

ANT 3930 Digital Anthropology

New Virtual Realities, Social Networks, Cybernetics, and More!



Course Information for Fall 2014:

Section 1E24 3 credits

Class meets MWF Period 5, **MAEB211**

Instructor Information:

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Office: B329 Turlington,

Office Hours MWF 1:45-2:45

Course description and goals:

Humans are becoming cybernetic hybrids, communities are becoming social networks, language is changing in response to technologies, popular digital fiat currencies are emerging, and ancient worlds are being recreated in virtual reality. These transformations are radically changing the way social and anthropological research is done. It is clear that humans are becoming increasingly “digital.” This course is a preliminary investigation of how our emerging digital environment is affecting humans and how we must study ourselves in this new world. Thus, it introduces students to emerging theoretical perspectives on digital phenomena and familiarizes students with the potentials of these technologies for enhancing human investigations into a variety of subjects. Class work will be grounded in real world examples drawn from Linguistic, Biological, Archaeological, and Cultural Anthropology, while emphasizing the potential of a four-field digital anthropology in our rapidly changing worlds. Specific topics are listed below:

- 1) Using technology as the basis for a wider discussion on what it means to be human.
- 2) The study of cybernetic systems of humans and technology.
- 3) Study of emergent, technology-based communities
- 4) Using anthropology to better understand and optimize our use of technology.
- 5) The use of technology as a tool for anthropologists both in teaching and research.
- 6) The study of digital technologies in comparative cultural contexts
- 7) The contextualization of digital technologies: the social and cultural frameworks that produce and consume
- 8) The study of digital technology as a form of material culture

Learning objectives: Students completing this course should be able to:

- Identify new digital objects of anthropological study
- Identify and describe new digital anthropology methodologies used in anthropological and social research
- Identify and describe new theoretical perspectives used to understand digital phenomena
- Identify and explain how anthropology is changing and where it should go to maintain integrity as a relevant social science
- Explain why a digital anthropology is necessary for each sub-discipline and important to social research as a whole

Special Note! Tablets, iPads, Laptops:

This class will rely heavily on the use of digital technologies such as tablets, iPads, and laptop computers for in-class activities and homework assignments. If you do not have access to one of these devices, it is recommended that you borrow one and/or be willing to share one with a classmate. Devices can also be checked out for use in Library West.

Required Readings:

The following two books are required texts and available for purchase in the bookstores, as well as on reserve in Library West. Other Readings will be required and available online. Each week's readings are reflected in the course schedule below. These readings are subject to change.

Digital Anthropology

Edited by Daniel Miller and Heather Horst, Bloomsbury Academic (2012)

Human No More: Digital Subjectivities, Unhuman Subjects, and the End of Anthropology

Edited by Neil L. Whitehead, University Press of Colorado (2012)

Additional Required readings will be available on the class E-learning site.

E-learning site:

This course uses the Sakai environment in E-learning for posting the syllabus, assignments, taking exams, viewing grades, and posting supplementary readings. Go to <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>, click on Sakai, and login with your gatorlink log-in.

GRADING:

Grades are based on attendance at lecture and special discussion periods, performance on three exams, an individual project, and performance in discussion sections exercises and quizzes. Students will have the opportunity to earn up to 400 points. Final grades will be based on how many points are earned with the point breakdown.

Exam 1 = 100 pts

Exam 2 = 100 pts

Exam 3 = 100 pts

Project = 50 pts

Discussions/Quizzes = 50 pts

Total score will be calculated as a percentage of 400 points.

| Points | Grade | Points | Grade |
|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| 372-400 | A | 292-308 | C |
| 360-371 | A- | 280-292 | C- |
| 348-360 | B+ | 268-280 | D+ |
| 332-348 | B | 252-268 | D |
| 320-332 | B- | 240-252 | D- |
| 308-320 | C+ | 0-239 | E |

For Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Analysis and Exchange Presentations:

There will be 4 in class discussions that you will be responsible for attending. This will make up the majority of your Discussion Attendance/Quiz points (40 points). The other 10 points will be derived from attendance checks. For the discussion classes, you must be prepared. This can be achieved by completing all of the previously required readings and participating in the previous activities. In these sessions students will be organized into groups that will democratically elect a speaker. This speaker will provide and answer both student and instructor generated questions to the broader class to stimulate discussion. Student generated questions will approved by the instructor beforehand. To answer these questions you must be prepared to bring your own examples and experiences to class. Students must attend and participate in class activities and complete take home assignments in order to create and answer the questions given in in these special class sessions.

Attendance Policy: Given the amount of information each day's class will involve, regular (and punctual) attendance is required. Attendance will be taken. You are expected to have completed the reading before coming to class.

Make-up Policy:

There will be no makeup exams, makeup exercises, or makeup assignments without an excused absence. Per University of Florida policy, excused absences include medical appointments and illness (with doctor's note), deaths in the family (with documentation) and school events (with documentation on school letterhead). If you miss more than two classes without an excused absence you will be docked one letter grade. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

In Class Project:

In the final project, students will answer how and why anthropology should adapt and study a new digital phenomena using a real-world example of their choosing. Students must create a 10 page photo or 10 minute video essay that investigates an emergent digital phenomena that leads to anthropological insights. Students will be asked to monitor and follow blogs and news sources throughout the semester to investigate their object of study. This project must incorporate theoretical and methodological perspectives from class lessons.

HONESTY AND ETHICS: Although study groups and other forms of intellectual interaction outside of class are strongly encouraged, each student is expected to produce independent written work on exams, and other assignments. Copying the published abstract of an article or text from the readings guide is plagiarism; all writings should be in your own words as your own original work. The same rules of conduct and ethics apply to at-home assignments as to in-class exams. The minimal penalty for using someone else's work is the loss of 15% of the entire course grade. The penalty for collaboration or copying on an exam is a failing course grade (E).

ACCEPTANCE OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS: By remaining registered in this class, you indicate your agreement to accept the course requirements and expectations as stated in this syllabus. These are in addition to other general University requirements and codes of conduct as stated in official documents.

Course Schedule:

| Week # | Beginning Date | Topics |
|---------------|----------------|---|
| <i>Part I</i> | | From the Digital Body to the Digital Community |
| 1 | 8/25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Course Introduction</u> • <u>Technology and the Human Past</u> • <u>Moving to the Digital: What is the Digital?</u> |
| 2 | 9/1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Digital humanity: What does it mean to be human in the digital age?</u> • <u>Digital Conundrums and Anthropology of the Post human?</u> • <u>Activity: Digital Living in the New Millennia</u> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weekly Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>In Digital Anthropology: The Digital and the Human: A Prospectus for Digital Anthropology</i> 2. <i>New Media Technologies in Everyday Life</i> 3. <i>In Human No More: Introduction pp.1-10</i> |
| 3 | 9/15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Cyborgs and Hybrids: The Human body digitalized</u> • <u>Cognitive objects: Optimizing the body and mind through the digital</u> • <u>Activity: IOS, Android and Windows phone and the Body</u> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weekly Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Article: A Cyborg Manifesto Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century</i> 2. <i>Excerpt: A Necromantic Device, or How Clocks Think pp. 36-71</i> |

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| 4 | 9/22 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Analysis and Exchange Presentations: 1)– User interfaces bodies and logic</u> • <u>Exam 1 9/24</u> • <u>The Study of emergent, digital communities</u> <p><u>Weekly Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>In Human No More: The Mutual Co-Construction of Online and Onground in Cyborganic: Making an Ethnography of Networked Social Media Speak to Challenges of the Posthuman Pp 11-32</i> 2. <i>In Digital Anthropology: Social Networking Sites</i> |
| 5 | 9/29 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Activity: Forums, Facebooks, and Evolution</u> • <u>Analysis and Exchange Presentations: 2) Digital communities – Evolution of the online social</u> • <u>Virtual Ethnographies MMO INTRODUCTION: Rules and Regulations</u> <p><u>Weekly Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>In Human No More: A Posthuman Perspective on Virtual Worlds</i> 2. <i>In Digital Anthropology: Rethinking Digital Anthropology</i> |
| 6 | 10/6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Activity: Group Explorations in the Digital World</u> • <u>Analysis and Exchange Presentations: 3) Digital communities – Explorations of Another World</u> • <u>Anthropology and Economics</u> <p><u>Weekly Reading:</u></p> <p><i>In Digital Anthropology: Free Software and the Politics of Sharing</i></p> <p><i>Article: Parlaying Value Capital in and Beyond Virtual Worlds</i></p> |
| 7 | 10/13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Exploring Digital Fiat, Virtual Currency and Digital-Economics</u> • <u>Activity: Virtual currency, Crypto-currency, and Anthropological Economics</u> • <u>Review session</u> <p><u>Weekly Reading:</u></p> <p><i>Article: When perhaps the real problem is money itself!": the practical materiality of Bitcoin</i></p> |
| 8 | 10/20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Exam 2 10/20</u> |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Project requirements</u> • <u>Project approval and discussion</u> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weekly Reading:</u> <i>Excerpt: Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics 11-33</i></p> |
| Part 2 | | New Philosophies for Brave New Worlds and New Methods to Explore Them |
| 9 | 10/27 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>New Ontologies, Philosophy of Networks</u> • <u>Activity: Networks of Life</u> • <u>Assemblage Theory, Modeling reality, Global Warming</u> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weekly Reading:</u> <i>Excerpt: Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy by Manuel Delanda pp. 1-30</i></p> |
| 10 | 11/3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Analysis and Exchange Presentations 4) – What are your networks and what are your systems?</u> • <u>Multiple worlds and digitally worlding</u> • <u>Understanding the Past and Present to Understand the Future (Guest Speaker)</u> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weekly Reading:</u> <i>1. In Digital Anthropology: Diverse Digital Words</i> <i>2. In Human No More: Marginal Bodies, Altered States, and Subhumans: (Dis)Articulations between Physical and Virtual Realities in Centro, São Paulo 199-216</i></p> |
| 11 | 11/10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Digital Technology and Anthropology: Research methods and Tools</u> • <u>Phenomenology and Post phenomenology</u> • <u>Activity: Post Phenomenology and virtual worlds</u> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weekly Readings:</u> <i>1. Articles/excerpts: Focus, Locus, and Sensus: The Three Dimensions of Virtual Experience by Waterworth and Waterworth</i> <i>2. Post-phenomenology and Technoscience: The Peking University Lectures by Don Idhe</i></p> |
| 12 | 11/17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>New digital Research Tools: Making a virtual world, Part 2</u> • <u>New digital Research Tools: Making and inhabiting a virtual world, Part 3</u> • <u>Analysis and Exchange Presentations: 5) The Flesh inhabiting Digital Worlds?</u> |

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| | | <u>Weekly Reading:</u> <i>In Human No More: Avatar: A Posthuman Perspective on Virtual Worlds pp 131-147</i> |
| 13 | 11/24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The Emerging Digital Others</u> • <u>Wednesday = Thanksgiving Holiday</u> • <u>Friday = Holiday</u> |
| 14 | 12/1 | <u>Conference/Study week:</u> <u>Videos:</u> <u>Robocop, Terminator 2, A.I.</u> <u>Weekly Reading:</u> 1. <i>In Human No More: The Adventures of Mark and Olly: The Pleasures and Horrors of Anthropology on TV</i> 2. <i>We Were Always Human pp 33-48</i> |
| 15 | 12/8 | <u>Activity: Fantasy of now and the Future</u> <u>Review</u> <u>Exam 3 12/12</u> |
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The following information is provided in conformance with University Policy:

Policy related to class attendance, make-up exams, and other work

Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Professor when requesting accommodation. Upon receipt of documentation, the Professor will grant the accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow these procedures as early as possible in the semester.⁵

Online course evaluation process

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester; students will be provided specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students and faculty at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

Religious Observances Students seeking modification of due dates for assignments and exams for religious reasons (e.g., holiday observances) should contact the Professor and request this modification; it will then be granted.

Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/secr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Instances of dishonesty include conducting unauthorized research on the internet and failing to cite sources of information on any work submitted, as well as unauthorized collaboration with current or former students or others to determine the answers on assignments and exams.

Counseling and Emergency Services

- The University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall,
352 392 1575
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
- Student Health Care Center, 392-1171
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601
- Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care
Center,
352 392-1161
- University Police Department 392-1111 (non-emergency); call 9-1-1 for emergencies

Electronic Course Reserves

The electronic course reserve service is offered by the George A. Smathers Libraries. Under the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with disabilities have the right to equal access, use and benefit of the course materials that have been placed on reserve in the Libraries. Students who have registered with the University Of Florida Disability Resource Center should initiate their request for assistance and accommodation in accessing these materials. The Center will work with the Libraries Course Reserve Unit to provide accessible course materials. All information submitted by the student to the Libraries in fulfilling the request for accommodation will be kept confidential. For more information on services for students with disabilities, contact the UF Disability Resource Center at 352-392-8565 or at accessuf@dso.ufl.edu. For general information on course reserves, please contact the Course Reserves Unit at 352-273-2520, or email ateres@uflib.ufl.edu. It is best to use the UF (Cisco) VPN client when accessing electronic materials course reserve materials as well as e-books, on-line journals, databases, etc. offered by the library. The VPN client is easily installed and configured, and provides easy access to electronic materials using off-campus computers. For more information on using the VPN client, go to <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/login/vpn.html>.

Software Regulations

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.