
ATTENTION AND UBIQUITOUS MEDIA in Spring 2019 (CM3042)

Course Code	CM3042	Professor(s)	Jayson Harsin
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-402
Class Schedule	W: 12:10-15:05 in C-102	Office Hours	12:30-16:30 Tuesday, and by appt.
Credits	4	Email	jharsin@aup.edu
Semester	Spring 2019	Office Tel. Ext.	575

Course Description

Surveillance, Big Data (-mining), Distraction, Attention, Hashtags, likes, tweets—these are the watchwords of many societies today. What power do we have over the social, political, economic and psychological dynamics that they produce or from which they emanate? Scholars as well as practitioners in the marketplace have described attention as the greatest commodity or form of symbolic capital today; that is, it can be converted into financial, political, or social capital/value. This is because in the digital age, the mass audience of the Television, print and radio media era has been fragmented or greatly segmented. No longer can advertisers expect to reach millions of people by buying TV time and space in magazines and newspapers. No longer can politicians or advocates expect to get on the mainstream news agenda (the six or eight o'clock news, etc.) to reach their constituencies or target audiences. However, all of these actors as well as ordinary individuals themselves have the means of cultural media production to address millions, when content goes “viral.” Thus, we speak of an attention economy, where a scarce resource is sought after and exchanged at high value. Knowledge of how content may circulate, what is happening when it “captures” attention, and how it can be used to predict future behavior becomes valuable (even or especially for resisting or living otherwise).

This course addresses the increasing economic, political, and cultural importance of attention in cultures of “ubiquitous computing” (always on, everywhere). In the fragmented media market and audience context, attention is struggled over and sought like never before. The course surveys a broad set of scholarship around three major emphases: (1) cognition and emotion in the rapid-shifting environment; (2) the technological infrastructure of attention, especially algorithms; (3) political economic interests underpinning what gets attention and how is used, shared, or sold. Each topical area will be presented and analyzed in the context of overarching perennial liberal arts questions of power, control, and freedom. At each turn in the course, the course asks: How can we think about power and freedom today? How much control do we have and are we exercising over what we see, hear, feel, and do? How should we strategically communicate to get attention? How might ubiquitous computing be changing our evaluations of friendship, family, citizenship, and intimacy? How might we develop a more critical and empowering relationship about our habits in the wired environment we “inhabit?”

Course Learning Outcomes

Define the concepts “attention economy” and “attention ecology” and explain their importance in contemporary societies

Use empirical studies to explain how and why consumers and “netizens” process information or react to it in ubiquitous computing cultures, especially in terms of attention and decision-making
Note alternatives cross-cultural differences in attention ecologies (and inequalities or value differences underpinning those differences)

Explain the challenge changes in attention and cognition pose for professional and social communicators

Explain the role of emotion and affect in decisions and choices about contemporary media content

Theorize why some content is influential and circulates broadly while other content does not

Defend their own strategic communication choices, based on accumulated course knowledge, in situations that require responses (opportunities and risks, reputation management and advocacy)

Explain how the attention economy functions with regard to the marketplace, the political public sphere, and the social sphere

Explain the attention economy’s implications for human freedom and control thereof

Discuss the study of attention, media, and communication in the context of liberal arts tradition (freedom, power, ethics)

General Education

Course Outline

January

Week 1

Wednesday 23rd - Session 1

TOPICS INTRODUCTION TO COURSE: read syllabus and this short post:

<http://fortune.com/2015/08/12/attention-economy/>

- Session II

Digital Nation, video

Week II

Wednesday 30th - Session I

TOPICS Attention, Control, Digital Culture

READINGS *The Shallows*, Nicholas Carr (2013). Read sections "Hal and Me," 42-49, and 58-62, and

See: <http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/8728-multitasking-not-on-resume.html>

- Session II

TOPICS How we read and think online (questions of power, control, freedom)

READINGS *The Shallows 2*, 77-85, 87-104,);

Recommended short: Daniel Levitin, excerpt from *The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information*

Overload. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/jan/18/modern-world-bad-for-brain-daniel-j-levitin-organized-mind-information-overload>

In CLASS:

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/the-drug-like-effect-of-screen-time-on-the-teenage-brain/>

Is it really changing? <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1073858415595005>

Twitter has changed our brains: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/03/21/the-surprising-truth-about-how-twitter-has-changed-your-brain/>

February

Week III

Wednesday 6th - Session I

TOPICS Cognition, Emotion, Digital Culture

READINGS Atchley and Lane, "Cognition in the Attention Economy" from *Psychology of Learning and Motivation* (2014), 134-170.

[added] <https://www.ama.org/publications/MarketingNews/Pages/feeding-the-addiction.aspx>

updated, internet changing our brains, cognitive offloading: <http://bigthink.com/philip-perry/cognitive-offloading-how-the-internet-is-changing-the-human-brain>

Session II

TOPICS How we read/think online and its effects on sharing and liking (Online news content presentation/structure and readers' online behavior)

READINGS

- "How people read online: why you won't finish this article" by Farhad Manjoo
http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/06/how_people_read_online_why_you_won_t_finish_this_article.html
- Sonya Song, "Sharing Fast and Slow" (on attention and social media "shares") *Nieman Lab*,
<http://www.niemanlab.org/2013/11/sharing-fast-and-slow-the-psychological-connection-between-how-we-think-and-how-we-spread-news-on-social-media/>

Week IV

Wednesday 13h - Session I

TOPICS Speed, Content, Attention Spans

READINGS

- "The Pleasure and Pain of Speed"
(1/23/2014): <http://nautil.us/issue/9/time/the-pleasure-and-pain-of-speed>
- "Cuts in Movies and Their Impact on Memory":
<http://scienceblogs.com/cognitivedaily/2009/07/20/cuts-in-movies-and-their-impac-1/>

RECOMMENDED SHORT: Video Streaming and Viewer Behavior (about Impatience)
<http://www.growthology.org/growthology/2013/01/video-streaming-quality-and-viewer-behavior.html>

- Session II

TOPICS Info Overload

READINGS

- David Grimshaw, "Information Overload," in *International Encyclopedia of Communication*
- Hossein Derakshan, "Iran's blogfather: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are killing the web," http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/dec/29/irans-blogfather-facebook-instagram-and-twitter-are-killing-the-web?CMP=share_btn_tw

Week V

Wednesday 20th - Session I

TOPICS Algorithms and Power

READINGS

- Tarleton Gillespie, (2015) "The Relevance of Algorithms," in *Media Technologies*, ed. Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo Boczkowski, and Kirsten Foot. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press Beer,

In class: http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_slavin_how_algorithms_shape_our_world#t-15158

February Break 15 -17 February (Wednesday-Friday)

Week VI

Wednesday 27th – Session 1

TOPICS Algorithms, attention, democracy

READINGS

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- D. (2013): "Algorithms: Shaping Tastes and Manipulating the Circulations of Popular Culture," in *Popular Culture and New Media*. Palgrave Macmillan. *Browse but be able to talk about: Social Media Spiral of Silence*: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/08/26/social-media-and-the-spiral-of-silence/>
 - Recommended: Sunstein, excerpt from *Republic.com 2.0*
 - *In class*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8ofWfx525s>

Session 2

TOPICS Neuromarketing/Neuropolitics

READINGS

- Kevin Randall (2015) "Neuropolitics, Where Campaigns Try to Read Your Mind," *The New York Times*.
- *Documentary: Neuromarketing*

March

Week VII

Wednesday 6th

Review: period 1; Midterm period 2

Spring Break 4 March - 15 March (Monday- Friday)

March 13 No class

Week VIII

Wednesday 20th - Session I

Session I

TOPICS Attention and Surveillance

READINGS

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- Interview with Mark Andrejevic, "We Are All Lab Rats Online," *PBS Frontline*:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/media/generation-like/mark-andrejevic-we-are-all-lab-rats-online/>
 - "How Companies Learn Your Secrets," *New York Times Magazine*
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/magazine/shopping-habits.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&hp
 - "Facebook's Secret Mood Manipulation Experiment" <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/everything-we-know-about-facebooks-secret-mood-manipulation-experiment/373648/>

- Session II

TOPICS Attention from perspective of Strategic digital communication

READINGS Miller, *Digital Storytelling* (2014): "10, Transmedia Storytelling"; 11, "Guidelines: Creating a New Project"

Week IX

Wednesday 27th - Session I

Ch. 1, Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together*

TOPICS : (in)Attention and Social Neglect (Friends, Couples, Families)

S. Turkle, (2015) "The Flight From Conversation"

<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/10/reclaiming-conversation-sherry-turkle/409273/>

and "May I have your Attention, Please?"

<https://medium.com/life-learning/may-i-have-your-attention-please-19ef6395b2c3#.hsritqwga>

Session II

TOPICS Attention and Ethics Continued

READINGS

April

Week X

Wednesday 3rd - Session I

TOPICS Prosumer Attention and Civil Society

READINGS: Fake News and Kony 2012

Harsin, "Fake News, From Tragedy to Comedy"

Stelter, B. (2012, April 14). The News Cycle, From Fireworks to Fizzle. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/15/sunday-review/the-news-cycle-from-fireworks-to-fizzle.html>

Mogus, J. (2012) "Why your non-profit won't make a KONY 2012," Communicopia. <http://communicopia.com/node/169>

Rainie, L., Hitlin, P., Jurkowitz, M., Dimock, M., & Neidorf, S. (2012, March 15). The Viral Kony 2012 Video. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/03/15/the-viral-kony-2012-video/>

Session II

Case Study: Kony 2012

Week XI -

Wednesday 10th - Session II

TOPICS Attention, Social Movements

READINGS Tufekci (2013) "Not This One" Social Movements, the Attention

Economy, and Microcelebrity Networked Activism," *American Behavioral Scientist*.

- Session II

TOPICS

Attention and Promotional Culture: Pressures to Self-brand, Self-promote

READINGS: Blackboard Pdfs on Promotional Culture and Self-branding

Week XII

Wednesday 17th - Session I

TOPICS Attention, Celebrity, Emotion, Politics

READINGS

Excerpts from P.D. Marshall, *Celebrity*

Session II

TOPICS Attention, History, Consumer Culture

READINGS Jonathan Crary (rest of ch. 1) of *Suspension of*

Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture, 1999, October Books/MIT Press, Cambridge.

Week XIII

Wednesday 24th TOPICS Attention, History, Consumer Culture

READINGS Harsin, *Political Attention*

- Session II

Harsin Continued

May

Week XIV

Wednesday 1 No class, AUP Closed, International Labor Day, Take a look at this:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/may/01/may-day-history-international-workers-day>

Wednesday 8th Last Class

TOPICS Technologies of Resistance? Individual and Collective Solutions

Jennifer Rauch "THE ORIGIN OF SLOW MEDIA" excerpt: "With the term "slow" now established as familiar shorthand for leading a more balanced life (see Honoré, In Praise of Slowness), Slow Media can be understood as both a philosophy and a practice:"

Excerpts from the following (you choose three, any three; they're short)

Finally, there are apps that will help you control your environment such as SelfControl, Freedom, KeepMeOut, Cold Turkey, FocalFilter, FocusMe, Training Wheels, LeechBlock, TinyFilter, Anti-Social, Freedom, and Stay-Focused."

- **READINGS** <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/the-worlds-happiest-man-is-a-tibetan-monk-105980614/?no-ist>
- <http://www.unh.edu/healthyunh/blog/2013/07/recent-study-ties-physical-activity-longer-attention-span>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/feb/08/norman-doidge-brain-healing-neuroplasticity-interview>
- "Meditation can change your brain!" <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A43006-2005Jan2.html>
- Interview with Carl Honore, "In Praise of Slow": <http://www.carlhonore.com/books/in-praise-of-slowness/>
- "What Changes When A School Embraces Mindfulness" http://www2.kqed.org/mindshift/2016/03/30/what-changes-when-a-school-embraces-mindfulness/?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=20160402
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Session II: Review Session, Final Exam Quiz Show, Prizes Awarded

Textbooks

Title	Author	Publisher	ISBN	Required
no books ordered				No

Attendance Policy

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods.

Grading Policy

Midterm 25%

Final 30% or Research Paper (on attention economy and politics; business; social life, couples, friends, family)

Self-Study Journal 15%

Quizzes 10%

Participation 10% (check AUP email daily!!!!!!)

Presentation 10%

Other
