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EDUC 2300: DIGITAL MEDIA FOR LEARNING

Welcome! This is our Annotated Syllabus. This syllabus—like our course—is incomplete without you and your feedback and commentary. This Annotated Syllabus is the start of a conversation about our course, your learning, and shared accomplishment.

I ask you to annotate the syllabus with these guidelines in mind: Asking clarifying questions; sharing opinions about readings and assignments; noting confusions and uncertainties; responding to policies; providing advice; and reflecting on what works and what can change.

While your annotation may be critical, let us strive for commentary that is inquisitive and constructive. Your ongoing thoughts are welcome anytime so that this syllabus documents our learning together this semester.

Instructor Information

Course Instructor: Veena Vasudevan
Class Format and Duration: Online (fully asynchronous) six-week course
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Course Description

This course will explore the nature of learning and the ways in which digital media shift, change, strengthen, or detract from learners' experiences. We will first explore theories of learning and bring them into conversation with theories of digital media integration, critical digital literacies, and media and communications.. We will consider how digital media can facilitate play-ful learning experiences, create multiple entry points into content, and expand opportunities for how learning and understanding can be expressed. Together we will also examine how digital media continues to reify systemic oppression against marginalized groups of people and the ways in which as educators (or facilitators of learning) we must nurture digital citizenship. To that end, we will develop our own design principles for leveraging digital media, learn how to identify select digital media content to support our curriculum goals, learn to meaningfully integrate digital media to nurture and support learning experiences, and think about how and when we might create our own digital media resources. We will continue to push back on the idea that the presence of digital media is inherently good and instead take a critical stance to the integration

and application of digital media across learning contexts. This course will be grounded in Critical Constructionist praxis (see below), and therefore you will learn to compose and deconstruct a range of digital artifacts, engage in critical analysis of digital artifacts, and think about how to design digital experiences to nurture learning and literacy.

Learning Goals

What will we do together?

1. Examine significant theories of learning and their relationships to learning *with* digital media.
2. Interrogate why learning *with* digital media differs from learning *from* digital media.
3. Explore the nature and expanse of digital media in relation to teaching and learning.
4. Imagine our own principles for designing curriculum with meaningful and authentic technology and digital media integration.

What can we learn together?

Together, we will explore how digital media and technology shape and mediate our learning lives. We will use theory as an explanatory lens- to help us 'look' through it to notice what resonates and what conflicts with our own lived experience.

Over the course of the semester, class members will engage, discuss, challenge, and (de)construct theories of learning. We will collectively develop an understanding of the digital media landscape as it pertains to teaching and learning. We will make connections to our own pedagogies and practice.

You will attend carefully to how people engage with digital media for learning by developing a digital media for learning needs assessment, your own design principles, a strategy for digital media integration, and finally consider how you might integrate digital media for learning in a lesson or unit that you are teaching.

What can we do together?

Together we will construct our understanding of digital media for learning. We will make and compose, deconstruct, and examine the assumptions, beliefs, and theories that inform our everyday literacy practices. We will also try out a variety of digital tools as we think together about the new mindsets and practices entailed in integrating them into classrooms, asking questions like: How can our understanding of youth participation inform teaching and learning? How are schools (and other learning institutions both formal and informal) incorporating digital literacies into institutional spaces? What role might we play in fostering and supporting critical participatory acts?

What are the theories or ideas that guide this course?

Like my other courses, Digital Media for Learning is rooted in *Critical Constructionist Pedagogical Praxis*, a theoretical space I hope to develop further as we engage in this class together. To be **critical** is to examine, to look closely, to question why something is the way it is, instead of taking it at face value.

Paulo Freire talked about criticality as the way we read both the *word and the world*. What Freire meant was we cannot engage in any discussion of literacies without recognizing the role of power and authority in our understanding and practice of literacies. **Constructionism** was coined by Seymour Papert, whose prescient work (detailed in texts like *Mindstorms, 1980)* predicted the powerful role that technology, namely computers, would have on how we learned and how we could make sense of ideas. But he also realized the potential for technology to facilitate creative production or *making*. To that end, Constructionism is a theory of learning that argues *we learn through personally meaningful making.* Paulo Freire (2003) defines praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). Freire asks us to not just do but reflect and be actively engaged in the process of understanding and deconstructing our understanding of the world. We will engage in critical praxis throughout this course. We will read, write, reflect, make, play, and share, and continue to ask how, what, why, about our practices. In doing so we can deepen our learning. I am excited to teach this course, because as bell hooks argued, “the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy” which resonates deeply with me.

Required Materials

Each week you will have required materials that will include Canvas pages of synthesized content, peer-reviewed journal articles, blogs and other online resources, and on occasion videos and podcasts. You will see different assigned readings related to each module topic and the readings embedded in the instructional materials.

Coursework

As a student in this course, you are responsible for engaging with all of the assigned texts, completing your assignments in a timely manner, and engaging with your peers. There are two ways we will engage in an exploration of digital literacies and learning in this course: I) community and class participation II) milestone activities:

COMMUNITY AND CLASS PARTICIPATION (50% of your grade)

Throughout this class we will be cultivating a learning community that is rooted in respectful and thoughtful engagement of ideas, opinions, and experiences. We will be engaging both asynchronously, during the week through reading and discussions and other activities together. Each week we will read and explore various topics together to deepen our understanding and perspectives on assessment and evaluation. We will do so in three main ways: 1) Responses to Text, 2) Participatory Activities, and 3) Digital Composing.

- **Response to Text**: these are an opportunity to critique, reflect, make connections to practice/other ideas you are interrogating in other coursework and contexts, and pose questions.

- **Digital Journal:** Throughout this course you will keep a digital journal where you will respond/reflect/post examples. At times I will give you a specific prompt, where you might answer several questions and synthesize those responses into one paragraph as part of a class assignment. At the end of the semester, you will read and annotate this journal. Make sure you date entries and include the prompts so that you can follow your own journey of reflection and critical analysis of the texts, concepts, and theories we engage with in the course. This journal is guided by the underlying philosophy of *writing as thinking*. When we are writing things, we are engaged in a process of articulating our ideas, and as we write, revise, and rewrite, we clarify our intentions and our understanding. We also will consider how reading others' writing can reveal other ideas and ways of thinking.
- **Perusall Readings**: Reading together, using the practice of *social annotation*, is to support you in shared sense-making. It is also modeling a practice that is increasingly common (and possible!) due to the technology we have. Reading together is also an essential component of community building and shared sense-making. You will post at least three questions/comments using the questions/comments/quandaries structure as well as respond to two peers (unless otherwise specified). Within a module you will be expected to write comments and then respond within two days to peers' comments. You will be guided by the following structure in your responses:
  - Connections: how does the current text relate to other concepts/ideas/texts in our course or even in your everyday practice?,
  - Questions: what are you left wondering about? What do you want to learn more about?
  - Quandaries: what are things you disagree with or push up against your existing understanding.

- **Digital Compositions:** within modules you will compose, create your own digital compositions as well as try out and critique existing digital media. These compositions will contribute to your final project as part of a portfolio you will build through the course.
- **Participatory Activities:** Within the modules, you will engage in peer-to-peer dialogue to support your understanding of key concepts, structures, and ideas. This will most often be done through posts on Canvas, **Padlet (http://padlet.com/)** , **MURAL (https://app.mural.co/)** , or occasionally using Flip (previously flipgrid) to engage in sharing/critique or reflection. Your responses will build on the texts that you read/watch, as well as ongoing themes and ideas that are emergent in the course.

Peer Feedback

Throughout this course, you will give and get feedback on your ideas, questions, insights, and learning from our peers. Think of your peers as providing windows into your work – they will see/interpret your ideas in ways that you don't anticipate, this will help you rethink and examine how you are conceptualizing and communicating your ideas. In other words, your peers offer another source of course content. In addition, together with your peers (and myself) you will be actively engaged in using a range of online tools and resources to explore new ideas, concepts, theories, and practices. When you comment you are offering insight into your perspective, and building on your own lived experience and expertise, and the same is true for your peers.

When otherwise not specified, we will be using the: *I like, I wish, I wonder* feedback structure. These comments should be respectful and focused on the work but also offer critique that goes beyond 'this is good' or 'I like that.' Your feedback should help your peers think differently and expansively about their work/ideas/questions. Here are some general guidelines:

- I like - what resonates? What works about this? What is meaningful or valuable?
- I wish - what are constructive critiques? What isn't there that could offer more clarity?
- I wonder - what isn't clear? What questions may help someone think differently about their work?

Grading

The focus in this class is on helping you engage in Critical Constructionist Praxis - to construct, deconstruct, and reflect on texts and artifacts composed by you and others. Therefore the above assignment marked as complete or incomplete. However, the criteria for complete is:

1. has fully responded to the articulated prompts/activity.
2. has engaged in thoughtful and critical analysis.
3. has written or composed in a clear and accessible manner.
4. has drawn on the texts, concepts, and ideas in the class.
5. has engaged in thoughtful, respectful, and critical feedback.

If all of these criteria are met, you will get a complete. If not, you will get an incomplete, and have a chance to revise the assignment within 2 days of grading. To make it easier for grading, there will still be an underlying point value for all community participation assignments that will total 50% of your grade.

MILESTONE ASSIGNMENT (50% of your grade)

- Option 1: Digital Media Integration Plan
- Option 2: Digital Justice & Equity Media Lesson Design

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Using Texts to Substantiate Arguments

If an assignment asks you to leverage or build upon the texts in the class then you should be effectively drawing on quotes, examples, or synthesizing ideas from a text. You will use APA citation style for any references or in-text citations that you use.

Here is an example: "Critical digital literacies ask us to interrogate the underlying power structures, histories, and contexts that inform a text. In doing so we are able to see that reading and writing are always inherently political (Freire, 1969; Patel & Bean, 2007). In our current moment, as we see education under attack, cultivating critical literacies is a way to ensure young people can see themselves as having agency… (see: Muhammed & Lee, 2016)."

For support, I strongly encourage everyone to take advantage of the excellent writing services available at the **Pitt Writing Center (https://www.writingcenter.pitt.edu/)** .

Submitting Timely Assignments

Our course will be managed through Canvas, a learning management system. Each week, you will begin your work by reading the module overview. This page describes the theme or set of key ideas for the week, the list of texts (e.g. scholarly journal articles, blog posts, podcasts, videos, social media posts, etc.), and highlights assignments. Most weeks, one of the materials will be an overview video from me connecting some big ideas and highlighting key themes. You are expected to engage with all the material for each week. The content has been intentionally paired down so that it is manageable within a week.

Late Assignments

Assignments can be late by a day or two (maximum), but you should always email me if you need an extension beyond that. The pace of this course is fast because it is only 6 weeks long. Therefore, if you don't have feedback on something, you might not be able to move forward. At other times, my feedback may change your decision-making. Therefore, barring any extenuating circumstances, please engage with the work in a timely manner to ensure you feel supported to move forward with the rest of the class and plan accordingly for assignments you think might require more time on your part.

Grading Scale

The work of all graduate learners is evaluated and then reported in terms of the following grades:

Grading Scale

Grade	Percentage
A+	99.0 - 100
A	94.0 - 98.9
A-	90.0 - 93.9
B+	88.0 - 89.9
B	84.0 - 87.9
B-	80.0 - 83.9
C+	78.0 - 79.9
C	74.0 -77.9
C-	70.0 - 73.9
F	Below 70.0

Course and University Policies

This course adheres to the following **Course and University Policies (https://canvas.pitt.edu/courses/311801/pages/course-and-university-policies)** . Be sure to review them in full before the start of the course.