

UNION COLLEGE – Spring 2009
Syllabus – Version 6, updated 4/26/09

Identity & Technology in a Media Saturated World

SRS 150-01
Scholars Research Seminar
MW 3:05-4:45
Olin 107

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The production, design, and use of technology play an increasingly important role in our day-to-day lives. In this course we will explore issues of identity and technology as they play out in the various electronic worlds we all inhabit these days. We will be looking at everything from email to social networks to single player computer games to virtual worlds like Second Life. We will consider the question of identity construction and the extent to which people can be successful at presenting as the "other" when they are in an electronic space. Examination of these electronic spaces and our behavior in them gives us a way to examine social markers of key components of identity, such as gender, and consider the ramifications of multiple identities we can have as we move through different electronic spaces.

Note 1: You may be exposed to adult content in this class.

Note 2: The exact schedule and reading assignments laid out below are preliminary. The syllabus will be posted to the class wiki and updated regularly with reading assignments.

Evaluation:

40% Wiki, Homework, Participation & Preparation
50% Final Project (Paper 40%, Presentation 10%)
10% Timely completion of all research deadlines

Attendance

Attendance in this course is mandatory. After 2 unexcused absences your final grade will be reduced one grade point. In other words, if your final grade is a "B+" and you have

missed three classes, it will be reduced to a “B.” If you miss four classes, it will be reduced to a “B-“ and so on.

40% Wiki, Homework, Participation & Preparation

Today’s technological world includes mechanisms that allow us to collaborate, discuss, and share information and ideas on both a physical and a virtual level. As such, we will work together on a *Wiki* to share a host of multimediatric material, like essays, clips, blogs, news articles, podcasts, and ask questions, come up with ideas, pose critical insights, and even edit and work on grammatical issues. This is a collaborative project that demands a high level of engagement on behalf of every individual in this class. You will be required to post information on the Wiki at least twice a week (once for every class meeting) and engage with the material of your classmates. Specifically, you will have to contribute at least one idea of your own and respond to at least one of the comments of your classmates.

This is a space and an activity that demands a high level of trust, professionalism, and respect. Your grade will depend on your up-to-date and continuous involvement, the quality of your critical and creative engagement, and the number of additional materials you bring to the discussion. The idea is to dig deep into the material that we are studying and use the Wiki as a creative space to share information and inspire our class discussions and your individual papers.

You will also be developing your own *Wiki* pages for your research projects, and you will be posting a series of homework assignments on it as well. Therefore, please keep in mind that a large part of your work for this class will be viewed, and commented on, by all of your classmates (the Wiki will be closed to the public). Please remember, this demands a high level of trust, professionalism, and respect. The goal of the Wiki is to allow for a deeper and more dynamic and engaged understanding of the material we are studying. Sharing of ideas and insights leads to richer outcomes.

50% Final Project (Paper 40%, Presentation 10%)

For the final project you will write a paper of 12 -14 pages.

You will develop your own paper topic, in consultation with us. It should address issues of identity formation (individual or group, taking into account race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, etc.) in cyberspace (social networks, blogs, virtual worlds, chat rooms, etc.).

Your papers will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Critical and creative thinking	Professional tone
Thesis Statement	Correct Use of course-specific concepts and terms
Focus and Logic	Use of Research
Organization	
Grammar and Mechanics	1.

Please use MLA Formatting and Correct Use Sources (for information on MLA Style, see the Online Reference Resources at the Union College Library website, or visit http://www.mla.org/style_fa4)

Schedule

Week 1

Monday 3/30 **Introduction**

Wed. 4/1 **GENERATION Y/YOU**

Read:

1. Chapter 1 of *Growing Up Digital* by Don Tapscott

2. "Time's Person of the Year: You"

(<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html>)

3. "New Citizens of the World"

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569526,00.html>

Week 2

Monday 4/6 **YOU & The WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE**

Read:

1. "Wikinomics: The Art and Science of Peer Production" by Don Tapscott

2. "Young People in a Globalizing World": Global Youth Report 2003

Wed. 4/8 **PERSONAL IDENTITY AND PRESENTATION OF SELF**

RESEARCH DEADLINE: by Friday evening (the 10th) you must post to the Wiki your research idea (what question are you going to answer?).

Week 3

Mon. 4/13 **LIBRARY SESSION & DEVELOPMENT OF BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Wed. 4/15 **GENDER IDENTITY – ABSOLUTE OR CONSTRUCTED, PASSING**

Read:

1. "Dueling Dualisms", Chapter 1 of *Sexing the Body* by Anne Fausto-Sterling

2. "TinySex and Gender Trouble" by Sherry Turkle

RESEARCH DEADLINE: By Friday evening (the 17th) you must post on the Wiki an extensive bibliography about your research topic

Week 4

Mon. 4/20 **INTRODUCTION TO SECOND LIFE**

Wed. 4/22 **WHO ARE YOU REALLY? (class in Second Life)**

RESEARCH DEADLINE: By Friday evening (the 24th) you need to post on the Wiki your first impressions/ideas about your research topic (at least one page)

Week 5

Mon. 4/27 **DISCUSSION ABOUT SL AND IDENTITY**

Wed. 4/29 **PRESENTATIONS ABOUT SL AND IDENTITY**

Week 6

Mon. 5/4 **SEX IN/AND CYBERSPACE**

Wed. 5/6 **OTHER ASPECTS OF IDENTITY (QUEER SPACES, RACE, ETHNIC IDENTITY)**

RESEARCH DEADLINE: By Friday evening (the 8th) you need to post on the Wiki the first three pages of your paper.

Week 7

Mon. 5/11 **COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT / RELIGION & POLITICS**

Wed. 5/13 **BURNING QUESTIONS AND CURIOSITIES.**

Week 8

RESEARCH DEADLINE: By Sunday evening (the 17th) you need to post at least 6 pages of your paper on the Wiki.

Mon. 5/18 **IN-CLASS PEER REVIEW SESSION**

Wed. 5/20 **INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS**

Week 9

Mon. 5/25 **PRESENTATIONS**

Wed. 5/27 **PRESENTATIONS**

RESEARCH DEADLINE: By Friday evening (the 29th) you need to post at least 10 pages of your paper on the Wiki

Week 10

Mon. 6/1 **PRESENTATIONS**

Wed. 6/3 **PRESENTATIONS**

RESEARCH DEADLINE: By 12:00 noon, Monday June 8, the final version of your paper is due. Please email it to both of us and deliver it (hard copy) to either Prof. Barr or Prof. Henseler.