

Visual Media, Technology & Health

(PUBH 851 / PH 711)

Thursdays, 6:30pm-8:30pm, GC

Office Location [TBA, 5th Floor, E. Harlem Campus]

Office Hours: By appointment

email: jdaniels@hunter.cuny.edu (email much preferred for contact)

COURSE OVERVIEW: *Visual Media* such as TV, and documentary films - have shaped how we think about health, public health, illness, the body and society. And, until recently, this was only a unidirectional relationship, with powerful individuals and institutions making decisions about the kinds of visual images viewers "received." Now, in the digital era of participatory media, it is easier than at any other time for everyone to make their own content, and distribute their own visual media for everyone else.

In 2007, for example, HBO launched a documentary series called "*Addiction*," funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Institute of Drug Addiction (NIDA), presented a strong message that drug addiction is "a brain disease" (HBO, 2007). Among the most compelling pieces in the HBO series is a documentary made from a video diary that a man used to document his addiction to crack cocaine while he was a prominent news anchor. The HBO series, and the historic partnership with NIH and NIDA, raises a number of questions.

What do these visual images mean? How do they shape our thinking around health, public health, illness, the body and society?

These kinds of questions presume a "mass media" (one-to-many, or top down) rather than "participatory media" (many-to-many, or bottom up) way of thinking about media images. In the current digital media era handheld video cameras, digital video editing equipment, and video-sharing websites, have opened up new potential for who is a "producer" and who is a "consumer" of visual media. Among the new types of questions this new video technology raises are: how can we use Internet technology to counter these with other images created by dominant media conglomerates (such as HBO)? And, what do we want to say, given such an opportunity?

In this course students will learn how to critically analyze and disrupt dominant images and representations of health, illness and the body. This course focuses on the convergence of visual media with new media campaigns around health and social justice issues. Students will view and analyze documentary films, their web-based analogues and critique them. At the end of the course, each student will produce a strategic plan for producing their own health-focused, media campaign.

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COURSE OBJECTIVES: At the end of this course, each student will be able to:

- ⇒ to write a critical analysis of documentary films related to urban, social justice, human rights, and/or health issues;
- ⇒ create and upload a short videos to a video-sharing site (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, or Google Video).
- ⇒ create and share a theoretically-informed animation using an open-source online animation tool (e.g., Xtranormal).
- ⇒ demonstrate an understanding of current communications theories and strategies as they relate to public health by creating a multi-media social action campaign.
- ⇒ write a prospectus for a social media campaign focused around some health or social justice issue with a central focus on a documentary film, including a budget and budget-narrative.

LIKELY REQUIRED TEXTS [these may change]: All books, both required and optional, will be available on 2-hour reserve at the Mina Rees Library.

Alexander, Bryan. 2011. *The New Digital Storytelling: Creating Narratives with New Media*. Praeger. (Hardcover: \$41.00)

Juhasz, Alexandra. 2011. *Learning from YouTube: Video Book*. MIT Press. Open Access:
<http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=2&tid=12596> (Free)

Kirkland, Anna and Jonathan Metzl. 2010. *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*. NYU Press. (Pb: \$21.36 / Kindle \$9.99)

Murray, Susan and Ouellette, Laurie. 2004. *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. NYU Press. (Pb: \$22.00 /used from \$13.50)

Additional *required* readings will be made available via Blackboard.

RECOMMENDED (not required) TEXTS:

Aaker, Jennifer and Smith, Andy. 2010. *The Dragonfly Effect: Quick, Effective, and Powerful Ways To Use Social Media to Drive Social Change*. Jossey-Bass.

Aoki, Keith, James Boyle, and Jennifer Jenkins. 2006. *Bound by Law? Tales from the Public Domain*. Duke University Press.

Kanter, Beth and Fine, Allison. 2010. *The Networked Nonprofit: Connecting with Social Media to Drive Change*. Jossey-Bass.

Zandt, Deanna. 2010. *Share This! How You Will Change the World with Social Networking*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

ALSO RECOMMENDED:

Netflix (streaming). You'll be required to watch several documentaries outside of class and Netflix is the best source for otherwise hard-to-find documentaries. It's your responsibility to make sure that you screen some of the films assigned *before* you come to class. (\$7.99/month)

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Attendance is MANDATORY. Students are expected to attend class regularly and in full. If you plan to miss class, please **email me beforehand**. In the event that you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the material that you missed (including, viewing films screened in class), from another student.

Participation (10%). Students are expected to attend class regularly, participate actively, and to be prepared to discuss readings and other assignments. This grade reflects students' participation as 'seminar leaders' for one session of the semester (see more below under "Critical Essays"). Failure to show up for a session in which you are the designated 'seminar leader' will result in an F for this portion of your grade and the extreme displeasure of the instructor.

Short Videos + Animation (20%). Students will make a series of three (3) short (2-4 minute) videos using the Flip cameras issued in class and post these to a YouTube channel created for the class. (See separate hand out for further details.) The goal of these short videos and video-sharing assignments is to shift students away from being merely media 'consumers' and toward becoming creators and producers of media. These are graded on a "credit/no credit" basis. Students will also make a theoretically-informed animation using an open-source animation software (e.g., Xtranormal). Each student will present their animation on the last night of class.

Critical Essays + Seminar Leadership (30%). Each student will write one (1) short (3-5 page) critical essays reflecting on the assigned readings. In addition, each student will select a session in which they will take responsibility the seminar leader for that session. While all students will be expected to do all readings, seminar leaders will read the assignment especially closely, provide an overview of what they see as the contribution, relevance and key points of the reading, and lead the discussion about it as it relates to the films we've screened. Past experience suggests that this is best done when a student is also writing on the assigned reading. The first night of class, I will hand around a sign-up sheet so people can select the seminar they will lead. (See separate hand out with a rubric for these papers.) The goal of these papers is to get students to read carefully, synthesize and engage with the assigned readings.

Attend & Review a Screening or Social Media Event (10%). Each student is required to attend a theater screening of a documentary or a social media event outside of class and on their own time. Each Tuesday, IFC Theaters (<http://www.ifccenter.com/>) hosts the “Stranger than Fiction,” documentary series with Q&A by filmmakers following the film. For other documentary screenings, consult web listings (<http://www.google.com/movies>) for the Angelika, Landmark Sunshine, the Quad Cinema, Film Forum, and the Museum of Modern Art. For other social media events, check Twitter and relevant hashtags.

Following the screening or event, each student will write a short (3-page) critical essay about the film or event, connecting their analysis to course material, particularly assigned readings. The goal of this assignment is twofold: 1) to introduce students to the broader documentary and social media community in NYC, and 2) to encourage students to read carefully, synthesize and engage with the assigned readings.

Prospectus for Social Media Campaign. (40%). Each student will write a prospectus (approximately 20-pages) for a social action campaign to accompany a documentary film (either an existing film or one that is yet-to-be-created) across multiple platforms. The prospectus will include a budget and budget narrative. The prospectus will be due the week after the last week of class (December 19-23).

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Participation	10%
Short Videos + Animation	20%
Critical Essays + Seminar Leadership	30%
Attend & Review Screening or Event	10%
Prospectus	40%

MISCELLANEOUS COURSE POLICIES

Screening Films. We will not have enough time to screen all the films referenced in class. Many times we will screen short clips or portions of director's interviews about those films. Therefore, it's imperative that you view the films before you come to class. Each student will be responsible for screening films in full on their own time. I highly recommend a Netflix membership (about \$7.99/month) for the duration of the semester.

Copyright. The videos created for this course should follow all copyright restrictions for protected images and music. Refer to the Aiko, Boyle and Jenkins text for a thorough explanation for what is covered by copyright.

Flip Cameras. To create the short videos required, students in the class will be issued Flip Cameras for use during the semester. These are provided through a GRTI grant at Hunter College and made available to students at no charge. These easy-to-use cameras are merely a suggested video camera for students to use. If you already have your own camera, you're welcome to use that.

Releases. Everyone who has their (identifiable) image captured in a video should sign a release (covered in class). It is the responsibility of the video maker to get the permission of people in the video, and to retain copies of those releases.

Technology. In this course, technology is both a course subject and a mechanism for how we learn. We will use a variety of technologies. Some of these means of communication are specific to the classroom (e.g., Blackboard), and others have wider applications beyond the classroom (e.g., blogs, wikis, YouTube). Some instruction in each of these will be provided in class, but students are also expected to familiarize themselves with this technology outside of class. Demonstrated proficiency with technology is expected from each student.

Services for Disabled Students. Support services and accommodations are available to provide students with disabilities greater accessibility to the academic environment. The Student Disability Services are available through the Office of Student Affairs, located at the Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Avenue, Room 7301, New York, NY 10016-4309; 1.212.817.7400 (voice); email: disabilityservices@gc.cuny.edu.

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Tentative Course Outline [this may change]

Date	Topic	Seminar Leader
Session 1.	Course Intro + Signup for seminar leadership, readings	---
Session 2.	New Digital Storytelling (“The Cove”)	1
Session 3.	Why Health? (“Supersize Me”)	2
Session 4.	Corporate Propaganda in the Digital Era (“Crude”)	3
Session 5.	Reality TV + Health (“Intervention” + “Biggest Loser”)	3
Session 6.	Documentary + Social Media Campaigns (“Food, Inc.”)	4
Session 7.	Human Rights + Digital Video Activism (Witness.org)	5
Session 8.	Ethnographic Film, Medicalization (“Titicut Follies”)	6
Session 9.	Being Seen as Other (“Queer Streets”)	7
Session 10.	Politics of Visual Representation (“True Meaning of Pictures”)	8,9
Session 11.	Race, Visual Technologies + Civil Rights (clips)	10, 11
	Visual Images in Post-Photographic Era (“Standard Operating Procedure”)	12
Session 12.	Evaluating Impact, Effectiveness of Media	13
Session 13.	YouTube, Vimeo + Video Blogging (clips)	14
Session 14.	Going Viral: Social Media Metrics	15
Session 15.	Final Presentations: Short films + animation.	---