sal from CLICC)

Week 5: 10/27 – Communities, Social Capital, and Information Initiatives

Putnam, Robert: Excerpt from Bowling Alone "Against the Tide: Social movements and the net" (pp. 148-80)

Wellman, B. and Gulia, M. "Net Surfers Don't Ride Alone" (maybe optional, will inform class)

Kollock, Peter : "Design Issues for Online Communities" (from Smith and Kollock)

(optional – to be posted potentially_: Michaels, E. – excerpt from Bad Aboriginal Art

Week 6: 11/3 – Design and Visualization

Shedroff, Nathan, Information Interaction Design: A Unified Field Theory of Design, In: Jacobson, R., (ed.), Information Design, MIT Press, 2000; pp. 267-293.

Norman, D. The Design of Everyday Things

IDEO and Sacred World Foundation precedents <http://www.ideo.com/> and <http://www.sacredworld.com/>

Tufte, Edward – Visual Explanations, part I

Jakob Nielsen's web site (useit.com)

Week 7: 11/10 – Imaging and Iconography

Scott McCloud – 'Understanding Comics' (read the whole book) – can get it from any bookstore

Tufte, Edward – Visual Explanations, part II

Davenport, G. et al "Synergistic Storyscapes and Constructionist Cinematic Sharing" (IBM Systems Journal 2000)-- <http://www.research.ibm.com/journal/sj/393/part1/davenport.html>

Week 8: 11/17 – Digital Divides and Global Inequities

Warschauer, Mark. 2003. Demystifying the Digital Divide

Srinivasan, Ramesh (2005). Indigenous and Ethnic Articulations of New Media – International Journal of Cultural Studies.

Ginsburg, F. – Re-thinking the Digital Age (in press)

In-class videos: Ted – Nicholas Negroponte and the OLPC, Hole in The Wall, Digital Divide/Uganda and Democrat Vids.

Week 9: 11/24 – Ontologies, Standards, and Social Movements

Lievrouw, L. 2006. The Oppositional and Activist New Media: Remediation, Reconfiguration, Participation. Paper Presented at the PDC 2006 Conference.

Shirky, Clay. 2005. Ontology is overrated: Categories, links, and tags

Introna, Lucas B., and Helen Nissenbaum, Helen. 2000. Shaping the web: Why the politics of search engines matters. The Information Society 16, no. 3: 1-17.

Week 10: 12/1 - Final Presentation or Further Review (TBD)

Week 11: 12/8 – Final Presentation or Further Review (TBD)