

Cultural Evolution and the Digital Age

Instructor: Ruby A. Montana, MA
Office hours: Wednesdays 12-1 and by appt. in library

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I. Course Description

Throughout history, human culture has been greatly influenced by the communication technology that was used to share knowledge and information. In this course we will align core components of digital culture with their antecedents. Today's age of the digital revolution has allowed for online media such as social networking, blogs, and livestreaming to shape the world around us. We will view civilization through the lens of the digital revolution, learning both about past issues, and what our experiences with modern technology lead us to discover about them. At first glance, our reading list may appear intimidating, but each class session will include the essential dialog to help you succeed in this course. However, I cannot stress enough the importance of setting aside the allotted time necessary to dedicate yourself to the assigned texts. Wikipedia or other such internet conveniences will NOT be reliable substitution for actual reading. Our readings will pair great works of literature and philosophy with current digital texts and tools, exploring common themes that include the structure of knowledge, principles of awareness and participation, and the power of knowledge in the digital age.

II. Required texts (links provided in Calendar):

Plato, *Allegory of the Cave*

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*

Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphoses*

Ernest Hemingway, *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*

Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit*

George Orwell, *1984*

Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*

III. Course Requirements

Students in this course will be expected to complete readings before class and participate in class discussions and activities. Grades for the course will be earned by accumulating points in the following manner:

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|----|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. | 1 Essay | 200 points | (200 points total) |
| 2. | 10 Pop Quizzes | 20 points each | (200 points total) |
| 3. | Assignments | point variation | (200 points total) |
| 4. | 3 Exams | 100 points each | (300 points total) |
| 5. | 1 Final Presentation | | (100 points total) |

TOTAL POINTS = 1000 divided by 10 = grade

Points will be added together at the end of the semester to receive the following letter grades: 90-100=A; 80-89=B; 70-79=C; 60-69=D; under 60=F. Cheating will result in an automatic F.

IV. Policies and Procedures

Regular attendance is imperative to your success in the class. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to keep up with assigned readings. Late homework assignments and late essays will only be accepted if prior arrangements have been made before the day of your absence. Similarly, exams can only be made up if prior notice was given to instructor. No exceptions. Otherwise, I do not need to be notified of absences. Quizzes cannot be made up. However, there will be extra credit opportunities to make up lost points.

Of significant importance is an understanding that courtesy in the classroom is a requirement. I encourage active discussions and feedback in class, but it should always be done in a respectful manner. Disrespect toward the instructor or other students will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Cell phone and laptop use during lecture is not allowed.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, not doing one's own work, plagiarism, and unacceptable collusion. Not doing one's own work may involve copying from or providing information to another student, or possessing unauthorized materials during a test. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person as one's own. And, collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Academic dishonesty is an assault upon the basic integrity and meaning of a University. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the University's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience not only for the perpetrators but also for the entire community. It is expected that UTEP students will understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts.

ADA statement

As per Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, if a student needs an accommodation then the Office of Disabled Student Services located at UTEP need to be contacted. If you have a condition, which may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the director of the Disabled Student Services. You may call [915-747-5148](tel:915-747-5148) for general information about the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the rights that you have as a UTEP student with a disability. Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. It is the student's

responsibility to contact the instructor and The Disabled Student Services Office at The University of Texas at El Paso

V. Calendar

Subject to change at the instructor's discretion:

August

27 - Course Introduction

29- Emerging Out of 'Darkness': [Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*](#), Manuel Castells, [The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective](#)

September

3- Holiday, No class

5- [Lewis Vaughn: Subjectivism and Relativism](#)

10- Emmanuel Levinas and ['The Other'](#)

12- Societal Class, Exploitation, and Economic Injustice: Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, Chpts. 1-9

17- *The Jungle*, Chpts. 9-19 Focus: Speciesism

19- *The Jungle*, Chpts. 19-26 Focus: Socialism and Capitalism

24- *The Jungle*, Chpts. 26-end

26- Paolo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* [excerpt](#): 'The hashtag which did (not) start a revolution': The Laborious Adding Up to the 99%

October

1- **Exam 1**

3- Franz Kafka- *The Metamorphoses* (full)

8- Ernest Hemingway, [A Clean, Well-Lighted Place](#) (full), Focus: Isolation and Existentialism

10- Jean-Paul Sartre, [No Exit](#) (full)

15- Power, Oppression, Manipulation: George Orwell, *1984*, One: I-VI

17- *1984*, One: VI-Two: IV

22- *1984*, -Two: IV- Two: X

24- *1984*, Two: X-Three: IV

29- *1984*, Three: IV-End

31- Film: *Black Mirror*, Ep. 2 Se. 1

November

5- Film: Black Mirror, Ep. 5 Se.3

7- **Exam II**

12- Carol Anderson, *White Rage*, Prologue- pg. 22

14- *White Rage*, pg. 22- Three

19- *White Rage*, Three - Five

21- *White Rage*, Five - Afterword- After the Election: Imagining

26- VICE News: Charlottesville: Race and Terror, Film: 13th

28- Film: 13th cont'd, Final Presentation workshop

December

3- Begin Final Presentations

5- Final Presentations cont'd, **Essay due**

14- **Final Exam-** 1 pm -3:45 pm

***November 2nd- Drop Deadline**