
DIGITAL RESISTANCE

Political activism and protest online

This course studies the proliferation, and implications, of digital technology in political resistance. The goal is to provide students with analytical tools and skills for understanding the strengths, weaknesses of contemporary digital resistance. The course' perspective is on the resistance that is played out in the 'everyday life' of 'ordinary' people: a resistance that might be widespread and diffused, individual or small scale, implicitly political, disguised or even hidden. It brings to light how the 'private' or 'personal' can be political and explores the creativity of 'cultural resistance'.

Where there is power
there is resistance

Michel Foucault

Particular interest will be paid to the study of new sources of power and their ability to subvert or censor acts of digital resistance. By taking this course the participants will gain a sophisticated understanding of the role played by technology, and technology providers, in the performance of, and resistance to, power. Course participants will develop a critical understanding of the nature of technology and its implications for local, regional, and global justice.

The course will present the basics of theories of social movements, civil resistance and disobedience before moving on to dig deeper into the ways in which digital technology both supports and hinders activism. The

focus on digital technology in the practice of activism and resistance will enable the course participant to better understand the ways in which technology has the ability to both enable and subvert our social interactions.

Where there is
resistance, there is
power

Lila Abu-Lughod

The course will also dig deeper into the understanding of the activist identity, the ways in which corporations and the media portray and participate with activism in order to both present themselves as good corporate citizens

but also to maintain the structures of power that have been assembled. By mixing theory and practice, history and the present, academia and case studies this course offers its participants the space to observe social and political activism from an array of perspectives.

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How this course works...

We meet twice a week for one semester and during this time we need to cover the theory and practice of social movements, digital activism technologies, study the history movements and analyze protest movements' use of technology. This is a lot to cover.

Naturally there will be much to read and I want you to read critically and be prepared to discuss the texts in class. Here is a good short guide to critical reading to give you an idea of what you should be thinking

Sometimes it's
appropriate to scream
at them.

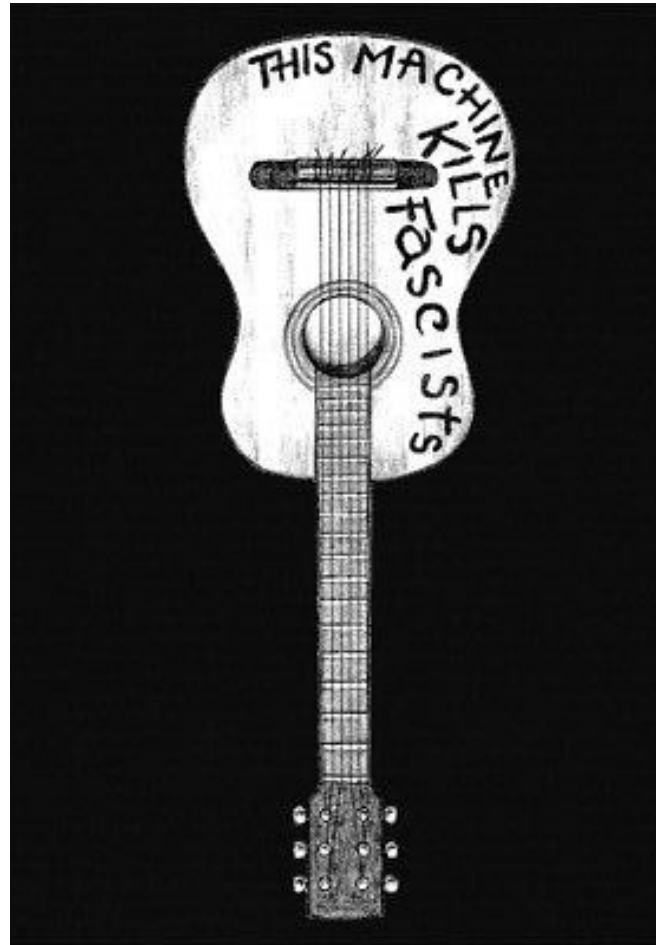
Helen Caldicott

about when you read <https://pcur.princeton.edu/2017/04/in-between-the-lines-a-guide-to-reading-critically/>

In addition to the readings I have scheduled several documentaries for us to watch and discuss. Ideally we would watch them together but this is not feasible so they are assigned in the same way as readings.

During the course we will be diving deep into three protest movements that relied heavily on technology in order to study the way in which they were launched, organized, and disseminated.

If all goes well we will also be sharing additional materials, watching current events and attempting to put our knowledge to use in analyzing the developing forms of activism reported in the media. So we are going to have an exciting but busy time.



Woody Guthrie's guitar 1940s

Movements are most powerful when they begin to affect the vision and perspective of those who do not necessarily associate themselves with those movements.

**Angela Y.
Davis**

Date	Topic & Readings	
Fri 9/3	Introduction	
Tue 9/7	Social Movements and Resistance	
Fri 9/10	DeFronzo & Gill - Sociology of Social Movements Civil Resistance: A First Look	
Tue 9/14	What does the internet do?	Documentary 1
Fri 9/17	Scholz - Infrastructure: its Transformation and Effect on Digital Activism Dean - Why the Net is not a public sphere	The Facebook Dilemma Part I & II
Tue 9/21	Social Movements and the Internet	
Fri 9/24	Mundt et al - Scaling Social Movements Through Social Media Joyce - Digital Activism Decoded: Preface & Introduction	
Tue 9/28	The Arab Spring: A digital? Revolution?	Project 1
Fri 10/1		
Tue 10/5	Protest, resistance & activism	Documentary 2
Fri 10/8	Johansen - Nonviolence: More than the absence of violence Bedau - Civil Disobedience	Sir, No Sir
Tue 10/12	Everyday Resistance & Everyday Activism Scott - Everyday forms of resistance	Documentary 3 Crip Camp
Fri 10/15	Madison & Klang - Recognizing Everyday Activism	
Tue 10/19	Digital Everyday Activism Milan & Barbosa - Enter the WhatsApp	MIDTERM
Fri 10/22	DeAtley - Mobile Ambivalence at Standing Rock	
Tue 10/26	Black Lives Matter	Project 2 Documentary 3
Fri 10/29		13th

Tue 11/2	Resistance & Identity	Documentary 4
Fri 11/5	Bobel - I'm not an activist, per se, though I've done a lot of it Hearn - Brand Me "Activist"	The Death and Life of Marsha P Johnson
Tue 11/9	The Occupy Movement	Project 3
Fri 11/12		
Tue 11/16	Crowd Surveillance (and resistance) Aston - State Surveillance of Protest	Documentary 5 Harlan County, U.S.A.
Fri 11/19	Klang & Madison - Entire History of You	
Tue 11/23	Markets for activism Kovic et al – digital astroturfing	
Fri 11/26	Pezzulo - Contextualizing Boycotts and Buycotts	
Tue 11/23	Feminism Feminism and the Woman's Movement	Documentary 6 She's Beautiful When She's Angry (2014)
Fri 11/26	THANKSGIVING	
Tue 11/30	Art and activism King - Weapons of Mass Distraction	
Fri 12/3	Gerbaudo - Protest avatars as memetic signifiers	
Tue 12/7	Closing Week. The life of Movements and the Digital Sphere	
Fri 12/10		

Course Assignments

The final grade for the course is based on the following percentage scale: A 94 or above A- 90–93, B+ 87–89, B 83–86, B- 80–82, C+ 77–79, C 73–76, C- 70–72,

Assignments

Documentaries (40 x 6)	240 points	Midterm	50 points
Projects (20 x 3)	60 points	Final Paper	150 points
		TOTAL	500 points



Covid protest Michigan by Jeff Kowalsky (2020)

Documentary Reaction Paper

As academics we are trained to read and think but the process of reading misses the ability to take in information in different ways. Where academia strives for objectivity and exactness, documentaries strive to reach the watcher on an emotional as well as informational level - and they use many techniques to do so. So how do you write a good reaction paper to a documentary? The idea is to capture both the facts and the way the facts were presented and the way in which you understood what was being presented. I do not want or need a retelling - remember we have both watched the same documentary. I want you to tell me the good the bad the ugly of what you have seen. Why it worked for you and why it didn't.

Obviously this is all opinion but I want you to strive to be as objective as possible. Why do you think you reacted the way you did to the documentary - is more interesting on how you reacted. Check out these resources **How to Write a Reaction Paper to a Documentary**

<https://medium.com/@ExpertsEssays/how-to-write-a-reaction-paper-to-a-documentary-642a4a008faa> and **How to Write a Documentary Film Review** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2Phxg-li2E>

These papers should be 450 - 600 words. It can be longer but be careful not to ramble.

Projects

The projects for for this semester provide you with the chance to dig more deeply into activism. For this semester the projects will be The Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and The Occupy Movement. For the Arab Spring project you will be asked to pick a country and chart the related events your chosen country (what kinds of actions, by which groups, for what reason etc) and analyze what impact the events had the countries politics and people. In the Black Lives Matter project the goal will be to study the impact of online memes and you will analyze the message, impact, and efficacy of a selected set of memes. For the Occupy project you will chart the progress of an occupy event in a city of your choice and compare the actions carried out with the overall goals of the Occupy movement.



anti-Vietnam march, by Marc Riboud (1967)

Midterm

What can I say. It's a midterm. Some short questions, some long questions. It's me testing to see if you have read, understood and analyzed the materials thus far. I don't like timed exams and I don't like the pressure these cause. So the midterm is on Tuesday 10/19 but it is NOT in class.

Final Paper

The final paper is an original piece of research. The topic must be within the parameters of the course and is chosen by the participant, and approved of by the instructor. The paper is to be double spaced, 2000 words in length, not including footnotes or bibliography.

FOCUSED: Provide all the arguments needed to support your thesis/answer your question. Do not add random facts or quirky points of interest. Unrelated or unsupported facts/arguments lower the legibility and grade.

STRUCTURED: You may know what you mean but you are not there when the paper is being graded. Expect to be misunderstood. Creating an outline, putting arguments in order, & rereading your paper are excellent ways of improving structure.

DOCUMENTED: The point of the paper is to provide strong arguments. The weakest argument is the unsupported argument. I may agree with you but its still weak. Provide support for the positions you take. For example if I was to argue that smoking is healthy you wouldn't believe me if all I said to support the argument was "because I said so". Show me the expert. Show me that you have read and understood the expert.

WELL PRESENTED: You are students of communication. This course is not about grading your grammar or spelling. However, turning in a badly written paper will not improve your grade.

I am looking for your ability to present analytical substance in a structured argument. I want to see you use supporting material in a clear and persuasive manner. I want you to show me that you have thought about the issue you are discussing and are able to argue in a way that does not confuse assumptions and value judgments with analysis and argument. And I want you to do all this with a high quality of writing.

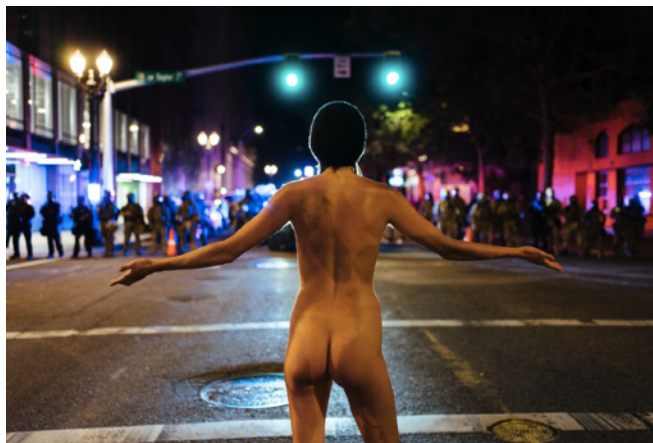
More information <http://klangable.com/uploads/teaching/FinalPaper.pdf> and thoughts on grading <http://klangable.com/blog/teaching/grading/>

Perusall

I have a love/hate relationship with a lot of technology and perusall is no different. It is awesome to see what other people are thinking/marking when they read (it also really helps me as an instructor) but it also makes the whole thing about the number of comments. Knowing this I want you to make at least 4 comments on each reading. Asking/answering questions is a bonus! This will be even more important if you (or we) have to stay home for any reason (looking at you Covid) so that I can see that you are active in class. While there is no 'active participation' grade in the course think of Perusall as active participation.

Readings should be done before end of day Wednesday so I have some time to look at the comments before class on Friday.

READ: How [Perusall Works](#) & how [Perusall scoring works](#).



Protest in Portland by Alex Wittwer (2020)

Important Information You Should Read

Effort

While it may seem odd to include in a syllabus, your effort is a required component of this course.

The federal definition of course credit hours assumes a minimum of “two hours of out-of-class student work per Module for a semester hour.” According to this metric, a student should assume at least six hours of out-of-class work per Module for each 3-credit course.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity: Every student in this classroom, regardless of personal history or identity categories, is a valued member of this group. Your experiences are valuable and important, and you should feel free to share them as they become relevant to our class. No student in this class is ever expected or believed to speak for all members of a group.

We protect ourselves
from knowing the pain
of others because it's
painful, and it's
uncomfortable.

Tunde Oyenehin

In this classroom you have the right to determine your own identity. You have the right to be called by whatever name you wish, and that name to be pronounced correctly. You have the right to be referred to by whatever pronouns you wish. You have the right to adjust those things at any point in your education. If you find that there are aspects of course instruction, subject matter, or classroom environment that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact me privately without fear of reprisal. For more see <http://klangable.com/blog/teaching/inclusivity-policy/>

Attendance

This is a tough one. Given the realities of this new normal it is important for us all that we stay safe. So here it is: If you feel unwell do not come to class. If you are away from class you MUST contact me as soon as possible. If you reach out and we communicate then this will not be an absence. However, disappearing with not contact IS an absence. If this is confusing in any way please reach out to me.

Scheduling

Changes to the syllabus may be made at the instructor's discretion and if circumstances require. Participants will be notified of changes via Blackboard/university email. Participants are responsible for keeping up to date with these changes. Once you have read this syllabus to completion please email me your favorite food (bonus if it comes with a recipe, additional bonus if its not meat, I'm a pescatarian).

Writing Aid

Writing is a painful, but rewarding, process. For help and tips see <http://klangable.com/blog/teaching/writing-resources/>

If you struggle with the writing required in this course, please make use of the Writing Center. For more information about their services see www.fordham.edu/academics/programs_at_fordham/english/writing_center

Contacting Me

Email is the best way to reach me for work related questions. Feel free email me anytime. Most often I reply within 24 hours, unless it is a holiday or weekend.

For more about communicating with faculty check out <http://klangable.com/blog/teaching/annoy-the-faculty/>



Baton Rouge La. by Max Becherer (2016)

University Statement on Academic Integrity

A University, by its nature, strives to foster and recognize originality of thought. Originality can only be recognized, however, when people acknowledge the sources of ideas or works that are not their own. Therefore, students must maintain the highest standards with regards to honesty, effort and performance. As a Jesuit, Catholic University, Fordham is committed to ensuring that all members of the academic community strive not only for excellence in scholarship but also for integrity of character. In the pursuit of knowledge and personal development, it is imperative that students present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique and eventual reformulation. As part of this process, each student must acknowledge the intellectual contribution of others. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to plagiarism, cheating on exams, falsification, unapproved collaboration, and destruction of library materials. For further details, consult the Standards of Academic Integrity on the University website.

Plagiarism

The following is a university-wide policy and those violating it will be subject to failure of the course. If you have any question concerning the plagiarism policy or about documentation of sources in work you produce in this course, come talk to me. For more information about how to cite see

Academic Coaching

Any student who struggles with time-management and/or organization is invited to one-on-one academic coaching sessions (typically once a week for 45 minutes). Please contact disabilityservices@fordham.edu for more information.

The fear of offense is a
really small price to
pay for freedom.

Andrena Sawyer

Accommodations

The Office of Disability Services at Fordham University helps to ensure equal educational access and opportunity for all members of our community. In the Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis*, members of the ODS staff work individually with each student to understand his or her strengths and limitations in order to develop their most effective and comprehensive accommodation plan. Fordham will offer reasonable and appropriate auxiliary aids and services to assist otherwise qualified persons in achieving access to its programs, services, and facilities once students meet with ODS for an initial intake meeting to develop an accommodation plan directly with the student in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students seeking accommodation(s) should the Rose Hill Office of Disability Services, (718) 817-0655 or email disabilityservices@fordham.edu.

If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, please visit the Office of Disability Services, email, or call them.

Counseling and Psychological Services

University life is full of challenges. Fordham offers support for anyone who feels like they need help dealing with the pressures of life as a student. CPS offers free individual and group counseling and psychotherapy in a safe and confidential setting. For more information about their services see www.fordham.edu/campus_resources/student_services/counseling_and_psych/

Student well-being

Any student who faces difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat everyday, or who lacks a stable place to live is urged to contact your class dean for support. I also urge you to contact me, or our dept chair, about these or other hardships you may be going through. Your well-being is of primary importance to us. if you are facing challenges related to your physical or mental health, or obstacles like food or housing insecurity, please do not hesitate to reach out. **We can help.**