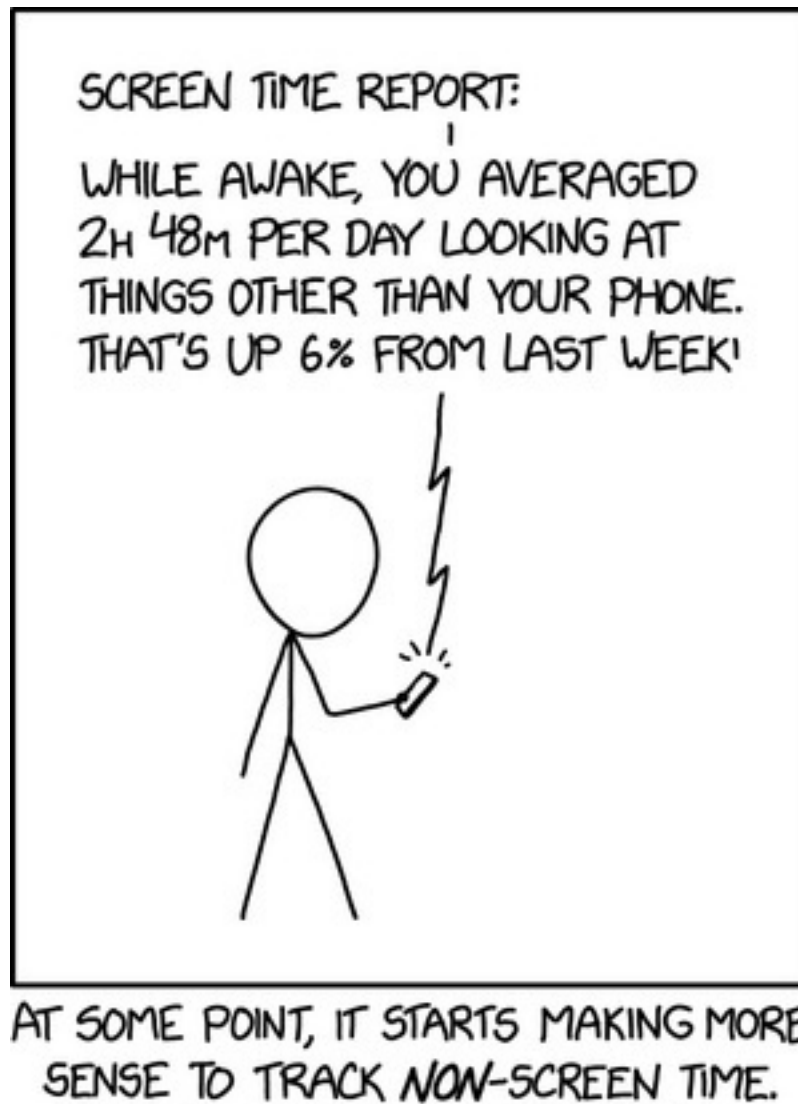


DTEM1402

Digital Cultures



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Digital Cultures

Digital cultures (DC) consist of the cultures situated in and supported by the new digital media platforms and devices.

The major differences between DC and pre-digital culture stem from the affordances and characteristics of the new tools and media techniques, such as interactivity, simultaneousness,

multitasking, convergence, and immediacy. These devices and techniques and our adoption have altered how people express cultural identity.

Culture is a complex and challenging concept, and digital, likewise. The culmination of the two gives a problematic theoretical concept that is hard to describe, let alone definitively define. The study of DC explores the consequences and meaning of technical innovations in social media, economics, politics, social

life, and more through the observation of the artifacts and rituals connected with digital technologies and new media.

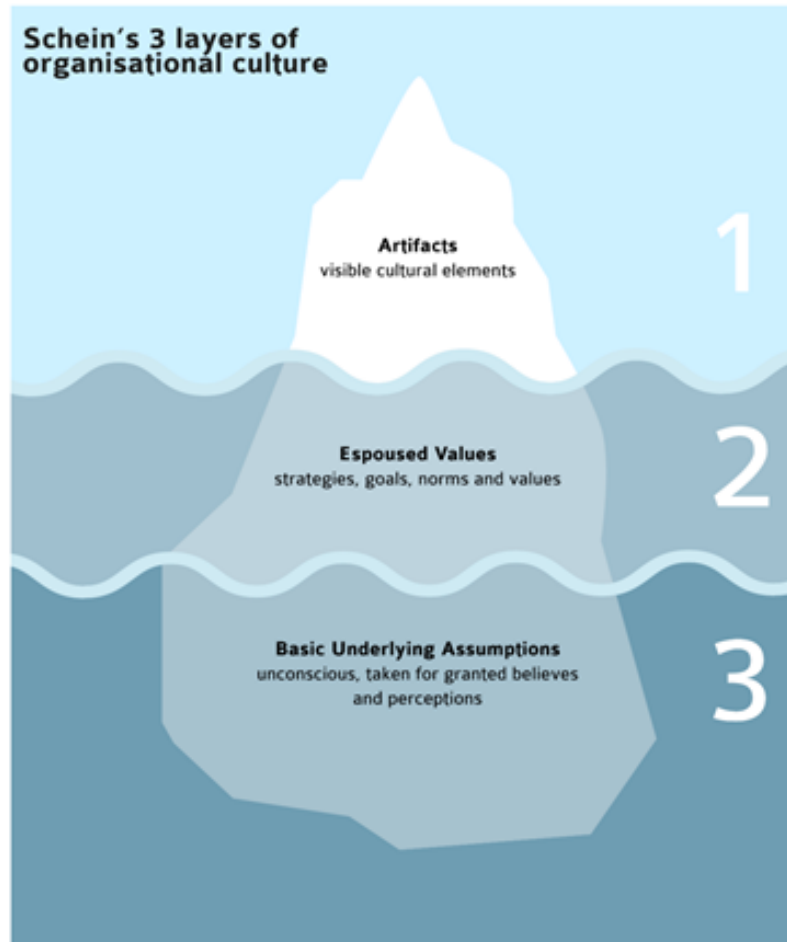
As the digital media landscape is constantly evolving, this course will take a specific interest in understanding the evolution of media technologies and investigate the emergence of older forms

of “new” media, from the original internet to big data, from graphical user interfaces to social media platforms. As we do so, we will focus on how we use digital media and how that use impacts individual identities, connections between people, our knowledge levels, relationships of power, and so on.



Course Objectives

Students will gain an understanding of core concepts of digital content, such as mobility, interactivity, and networking, as well as its technical components and how it impacts communication and information.



- Students will historicize media technologies we consider(ed) "new" media.
- Students will understand and contribute to contemporary debates over changes in identity, sociality, the economy, education, and play associated with the emergence of new media.
- Students will recognize how digital media constantly impacts and/or structures their everyday social interactions, identities, and seemingly mundane or rote behaviors.

SCHEDULE

Week One: What is Culture?

Monday 1/13 Read: Tiffany (2024) Hawk Tuah Wasn't What It Seemed

Thursday 1/16 Read: Schein Three Levels of Culture

Prompt 1: Why do you think Schein places so much importance on physical things?

ARTIFACT EXERCISE

Week Two: Technology Manifestos

Monday 1/20 Read: Barbrook & Cameron (1995) The Californian Ideology &

Andreessen (2023) The Techno-Optimists Manifesto

Thursday 1/23 Read: LaFrance (2024) The Rise of Techno-Authoritarianism

Prompt 2: What do the manifestos tell us about our culture? What are the expectations/fears expressed in the manifestos compared with the promise of our devices?

Week Three: Identity

Monday 1/27 Read: Clarke (2008) Culture and Identity

Thursday 1/30 Read: Waugh (2017) Post-Internet Identity

Prompt 3: Do we have digital identities? How is identity shaped by technology?

Week Four: Labor & Economy

Monday 2/3 Read: Abidin (2017) Family Goals, Brown (2022) Hustle & Hype

Prompt 4: What kind of labor is the influencer performing?

Thursday 2/6 Read: Firer-Blaess & Fuchs Wikipedia: An Info-Communist Manifesto

Prompt 5: What is the economic culture of technology? Who owns knowledge?

Week Five: Algorithmic Culture

Tuesday 2/10 Read: Tarnoff (2023) Weizenbaum's nightmares

Thursday 2/13 Read: Fagone (2021) The Jessica Simulation

Prompt 6: What is the most important impact of algorithms on culture?

SCHEDULE

Week Six: Brubaker

Monday 2/18 Brubaker Seminar: Introduction

Thursday 2/20 Brubaker Seminar: Selves

Week Seven: Theories

Monday 2/24 Doctorow (2023) The 'Enshittification' of TikTok Or how, exactly, platforms die

Thursday 2/27 Tiffany (2021) Maybe You Missed It, but the Internet 'Died' Five Years Ago

Prompt 7: Is this just nostalgic boomers, or is the internet getting worse?

Week Eight: Brubaker

Monday 3/3 Brubaker Seminar: Interactions

Thursday 3/6 **MIDTERM**

Week Nine Tradwives

Monday 3/10 Elmhirst (2024) The Rise and Fall of the Trad Wife

Thursday 3/13 Estey-Burt (2024) Trad wives hearken back

Prompt 8: How do you explain the allure of the trad wife?

Monday 3/17 & Thursday 3/20 SPRING RECESS

Week Ten

Monday 3/24 Brubaker Seminar: Culture

Thursday 3/27 Woodcock & Johnson (2017) Gamification

Prompt 9: Is gamification a culture? What are its harms?

Week Eleven Surveillance Culture

Monday 3/31 Jennings (2023) Should we know where our friends are at all times?

Thursday 4/3 Benjamin (2024) Squeeveillance

Prompt 10: Why does the normalization of surveillance matter?

Week Twelve

Monday 4/7 Brubaker Seminar: Economics

Thursday 4/10 Toner (2018) Exploring the dark-side of fitness trackers

Week Thirteen

Monday 4/14 Brubaker Seminar: Politics

Thursday 4/17 **EASTER**

Week Fourteen

Monday 4/21 **EASTER**

Thursday 4/24 Brubaker Seminar Conclusion

Week Fifteen

Monday 4/28 Conclusion

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.

Effort

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

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS	DUE
Artifact	6	
Culture Exercise	10	
Paper prompts x 10	30	In and after class discussion
Book Seminar x 7	70	Before in class discussion
Midterm	50	
Future of Culture	10	
Final Paper	50	
Participation	24	
Total	250	

The final letter grade for the course is a percentage of your total points, A 94 or above A- 90–93, B+ 87–89, B 83–86, B- 80–82, C+ 77–79, C 73–76

Attendance

Attendance means more than going to class. It requires speaking up in class and group discussions. Attendance-wise, you are allowed to miss TWO classes without a penalty to your grade, exclusive of serious emergencies. (If you are very ill or have extenuating circumstances, you need to be proactive about contacting me. If you do that, make-up assignments are possible—but they MUST be cleared with me first).

3 absences automatically take your final grade down one tier of a grade lower (i.e. from an A- to a B+). **Fordham’s university-wide policy is that 4 unexcused absences result in a failing grade.** It is your responsibility to get readings/ assignments for missed days from other students, and you are encouraged to come to my office to discuss unclear topics.

Please be on time for class and remain for the whole class period. If you are more than 10 minutes late or leave more than 5 minutes early, you will be counted as absent for that class.

Artifact exercise

This exercise aims to bring an artifact (or an image of an artifact) and use it to explain the *espoused values* and basic *underlying assumptions* (check out Schein) of the group to whom it belongs.

Imagine how the artifact may be understood and misunderstood by members and non-members of the culture. Aside from discussing these in class, please submit a 200-400 word explainer to Blackboard.

1. Pick an non-digital artifact that represents a group to which you belong. It needs to be mostly specific or representative to one group. Think of the artifact as pointing to that group. For example, if you see a dog leash, you probably think of a dog or dog owner. The leash represents how we think about dogs (mostly) and how we adapt our laws and values. I could use it to walk an alligator, but that would be weird (unless it's Florida?) 2. Explain what the artifact can 'teach' us about the culture/group to which it belongs



Grading rubric

5-6 points: Exceeds expectations. Unique artifact, clear interpretation of Schein's three levels of culture.

3-4 points: Meets expectations. Artifact less uniquely illustrative of the culture and/or Schein is not explained adequately in relation to the artifact.

1-2 point: Does not meet expectations in effort on artifact or explanation

Culture Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is to begin to understand the recognition and interpretation of culture. For this exercise, you should identify a practice that is common in your culture and explain it to the class. One way of identifying a cultural practice is to imagine that you are explaining why your group (family, team, class, etc.) does something to an intelligent creature from another planet.

The point is not to explain something wildly exotic but to demonstrate that something very ordinary (for the group) can be seen as exotic to everyone else. The minimum length of this exercise is 400 words, and should use Schein's 3 levels of culture as an explanatory tool. Therefore you will need to talk about artifacts, expressed values, and underlying assumptions.

Rubric for culture exercise

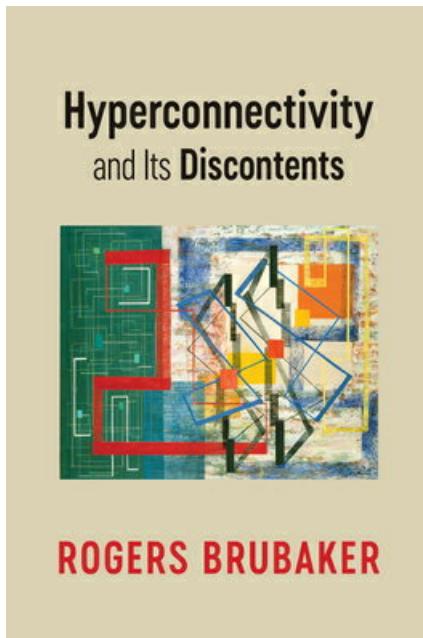
Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs improvement (1)	Points
Clarity & Conciseness	Response is clear, well-organized, and succinct. Writing is direct and to the point, with no unnecessary elaboration.	Response is generally clear but may include a few areas of ambiguity or unnecessary details.	Response is somewhat unclear or overly detailed, which detracts from the main point.	Response is unclear, confusing, or overly wordy, making it hard to follow the main argument.	3
Depth of thought	Demonstrates thoughtful, well-developed ideas with depth and insight.	Provides a solid response, but ideas may be somewhat underdeveloped or lack depth.	Response provides basic ideas, but lacks detail or critical thinking.	Response is superficial or lacks sufficient thought or depth.	4
Support & Justification	Strong support for ideas with clear examples, evidence, or reasoning.	Provides some examples or reasoning, but they may be vague or underdeveloped.	Provides limited or weak support for claims, with little explanation or examples.	Lacks support or justification for ideas, or offers unsupported opinions.	3
Total					10

Prompts

The purpose is to guide your thinking (but not really control it). The idea is that you will read, think individually, and write a 200 word reflection on the paper. These are due after the class where the prompt is in the syllabus as we will be discussing the papers in class. Remember I am interested in knowing your thoughts so participation is really important (and also graded).

Book Seminar

The course is mostly built on research articles other written materials, these are available via Blackboard. However, each semester I like to present a (newer) work that discusses the impacts of technology from one authorial perspective. This semester we will be reading Roger Brubaker *Hyperconnectivity & its Discontents* from 2022.



Think of this exercise as a book club, you will be organized into groups and will be expected to discuss specific sections of the book together before we meet in class.

Things to think about in your group discussion (1) identify the arguments & compare the with the other literature on the topic. (2) What is the author contributing to our understanding. Is it groundbreaking or original? (Why? Why not?) (3) Why would you recommend this book?

Even if nr 1 above may be tricky try to compare the authors arguments with 'established' knowledge (google it, wikipedia it, whats your gut instinct? Use as much text as you need, but at least 400 words.

Midterm

What can I say? It's an exam. 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. Therefore, the exam will NOT be held in class.

Final Paper: Digital Subculture Analysis

The idea is to conduct a short analysis of an internet subculture. For this exercise, you need to choose any internet (or technologically mediated) subculture and use Schein's The Three Levels of Culture to attempt to analyze and explain it.

Therefore, you will give examples of your chosen culture 1. Artifacts, 2. Espoused Beliefs and Values, and 3. Basic Underlying Assumptions. You will also need to explain why you argue this is a subculture as opposed to culture, counterculture, or individuals behaving similarly.

The final paper is an original piece of research. The topic must be within the course's parameters, chosen by the participant, and approved by the instructor. The paper should be double-spaced, 1000 words long, not including footnotes or a bibliography.

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 can 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 high-quality of writing.

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

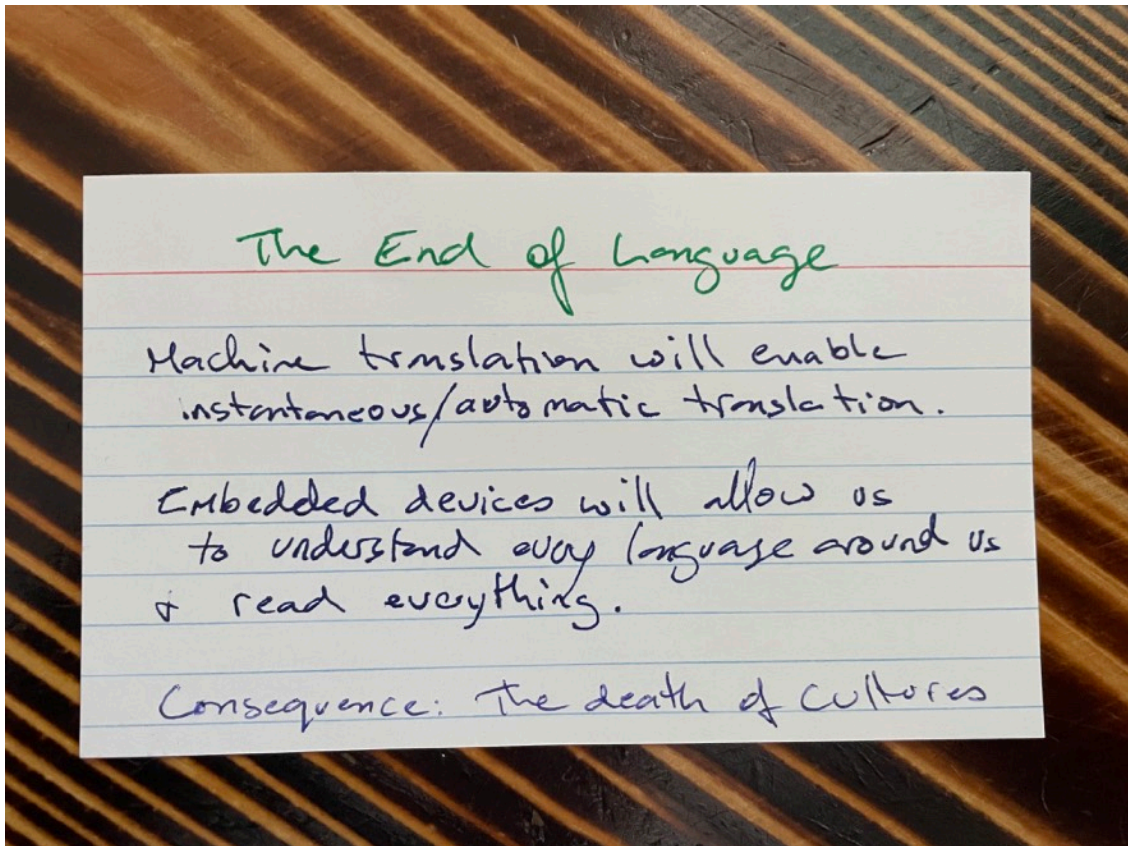


Rubric for final paper

Category	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Needs improvement	Points
Thesis/Argument	Clear, original, and insightful thesis; argument is well-developed and highly compelling.	Clear and relevant thesis; argument is mostly well-developed with minor weaknesses.	Thesis is present but lacks clarity or originality; argument is somewhat developed.	Thesis is unclear, irrelevant, or underdeveloped; weak or missing argument.	10
Introduction	Engaging introduction that clearly presents the topic, context, and thesis.	Introduction is clear and provides relevant context, but could be more engaging.	Introduction is basic, but does not effectively set the stage for the paper.	Introduction is weak, unclear, or missing important context.	5
Evidence	Exceptional use of relevant, credible, and detailed evidence that strongly supports the argument.	Good use of relevant evidence, with some minor gaps or lack of depth.	Some evidence used, but not always relevant, credible, or sufficient to support the argument.	Lacks credible or sufficient evidence; does not support the thesis.	5
Organization	Paper is well-organized with clear, logical progression of ideas; excellent paragraph transitions.	Paper is organized with some logical flow, though transitions could be improved.	Organization is apparent, but the paper lacks clear structure or logical flow.	Poor organization, difficult to follow; paragraphs are poorly structured or disconnected.	5
Critical thinking	Excellent analysis with deep insight; demonstrates critical thinking and engagement with the material.	Good analysis with clear understanding of material; some minor gaps in depth or complexity.	Adequate analysis; relies on summary or surface-level understanding.	Lacks critical analysis; primarily descriptive or lacks depth.	5
Conclusion	Conclusion effectively synthesizes key points and provides strong final insights or implications.	Conclusion summarizes main points but may lack depth or broader implications.	Conclusion restates key points, but lacks synthesis or closure.	Conclusion is weak, vague, or missing important elements.	5
Style & Clarity	Writing is clear, concise, and engaging; highly effective sentence structure and word choice.	Writing is clear and readable, with minor errors in sentence structure or word choice.	Writing is somewhat unclear or verbose; contains frequent awkward phrasing or grammar errors.	Writing is unclear, difficult to read; numerous grammar or style issues.	5
Mechanics (grammar, punctuation, spelling)	Virtually no errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling.	Few minor errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling that do not hinder understanding.	Noticeable errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling that may distract the reader.	Frequent errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling that make the paper difficult to understand.	5
Citation & Formatting	Properly formatted citations in the required style (APA, MLA, etc.); no errors in referencing.	Minor citation or formatting errors, but overall accurate and consistent.	Some errors in citation or formatting; several inaccuracies or inconsistencies.	Major citation or formatting errors; inconsistent or missing citations.	5
Total					50

Future of Digital Cultures

Once we reach this point, you will have a grasp of the concepts of culture and a wide array of dives into different aspects of digital cultures. This final exercise is an attempt at predicting the future. Despite the warning from Niels Bohr (Nobel laureate in Physics and father of the atomic model) that "Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future," we shall attempt to gaze into the future of digital culture. Write your prediction in one sentence on an index card and use the rest to explain what you mean and/or provide arguments. End with a consequence the technology will bring (something like my example here). In class, you will be divided into groups, and each group will pick the prediction they think is best and present it to the class.



Annoying faculty & other advice

I keep a bunch of resources aimed at helping students navigate the more obscure details of academia. Check out [Annoy the faculty](#), which has surprisingly good advice on how to email your professor. Matt Might has [a great page on college](#), and the Reddit thread on [College Classroom Norms](#) has some gems. I have an unfinished page of [Classroom reflections](#) and [teaching & writing](#) resources, which may help combat insomnia...

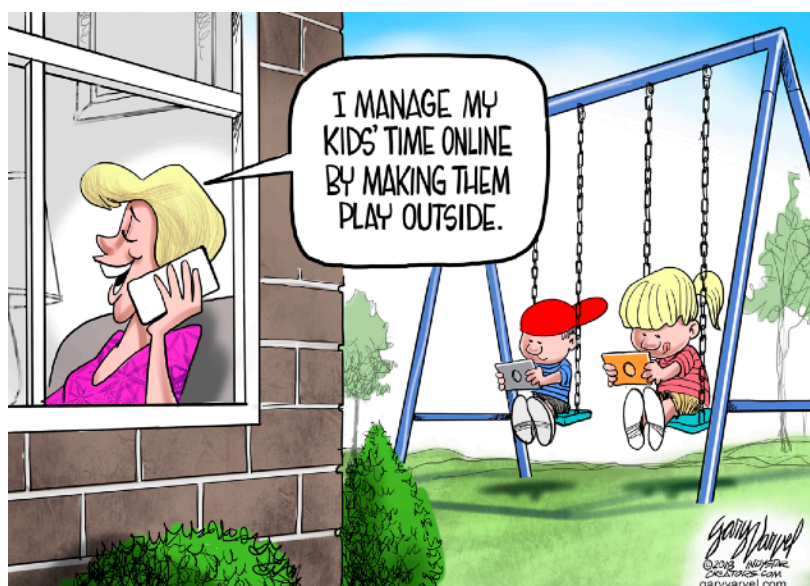
Inclusivity

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; you should feel free to share them as they become relevant to our

class. No student in this class is expected or believed to speak for all group members. If you have made it this far, email me your favorite food, bonus if you include the recipe.

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 for that name to be pronounced correctly. You have the right to be referred to by whatever pronouns you wish. You can 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/>



Academic Integrity

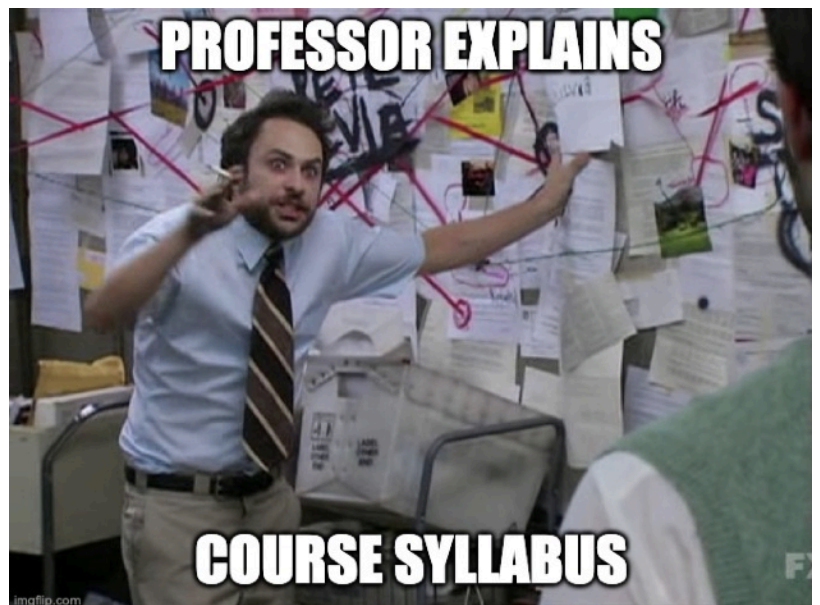
A University, by its nature, strives to foster and recognize the originality of thought. Originality can only be recognized when people acknowledge the sources of ideas or works that are not their own.

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.

AI Tools

You may use AI programs e.g. ChatGPT to help generate ideas and brainstorm. However, you should note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. *Beware that use may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity.*

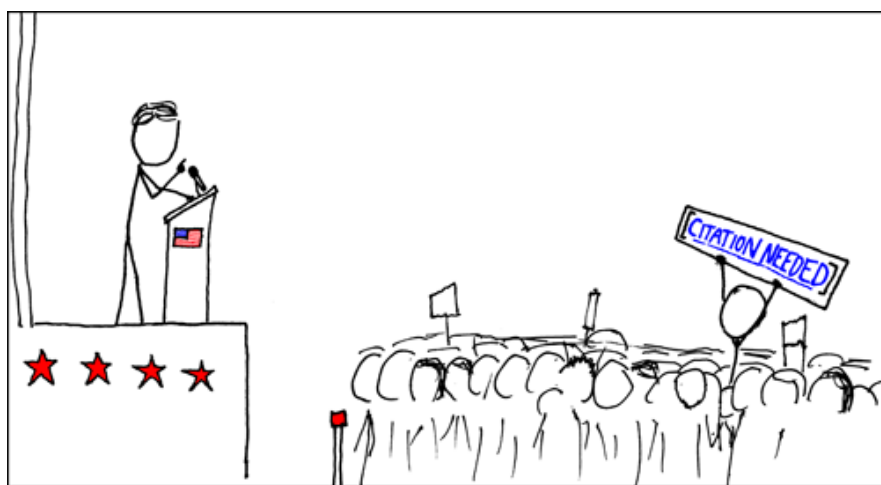
You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor).



Accommodations

The Office of Disability Services at Fordham University helps ensure equal educational access and opportunity for all community members. 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 to develop the 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/

Writing Aid & Writing Center

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 use the Writing Center. For more information about their services, see www.fordham.edu/academics/programs_at_fordham/english/writing_center

me in class taking a picture of the notes that i'll never look at again



Academic Coaching

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

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 department 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.**