CMS.998/CMS.600: New Media Literacies
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Lecture Notes

Session 1, 2/7/07

- Class introductions
  - Graduate and undergraduate students from Harvard, MIT, Comparative Media Studies, with current and previous research in new media literacies, video games, computer science, cell phones, massively multiplayer online games education, and various other fields

- Professor introduction
  - I'm trained in literacy – that's my main background
  - Last fall I taught a class on video games
  - I want to have a lot of active discussions in this course

- Syllabus
  - I've been looking forward to teaching a class like this for a long time
  - We should all be able to collaborate, share, and learn from each other
    - It should always be a committed discussion
  - The theme of the course is literacy and new media
  - We'll start out reading Henry Jenkins
    - He's a well known scholar in film and new media studies
    - Under Henry Jenkins the CMS program is working on a project funded by the MacArthur foundation on a project for children's education in new media literacy
      - Video blogging, wikipedia, providing kids with a practical context to work with these tools
    - What are the implications of these new media for the next generation of learning
    - White paper
  - Time's person of the year from 2006: You, participating in interactive media
    - We'll talk a bit about the implications of this
  - Then we'll go back to Plato, and really look at the history of media studies, where it comes from, and go from there
  - The so called myth of literacy
    - We'll challenge this notion
  - "Why Johnny Can't Write," "Why Heather Can Write"
  - New media studies, multi-modality, superheroes
  - This stuff is really, really cutting edge right now – it's coming out as we speak
  - We'll be providing a theoretical background and context for the new practices that are going on, with YouTube, MySpace, etc.

- We need to understand and articulate *why* these things are interesting, not just *that* they're interesting
  - We'll start class each day with a video, clip, story, meme, etc, and discuss it
    - (a meme is like a unit of cultural exchange, a viral social gene)

- We'll have a Facebook group as a class
  - We'll exchange IM names, we can patch people in on video on occasion if you can't make it to class, or have a video conversation outside of class
  - We'll use the facebook group to post the videos and other items that we use in class, so that we have a record

- YouTube video clip discussion

- Website example: some people in San Francisco who like to play WarCraft were looking for a roommate, and they posted a fun artistic ad on Craig's list with photos, WarCraft images, and a $700 monthly "subscription" fee

- Class website

- There will be some people auditing the course, and coming in sometimes just for specific topics

- We'll talk about copyright, fair use, creative commons, etc

- Some useful websites on new media literacy

- How teachers and schools usually approach media literacy
  - Often they see their role as mitigating and guarding the potential dangers and violence of these media for children
  - We'll be calling that approach into question

- Looking at the syllabus, you can see how there are weeks called Learning Weeks, when there is no required reading
  - You'll be required during those weeks to teach the class something about a new media literacy
  - You'll be working collaboratively with another student
  - You won't be expected to be on your own studying something you're not familiar with
  - But you will be required to create a lesson plan that reflects on the theories of literacy that we're addressing in class, and teaches us something that we don't already know
  - We need to ourselves use all of these new media and become personally literate in them
  - The topic you choose could be theoretical, technical, practical, or otherwise

- You should really think of this opportunity as a teacher and use it to reflect on the learning theories that we've discussed

- Student interests: students volunteer new media items that they're particularly interested in and familiar with
  - Video game forums
    - Policies on images for sites with an audience containing a lot of children
  - Mobile technology
  - Gaming in general
  - Blogging
  - Building and designing games
  - Digital photography
  - Fan culture, fan communities
  - Gender presentation online, and how that corresponds to a larger presentation of self in virtual spaces, and continuity of identity
  - Digital-audio projection

- Regional and social development of media literacy:
  - Facebook might be more common in colleges, while MySpace is used in high schools

- YouTube Video clip

- For Monday, take a look at the white paper from Jenkins