

# Digital Culture

## Spring 2007 Syllabus

**Meeting Time: W 6-9:30 - 3:30 - 623 S. Wabash, Rm. 405**

Interactive Arts and Media, Columbia College Chicago

600 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60605

Syllabus Date: 1/04/07

Instructor: Patrick Lichty  
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Office Hours: TU & TH 10-12

### Course Description:

This class provides familiarity with important writings and concepts regarding the history and construction of digital culture, New Media Art, and related subjects. These ideas help you become smarter media makers and consumers.

### Prerequisite:

None.

### Course Rationale:

This course is elective for IAM Majors. This is a class that explores conceptual issues related to New Media and Interactive Media Art, as well as history and critical issues related to Digital Culture.

### Required Texts:

*DIGITAL ART: Christiane Paul (Thames & Hudson)*

*(You will be strongly recommended to attend her lecture)*

Neuromancer - William Gibson

Strongly Recommended: Snowcrash - Neal Stephenson

### Required Materials:

Recommended storage device-USB flash drive, at least 512MB. Buy the most memory you can afford.

**Lab Fee: \$75**

You will always need to be prepared to take notes.

You are responsible for checking your Oasis e-mail and the class discussion forum regularly.

**ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:** Patrick Lichty (1962) was born to a family of artists, but also was raised with a love of science fiction and was encouraged to explore electronics and computers. He has two undergraduate degrees in Electronic Engineering, but left after seven years as an engineer for Tandy Computers to continue his work as a fine artist and media designer. He works in in most media, from painting to music to Robotics to Virtual Reality. His work deals with social activism/critical issues, media narrative, media history, and what it means to be part of Digital culture.

Lichty graduated from Bowling Green State University in 2006 with an MFA in Digital Art/Virtual Reality (Phi Kappa Phi) after 15 years as a New Media artist. He was an exhibitor in the Whitney Biennial in 2000, participated in the Venice Biennial as part of RTMark, recipient of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's New Media/New Century Award, and a Herb Alpert/CalArts Fellow in 2003. .

He is best known for is animations with the activist group, The Yes Men, and is Editor-in-Chief of Intelligent Agent, a New Media art magazine produced by Lichty and Christiane Paul, Adjunct New Media Curator of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- \*Understand the history and context of Digital Culture and New Media Art
- \*Understand basic communication, media, cultural, and semiotic theories.
- \*Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze Digital Culture, both in written and verbal form, from a variety of theoretical perspectives
- \*Understand foundational development concepts including goal-oriented research, idea development, analysis, process, design and production
- \*Understand linkages between theoretical praxis and quotidian life (“Student Culture”)
- \*Understand foundational ethical principles

**GRADING AND EVALUATION:**

Attendance is required, and 3 or more unexcused absences will result in automatic failure in the class.

A MINIMUM grade of “C” is required in order for this course to count toward your major in Interactive Arts and Media.

Failure to do so requires re-enrollment in the course until a “C” is attained.

Please make an appointment during office hours or e-mail me for any questions.

**GRADE BREAKDOWN:**

- Project 1, 15% total, 150 points;
- Project 2, 20% total, 200 points;
- Final project, 35% total, 350 points;
- On-line discussion forum entries, 20% total, 200 points;
- Class participation, 10% total, 10 points.
- TOTAL 100% 1000 points

**Grade Scale**

- 93 - 100% A 930-1000 points
- 89 - 92.9% A- 890-929
- 86 - 88.9% B+ 860-889
- 82 - 85.9% B 820-859
- 79 - 81.9% B- 790-819
- 76.5 - 78.9 C+ 765-789
- 72 - 76.4 C 72-764

69 - 71.9 C- 69-71.9  
59 - 68.9 D 59-68.9  
58.9 and below F 589 or less

**POLICIES:**

**GENERAL:**

I reserve the right to enforce any and all of the following policies at my discretion. My philosophy is that if you do not pay attention, attend, and participate, you will miss important information that will probably handicap you as badly as missing class/assignments.

**ATTENDANCE:**

By CCC policy, failure to attend/being excessively late to three (3) classes without prior authorization is criteria for automatic failure in the class.

Please notify me of your absence if you know you will not be able to attend class for any reason. You are responsible for finding out what you missed in class and keeping up with readings and assignments. You can find out what you missed by contacting me. If you miss a project deadline without a prior arrangement or emergency, your grade for the project is subject to the LATE POLICY.

**DEVICE USAGE:**

Cell Phones & texting during class outside of break are prohibited; and laptop use is permitted as long as you are engaged in the class. Gaming and iPod use outside of class discussion is prohibited. Failure to do so is grounds to be asked to leave.

**LATE POLICY:**

Late work will be assessed 10% PER DAY late without prior authorization. Work handed in more than 4 business days will be accepted as an "F" (better than a "O")

**SUBMISSIONS POLICY:**

You are responsible for assuring that I have your materials on time, and that your media is compatible with the lab/auditorium facilities. All papers will be submitted in printout (not handwritten) as well as email attachments on the date required. I suggest e-mailing to prof@voyd.com as well as plichty@colum.edu to make sure I have your materials.

**PERSONAL INITIATIVE/EXTRA CREDIT:**

I reward personal initiative in bringing relevant outside research to class, doing extra work, or independent study related to the technologies/concepts. The nature of this has to be approved by the instructor, and must significantly add to the student's or class experience. Although I support personal initiative, you are also responsible for producing a demonstrable product or 'learning experience'.

**MAKEUP POLICY:**

If you, for some reason, are not able to present work, presentation makeup can be arranged by appointment/before/after class (if applicable). Failure to do so will result in a "O" grade.

**MEDIA FORMATS:**

I accept Microsoft Office formats (Word, PowerPoint) up to 2003, and OpenOffice. No Keynote presentations.

## SUITABLE REFERENCES

Suitable references are relevant books, magazines, and media. We will use the MLA guidelines for citations (see: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>). Because of unreliability of sources, Wikipedia citation is not allowed, and usage will constitute a 1/2 grade reduction per citation.

## CONCERNS/MEDIATION

Be assured that I will do everything within my power to be fair and resolve any concerns in the best way possible. Please come to me first, as I am the person who is working with you. If we cannot resolve your issues, I will refer you to the next level of administration, and will even join you for the discussion, if you wish.

## GRADING POLICY

**You begin the class with 0 points, and work to an "A", not the other way around.** The following descriptions detail the criteria for earning grades.

### To receive a grade of:

**A** - Outstanding work relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. Work shows complex synthesis of ideas from class and OUTSIDE sources; shows unusual mastery of the skills and innovative and creative thinking.

**B** - Significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements; shows very good understanding of in-class concepts. A "B" is a very good grade, not outstanding.

**C** - Average work that meets the basic project requirements, but no further. A "C" is a respectable grade to achieve in a class, especially if the subject matter is not where your talents lie.

**D** - Worthy of credit even though it fails to meet the project requirements.

**F** - Represents that the work was (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is insufficient for credit, (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that an "Incomplete would be awarded", or (3) the requirements of the project were not followed at all..

**I** - Assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, the student was prevented from completing the work of the course on time, and was passing before the incident. Requires a written agreement between the instructor and student specifying the time and manner in which the student will complete the course requirements within ONE semester.

If you have any questions, please ask.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS:

Each of the three creative projects requires a Project and proposal White Paper.

### Project 1 Due Week 5:

1500+ word paper or 3 min+ media, Or Salient Media Project

Student will Perform research into subjects or works covered in class and then do one of the following:

- 1: Write a 1500+ word paper analyzing aspects of that student's research on that subject, style, or genre, and relate the the relevant aspects of that reserach to the studetn's area of interest/work.
- 2: Create a 3+ minute media work (sound or video) or 15+webpage interpretative site which creatively interprets a topic or body of work described in the class. To be accompanied by 750 word+ statement communicating topic, intent, and discover-ies in the work.
- 3: Propose and execute an interpretive experimental work to be agreed upon with the instructor addressing one of the topics of the class. To be accompanied by 750 word+ statement communicating topic, intent, and discoveries in the work.

**Goals:** Displaying proficiency in basic electronics, Basic Stamp programming, basic construction, conceptual application of discussion topics.

White Paper/presentation: 25% of project grade, Device: 75%.

### Project 2: Student-led discussion: Weeks 6-13

Starting in Week 6, each student will research a topic relevant to the subject & readings and lead a 30-40 minute informal discussion using online references, media at the student's discretion.

**Goals:** Displaying understanding of real-time performance of visual composition.

White Paper/presentation: 25% of project grade, Device: 75%.

### Final Project: Final presentation: Class MindMap

We will be using the program FreeMind to create individual MindMaps to describe their intellectual journey through the class. The student will present their mind map, using their references in that mindmap for 10-15 minutes, focusing on their areas of greatest interest.

### Blog:

We will have a weekly blog in which students will be required to find at least one source related to the subject and briefly reflect upon it online That source will also be

**OFFICE HOURS:** I encourage you to stop by during office hours to discuss anything about the class or to get help with assignments. To ensure a meeting at a specific time, make an appointment. You can also contact me via e-mail with questions or to set up an appointment.

**TIME MANAGEMENT:** Since the projects and papers are long-term, efficient time management is essential. I will provide due dates to help you stay on track, but to do well, it is important to work regularly (several hours a week) outside of class on readings and assignments. Failure to complete assignments due to poor time management is your responsibility.

**BUILDING SAFETY:** Be careful in the building at night. Report anything unusual. Watch your belongings and keep them with you at all times.

#### **AVAILABLE RESOURCES:**

##### **WEB SITE FOR ACADEMIC RESOURCES**

[http://colum.edu/students/academic\\_resources.html](http://colum.edu/students/academic_resources.html)

**ASSISTANCE:** Please let me know immediately if you need learning accommodations or are having difficulty with the class. There are resources in the college to help you.

To receive particular accommodations, you must present a letter from Services for Students with Disabilities.

##### **SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

<http://www.colum.edu/student-life/conaway/SWD.html>

##### **TUTORING IN IAM**

Student tutors are available in the labs (Wabash 407, S. Michigan 603) beginning the second week of each semester.

Getting a tutor:

- Consult the tutor schedule posted throughout the department and on the department web site for the tutors' names and availability.
- Go to one of the computer labs.
- You need a current Columbia College Student ID Card to enter the computer lab.
- Go to the front desk of the lab, sign in and fill out the tutoring form.

##### **THE WRITING CENTER**

<http://www.colum.edu/undergraduate/english/writingcent/>

Students can receive assistance for writing and reading assigned in all courses offered at Columbia, as well as for related nonacademic writing such as resumes, business letters, and creative projects. The Center provides guidance in every stage and element of the writing process: finding ideas, focus, development, organization, logic, paragraphing, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, revising, proofreading, etc. Special assistance is offered for learning disabled students (LD), non-native speakers of English (ESL), and students with reading difficulties. The Center has a library of writing and grammar books, reference materials, and computers for tutorial use. The Center also sponsors workshops on different aspects of writing throughout the year.

## **COUNSELING SERVICES**

<http://www.colum.edu/student-affairs/counseling/index.html>

The office of Counseling Services is committed to helping students reach their highest academic and personal potential. Our aim is to help students fulfill their educational goals with minimal distractions. We realize that students might encounter difficult situations that could impede their academic, personal, and social progress. Our services are designed to help these students address their concerns and increase their self-awareness while empowering them to manage challenging areas in their lives.

Counseling Services are provided free of charge. Services include individual, couple, and group therapy for students. Therapists are also available for workshops and presentations on a variety of psychological issues.

### **TOPICS:**

**2-3 classes will be visiting artist lectures.**

#### **1: Overview and Familiarization**

##### **Syllabus Review**

##### **History of Digital Culture**

Reading for weeks 1&2:

Chapter 1 of Digital Art;

Other Readings to be supplied by Instructor

#### **2:**

##### **The Computer as Medium**

Other Readings to be supplied by Instructor

#### **3:**

##### **Digital Culture, activism, and power**

Readings on Tactical Media

#### **4:**

Week Off: CAA Lecture

#### **5:**

##### **Authorship and the Issue of Collaboration**

Selections from DJ Spooky, Foucault, and Barthes

Project 1 due

#### **6:**

##### **Placemark for Speaker**

Begin work on Project 2

#### **7:**

##### **PROJECT 1 Due**

Final Debugging/Present microprocessor works

#### **8:**

##### **I am 8 Bit: Digital Retro/Game Nostalgia**

Readings TBD

Student discussion

**Digital Culture**  
**Interactive Art & Media**

**9:**  
Digital Aesthetics  
Generation Flash, Lev Manovich  
Student discussion

**10:**  
Databases and Programming as art  
Readings TBD  
Student discussion

**11:**  
Virtual Art  
Readings TBD  
Student discussion

**12:**  
Resampling and the question of the Author  
Barthe, Roland - Death of the Author  
Foucault, Michel -

**13:**  
Placemarkers for Speaker  
Student discussion

**14:**  
FINAL PRESENTATIONS  
Final Project due

**15:**  
FINAL PRESENTATIONS  
Class wrap-up

**THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR.**