



MAS 240

Cybercultures

S1 Day 2014

Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

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Y3A 191C

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

12cp

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit introduces students to debates surrounding the internet and the world wide web. It articulates some of the complex relationships between technology and society, and examines how new media technologies may shape our contemporary mediascape and our lives. Students undertaking this unit learn how to design and create simple web sites, analyse cybercultures, and engage with key debates surrounding new media technologies. The production component of this unit is introductory and does not require any special software or prior knowledge. It is complemented by a theoretical analysis of cybercultures in which key opportunities and threats posed by new media technologies are explored.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context

Develop and convey theoretical understandings of cybercultures

Develop and apply critical analysis to contemporary cybercultures

Develop academic research skills

Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services

Apply current Web design practices to produce a functional Web site project

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
Tutorial Participation	10%	Ongoing
Tutorial Papers	30%	Week 5 & Week 8
Major Essay	35%	5pm Friday Week 13
Website Project	25%	Week 13

Tutorial Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **10%**

The purpose of tutorials is for students to discuss the weekly topics and readings to enrich their understanding. All students are required to participate in tutorial discussion. This means arriving at tutorials having completed set readings and being prepared to discuss issues arising.

The format of tutorials is based around student-led discussions. Your responses to your peers will form the basis of your participation mark.

You will be assessed on four criteria:

- Engagement with the readings
- Engagement with lecture material
- Ability to relate key theoretical ideas to previous readings and/or independent research
- Willingness to contribute to class discussion by asking relevant questions, answering other students questions, treating other students with respect and behaving appropriately (e.g. not talking whilst tutor or other students talking)

Attendance is not the same as participation. Students receive no marks for simply attending tutorials.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context
- Develop and convey theoretical understandings of cybercultures
- Develop and apply critical analysis to contemporary cybercultures
- Develop academic research skills
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services

Tutorial Papers

Due: **Week 5 & Week 8**

Weighting: **30%**

Students are required to submit two separate tutorial papers during this semester. Each is to be 500 words long and must engage with one of the readings from the unit reader. The first paper must engage with a reading from weeks 2 to 5, the second with a reading from weeks 6 to 8.

Students must analyse the reading and critically reflect on its key ideas and arguments.

- Students should identify the key concepts and argument. What is the author saying? Why?
- Evaluate the argument. Is this a strong argument? Why/ Why not?
- Contextualise the argument within broader academic frameworks. How is this argument similar or different to what other theorists are saying?

You should not simply summarise the reading, you must explore, expand, and critique the author's major arguments.

Tutorial papers should follow standard academic writing practices, i.e. be formal in tone and reference cited material. Students are encouraged to draw on examples of technological forms and practices they are familiar with to better engage with and build upon the key ideas from the reading.

Students must submit online through the unit iLearn site prior to the start of their assigned tutorial.

Students will be assessed on the following:

- Demonstrated ability to identify and articulate author's key arguments
- Demonstrate ability to critically engage with key arguments
- Demonstrated ability to contextualise article core arguments within broader theory
- Style, coherence, and structure of writing

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context
- Develop and convey theoretical understandings of cybercultures
- Develop and apply critical analysis to contemporary cybercultures
- Develop academic research skills
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services

Major Essay

Due: **5pm Friday Week 13**

Weighting: **35%**

Students are required to submit a 2000 word essay addressing the following question:

MAS240 is concerned with examining the cultures that have sprung up around computer technologies and the networked environment. Select a 'new media technology' and critically analyse it with a focus on its history and cultures.

- Briefly describe the historical development of your subject and identify any key actors and moments in its development.
- Critically analyse the cultures that have surrounded and continue to surround its usage and analyse its past and future impacts.
- Examine any conflicts and tensions that may impact the direction of its further development.

Note: Essays will be submitted, marked and returned electronically via iLearn.

Marking Criteria

- Choice of Topic: How useful and interesting is your chosen case study?
- Research:
 - What is the quality of your research?
 - Have you identified and made use of appropriate resources beyond those provided in the unit reader?
- Critical Approach/Analysis: Whilst part of the essay may be descriptive, the analysis of your chosen technology must make an argument and provide evidence to support it. For example, an analysis of BitTorrent might include statistics about usage (from reputable sources), and evidence about its cultural and economic impact. Do not just describe the technology.
- Presentation: Your essay must be clearly written and presented, with appropriate referencing for all cited sources.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context
- Develop and convey theoretical understandings of cybercultures
- Develop and apply critical analysis to contemporary cybercultures
- Develop academic research skills

Website Project

Due: **Week 13**

Weighting: **25%**

Students are required to plan and develop a Website. Websites are due to be presented in your timetabled workshop session in week 13: This means that your Website must be completed PRIOR to that class. You will not be given any class time in week 13 to complete your Websites and will be penalized as a late submission.

You may choose the topic of your Website, for example, you may build an online CV or a fan site for your favourite band or video game. All Websites must satisfy the following criteria:

- Minimum of four (4) pages including a home page
- Home page must be saved as index.html
- Original content
- Any borrowed content or code should be visibly referenced using a separate references page (which will not count towards the mandatory minimum four pages)
- A single CSS document linked to by all HTML documents
- Websites should draw on skills developed during the unit
- Websites should use current approaches to design as taught in the unit. Table-based design is not permitted and will incur significant penalties
- Web sites should use current and valid HTML code
- Images should be resized and optimized for the Web
- Individual pages should utilize titles using the <title></title> tag

Marking Criteria:

Design

- How aesthetically pleasing is the site?
- Do the colours complement each other?
- Are images relevant?
- Is the text readable and formatted correctly?
- Does the design reflect the content?
- Has the box model been used?

Content

- Choice of topic
- Is the content original?
- Is borrowed content referenced?
- Does the content make sense?

- Are there spelling or grammatical errors?
- Is the site easy to navigate?

Coding

- Is the HTML correct?
- Is the CSS correct?
- Have CSS styles been employed to control presentation?
- Do the hyperlinks work?
- Do images display properly?

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop academic research skills
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services
- Apply current Web design practices to produce a functional Web site project

Delivery and Resources

Each week students must attend a 1 hour lecture, 1 hour tutorial and 1 hour workshop.

Tutorials and workshops start in Week 2.

Late penalties for assignments are 10% per day, including weekends, unless otherwise stated in assignment description.

There is a unit reader available for purchase in the Coop Bookshop. All students are expected to have a copy.

Further resources for MAS240 can be accessed through iLearn: <http://ilearn.mq.edu.au/>.

Technologies used and required: PC and Internet access are required. Basic computer skills (e.g., internet browsing) and skills in word processing are also a requirement.

Please consult teaching staff for any further, more specific requirements.

Changes Made to Previous Offerings of the Unit

The topics in this unit have been updated to reflect contemporary technological and cultural forms and practices. Recent academic material has been added to this unit in order to best offer students insight into the rapidly changing media environment, with a particular focus on social and participatory media, new digital economies, and cyber politics. The weighting of assignments has also been changed this year.

Unit Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction

The first lecture for MAS240 will introduce students to the unit and go through assessment tasks and deal with any questions.

There are no tutorials or workshops this week.

Week 2 – Introduction to Cybercultures

What are cybercultures? How do we define and categorise them? What kinds of things do they involve? How do cybercultures impact on your life?

READING:

Castells, M. (2003). *The Internet galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.36-63.

Week 3 – Web 2.0: Participatory Culture

This week we will begin looking at Web 2.0 and the idea of participatory culture. How is society altered by everyone and anyone being able to share their thoughts and ideas? Are Web 2.0 sites like Facebook, Youtube, Tumblr, etc. a democratising force, giving everyone a voice, or simply a dumping ground for mindless, trivial and banal content? Is the quality of what we watch, listen to, and read declining? Are new forms, genres, and viewing practices emerging?

READINGS:

Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. Penguin Press HC. pp 23-33

Keen, Andrew. *The Cult of the Amateur*, Crown Business, 2008, pp.25-63.

Week 4 – YouTube: Memes, Viruses, and Contagious Media

YouTube requires us to rethink how we access and learn about media content. What do we watch on YouTube? How do we find out about it? Why do some videos become so popular when others are instantly forgotten? How does the content that become popular on YouTube differ from what is popular on TV? Why?

READINGS:

Rushkoff, D. (1996). *Media virus!*, Ballantine Books. pp. 3-16.

Phillips, W (2010) In Defense of Memes, available at <http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/phillips/#.UP4a8meapeE>

Week 5 – From Netflix to Amazon: New Digital Economies

In the information overload of the internet how do we find material that interests us? What new economic models, legal and illegal, have developed? What are we willing to pay for? What do we want for free? How are traditional business models adapting? What do these new digital economies mean for the type of content we can access?

READING:

Anderson, C. (2004). 'The Long Tail' in *Wired*, Issue 12.10.

Thompson, C. (2008). 'If You Liked This, You're Sure to Love That' in *The New York Times Magazine*, November 21, 2008

Week 6 –Bittorrent and Peer to Peer Technology: Digital Rights and Wrongs

Is copyright obsolete in the digital era? Can piracy possibly be regulated? Is digital rights management a viable and fair option? What kind of rights should consumers be able to exercise over their purchased media?

READINGS:

Mason, M. (2008). *The Pirate's dilemma*, London: Penguin Books, pp.33-67.

Kusek, D., & Leonhard, G. (2005). *The Future of Music: Manifesto for the Digital Music Revolution*, Berkley Press, pp.80-96.

Week 7 – Facebook: Online Identities

This week we explore the notion of online identity. We look at how social networking sites like Facebook have changed the way we understand ourselves and others. We look at the questions raised by social networking: can, and should, we distinguish between our virtual and 'real world' identities? How are our lives influenced by the kinds of self-representation offered by Facebook? We will also look at the way in which our identities have been commodified, and look at how personal information has become a valuable product in the social networked age.

READINGS:

Kirkpatrick, D. (2011). *The Facebook effect*, Simon & Schuster, pp 1-17.

Galloway, A. R. (2004). *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization*, MIT Press. pp. 3-27. (*Please note: this is a difficult reading, the important theoretical material comes towards the end. If you are struggling with the technical information early on, skim the early pages and focus on the 'Periodization' section p20 onwards*)

Week 8 – Reddit, 4chan and Anonymous: Freedom of Speech, Activism and Trolling in Online Communities

Advocates of internet freedom argue the net offers us a unique opportunity to break from establish hierarchies and challenge traditional authorities. Opponents claim it is a dangerous space of unregulated prejudice, extremism, bullying and harassment. This week we will look at the reddit and 4chan forums, as well as the activist group Anonymous, to examine some of the discussions, debates, and controversies that have taken place within and around these online communities. We will look at how the rules and etiquettes of online interaction are not always the same as those that govern the rest of our lives, and explore what impact this has on what is discussed and how these discussion take place.

Chen, A. (2012) *The Man Behind the Troll: Unmasking Reddit's Violentacrez, The Biggest Troll on the Web*, on Gawker, available at <http://gawker.com/5950981/> (*Please note: this article contains content some students might find offensive or*

confronting)

Elliott, D. C. (2008). *Anonymous Rising*. LiNQ, 96. Available at http://www-public.jcu.edu.au/public/groups/everyone/documents/ebook/jcuprd1_056530.pdf#page=94

Week 9 – Mobile Technologies: Mobile Cultures

How has mobile technology changed our lives? How have mobile digital devices like iPod, iPads, smartphones etc. changed how we work and play? What does the fact that we can communicate on the move mean for our social relationships? What unique problems does mobile technology cause police and governments?

READINGS:

Goggin, G. (2006) 'SMS Riot: Transmitting Race on a Sydney Beach', December 2005 in *M/C Journal* Volume 9 Issue 1.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid life*, Polity, 2005. pp 1-14

Week 10 – Wikileaks: The Politics of Information

How is power exercised in the digital world? Who has the right to collect and distribute information? What right to privacy do individuals have? What right to control information do governments have? Whose responsibility is it to safeguard our information?

READINGS:

Sifry, M. L. (2011). *WikiLeaks and the Age of Transparency*, Or Books. pp19-38

Birmingham, J. (2010) 'The Man Who Fell to Earth: Julian Assange's WikiLeaks' in *The Monthly*, October 2010

Week 11 – Online Gaming: Crowds, Clouds, and Distributed Intelligence

The rise of cybercultures brings with it new types of entertainment. This week we will be looking at Alternate Reality Games and exploring how this form relies upon and builds strong virtual communities. We will ask: What is the power of the crowd? What can communities achieve that the individual cannot? Does the distributed intelligence witnessed in games like 'the beast' reveal new possibilities not just for games but for society more broadly?

READINGS:

McGonigal, J. (2003). This is not a game: Immersive Aesthetics and Collective Play. In Melbourne DAC 2003 Streamingworlds Conference Proceedings.

Surowiecki, J. (2005). The wisdom of crowds, Anchor, pp. 3-22.

Week 12 – The Future of Cybercultures

This week we will be looking back over the key themes of this unit, and drawing together the various ideas to explore the future possibilities of cyberculture. Can we

predict where society is heading? What are technologies that are most likely to shape our lives, our country, and our world in the years to come? What will the major battles, and key areas of debate when it comes to technology in the future?

READING:

No readings for this week, but all students must bring a 300 word essay plan to their tutorials. It must outline your argument and three key theoretical resources you will be using.

Week 13 – No lecture

Tutorials this week will focus on essay preparation. You should be well underway with researching and writing your essay. This week will offer you a chance to sit down with your tutor and troubleshoot any problems you are having.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study

strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial Papers
- Major Essay

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they

participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop academic research skills
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services

Assessment tasks

- Major Essay
- Website Project

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context
- Develop and convey theoretical understandings of cybercultures
- Develop and apply critical analysis to contemporary cybercultures
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services
- Apply current Web design practices to produce a functional Web site project

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial Papers
- Major Essay
- Website Project

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and

systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context
- Develop and convey theoretical understandings of cybercultures
- Develop and apply critical analysis to contemporary cybercultures
- Develop academic research skills
- Apply current Web design practices to produce a functional Web site project

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial Papers
- Major Essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context
- Develop and convey theoretical understandings of cybercultures
- Develop and apply critical analysis to contemporary cybercultures
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services
- Apply current Web design practices to produce a functional Web site project

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial Papers
- Major Essay
- Website Project

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be

imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context
- Develop and convey theoretical understandings of cybercultures
- Develop and apply critical analysis to contemporary cybercultures
- Apply current Web design practices to produce a functional Web site project

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial Papers
- Major Essay
- Website Project

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop and convey theoretical understandings of cybercultures
- Develop and apply critical analysis to contemporary cybercultures
- Develop academic research skills
- Apply current Web design practices to produce a functional Web site project

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial Papers
- Major Essay
- Website Project

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded,

sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial Papers
- Major Essay
- Website Project

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand cybercultures in a contemporary and historical context
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary online media platforms, environments and services

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial Papers
- Major Essay
- Website Project