

Sensor Guide MEVIT4701 Spring 2022

Course description

The course screen technologies offers critical and contextual approaches to various screen technologies, such as the cinema, television, mobile media, body scanners, apps, cameras, dashboards, games, livestreaming, social media platforms, and wearables. We explore a range of methods and theories for the social and cultural analysis of screen technologies, with a particular focus on the relations between technology, society and meaning-making. The course will draw on a broad range of theories from cultural and media studies, sociology, science and technology studies. As a recurring theme throughout the course, we will trace the governance, production, consumption, representation, and identity work done through screen technologies, with careful attention to how aspects of human difference (e.g. gender, orientations, race, disability) shape and are shaped by screen technologies.

Course structure

The course was designed with careful attention to a broad range of topics, examples, disciplines, writing styles, concepts, and methods represented in the syllabus. Rather than thinking of screen technologies as stand-alone objects, the course focused on situating an understanding of screen technologies in broader historical, social, technical and cultural contexts. The course also attempted to broaden the scope of what counts as a screen technology, including examples as diverse as body-scanners, VR, wearables, body-cameras, facial recognition, CCTV, dashboards, urban screens, and billboards. Most importantly, the course was designed with intersectionality and differential identities in mind, meaning that students were encouraged to develop a critical understanding of the ways in which screens intersect with issues of race, gender, orientations, and disability. Rather than teaching about gender or race in a dedicated seminar, each lecture/seminar contained readings that were attentive to these issues. The reading list is also meant to reflect the diversity of topics and problems addressed in the readings by including non-western and bipoc scholars. The students seemed very happy about the syllabus and course materials as reflected in their evaluations.

Learning outcome

Candidates who have completed the Screen Technologies course will have acquired the following knowledge, skills and general competences. The candidate:

- has advanced knowledge of the technologies of screens, such as the cinema, television, computer, and smartphone screen.
- can analyze and interpret media texts and cultural artifacts pertaining to the field of screen technologies independently.
- can assess relevant existing theories and approaches in researching screen technologies and work independently on practical and theoretical problems.
- can use the methodological skills obtained from practical experience with different approaches to technologies within the field of screen cultures to carry out independent academic and professional work.
- can within the field of screen technologies analyze and critically assess different sources of information to make scholarly arguments, and communicate about academic questions, analyses and findings with specialists and society at large.

- can use the general competence of writing scholarly about technologies within the field of screen cultures in other academic and professional fields.

Term paper exam

The students were asked to submit a term paper on the following broad instructions:

Choose an example or object of study related to screen technologies and construct a research question which you shall answer throughout the text. You are free to choose the empirical materials/data sources/cases and the analytical approaches in answering the research question. Make sure to use relevant parts of the from the syllabus, as well as self-chosen academic texts from outside the syllabus.

Formal requirements

- The term paper should be approximately 10 pages, where one page is about 2300 characters excluding spaces.
- The front page, literature list and appendices do not count towards the 10 pages.
- You must use a reference style (e.g. Harvard, Chicago, MLA, APA) consistently and precisely throughout your submission and in the literature list.

Grading instructions

The exam question was designed to encourage students to think creatively and analytically about screen technologies in the widest sense, by deliberately leaving it open to the students to define and operationalize their terms and to link a case to a self-chosen research question and focus. **To successfully answer** the exam question, students must demonstrate that they are able to conduct independent research on a self-selected case of screen technologies (**please keep in mind** that the course does not operate with a right or wrong definition as to what screen technologies are but really encourages students to think of technologies relationally as opposed to stand-alone objects). This means that the papers should have a clearly delineated research question or problem statement, at least one case or example, and adequately analyze this case with regards to the stated question or problem. Students are expected to refer to key texts on the literature, in addition to self-chosen academic sources.

In order to prepare for the exam, students had to submit a mandatory term paper outline (2-3 pages) by the end of the semester, containing information on the following points:

1. Introduction
2. Topic and motivation for choosing the topic
3. Problem statement/research question
4. Key concepts and theories
5. Empirical material/case/data sources/methods (**what** are you analyzing and **how**)
6. A list of references (both from the syllabus + relevant **academic literature** chosen from outside the syllabus that pertains more specifically to your term paper topic)

Each student received detailed written feedback on their outline by the teacher. We also discussed the components and common mistakes of a term paper several times during class.

Please keep in mind, that the students were not required to conduct an empirical study for this term paper in terms of collecting new data materials, but were encouraged instead to find analytical cases and examples that could be used to discuss their chosen research question. **Also**, there was no requirement to write a term paper on the topics and questions submitted for the mandatory outline. Thus, we may not automatically assume that what they ended up submitting for the exam is the same as the outline they received feedback on. I have received several emails in the meantime from students indicating that they've changed topics and research questions.

More specifically: graders will further evaluate term papers vis-à-vis:

- 1) Completeness and coherency of responses to the primary questions to be addressed in the paper
- 2) An excellent paper will clearly demonstrate the fulfillment of the majority of the learning outcomes defined for the course. Excellent or very good papers situate a reflection of screen technologies within broader societal, political and cultural concerns.
- 3) Demonstration of close familiarity with course literature and topic-specific scholarly sources. An excellent paper will make strong use of relevant course and self-chosen readings. While online and popular sources are allowed, if clearly relevant, it is expected that the majority of resources made use of and included in the reference list will come from the course readings and the student's own research via scholarly library resources.
- 4) Writing, documentation, and weighting of components of the paper. Papers will be graded according to standard requirements for academic excellent writing – beginning with clear introduction, fully developed body, and then a summary/conclusion, coupled with careful and consistent documentation techniques following a major academic style sheet (e.g., APA, Chicago).

Grading criteria:

A / Excellent – fulfills these specific benchmarks:

Answers / responds to the problems / questions defined by the assignment. Independent, clear and interesting reflection and arguments; relevant examples and very good use of theory (where relevant). Clear and precise language; clear connections; very well focused and consistent / clear structure. Convincing with regard to the use of relevant facts; and demonstrates very clear familiarity with the course readings. High level of familiarity with relevant theories, figures, etc. in media and communication studies; high analytical competency. Very well proportioned in terms of appropriate length for specific elements and contents of the essay. Clear impression of original and interesting work.

B / Very good

A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgement and a very good degree of independent thinking. Solid critical and nuanced argument that shows in-depth understanding of the literature and is well supported by it.

C / Good

A good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas. Reasonably good knowledge of the literature. There is evidence that the syllabus has been read. Basic concepts have been understood. Different argument are considered critically. Overall, though, the paper tends to repeat the literature, with little evidence of originality or an independent stance. At this level, papers may also demonstrate somewhat unclear and imprecise language, inconsistent use of concepts, somewhat erroneous or insufficient account of facts or theoretical concepts.

D / Satisfactory

A satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgement and independent thinking. Does not give a clear answer, not well structured, not well focused, presents relevant material but it is not clear where the discussion is going. If there is an argument this is not critical and/or is one-sided. At this level, papers may demonstrate unclear and imprecise language, inconsistent use of concepts, unclear structure, erroneous or insufficient account of facts or theoretical perspectives, unnecessary or irrelevant elements, implicit or unclear account, erroneous or inconsistent use of references.

E / Sufficient

A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgement and independent thinking. Only satisfies the minimum requirements. No command of the subject matter. Not independent.

F / Fail

A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgement and independent thinking. Lacks detailed knowledge, is confusing and hard to grasp. Does not satisfy the minimum requirements.

Course coordinator: Taina Bucher