

SPECIAL TOPIC:

POST-MILLENNIAL CULTURE AND THE MEDIA

COURSE SUMMARY



The Clock of the Long Now



aka, The Millennium Clock

On the left, perhaps the most complex clock ever built, a clock programmed to tick but once per year for ten millennia. On the right, perhaps the most fashionably famous pop star in the new millennium, a celebrity whose viral videos have more than a *billion* views in YouTube. What's the connection? The future isn't what it used to be!

The year 2000 was once symbolic of "the future" — the world of tomorrow filled with utopian possibilities for art, media, technology, and human culture. Yet, 14 years into the millennium, we see a post-millennial culture and media shaped by a strange mix of:

- acceleration and deceleration
- information and simulation
- entertainment and enlightenment
- surveillance and celebrity
- social media and cosmic media
- big data and giant garbage
- clones and zombies
- ecology and land arts
- globalization and tribalization
- hypermodern and premodern

This course will decode our mediated culture via theory and research on mass media artifacts, focusing on the content, technologies, and consequences of media in the new millennium.

This course includes an introduction to relevant critical theory, addresses the theories and myths of media influence, and provides an overview of the social and psychological function of various media artifacts, from film and television, advertising and publicity, digital media and the internet. Readings will include variety of theories and sources, drawing from classic readings in critical media theory and recent works dealing with current cultural conditions. Numerous videos and film clips will complement the readings.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The essential goal of this course is for students to understand the deep and complex relationships between postmillennial culture and the global media systems. At the end of this course, students will:

- understand the dominant cultural and media trends of the new millennium.
- be well-versed in critical media theory as a guide for decoding the messages and meanings of media.
- be able to synthesize critical theory with their own specialized interests in theory and research.
- grasp the ever-expanding social and cultural roles of media, in terms of content and technology.
- produce a paper for submission to a conference/publication.

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Barry Vacker, Associate Professor
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Office Phone: 215.204.3623

Office Hours: 2:00 – 3:00 on T; 1:00 – 3:00 on TT; or by appointment

Preferred methods of contact — interpersonal: 1) come up to me before or after class; 2) drop by during office hours
electronic: 1) send an email; 2) call on the office telephone

Email response time: Please give me 24 hours to respond to your email.



Lady Gaga in "the future"



Lady Gaga as "Saturn"

REQUIRED READINGS

Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (The University of Michigan Press 1994). ISBN: 0-472-06521-1.

Douglas Kellner, *Media Spectacle* (Routledge 2003). ISBN: 0-415-26829-X.

Gilles Lipovetsky, *Hypermodern Times* (Polity 2005) ISBN: 0-7456-3421-4.

Alice Marwick, *Status Update* (Yale University Press, 2013). ISBN: 978-0-300-17672-8.

Reading packet from University Readers; packet purchased online; information to be provided at beginning of semester.

GRADING, PAPERS, PRESENTATIONS

Students must complete the following list of projects to successfully complete and pass this course. The grades for this course will be determined according to the following breakdown:

Weekly "Reading Summary"	= 30% (due dates throughout semester)
Class Presentations/Discussions	= 20% (2 @ 10% each, due dates throughout the semester)
Final Paper	= 30% (May 13)
Final Class Presentation	= 10% (May 13)
<u>Attendance</u>	= <u>10%</u>
TOTAL	= 100%

The due dates for Class Presentations/Discussions will be set once the class enrollment is finalized. Once the dates are set, they cannot be changed. The due dates for the Final Paper cannot be changed. No reasons are acceptable. This is only fair to those fellow students who turn in papers as scheduled. Grades will be assigned according to the criteria of:

100-93 = A	89-86 = B+	79-76 = C+	69-66 = D+	59-0 = F
92-90 = A-	85-83 = B	75-73 = C	65-63 = D	
	82-80 = B-	72-70 = C-	62-60 = D-	

What these grades mean

- An "A" means your work is outstanding. "A" work goes above and beyond expectations and shows an astute intellect.
- "B" work is better than average and demonstrates excellent effort and satisfactory understanding of coursework. "B-" work meets expectations and demonstrates a general understanding of material and an average effort.
- A "C" represents seriously flawed work, according to graduate school standards. This might mean a misunderstanding of fundamental concepts, presenting them unacceptably in writing, and/or a lack of constructive participation in class discussion.
- A "D" cannot be assigned in graduate course.
- An "F" illustrates a failure to adhere to policies of academic honesty

Note: Regarding any questions you have about a grade on a paper or presentation, you have one week (7 days) from the date you receive the grade to discuss the questions with your professor. After that, the grade is final. You have until April 25 to discussion any questions regarding your attendance records. **All summary, presentation, and attendance grades are final after May 1. All total grades are final after May 15, the date the grades are submitted to the online system.**

Reading Summaries

You will receive a handout that provides the necessary details. These summaries function to help you gather your thoughts for the week's discussion. They should be typed in essay format, but should not to exceed 1.5 pages, single-spaced. All summaries are due at the beginning of class; no late critiques will be accepted. You will complete ten reading summaries; each one will be worth 3% of your grade for a total of 30%.

Weekly Presentations

Each week, one student will be responsible for initiating the class discussion on that week's readings. The presentation should be no longer than 15-20 minutes. Students are expected to introduce and analyze the major themes of that week's readings and address questions posed by fellow class members. You will receive a handout that provides the necessary details. Presentations and class discussions are worth 20% of your grade.

Final Paper and Presentation

For your final paper, you can produce an essay based in critical analysis or a work that summarizes research you conducted over the semester. You will receive a handout that provides the necessary details. The final paper should be 15-20 pages, double-spaced, including tables, charts, endnotes, reference list. The paper should in some significant way relate, in depth, to one or more of the theories and themes that we discuss in the seminar. The final paper is worth 30% of your final grade, accompanying Powerpoint presentation 10%. Your final presentation will be on May 13.

Class Discussion

Your attendance and participation in class discussions is essential and expected. This is a graduate seminar, meant to inform you on this topic but to also teach you to articulate your own opinions with confidence. All readings should be completed before the assigned date, and you should come to class prepared to talk.

Attendance

In graduate seminars, an active and vibrant class discussion is essential. Such discussion requires your physical presence (since this is not a virtual seminar). To encourage attendance, I have established an attendance policy. Simply put: the more classes you attend, the more points you earn toward your final grade. Excluding the first week, there will be a total of 13 class meetings.

Classes	Points	Classes	Points
<u>Attended</u>	<u>Earned</u>	<u>Attended</u>	<u>Earned</u>
14	10	11	2
13	8	10 or less	0
12	5		

Note: It is your responsibility to ensure you sign your name on the attendance sheet; otherwise you will be counted absent. If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, please let the professor know in writing and verbally (before or after class, or in office hours). If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and watch any film clips on your own time. Video clips will not be loaned out for private viewing. Anything said in class will be assumed to have been heard by everyone.

Academic Dishonesty

Regarding academic dishonesty, this class will abide by the rules of Temple University. Cheating on exams will get you dropped from the class — NO EXCEPTIONS. The Temple Student Handbook states:

Temple University strongly believes in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited.

There is nothing wrong with citing the works of others, just make sure you give them credit. In return, you get credit for doing so, and citing them can enhance your learning. If you are not certain that you are using or citing materials properly, then please check with Dr. Vacker. Academic honesty and plagiarism:

Adapted from the Temple University policy statement on academic integrity, passed by the Academic Senate on April 19, 1989. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor: another person's ideas, words, or assistance.

There are many forms of plagiarism: repeating another person's sentence as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of an idea as though it were your own. Academic writing is built upon the use of other people's ideas and words — this is how ideas are developed — but appropriate credit must always be given to the originator.

In general, all sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult your instructor. Here are some specific guidelines to follow:

- a. Quotations. Whenever you use a phrase, sentence, or longer passage written (or spoken) by someone else, you must enclose the words in quotation marks and indicate the exact source of the material, including the page number of written sources.*
- b. Paraphrasing. Avoid closely paraphrasing another's words. Substituting an occasional synonym, leaving out or adding an occasional modifier, rearranging the grammar slightly, or changing the tenses of verbs simply looks like sloppy copying. Good paraphrasing indicates that you have absorbed the material and are restating it in a way that contributes to your overall argument. It is best to either quote material directly, using quotation marks, or put ideas completely in your own words. In either case, acknowledgment is necessary. Remember: expressing someone else's ideas in your own way does not make them yours.*
- c. Facts. In a paper, you will often use facts that you have gotten from a lecture, a written work, or some other source. If the facts are well known, it is usually not necessary to provide a source. (In a paper on American history, for example, it would not ordinarily be necessary to give a source for the statement that the Civil War began in 1861 after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.) But if the facts are not widely known or if the facts were developed or presented by a specific source, then you should identify that source.*
- d. Ideas. If you use an idea or ideas that you learned from a lecture, written work, or some other source, then you should identify the source. You should identify the source for an idea whether or not you agree with the idea. It does not become your original idea just because you agree with it.*

Penalties for violation of Temple University's academic honesty policies can range from a failing grade for the assignment or the entire course to referral to the university disciplinary committee.

SLACKERS

If you miss many classes, much class time, or fail to do the readings and assignments, then you will have difficulty passing this course. You are expected to actively participate in this course! After all, this is grad school. Any topic discussed in class will be assumed to have been heard by everyone. If you miss a class, please feel free to ask questions of the professor; however, do not expect him to recite the class lecture for you.

TEXTING, EMAILING, AND WEB SURFING IN CLASS: Your media universe will still exist at 6:50!

Instant access online is surely a permanent feature of digital media on college campuses. Obviously, there are many benefits to these technologies. However, text messaging, emailing, and web surfing in class are too often a *detriment to concentrating and learning in a college classroom*. First, you cannot concentrate on class material when you are texting and surfing; this will hinder your understanding of complex class material and reduce your performance on the exams and projects. Second, the imagery on your laptop or cell phone screen is a distraction to others around you, especially when we are screening film clips. So, do yourself and your classmates a favor: avoid texting, emailing, and surfing during class. Your mediated world and friends will still exist when the class is over!

EMAIL PROTOCOL

Since your prof teaches over 200 students each semester, he receives a huge volume of emails. To insure efficient responses and clear communication, he has two requests:

- Please provide him at least 24 hours to reply to your email; it is much better for all concerned that when you get an email response, he has had time to think about it and gather additional information, if necessary.
- Please compose your emails in clear, concise sentences, keeping the length of the email as brief as needed.

It should go without saying that you should use proper grammar and form in composing your email and addressing your professors. Emails should be written as a brief letter, not a text message. Short, clear emails make for clear communication and help everything to run smoother!

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Professor Vacker privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215.204.1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Temple University has requested that the following information be included on all course syllabi: *Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.*

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS CLASS

The best way to do well in this class is simple: come to class, stay up on the readings, study hard, and have an open mind. Also, let your professor know if you have any questions!

CLASS PROTOCOL

In general, your professor is an easy-going guy who prefers his classes to be open forums for ideas and opinions relevant to class topics. However, a few rules are needed:

- please arrive to class on time; lectures, discussion, and films will begin promptly.
- timely arrivals to class are not only courteous to classmates, but many of these films have important openings, which are important to understanding the meanings and messages to be discussed in class and in your papers.
- you are encouraged to silence or turn off all cell phones and PDAs.
- please show respect and courtesy to fellow students at all times.
- eloquence is the most persuasive form of dialogue; insults and “in your face” persuade no one of anything.
- feel free to ask questions during discussions or at appropriate moments during class lecture.
- I want all of you to do well in this class, so feel free to approach me with questions before or after class, or during office hours.

DATE TOPICS AND READINGS

PART 1: 2000 AND BEYOND

- Week 1**
Jan 21, 23 **Post-Millennial: Speed and Slowness, Acceleration and Deceleration, Forward and Reversals**
Into the future: going forward and backward.
Packet 1: Gitlin, "Speed and Sensibility," (from *Media Unlimited*, 2007).
Packet 2: Brand, "Notational Clock," "Kairos and Chronos," "Moore's Wall," (from *The Clock of the Long Now*, 2000).
- Week 2**
Jan 28, 30 **Screens, Spectacle, Simulation**
From television to Times Square to theme parks.
Kellner: "Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle," *Media Spectacle*.
Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," "Simulacra and Science-Fiction," *Simulacra and Simulation*.
Packet 3: Baudrillard, "Pataphysics of the year 2000" (from *The Illusion of the End*, 1997).
- Week 3**
Feb 4, 6 **Postmodern to Hypermodern**
Fashion and the future; consumption and individualism.
Lipovetsky: "Paradoxical Individualism," "Time against Time," *Hypermodern Times*.

PART 2: ARTIFACTS OF POSTMILLENNIAL CULTURE

- Week 4**
Feb 11, 13 **Networks**
What is the role of networks: social web, hive mind, global brain?
Packet 4: van Dijck, "Engineering Sociality in a Culture of Connectivity" (*The Culture of Connectivity*, 2013).
Marwick: "A Cultural History of Web 2.0," *Status Update*.
- Week 5**
Feb 18, 20 **Brands**
Commodity as spectacle; Big Macs, Coke Zero, NFL, 24/7 advertising.
Kellner: "Commodity as Spectacle: McDonald's as Global Culture," *Media Spectacle*.
Baudrillard: "Hypermarket and Hypercommodity" & "Absolute Advertising," *Simulacra and Simulation*.
- Week 6**
Feb 25, 27 **Celebrities**
Why the fascination with fame and infamy?
Packet 5: Cashmore, "Answering/The Big Question" (from *Celebrity Culture: Key Ideas*, 2006).
Marwick: "The Fabulous Lives of Micro-Celebrities," *Status Update*.

Spring Break
- Week 7**
Mar 11, 13 **Status Updates**
Social media: What is the meaning of Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and Vine?
Packet 6: Bogost, "Ian Became a Fan of Marshall McLuhan in Facebook" (*Facebook and Philosophy* 2010).
Packet 7: Rune Vejby and D. E. Witkower, "Spectacle 2.0?" (*Facebook and Philosophy* 2010).
Marwick: "Self-Branding," *Status Update*.
- Week 8**
Mar 18, 20 **Surveillance**
Google Earth, total surveillance, mapping everything, information overloads; from information deficit to attention deficit.
Marwick: "Life Streaming," *Status Update*.
Baudrillard: "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media," *Simulacra and Simulation*.
- Week 9**
Mar 25, 2 **Apocalypses**
Catastrophes and doomsday scenarios seem to be proliferating around the world. Why?
Handouts: Matthew Barrett Gross and Mel Gilles, "The Apocalyptic Decade," *The Last Myth: What Apocalyptic Thinking Tells Us About America* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2012),
Annalee Newitz, "Are We All Going to Die?" *Scatter, Adapt, and Remember: How Humans Will Survive a Mass Extinction* (New York: Doubleday, 2013).

DATE TOPICS AND READINGS (cont.)

PART 2: ARTIFACTS OF POSTMILLENNIAL CULTURE (cont.)

Week 10 Clones and Zombies

Apr 1, 3 The postmodern and premodern humans: from wax figures to robots to clones and zombies.
Baudrillard: "Clone Story," *Simulacra and Simulation*.
Packet 9: Lizardi, "The Zombie Media Monster's Evolution to Empty Undead Signifier" (*Thinking Dead* 2013).
Guest speaker: Angela Cirucci, "The Social Dead: How Are Zombie Baggage Threatens to Drag Us Into the Crypts of Our Past," (from *Thinking Dead* 2013).

Week 11 Garbage and Global Warming

Apr 8, 10 "The Great Pacific Garbage Patch;" pollution, ecology, technology, global warming.
Packet 10: Brand, "Scale, Scope, Stakes, Speed" (from *Whole Earth Discipline* 2010).
Packet 11: Gore, "The Power of Information" (from *Our Choice* 2010).

Week 12 Galaxies and Planets

Apr 15, 17 Cosmic media: Hubble Space Telescope, Gaia space probe and "a billion pixels for a billion stars," Kepler space probe and 10 billion planets like Earth?
Packet 12: Vacker, Gillespie, "Yearning to be the Center of Everything..." (*Telematics and Informatics*, 2013).
Packet 13: Abrams & Primack, "The New Universe," (from *The New Universe* 2011).

Week 13 Media, Futurist Architecture, and Land Arts

Apr 22, 24 Guggenheim Bilbao and futuristic buildings; Roden Crater, Star Axis, City, and other massive land arts.
Packet 14: Taylor, "From Grid to Network" (from *The Moment of Complexity*, 2000).
Packet 15: Wallis, "Survey" (from *Land and Environmental Art*, 2010).

Week 14 Media and the New Millennium

Apr 29 Just what does the media future hold for us, collectively and individually?
May 1 Packet 16: Best and Kellner, "Challenges for the Third Millennium," (from *The Postmodern Adventure* 2001).
Packet 17: Abrams and Primack, "Cosmic Society Now" (from *The New Universe* 2011).

Final Paper and Presentation: May 13, 5:45 – 7:45 (No exceptions)