Media Studies: Digital Cultures

Master Programme

Regular courses

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Transformations in Digital Cultures

Full course description

This module focuses on the impact of recent transformations of our media landscape on society and culture. We will discuss how the architecture of the web controls but also enables user practices. We will start with an analysis of the web, specifically search engines and social media. User and (online) communities use but also partly depend on digital technology, they make use of digital data, online networks and the specific characteristics of digital media. These often include digital natives who are growing up with an understanding that sharing (digital) data is essential of how friendships and communities are being built and maintained. The internet has facilitated and allowed for individual users and communities to create, configure and control content. At the same time users give information about the number of connections (friends), activities within the networks (status updates, likes, shares). Numbers, ranks and scores structure our online presence; they are used by us but also by observers with commercial or political interests. The method introduced in this module is discourse analysis. We will investigate discourses about user practices, participation, net activism and hacking and analyse them.

Course objectives

Introduction in digital cultures; introduction in the history and theory of new media; introduction to social media and user practices as e.g. net activism and hacking; introduction in problem based learning; introduction in discourse analysis; introduction in the making of and writing for a research weblog and basic programming skills.

Prerequisites

None

Recommended reading

Jenkins, H., Ford, S. & Green, J. (2013). Spreadable media. Creating value and meaning in networked culture. New York & London: New York University Press.

Jordan, T. (2015). Information politics: liberation and exploitation in the digital society. Digital Barricades. London: Pluto.

MCU4000

Period 1
4 Sep 2017

27 Oct 2017

Print course description

ECTS credits:
6.0

Instruction language:
English

Coordinator:
K. Wenz

Teaching methods:
PBL, Lecture(s), Work in subgroups

Assessment methods:
Final paper

Keywords:
spreadable media, cultural participation, Social media, user generated content, net activism and hacking

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Real Virtualities. The relation between real and virtual dimensions of contemporary media culture

Full course description

Media extend our senses and our engagement with the world—as Marshall McLuhan, the father of mediastudies, famously said. In this process they do not leave things untouched, but transform how we experience our environment and how we act in it. Through newsmedia we are an immediate witness to events all over the globe. With webcamera's we access the world online from whereever we are. Our cellphones help us to keep our friends with us anywhere we go. In these processes, off- and online existence, becomes inextricably entangled. This module reflects on the emerging culture of 'real virtuality'. Students will be introduced to two main philosophers that have dealt with the changing relationship between 'the real' and 'the virtual' (W. Benjamin, J. Baudrillard). The issues they address in relationship to older media such as photography, film and television will be related to new media practices, such as telepresence and augmented reality, and evaluated in the light of these. The methodology employed is phenomenology. Where the thinkers mentioned above take an overarching approach, D. Ihde's phenomenology focuses on concrete sets of perceptual relations between users, media and the world and helps to make more nuanced analyses. During the module students will discuss different media applications, including media artworks, and work towards their own analysis of an application in the light of the themes discussed.

Course objectives

Introduction to three relevant philosophical positions and hands on introduction to the phenomenological analysis of media.

Prerequisites

None

Recommended reading

see course book for required and recommended reading

MCU4001

Period 1
4 Sep 2017
27 Oct 2017

Print course description
ECTS credits:
6.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
D.J. Kamphof
Teaching methods:
PBL
Assessment methods:
Assignment, Final paper
Keywords:
Reality, virtuality, mediation

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Sound Technologies and Cultural Practices

Full course description

This course aims to provide you with a better understanding of the changing relationships between sound technologies and cultural practices, notably music-related practices. You will analyze these relationships with the help of theories and concepts from media studies and science & technology studies (S&TS). These will help the characteristics of cultural practices through historical examples and by familiarizing, with a key method for understanding everyday culture: ethnographic research. This method enables you to unravel the taken-for-granted meanings and activities predominating in particular cultural practices. Such practices may vary from listening to music at home, the car or the concert hall, making and composing music with new sampling technologies or electronic musical instruments, downloading and sharing music online or amplifying music at festivals. Finally, this course teaches you to transform your knowledge and research of sound technologies and cultural practices into a short podcast. As consumers increasingly listen to short radio-like features such as podcasts, audio books and audio guides, knowledge of basic sound production techniques provide you with a much-valued professional skill.

Course objectives

Familiarizing you with the field of sound studies; understanding the changes in the production and consumption of music related to the societal appropriation of new sound technologies; problematizing

the relationship between sound technologies and cultural practices.

Prerequisites

None

Recommended reading

Bull, M., & Back, L. (eds.) (2003). The Auditory Culture Reader. Oxford: Berg. DeNora, T. (2000). Music in Everyday Life. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

MCU4003

Period 2
30 Oct 2017
22 Dec 2017

Print course description
ECTS credits:
6.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
J.L.M. Bruyninckx
Teaching methods:
Work in subgroups, PBL
Assessment methods:
Assignment, Presentation
Keywords:
Sound Studies, Music, Sound Technologies and Cultural Practices, Ethnography

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

New Public Spheres: Critical theory and technological disruption

Full course description

A good public sphere is seen as the elixir of modern democracy, as it provides a forum for exchanging views and formulating opinions. Media play an important role in the structural transformation of the public sphere. The art of printing, for instance, had an enormous impact on the emergence of the modern public sphere. Therefore it is important to scrutinize the role that new media play in the public sphere. This course will set out to both explicate the theoretical principles that inform the idea of the public sphere and critical theory, and situate those theoretical claims in everyday practices. What is the impact of the media on the public sphere? How do new forms of technological mediation interact with our social and political practices and environments? These are central questions addressed in this course. It aims especially to clarify the role of new media in the structural transformation of the public sphere. This course comprises group sessions and lectures.

Course objectives

In this course, students will learn to understand the impact of old and new media on the structural transformation of the public sphere; to reflect on core problems of public spheres, such as democratic deficits, unequal power relations, censorship, the tyranny of intimacy and the limits of hacktivism; to write a research paper.

Prerequisites

None

MCU4004

Period 2
30 Oct 2017
22 Dec 2017

Print course description
ECTS credits:
6.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
A.S. Richterich
Teaching methods:
PBL
Assessment methods:
Final paper, Presentation
Keywords:
Democracy, digital divide, internet, media, power, privacy, Public Sphere, resistance, surveillance

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Sharing Practices and Online Communities

Full course description

In this course, we will take a closer look at the complex and multifaceted relationships between digital technologies and sharing practices. Emerging technologies of file sharing and cloud computing are radically transforming the ways we produce and use information, and are pervading all aspects of modern life. Although heralded by many, the trend of data sharing also evokes serious concerns about the exploitation of shared data in the interests of economic profit, surveillance, and superficial forms of “participatory democracy”. The aim of the course is to introduce students to the discourses surrounding the phenomena of data sharing and to create a critical awareness for the consequences that come with it. By analyzing concrete examples, we will look at the different modes of online sharing and discuss vital questions about the ethics of sharing and who is actually profiting from the so-called sharing economy. The 'domains' in which the phenomena of datafication (Van Dijck 2014) and the proliferation of digital data will be explored are: 1) social behavior, 2) epistemology, 3) arts

and heritage. Each assignment will address one of these domains or a combination thereof. As the investigation of online cultures and communities involved in sharing practices also ask for specific methods, students will be introduced to the method of virtual ethnography and learn how to apply the method.

Course objectives

In this course students will be further introduced to the logics of datafication and the ideologies of sharing through digital media; learn to critically assess online sharing practices with a specific focus on ethical issues emerging from these new practices.

Prerequisites

None

Recommended reading

See course book for required and recommended reading

MCU4006

Period 3
8 Jan 2018
2 Feb 2018

Print course description
ECTS credits:
6.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
V.E.J.P. van Saaze
Teaching methods:
PBL, Lecture(s), Work in subgroups
Assessment methods:
Final paper
Keywords:
datafication, databases and archives, epistemology, online communities, virtual ethnography

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Research Design

Full course description

In this module students will draw together what they have learned so far they will apply their theoretical insights, research methods, and practical skills in order to design their research plan for the second semester thesis. Each of the five first-semester modules has emphasised a particular

disciplinary and/or theoretical approach and a specific methodology, but always in a problem oriented and interdisciplinary context. In the second semester students will develop their own research on developments and issues in contemporary media culture; the research plan will support them in connecting their own research questions and strategies to the previous modules. Students will design this research plan in a step-by-step process. These steps will be prepared by an introductory lecture. In the first week students will explore their thesis topic and discuss their ideas. Students will also take part in a workshop on how to peer-review a research proposal. In the following weeks, students will support each other by engaging in weekly peer-review sessions in which they critically evaluate the work of their colleagues.

Course objectives

Assisting students in phrasing research questions and designing a research plan; instructing students on how to peer-review a research proposal.

Prerequisites

None

Recommended reading

Bertrand, I., & Hughes, P.(2005). Media Research Methods: Audiences, Institutions, Texts. Basingstoke [etc.]: Palgrave/Macmillan. Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2003). The Craft of Research. Chicago [etc.]: University of Chicago Press. Stokes, J. (2013). How to Do Media and Cultural Studies. Los Angeles [etc.]: SAGE.

MCU4005

Period 4
5 Feb 2018
9 Mar 2018

Print course description
ECTS credits:
6.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
J.A. Post
Teaching methods:
PBL, Lecture(s), Work in subgroups
Assessment methods:
Final paper
Keywords:
research plan, research questions, Theory, Methodology, peer-review

Semester 2: Thesis

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Thesis

Full course description

Students write an extensive MA thesis of at least 24.000 words, for which they independently and individually conduct research in the field of media culture. The MA thesis is written under supervision of one of the MA teaching staff members (but they may also choose another supervisor from the FASoS staff). For the assessment a second reader will be added.

Course objectives

The thesis, as a traditional final assessment of a MA programme, has the function to give students the possibility to engage in depth in research and deepen their knowledge of a specific field in media culture. The thesis is research-oriented and students often choose it as preparation for a second MA programme or for further research in the future. The choice of a topic for the thesis is completely free, within the restrictions that it relates to the MA MC programme.

Prerequisites

None

MCU4800

Period 4
12 Mar 2018
29 Jun 2018

Print course description
ECTS credits:
24.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
K. Wenz
Assessment methods:
Final paper

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Workshops supporting Thesis and Internship

Full course description

For further information please contact the course coordinator.

MCU4700

Period 4
12 Mar 2018
29 Jun 2018

Print course description
ECTS credits:
0.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
K. Wenz
Teaching methods:
Skills

Semester 2: Internship

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Internship

Full course description

Many students choose for an internship. Students are responsible for finding their own internship and we advise everyone to start as soon as possible with searching. For non-Dutch speaking students it might be hard to find aposition in the Maastricht region, so students often go back to their own country. The internship starts in May and has to last at least 2 months. We offer a database of internship places to our students to help in finding an internship place.

Course objectives

The internship has the function to help students improve their professional skills and get in touch with the professional field.

Prerequisites

None

MCU4990

Period 4
12 Mar 2018
29 Jun 2018

Print course description
ECTS credits:
10.0
Instruction language:

English
Coordinator:
K. Wenz
Assessment methods:
Written exam

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Internship report

Full course description

The internship report can best be described as a diary of the practical work at the internship institution/company. It describes the different projects the students worked on and might as well include development and implementation of a business/marketing scheme for the company chosen. The report needs to reflect critically on the internship and evaluate the internship critically and put it into relation to the MAMC programme. The report is graded by the faculty supervisor and a 2nd reader.

Course objectives

The goal of this report is an introduction of the internship place to the reader, a reflection on the practical part of the internship and its evaluation. The relation of the professional field to the academic part of the MAMC programme is discussed. This report shall give insights about the student's experience to both supervisors.

Prerequisites

None

MCU4991

Period 4
12 Mar 2018
29 Jun 2018

Print course description
ECTS credits:
2.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
K. Wenz
Assessment methods:
Final paper

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Internship thesis

Full course description

Those students who conduct an internship have to write a short internship thesis of 12.000 words. This short thesis has to be clearly related to at least one of the modules and finished before the internship starts in May. The internship thesis is written under supervision of one of the staff members.

Course objectives

The thesis, as a traditional final assessment of a MA programme, has the function to give students the possibility to engage in research and deepen their knowledge of a specific field in media culture.

Prerequisites

None

MCU4890

Period 4
12 Mar 2018
29 Jun 2018

Print course description
ECTS credits:
12.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
K. Wenz
Assessment methods:
Final paper

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Workshops supporting Thesis and Internship

Full course description

For further information please contact the course coordinator.

MCU4700

Period 4
12 Mar 2018
29 Jun 2018

Print course description

ECTS credits:
0.0
Instruction language:
English
Coordinator:
K. Wenz
Teaching methods:
Skills

Specialisation courses