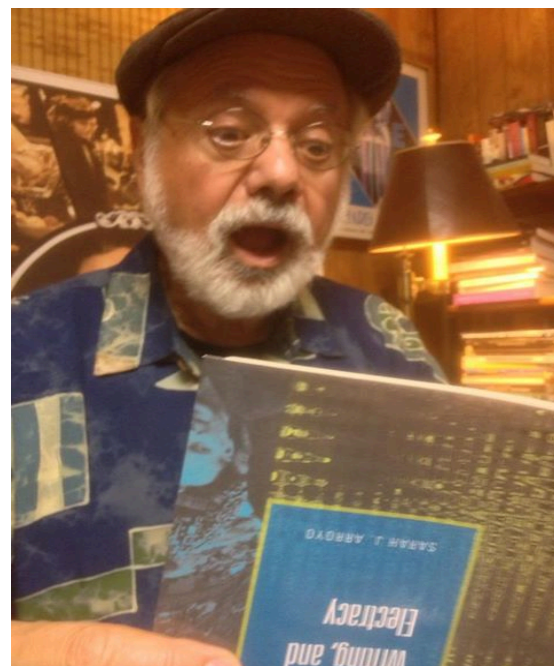
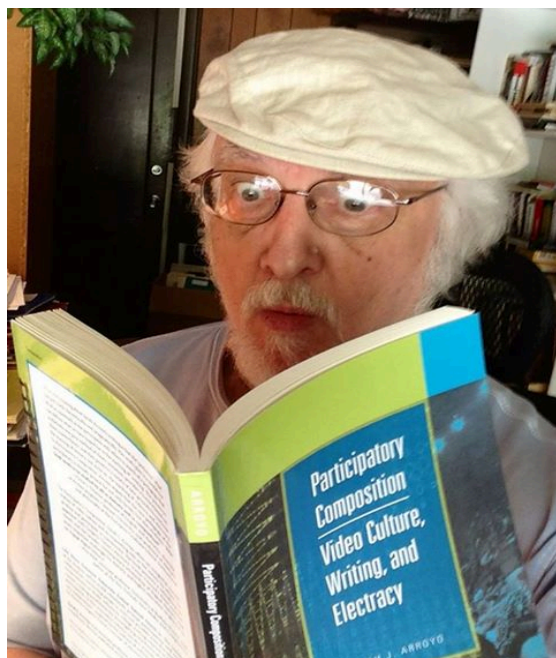


**Seminar in Digital Rhetoric**  
**English 671**  
**Fall 2015**

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[Link to course site](#)



**Course Description:**

“It is within the media that the battle ought to be established.”

- J. Derrida (“Philosophie des Etats Généraux,”  
in *Etats Généraux de la Philosophie*. Paris, 1979)

“The students are helping to invent the future of writing. This attitude and relationship to learning has to be made explicit and encouraged, since students are unaccustomed to working in an experimental way.”

- G. Ulmer (*Internet Invention*. Florida, 2003)

Digital rhetoric is now ubiquitous, and it deserves intense scholarly attention beyond simply acknowledging that more people write and communicate with computers. Digital rhetoric entails more than critiquing writing we encounter in digital environments or producing simple web texts; instead, studying digital rhetoric requires examining theoretical and ideological issues involved in the shift from writing in a text-only medium. Accordingly, digital rhetoric entails larger cultural shifts in recognizing new patterns of thinking, rethinking familiar conceptualizations about both the self and human interaction, and re-envisioning attitudes and expectations toward reading, writing, and rhetoric, regardless of the physical presence of machines. We will interrogate how central tenets from post-structural and postmodern



theories (especially regarding identity and community) play out in the digital realm. We will study scholarship in which we will encounter practices largely alien in print culture such as database thinking, speculation, research as juxtaposition, pattern recognition, lack of clarity, generating theories while learning about them, and networking, to name only a few. The course is framed around Ulmer's concept of "electracy." **Electracy** can be compared to digital literacy but encompasses much more: a **worldview** for civic engagement, community building, and participation. For three decades, Ulmer has been predicting electracy's emergence, and he defines the "apparatus" as a type of social machine that influences laws and conventions in a given historical era.

It is important to know that media work on two levels, as Lisa Gitelman explains in *Always Already New*: on the first, a medium is a technology enabling communication; on the second, a medium is a set of associated "protocols" or social and cultural practices that have grown up around that technology. Delivery systems are simply and only technologies; media are also cultural systems that need to be understood. Delivery technologies become obsolete and get replaced; media, on the other hand, evolve. Understanding these cultural practices is central to studying Digital Rhetoric. We will be introduced to a set of theoretical problems put forth by Roland Barthes, Giorgio Agamben, and Ulmer alongside speculations made by Marshall McLuhan and Henry Jenkins. We will work through these problems by creating short multimedia projects, working toward a larger multimedia project and accompanying seminar paper. No previous experience with digital writing is needed, yet I expect you to be able to participate in social media, use a search engine effectively, and remain open to learning new software and video editing programs.

### **Required Texts:**

- Arroyo, Sarah J. *Participatory Composition: Video Culture, Writing, and Electracy*. Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 2013. Print. (in bookstore)
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (in bookstore).
- Eyman, Doug. *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2015. (in bookstore and available online)
- McLuhan, Eric. *The Essential McLuhan*. Basic Books, 1996. Print. (in bookstore)
- Vitanza, Victor and Craig Saper. *Electracy: Gregory L. Ulmer's Textshop Experiments*. Aurora, CO: The Davies Group, 2015. Print. (in bookstore)

### **Required Articles**

- Barthes, Roland. "The Third Meaning." *Image, Music, Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.
- Gitelman, Lisa. "Introduction." *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2006.
- Porter, James. "Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric." *Genre* 27 (2008).
- Strangelove, Michael. "Home Movies in a Global Village." *YouTube: Extraordinary Videos by Ordinary People*. Toronto, U of Toronto P, 2010.
- Ulmer, Greg. "Barthes's Body of Knowledge." *Studies in 20th Century Literature*



---. "Forword/Forward (Into Electracy)." *Literacy Theory in the Age of the Internet*.

Eds. Todd Taylor and Irene Ward. New York: Columbia UP, 1998. iv – xii.

---. "A Night at the Text" *Yale French Studies* 1987. 38 – 57.

**Several online readings and videos are linked throughout the syllabus calendar**

**Recommended Readings:**

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Trans. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993 (**Available on Google Books**).

Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

<[http://pixels.film.tv.ucla.edu/gallery/web/julian\\_scaff/benjamin/benjamin.html](http://pixels.film.tv.ucla.edu/gallery/web/julian_scaff/benjamin/benjamin.html)>.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. (selections from) *A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987.

Eisenstein, Sergei M. *Battleship Potemkin* (DVD)

Jarratt, Michael. "Defining Heuristics." < <http://www.yk.psu.edu/~jmj3/defheu.htm>>.

Jenkins, Henry. [Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture](#)

Polyani, Michael. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. New York, Harper & Row, 1964.

Ulmer, Greg. *Internet Invention: From Literacy to Electracy*. New York, Longman, 2003.

[Vertov, Dziga. Man With a Movie Camera \(1929\)](#)

[Wieshaus, Joel. "Imaging EmerAgency: A Conversation with Gregory Ulmer."](#)

Zappen, James. "Digital Rhetoric: Toward an Integrated Theory." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 14.3 (2005): 319 – 25. [Article pdf located here](#)

**Technology Requirements:**

As I said, no prior experience with the software programs we will be working with is necessary, yet you should have **regular online access** and minimal proficiency navigating through and participating in online environments and social media sites. Part of digital rhetoric is **self-teaching** in various, free online platforms; the practice of both creating content and learning the structure of a particular platform places the participatory pedagogical notion at the forefront, since you have to invent not only the content for your projects but also the site in which the projects will be hosted. Searching, traveling, and locating an appropriate site is integral, as the space itself, and the dynamics involved in the space are part of the composition. Figuring out the technical issues of any one of the free platforms students use is also part of the composition, and, by the end of the semester, **you will gain technical skills by simply participating on the course site and in fellow students' compositions**. While not a hard requirement, I strongly suggest using [google drive](#) for composing your papers and collaborating with your peers.

**Attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory. The nature of this course relies on your participation, so it is crucial for you to attend each class. While I will lecture from time to time, this is fundamentally not a lecture course. Since we rely heavily on the Ning site, we try to use class time for engaging with each other in ways not possible online. Thus, if you miss a class, there is no way to



“make up” what went on in class while you were gone. **If you miss more than four classes, I will lower your course grade. In other words, you cannot get an “A” with five absences. If you are absent more than six times, I may ask you to drop the course. Chronic lateness is unacceptable as is coming to class unprepared or unread.** I will not grant incompletes unless circumstances are extremely dire.

### **Course Requirements:**

The fundamental requirement for this course is that you come well prepared to actively **participate in every class**. Careful reading of the assigned texts, substantial class and online participation, and satisfactory completion of all assignments are required to pass this course. The readings for this course are particularly diverse and exist across platforms (text, video, etc.); therefore, skimming a reading or viewing it carelessly will only frustrate you. I expect you to “get” something from and make connections among all of the readings. All reading, writing, and viewing should be completed before each class session, and you should be able to make critical and interpretive comments about everything assigned. This is best accomplished by taking careful notes and deliberately finding things in readings and videos that you would like to discuss in class. If you have nothing to say in a discussion, I may ask you to refer to your notes, so make certain to come to class with commentary about what you have read or viewed. You should also devote chunks of time to your projects and allow sufficient time to familiarize yourself with the technical requirements of each assignment. Cramming doesn’t work in digital culture as it does (if only minimally) in print culture. There is no way to complete projects successfully at the last minute.

### **Grade Distribution:**

Two short digital projects	30%
Presentations/response	10%
Online Notes/Vlogs	20%
Seminar Paper	15%
Multimedia Project	15%
Participation (in class and online)	10%

**Course Objectives:** Upon completion of the course, you should be able to:

- Apply both traditional cultural studies practices (critiquing our consumption of digital writing spaces) and emerging digital studies practices (participating in the production of digital writing spaces) and discern rhetorically appropriate ways to do so;
- Evaluate digital writing and its interdisciplinary capability; delineate pertinent theories for digital writing across pertinent disciplines;
- Articulate theories of community and identity in digital culture;
- Compose in digital culture by creating video or multimedia texts;
- Differentiate among ways meaning is produced in digital culture;
- Actively participate in digital and participatory culture and learn rhetorically appropriate ways to do so;
- Discern the value and necessity of digital writing both in and out of the university;





- Represent an engaged understanding of the theories and practices studied by way of both traditional, textual argumentation and multimedia writing.

### **Brief Explanation of Requirements:**

#### **Two Short Projects:**

You will create two projects that address some aspect of the readings and assigned pieces. The topics of these projects will evolve from the readings, will take on a theoretical issue presented in them, and will be presented in your choice of digital format. We will go over options in class, although your first project will articulate your understanding of electracy. Your projects will include both a multimedia and a written element. For the written part, you will set up the post by explaining the issue and referring to at least **three others who have worked on the same issue. You will put these scholars in conversation and then** you will contribute to the conversation by making your own argument about the issue. The media element (audio, video, prezzi, web-based or a combination) will present the same argument in the medium in which you chose to work.

#### **Presentations:**

Each of you will prepare two presentation in response to the readings. You will choose one assigned reading for each presentation. *Please refer back to these instructions before you prepare your presentations, as you will be held accountable the instructions below.*

**For your presentations**, you will talk about at least one of the assigned readings for the day on which you signed up. **The purpose of this presentation is to jump-start the discussion and to provide your colleagues with your take and analysis of the material under discussion.** You should prepare enough material for 15 minutes. However, your presentation can last longer than that, depending on how many others have signed up for the same day. You may wish to collaborate on your presentation. If you do this, you would discuss one of the assigned readings, and your colleague would discuss another. This can be accomplished in a back-and-forth style or a presentation-response style.

Your job is to discuss the issues in the readings with your colleagues, NOT just summarize or go over what you have read. Of course summary will be necessary to align the class with how you understand the material, but you should also come up with relevant connections that you have made and examples you have found that we can discuss. Prepare for breaks in your presentation to facilitate discussion. If you just whiz through your presentation, I usually have to take up the task of prompting people to discuss the material you presented, and that is really awkward. So, you should prepare for discussion by designing questions, or taking us to related material on the web. However, your questions should demonstrate some analysis on your part, not simply things like “do you think technology is good or bad,” or “is electracy good or bad,” or “do you agree with the author,” or “do you think the internet is good or bad” etc. These types of questions are NOT engaging at all and demonstrate to us that you have not interacted with the material from the readings at a graduate level. Find **something specific from the readings to pursue**, and make it evident that you have read closely and carefully.



**YOU MUST PREPARE SOMETHING VISUAL TO AID YOUR PRESENTATION** on power point, prezzi, a blog post on the ning site, or a video. You may use other formats as you see fit.

**Your presentation must include the following:**

- A BRIEF summary of the reading. We have all read or viewed this reading, so we don't need to hear a detailed summary. YET we do need to hear about how you have understood the material and what you think the main points are in the material you've chosen. **NOTE:** If your presentation in its entirety only consists of summarizing what we've read, you will not receive credit for your presentation.
- Connection to **AT LEAST THREE** other sources you have read or found to complement the assigned reading. These sources can be articles, books, videos, websites, blogs, social media posts, etc. You should not just summarize these sources but tell us why they are important for what we are learning about on the day you present. Are they examples of theoretical concepts? Do they take the ideas further or in another direction? Do they pose a counter-argument? The ability to bring together disparate sources is a skill in which all teachers must be proficient. **If you do not refer to other sources, or only refer to one or two, then you will receive half credit for your presentation.**
- Appropriate time limit, not under 15 minutes but not so long that you interfere with another colleague's presentation. If no one is presenting on your day, then you can go longer.

**Weekly Reading Notes Posts:**

You will use our electracy site to post your (almost) weekly responses to one or more readings (10 total, 2 pts each). Posting reading responses on Ning allows your work to become public and networked, thereby taking the reading response process out of the introspective realm. Posting also allows a conversation to occur and forces you to respond to others' ideas and connections. Each week that we have notes assigned, you should go into the forum, read what has already been posted, and then formulate your post as either a response to someone else's post or as a new discussion topic. **In either case**, your notes MUST go beyond simple agreement or disagreement and must engage the reading or video in an analytical matter. Please do not say "the video was too long," or "I couldn't get through the reading" unless these types of comments pertain to the insights you gained from engaging with them.

You can use a basic summary/response/connection model at first and then modify it as the semester progresses. **Note:** You may also produce video logs, or "vlogs" for your notes. Follow the same format but record yourself discussing the readings into your webcam. **First**, BRIEFLY summarize the section of the text, video, or site to which you are responding. Use quoted material to show how you are interacting with the reading. **Next**, provide your commentary about the selection you just summarized by taking a concept, issue, conflict, theme, etc. and exploring it. What connections did you make? What questions do you have? You should try to find examples to support your thoughts and provide links to those examples.























































