LLCU 212 001: Understanding Digital and Social Media
Fall 2020

Course information
Course code and section: LLCU 212 001
Fall 2020

Virtual sessions via Zoom (see below for more details)
Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 16:05-17:25 UCT-4
All dates and times throughout this syllabus are for Montréal, Canada
Three Credits

Class Hashtag: #llcu212f20

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TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
McGill University is situated on the traditional unceded territory of the Kanien’kehà:ka, one of the founding nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in Tio’itia:ke (Montreal), a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations. We recognize and respect the Kanien’kehà:ka as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today.

Remote Delivery:
This course will be delivered entirely online. I understand that this might be an exceptional, new, and challenging experience for many of us and have kept that in mind while designing this syllabus. If you have any concerns, face any challenges, or require any special accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible so we can find an appropriate solution to help you succeed in our course. For further information, please refer to McGill’s Student-specific Guidelines for Remote Teaching and Learning and Remote Learning Resources.
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Course Overview

People who smile while they are alone used to be called insane, until we invented smartphones and social media.
― Mokokoma Mokhonoana

The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us [...] we are they.
― Donna Haraway

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Lectures will explore a range of topics related to technologies of contemporary digital and social media, with particular attention to understanding technical, historical, ethical and legal issues. Tutorials will help students to express themselves effectively with digital media, and especially on the web (HTML, images, audio, video) (https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2020-2021/courses/llcu-212).

This course incorporates several media and cultural topics to understand and analyze digital media and production, and their relationship with human users and society at large. Digital and social media have changed human societies and situate us as both receivers and creators of content. Thus, this course will provide students with a variety of theoretical, conceptual, and technical tools to

- understand the different phases and faces of digital and social media,
create meaningful digital content,
become educated users of media,
encourage a critical attitude towards media, and
advocate for an inclusive understanding of digital media and cultural production.

This course is designed to combine the theoretical study of media with media-making experiments that utilize digital tools for critical analysis and artistic creation. At the start of the semester, students will create their own blog space, which will become their ongoing e-portfolio. Students will explore and utilize a variety of digital platforms and learn the basics of media analysis as well as techniques in media production. By the end of the semester, students will consider themselves not only users but makers and critics of digital and social media.

Instructional Method and Communications
Online and recorded lectures, slides and material on myCourses, online engagement, technical tutorials and assignments. Communications via Zoom, myCourses, email, and Edmodo.

- Lectures and tutorials will be given via Zoom on the schedule indicated for the course. Information to access Zoom sessions is available at the bottom of the homepage on myCourses. The meeting ID and password will be the same for the whole semester. Alternatively, you can access the sessions directly from the Zoom tab on myCourses.
- Attendance to the lectures is not mandatory but is greatly encouraged.
- Zoom lectures and tutorials will be recorded and made available on myCourses. Slides used for lectures will also be available on myCourses after each online session.
- In general, Tuesday sessions will be for lectures and Thursday sessions will be for tutorials (except the Thursdays before a quiz).
- Office hours will be held via email following the same time-related guidelines:
  - I will try my best to respond within 24 hours, except during weekends. Please only send a second email regarding the same issue if you have not gotten a response after 72 hours.
  - Emails sent after 6 pm from Monday to Thursday will be responded the following day. Emails sent between Fridays at 6 pm and Sundays will be responded starting the following Monday.
  - Zoom individual meetings can also be scheduled if needed (send me an email to request an appointment).

If you have general questions, you can post them on the discussion board on myCourses or Edmodo. This way, everyone can see my response and your peers can comment or ask related questions as well.

- TA office hours will be held via email.
  - Our TA will respond to emails on Wednesdays from 3 to 4 pm. You can send your email outside of that window but must be aware that you will not get a response until the following TA office hour.
  - Our TA can also schedule virtual Zoom office hours when necessary.
  - Please note that our TA will only respond to questions about the tutorials and the technical assignments.
IMPORTANT NOTICE: Recording Sessions
Please note that I will be recording online sessions (except discussions) and posting them on myCourses. Be aware that I will pause the recording during discussions, so students attending the session can feel more comfortable participating during class. If you have any concerns about the recording at any point, you can leave the session or not attend and watch the recording instead. By remaining in the Zoom session while it is being recorded, you consent to the recording, and you understand that your image, voice, and name may be disclosed to your classmates. You also understand that recordings will be made available on myCourses to students registered in the course. Please read McGill’s Guidelines on Remote Teaching and Learning for more information.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Intellectual Property
I would like to remind you of your responsibility in ensuring that Zoom recordings and associated material are not reproduced or placed in the public domain. This means that each of you can use it for your educational (and research) purposes, but you cannot allow others to use it, by putting it up on the Internet or by giving it or selling it to others who may also copy it and make it available. Please refer to McGill’s Guidelines for Instructors and Students on Remote Teaching and Learning for further information. Thank you very much for your help with this.

© Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or medium without the explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Netiquette
The University recognizes the importance of maintaining teaching spaces that are respectful and inclusive for all involved. To this end, offensive, violent, or harmful language arising in contexts such as the following may be cause for disciplinary action: Username (use only your legal or preferred name); Visual backgrounds; “Chat” boxes.

Please read and follow the next guidelines very carefully for all interactions related to our course.

- Remember that we are communicating through technology and online platforms but still require the warmth and understanding of human social interactions. The most important rule in netiquette is to always remember the human(s) behind the machine(s).
- Treat your instructor, TA, and classmates with respect in Zoom sessions, emails, or any other communication. Disrespectful interactions and comments will not be tolerated.
- Be careful with your arguments and language.
  - Respect your classmates and what they share.
  - Use clear, concise, and respectful language. No offensive language will be tolerated.
  - Ask classmates for clarification if you find a comment or discussion posting offensive or difficult to understand.
  - Understand that we may disagree and that exposure to other people’s opinions is
part of the learning experience. However, you must be respectful of other people’s opinions and backgrounds. Hate discourses and discrimination, as well as flame wars, trolling, and other similar practices, will not be tolerated.

- Avoid sweeping generalizations. Back up your stated opinions with facts and reliable sources.
- Before posting a comment, ask whether you would be willing to make the same comment to a person’s face.

Even though the use of your camera is not mandatory, you are welcome to activate your video during Zoom online sessions if it helps you focus and/or interact better.

- Always keep your microphone deactivated. If you have a question or want to share something, please use the raise hand option on Zoom and activate your microphone when invited to speak.

Be aware of your surroundings.

- If you activate your video, you can use an appropriate virtual background on Zoom if you prefer.
- Avoid loud or distracting noises when activating your microphone.
- Avoid all possible distractions around you and make sure that you are in an appropriate environment for learning. This will help you concentrate on the course contents and participate better in class discussions.

If you do not want to activate your video or audio, or do not have access to a camera or a microphone, you can use the chat function on Zoom to participate during class.

- As with any in-person courses, you should respect the class schedule.
  - The waiting room on Zoom will be activated for every session. If you are late for the session or left at some point, I will let you join at an appropriate, i.e. non-disruptive, moment.
  - Make sure to also respect schedules for my office hours, individual Zoom appointments, and TA office hours.

Please watch this video on email etiquette and follow its guidelines for all communications related to our course, with me or with our TA.

The 24-hour rule: I understand that sometimes getting a grade you were not expecting can be frustrating. Because of this, and to avoid misunderstandings, follow the 24-hour rule for all inquiries regarding your grades: once you receive your grade, you must not contact me nor our TA within the first 24 hours. After 24 hours, you can contact us to express any concerns or questions you might have. This will give you time to carefully read the feedback you received and avoid visceral reactions.

For interactions via Twitter, myCourses, and Edmodo, please follow the guidelines for discussion boards in this video and on this website.

- Posts that breach the rules are automatically excluded from the course grade and can contribute negatively towards it.
- The instructor and TA of this course have the right to establish a pre-approval process for posts at any time if considered necessary.
Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites for this class, though some basic technical skills will be helpful.

Required Tools
1. Accounts: You should have active accounts for
   - Weebly (we will create it during our first tutorial)
   - Twitter (optional but encouraged; see Online engagement item in the Assessment section)
   - Edmodo (we will create it during our first class)
2. Device + Internet connection: Regular access to an electronic device and Internet connection are mandatory (laptop/computer recommended). The use of a camera and microphone for online sessions is optional but appreciated.
3. Software: For some tutorial sessions, you will be asked to download and run the required software before the tutorial session. All software we will be using is free and links for download are provided in the Course outline below.
4. myCourses: All readings and assignments will be available via myCourses. Announcements and important information will also be distributed via myCourses and/or Edmodo, so you are expected to consult both platforms regularly.

Course Assessment
Your final mark will be determined based on the following breakdown:

- Online engagement: 10%
- E-portfolio and technical assignments: 20%
- Mid-term quiz: 20%
- End-of-term quiz: 20%
- Final #project: 30%

Online Engagement
You are expected to engage with the course through online conversations on Twitter (using the course hashtag #llcu212f20), Edmodo, or myCourses (through the discussion board). You are required to post at least one comment or question per week, on one or several of the previous platforms. You can also share interesting content related to the course. Your posts should reflect the course contents and should be well-thought. For instance, sharing a picture is not enough; you should comment on why sharing it is important and/or relevant. Similarly, tautological or shallow comments (such as “I love this topic” or “X reading was super interesting” or “This reminded me of our course”) are not a valid form of meaningful engagement. Thus, you should take into consideration that substantial and meaningful engagement will require you to read and/or watch all assigned materials.

Important information: Attendance to the online sessions is not mandatory. However, you are encouraged to attend these sessions to 1) make sure you understand all course...
materials, 2) participate in the discussion of the topics, and 3) aid your engagement mark. For example, if you participate in discussions on Twitter during class time, you will already be fulfilling your online engagement requirement of that week!

**E-Portfolio and Technical Assignments**

- You will build a Weebly website during our first tutorial of the semester, which will be your e-portfolio for this course.
- Note that your e-portfolio will be public and will be visited (at least) by me and our TA regularly to keep track of your progress.
- You will use your e-portfolio to explore course topics and publish your technical assignments.
- We will have 10 tutorials and 4 technical assignments (based on the tutorials) during the semester. Each assignment is worth 5% of your e-portfolio grade.
- The deadlines for technical assignments can be found in the Course Contents below.
- Technical assignments will be submitted via the Assignments tab on myCourses. You will have to submit a URL to the specific page in your e-portfolio where the assignment is found.
- Specific details and/or rubrics for each assignment will be provided in the description of the assignment in the Assignments tab on myCourses. Please note that these are minimum requirements and that fulfilling them is not enough to get 100% (5%). In general terms, and unless otherwise indicated, your assignments will be graded according to effort, attention to detail and design, and/or quality of content, depending on the nature of each assignment.

**Mid-term and End-of-term Quizzes**

- Both quizzes will be done on myCourses on the dates indicated below.
- It is strictly forbidden to circulate the quiz or communicate with others in order to answer the questions. The McGill Honor Code and all other McGill regulations strictly apply.
- You will have access to the quizzes through the Quizzes tab in the navigation bar on myCourses. **Access to each quiz will be open for 24 hours; once you access the quiz, you will have two and a half hours to complete it:**
  - The mid-term quiz will be available from 11:59 pm on October 19 to 11:59 pm on October 20.
  - The end-of-term quiz will be available from 11:59 pm on November 23 to 11:59 pm on November 24.
- Please note that there is only one attempt per quiz (there are no additional attempts, i.e. you can take each quiz only once). Once you click “Submit” on the final page, you will not be able to return to your quiz. Submission is final.
- Quizzes will include mostly brief open questions on class concepts and topics. Please note that doing the readings might not always be enough to prepare for the quizzes; you must familiarize yourself with the slides and material covered in lectures as well. If you cannot attend the online Zoom sessions, you can watch the recordings of the sessions on
The Thursday session before each quiz is considered a study day and we will not have a tutorial. During these sessions, I will be available by email and on Zoom to answer any questions you might have regarding the quiz format and contents.

**IMPORTANT: QUIZ DURATION**

For this course, I am adopting flexible assessment strategies that create greater access for all students by incorporating principles of Universal Design for Learning. As such, I have taken into consideration the variety of learner needs and barriers that students may face in this course and have designed the assessments with these considerations in mind. Additionally, I recognize that any student may experience unexpected interruptions in a remote learning environment. Therefore, additional time has been built into the assessment strategy to address these potential barriers. Because of these modifications, authorized time-based accommodations for students registered with OSD will not apply. There may be exceptional circumstances in which other disability-related accommodations may still be needed. If you feel this is the case for you, please reach out to OSD via email at exams.osd@mcgill.ca. They will assess the situation and coordinate with me when necessary. **If you require accommodations related to your time zone or an academic schedule conflict, please contact me at the beginning of the semester so we can make the necessary arrangements.** Details of these modifications are available below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Time needed for completion</th>
<th>OSD-recommended time accommodations</th>
<th>TLS-recommended window for connectivity issues</th>
<th>Total time allotted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Quiz</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>+1 hour</td>
<td>+0.5 hours</td>
<td>2.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-term Quiz</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>+1 hour</td>
<td>+0.5 hours</td>
<td>2.5 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final #Project**

Your final project is a critical academic essay in which you will analyze the use and the social, cultural, political, economic... implications of a hashtag of your choosing in one or several platforms (you are free to decide which platforms to include). For example, you could analyze #metoo on Twitter from the perspective of online feminism in a specific region/country, or #selfie on Facebook and Instagram as a mode of self-recording for youth versus adults in Canada.

Your essay must include a description and contextualization (time frame, cultural/political/social context, subjects involved, etc.) of your topic, as well as your thesis, your objectives, and your theoretical/methodological framework (i.e. the perspective/theories/main concepts from which you analyze your hashtag, as well as the methodologies employed).

You are encouraged to incorporate images, screenshots, and/or any other media that can help you illustrate and support your arguments.

Whatever your hashtag and topic are, you must incorporate conceptual content from the course in your analysis.

As with any academic work, you should construct a position and present arguments to support that position (even if you recognize opposing perspectives). You should limit personal opinion and refer to external (scholarly, academic, serious) sources to support...
your arguments.

You must include a bibliography of all your sources at the end of your essay (at least six sources other than your primary material, that is, your hashtag and selected posts). All in-text quotations and the bibliography must follow the guidelines of a proper citation style (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.).

You should write between 1000 and 1500 words (word-count does not include the bibliography nor any media captions you might include).

You must submit your final essay as a Word file via myCourses.

- Please make sure that your file is in .doc or .docx format. No other formats are accepted (.pdf, .pages, etc.).
- If you do not have Word installed in your computer, please consult IT services on how to install/use Office 365 apps.

You are welcome to discuss any ideas for your final project with me at any time.

Late Submission Policy

- All deadlines, except for quizzes, are set at 11:59 pm on the due date.
- Late submissions can only be excused due to physical or mental health issues or other severe reasons by providing the corresponding documentation to justify the lateness.
- Extensions are only granted for physical or mental health issues or other severe reasons. However, if you are in a time zone other than Montréal and require adjustments for submissions, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can agree on a different date/time for your submissions, especially for quizzes, which are written during class time. Please note that no matter where you are, your submission will always be before the Montréal-based deadline.
- Unjustified late submissions of technical assignments and quizzes are not accepted and will automatically get 0%.
- Unjustified late submissions of the final project will be accepted only within a week after the deadline and will be deducted 5% per day of lateness (including weekends).

Course Contents

Please note that this schedule is tentative and subject to change. It is your responsibility to check the schedule on myCourses regularly. All materials are available online and on myCourses.

Content Warning

The contents and discussions in this course will necessarily engage with sensitive topics and materials, which can be emotionally and intellectually challenging. I will do my best to make this course a safe space where we can engage bravely, empathetically, and thoughtfully with difficult content every week. If you have any concerns or difficulties working with any of the topics or materials included in the outline, please feel free to contact me. For further information, see the Important resources and information section at the end of this syllabus.
Week 1
Thursday, September 3rd: Introduction

Topics
- Course presentation and syllabus review.
- Edmodo account creation and overview of platforms.
- Brief introduction to media.

Optional reading

Week 2
Tuesday, September 8: What is media?

Topics
- Defining and understanding media
- Perspectives on media
- Understanding digital media and culture

Readings
- Nakamura, Lisa. “Media.” Keywords for American Cultural Studies.

Thursday, September 10: Tutorial 1

Topic: Weebly

Week 3

Add/drop deadline: Tuesday, September 15

Tuesday, September 15: The participatory web

Topics
- Participation and Web 2.0
- Social media, from networks to platforms

Readings

Optional reading from OECD’s report:
- “Chapter 3. Drivers of user-created content” (pp. 28-30).

Thursday, September 17: Tutorial 2

Topic: Weebly 2
**Week 4**

**Technical assignment 1 deadline: Monday, September 21st**

Tuesday, September 22: Hashtags

- **Topics**
  - # The various faces of hashtags: (self-)representation
  - # Community and discourse: race

- **Readings**
  - # Erz, Antonia, Ben Marder, and Elena Osadchaya. “Hashtags: Motivational drivers, their use, and differences between influencers and followers.” *Computers in Human Behavior.*
  - # Carney, Nikita. “All lives matter, but so does race: Black Lives Matter and the evolving role of social media.” *Humanity & Society.*

Thursday, September 24: Tutorial 3

- **Topic:** Hashtag analytics

**Week 5**

Tuesday, September 29: The costs of technology

- **Topics**
  - 🌊 The human costs of technology: labour
  - 🌊 The environmental costs of technology: resources

- **Readings**

- **Optional viewings**
  - 🌊 applegirl002. “Beyonce ‘Irreplaceable’ by Applegirl (iPhone ver.).” *YouTube.*
  - 🌊 applegirl002. “Lady Gaga ‘Poker Face’ by Applegirl (iPhone ver.).” *YouTube.*

Thursday, October 1st: Tutorial 4

- **Topic:** Audio edition

- **Necessary software:** Audacity

**Week 6**

Tuesday, October 6: Open access

- **Topics**
  - 🌊 Democratization and utopia
  - 🌊 The digital divide and the openness of “open” access

- **Viewings**
  - 🌊 TEDx Talks. “Healing the Digital Divide | Cynthia Owyoung | TEDxUCDavisSF.” *YouTube.*
  - 🌊 Piled Higher and Deeper (PHD comics). “Open Access Explained!” *YouTube.*
**Technical assignment 2 deadline: Sunday, October 11**

**WEEK 7**

**Tuesday, October 13: Digital archives**
- **Topics**
  - Digital archives and (de)coloniality
  - Access and virtual repatriation
  - Universal rights and cultural specificities: TK licences
- **Readings**

**Thursday, October 15: Study day (no tutorial)**

**WEEK 8**

**Tuesday, October 20: Mid-term quiz**

**Thursday, October 22: Tutorial 6**
- **Topic:** Artifacts on the Internet Archive

**WEEK 9**

**Tuesday, October 27: Digital (copy)rights and piracy**
- **Topics**
  - Rights and property
  - Justice and crime: Heroes or Villains?
  - CC licences
- **Readings and viewings**

**Thursday, October 29: Tutorial 7**
- **Topic:** Creative Commons and Image edition
- **Necessary software:** GIMP
Week 10
Tuesday, November 3rd: Privacy

Topics
- Defining and protecting personal information
- Granting access, app permissions, and terms of use

Readings
- Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada / Commissariat à la protection de la vie privée du Canada.
  - “Protecting your privacy online.”

Thursday, November 5: Tutorial 8

Topic: HTML + CSS 1
Necessary software: Notepad++ (Windows); Coda 2 (Mac)

Week 11

Technical assignment 3 deadline: Monday, November 9

Tuesday, November 10: (Fake) News

Guest speaker: Marcela Isuster

Topics
- Traditional and digital news media
- Understanding and identifying fake news

Readings and viewings
  - “Introduction” (pp. 2-11).
  - “Some final thoughts looking forward” (pp. 95-99).
- Tavlin, Noah. “How false news can spread.” YouTube video on TEDEd.

Thursday, November 12: Tutorial 9

Topic: HTML + CSS 2

Week 12

Tuesday, November 17: Gaming

Topics
- From literature to games: Cybertext
- Ludicity: Gaming as culture
- Controversy: (Mis)Representation

Readings
Aarseth, Espen J. “Sample Chapter from Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature. Chapter 1: Ergodic Literature.”
Chaplin, Heather. “Will The 21St Century Be Defined By Games?”
Zimmerman, Eric and Heather Chaplin. “Manifesto: The 21St Century Will Be Defined By Games.”

Thursday, November 19: Study day (no tutorial)

**Week 13**

**Tuesday, November 24: End-of-term quiz**

Thursday, November 26: Tutorial 10

? Topic: HTML + CSS 3

**Week 14**

Tuesday, December 1st: Conclusions

👍 Final remarks about the course

👍 Final #project Q&A

**Technical assignment 4 deadline: Thursday, December 3rd**

**Final #project deadline: Tuesday, December 15**

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**Important Resources and Information**

**Academic Integrity:**

*McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.*

It is your responsibility to understand McGill’s policies on academic integrity and honesty. Any violations of, or attempts to violate, these policies will result in strict disciplinary action. Most students violate academic integrity out of desperation and/or stress. If you ever feel tempted to plagiarize or cheat on any assignments, please think twice, contact me, and we can discuss options for managing your workload.

**Mental Health:**

University life can be very stressful, and most students face mental health issues at some point in their degree. McGill has many resources to aid students in these situations. If you need help, you can contact me or McGill’s Wellness Hub. This course asks you to share content online through different means and it covers sensitive material, all of which might make you uncomfortable or distressed. If you experience any such feelings at any point, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Accessibility and Universal Design:
I am striving to make my course materials and assignments as accessible as possible to all types of student learners. If you have any problems accessing readings, completing assignments, or participating in in-class discussions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You may also contact McGill’s Office for Students with Disabilities for a wide range of resources. If you are already registered at OSD, please let me know at the start of the semester so that I can be aware of your needs, and we can discuss strategies for your success in the course.

Equity and Diversity:
I am a member of the Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Diversity and Equity Committee. I am firmly committed to diversity, inclusion, and equity in all areas of (campus) life for all races, genders, nationalities, cultures, religions, sexualities, ages, abilities, and identities. In this class, we will all work to promote an anti-discriminatory environment where everyone feels safe and welcome. I recognize that discrimination can be direct or indirect and take place at both institutional and personal levels. I believe that such discrimination is unacceptable and am committed to eliminating all discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimization in my classes. If you are interested in learning more about social equity and diversity, please do not hesitate to contact me or visit McGill’s Equity website.

Course Changes and Information:
In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between the information in this syllabus and information provided on myCourses, Weebly, Edmodo, or other means, the terms of the syllabus shall prevail.

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.