

DiKult106  
**Critical Approaches  
to  
Technology  
& Society**



Dr Mathias Klang  
[mathias.klang@uib.no](mailto:mathias.klang@uib.no)  
[www.klangable.com](http://www.klangable.com)  
Classroom: SH Aud A&B

## What is DiKult?

Welcome to DiKult106, a course that explores the connection between technology and society. The basic underlying premise of a course such as this is that technology is not neutral. Technology shapes the ways in which we behave as individuals, groups, and societies. This does not mean technology forces us to behave in specific ways, but it does nudge our behaviors in certain directions. The accumulation of these 'nudges' creates countercultures, subcultures, and some may eventually form part of mainstream culture.

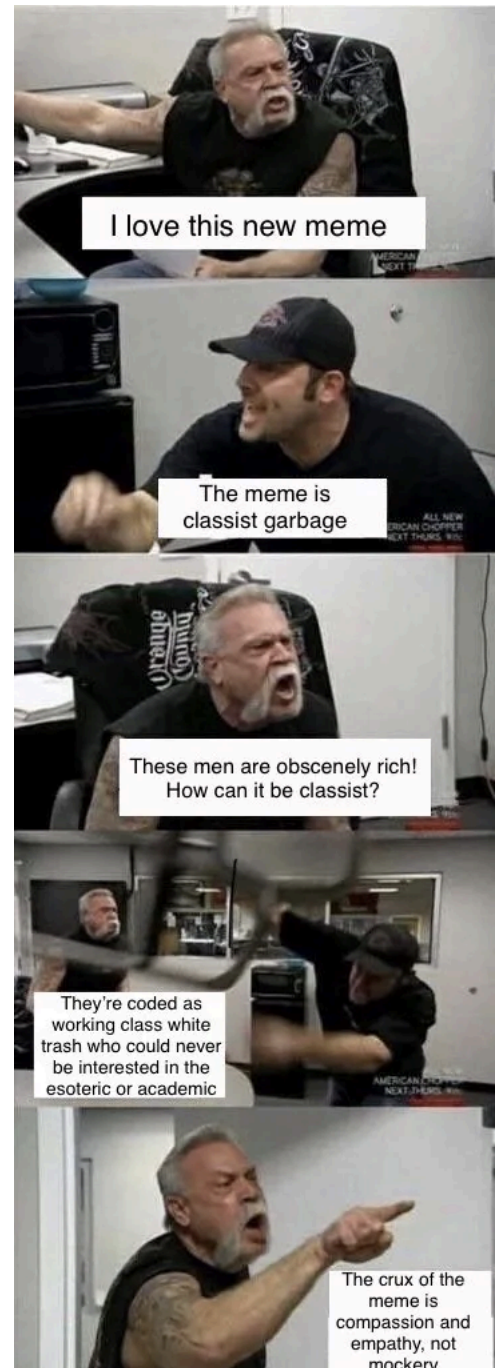
Our exploration this semester will be broken into three interconnected sections: digital culture, surveillance culture, and digital ethics. One way to think of this is to begin with the formation and implication of digital culture: how did we get here, which ideologies guided us, and where are we now? Once established, this will enable us to analyze surveillance capitalism, one of the most significant shifts in economics and lifestyle in recent years brought about by the 'nudges' mentioned above. The course's final section, digital ethics, will introduce tools with which we can evaluate the impacts of technological developments, apps, techniques, and trends.

Through these sections, supported by readings, discussions, lectures, and student submissions, the participants will be guided toward a complex understanding of our digitally mediated reality and be more adept at recognizing and analyzing the issues arising from our technology.

## Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand and contribute to contemporary debates over changes in identity, sociality, the economy, education, and play associated with the emergence of new media.
- Recognize how digital media constantly impact and/or structure their everyday social interactions, identities, and seemingly mundane or rote behaviors.
- Understand the moral dimensions of issues in digital media – including the understanding that not every controversy is a moral one.
- To explore and analyze what privacy is, and should be, in the age of ubiquitous digital technology.
- Recognize the implications of surveillance on everyday life.
- Extend this knowledge and practice to future coursework and beyond.



## Schedule

Week		
33	15/8 Orientation	
34	21/8 What is Culture? How it got digital. Read: Ballmer, Schein	23/8 Manifesto! Read: Marinetti, Barlow, Zuckerberg
35	28/8 What it means to be a bodybuilder Read: Wellman	31/8 Witches of TikTok Read: Miller
36	Writing Culture Paper	Writing Culture Paper
37	11/9 Peer review	14/9 Surveillance Panopticon (Ess chap 2)
38	18/9 Lyon: Convenience/Compliance	21/9 Lyon: Novelty/Normalization
39	25/9 Lyon: Online/Onlife	28/9 Lyon: Total Transparency
40	2/10 Lyon: Revisiting the Gaze	Writing Surveillance paper
41	<b>Fall Break</b>	<b>Fall Break</b>
42	16/10 Peer Review Surveillance	19/10 Ethics: what is it good for? Ess Chap 1
43	23/10 Ess Chapter 6	26/10 Ethics
44	30/10 Ethics	02/11 Ethics Property Ess Chap 3
45	06/11 Ethics Sex Ess Chap 5	No Class
46	Ethics Video	Ethics Video
47	20/11 Video Release	23/11 Video Feedback
48	27/11 Second Peer review?	
	4/12 Exam	

Possibly the best syllabus ever written is [Sonya Huber's Shadow Syllabus](#); it's nothing like a typical syllabus. Read it. You won't regret it.



## Assignments

NAME	Length	CREDITS	DUE
Culture Paper	1000 words		
Culture Revisions	2000 words		
Surveillance Paper	1000 words		
Surveillance Revisions	2000 words		
Digital Ethics Analysis			

## Slack

I really like using Slack as a communications platform in my courses. It is faster, more informal, and fun (?), and it enables you all to get to know each other and help each other answer questions that you may have. So, in DiKult, we will use Slack to post questions, share information, and goof off. Slack is a form of digital culture and we should probably evaluate its ethical implications, but the advantages are that if you have any questions, they will be answered quicker on Slack than via email. Make sure you are on the course slack channels #admin, #media, and #random. You will be given separate instructions for downloading and using Slack.



## Reading & Talking

This course has a lot of reading. Not too much, but still a lot. It is designed to also include a LOT of thinking, participation and discussion. I am very good at talking. I am a professional, I get paid to talk. But this course will only work if you share your ideas and join the discussion. I will talk less, I will set up the discussions, and you will fill it with meaning. I know that you may not enjoy talking in class but this is a "fake it till you make it kind of situation" and I believe in your abilities to do so. In addition to the classroom I encourage you to chat, post, and comment on Slack.

## Culture Paper

The idea is to write a short analysis of a digitally mediated culture. The readings and the lectures will provide you with the tools for analysis. Your work will be to (a) identify an internet culture, (b) write an analysis explaining the culture from its own terms, practices, and ideologies.

This may seem very abstract at the moment but imagine a non-Norwegian being presented with Pinnekjøtt, how would they interpret this meal? What would their understanding of what it means to be Norwegian (or even a bergenser) based off this artifact?

- Papers should be 1000 words not including the references and citations.
- Papers must cite/reference at least 4 academic sources using Chicago Manual of Style.
- Papers must have a "References" section at the end of the paper (again, Chicago Manual of Style)
- Papers do NOT need a title page or abstract -- do not include these



**Refresher:** [You are Not Entitled to Your Opinion](#) ← worth reading.

## Culture Revisions

Your culture paper will be peer-reviewed, and you will then be given the opportunity to revise and re-submit your work based on the reviewers comments. This version should be 2000 words in length.

Writing is hard. Even before you submit your work for peer-review you should have thought a great deal about the ideas you are trying to put forward, the structure of the paper, the language, and the grammar. You should re-read your work. Nobody wants to do this. Not you, not me, not even professional authors. The difference is that the professionals are good because they put in the work.

Ask someone else to read your work before you submit it. Your friends probably don't want to, but I am sure your parents are curious about how you spend your time...

## Surveillance Paper

This paper is an original piece of research dealing with an applied case of privacy and surveillance.

- Papers should be around 1000 words not including the references and citations.
- Papers must cite/reference at least 4 academic sources using Chicago Manual of Style.
- Papers must have a "References" section at the end of the paper (again, Chicago Manual of Style)
- Papers do NOT need a title page or abstract -- do not include these

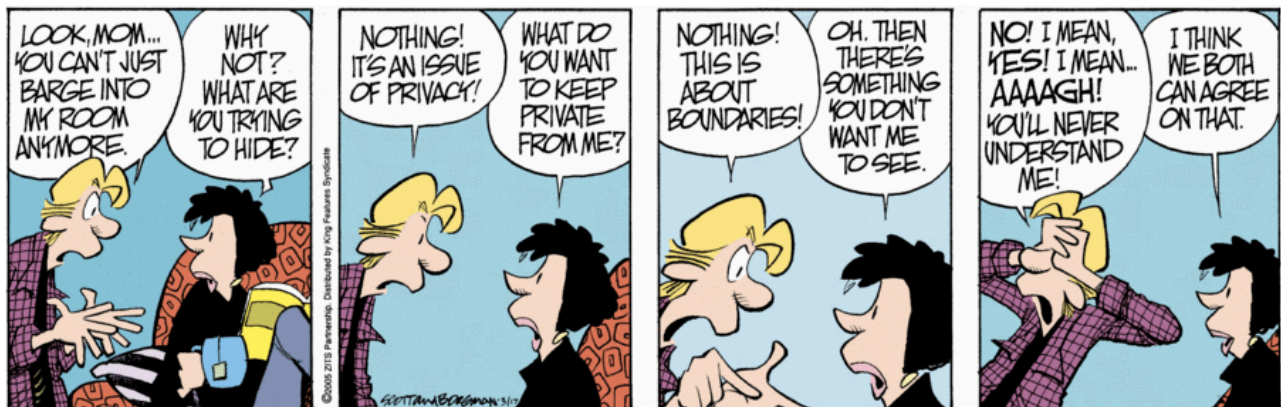
Refresher: [You are Not Entitled to Your Opinion](#) ← worth reading.

## Surveillance Revisions

Your surveillance paper will be peer-reviewed and you will then be given the opportunity to revise and re-submit your work based on the reviewers comments. This version should be 2000 words in length.

Writing is hard. Even before you submit your work for peer-review you should have thought a great deal about the ideas you are trying to put forward, the structure of the paper, the language, and the grammar. You should re-read your work. Nobody wants to do this. Not you, not me, not even professional authors. The difference is that the professionals are good because they put in the work.

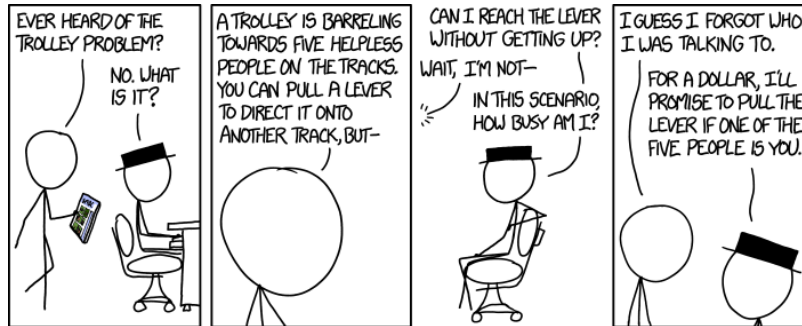
Ask someone else to read your work before you submit it. If you have already abused your parents then how about reading a course mates paper and you can read theirs?



## Digital Ethics

Digital ethics is about thinking in action, about applying ideas in real world situations and reaching conclusions. For this section of the course we will be covering ethical theories and learning how to use them in the analysis of digital technology.

Using we will some of ethical and then move on these in studies you will to



Ess' book cover the main theories quickly to use case where be asked evaluate

technologies, social practices created by technology, and other thorny questions. The great part about technology is that it seems to create an endless amount of ethical questions. For example: should you dox a nazi? Should self driving cars protect passengers or pedestrians? Is downloading course books wrong?

## Digital Ethics Analysis

For your final project of the course you will be working in groups to conduct an ethical analysis of a digital product (it could be an app, platform, game, device, or some other digitally infused artifact). The goal is to use an ethical theory as a method of analysis an attempt to illustrate how the digital product creates or supports ethically dubious values.

This is not intended to be anti-technology. The purpose of a critique is to look at structure, finds what's working and points to the issues it creates. The goal is not to pan, but to demand clarification, better design, and ultimately improve through knowledge.

In order to carry out this project you will need to (1) identify what you want to study, (2) discuss its strengths and weaknesses, and (3) explain your position using the theories in this course.

The final deliverable for this analysis will be a short video documentary covering these points.

## Culture Readings

For this section of the course we will be using research articles (1) to understand the concept of culture, (2) to learn how to analyze culture, and (3) to explore some digitally mediated cultures.

### Lyon

For the surveillance section of the course we will be reading David Lyons book *The Culture of Surveillance*. In this book the author makes an important argument "surveillance is not only 'done to us' – it is something we do in everyday life. We submit to surveillance, believing we have nothing to hide. Or we try to protect our privacy or negotiate the terms under which others have access to our data. At the same time, we participate in surveillance in order to supervise children, monitor other road users, and safeguard our property. Social media allow us to keep tabs on others, as well as on ourselves. This is the culture of surveillance."



The focus of this section of the course will be to obviously understand 'classic' privacy and surveillance but then move into the more complex and interesting culture we inhabit today, in order to understand our own roles in the creation of surveillance cultures.

### Ess

I would like to make a pun  
about philosophy,

**but I Kant.**



For the ethics part of the course we will be using Charles Ess book *Digital Media Ethics*. This book provides us with an accessible theory overview of the schools of ethics and works to help understand the role of ethics as an applied science. Think of ethics as a set of tools that can be used to organize ones thoughts and used to analyze situations around us. Ess' book will show you how those tools can be used and how we may arrive at well grounded standpoints and opinions about the technology that make up our lives.