Intro to Media Studies

Course prefix: LMC

Course number: 2400

Section: B1

CRN (you may add up to five):
30325

Instructor First Name: Watson

Instructor Last Name: Hartsoe

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

Media shapes reality—but who shapes media? Humans are the first medium; every story, symbol, and system shapes who we are. This course examines the nature of media, its co-evolution with cultural systems, its role in power, and its influence on our future. From ancient myths to AI-generated worlds, we will explore how media define humanity and expand (or limit) what is possible.

Course Overview

If humans are the first medium, every story, symbol, and system rewires us—constitutions, scriptures, and memes alike are program updates to *human*. This course examines media as an active force that shapes perception, distributes power, and scripts the future. We will investigate its nature, its entanglement with consciousness, and its capacity to redraw reality, tracing how media from ancient myths to AI-generated worlds define humanity and set the boundaries of the possible. Media theory is not observation; it is intervention. You are expected to engage fully with readings, discussions, and projects as live parts of a shared system; contribute to culture by creating work that did not exist before; think critically and act deliberately by testing frameworks, questioning assumptions, and tracking consequences; and work the loop—readings, assignments, rubrics, and mood tracking feeding and depending on each other. By the end of this course, you will be able to analyze media as both a tool for thought and a cultural system; trace its co-evolution with consciousness, power, and possibility; apply theoretical frameworks to current and emerging media forms; and create media artifacts that actively intervene in cultural narratives.

Course learning outcomes:

How the Course Works

Think of this class as a living loop:

1. Readings introduce concepts and perspectives.
2. Assignments transform those concepts into original work.
3. Rubrics clarify expectations and evaluate outcomes.
4. Mood Tracking captures our collective state and informs adjustments.

This cycle repeats—each stage feeding the next—so the course evolves as both a learning environment and a cultural system.

Grade Breakdown:

- Weekly Reading Responses: 25%
- Discussion Leader: 20%
- Short Paper 1 (Media-History): 15%
- Short Paper 2 (Spacing/Presence): 15%
- Final Project (Sankofa Futures): 25%

The Course Journey: 6 Acts of Discovery

Meaning is a provisional pattern, [stabilizing] through repeated <practice>: <text> → <code> → <interface> → <platform> → <public> → <culture> → <human> → <text> *Meaning is never fixed; it's always [deferred], [re-staged], and [remediated] by media we both produce and are produced by.*

1. **Act I: Origins — Humans Were Always Media (Wks 2-4)**

- **Stakes:** Identity. **Core Idea:** We didn't get media — we became them. *Media made us human.*

2. **Act II: Seeing Like a Medium (Wks 5-7)**

- **Stakes:** Reality, belonging, perception. **Core Idea:** Every apparatus tells us what is real. Cameras, broadcasts, feeds: each claims objectivity, each encodes bias. *Every frame is already a program.*

3. **Act III: Sensing and Ritualizing (Wk 8)**

- **Stakes:** Mind, attention, knowledge. **Core Idea:** Media retrain our bodies — our listening, our silence, our rituals of belonging. *Attention is not natural; it's engineered.*

4. **Act IV: Computation and Futurity (Wks 9-11)**

- **Stakes:** Your future. **Core Idea:** Once media compute, they stop reflecting and start generating. Simulations, games, design fictions: *the future is no longer predicted — it is prototyped.*

5. **Act V: Haunted Presents (Wks 12-14)**

- **Stakes:** Time, memory, kinship. **Core Idea:** Reproduction didn't kill aura, it moved it. Media fold time, carrying ghosts forward and canceling futures before they arrive. *The past is never past; the future is never free.*

6. **Act VI: Exhibition / Accountability (Wk 15)**

- **Stakes:** Responsibility. **Core Idea:** Meaning is provisional, staged in publics. *To exhibit is to take responsibility for a world.*

Guiding Frameworks: Arcs & Critical Questions

1. **Nature of Media:** How do *forms* & *systems* of media reshape perception, communication, & 'reality'?
2. **Media, Power, & Construction:** How do media encode, transmit, & contest power, ideology, & identity?
3. **Temporality, Memory, & Future-Making:** How do media transform time/memory, & what ethical responsibilities in *designing* futures?
4. **Human/Machine Co-Evolution:** As humans & AI co-evolve, how are intelligence, creativity, identity, & 'kinship' redefined?

Required course materials:

Act I — Origins & Human-Media Co-Evolution (Weeks 2-4)

Stakes: Your identity. **Core Idea:** Every story, symbol, system doesn't just reflect — it *makes* us. Media are human "program updates." **Your Task:** As a primal storyteller, bind people with words that outlive you, making a world. *You don't just use media — you are media. Every story, meme, and TikTok is a ritual shaping what being human means.*

Week 2: Origins — When Humans Became Media

Focus: Nature of Media; Human/Machine Co-Evolution. | **Theme:** Humans Were Always Media.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 2) — Thu, 01/15 @ midnight.

Session 3: Tue, 01/13 | When People Became Media: From Gatekeepers to Viral Editors

Core Idea: Networked publics make each person a node, unsettling authority. **Key Question:** How do media technologies alter *who can author* and *what can be thought*? **Prompt:** Compare Miroshnichenko's "publicators" with Victor's "media for thinking the unthinkable."

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT1.W2.S3.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Miroshnichenko, Human as Media: Emancipation of](#) Authorship
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT1.W2.S3.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Victor, Media for Thinking the Unthinkable](#)

Session 4: Thu, 01/15 | The Way of the Vibe Coder: Culture, Media, and the Making of "Man"

Core Idea: "What is man?" is "Through what code/medium are we written?" **Key Question:** Culture is human software, re-coded by new media, making the "message" the architect of reality.

Prompt: Using McLuhan/Geertz, discuss how a medium reshapes "man." How does Rick Rubin's "Way of Code" illuminate this?

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT1.W2.S4.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Geertz, Concept of Culture on Concept of Man](#)
    - ACT1.W2.S4.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [McLuhan, Medium Is the Message (excerpt)](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT1.W2.S4.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Rubin, The Way of Code](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 2) — Thu, 01/15 @ midnight.

Week 3: Semiotics, Language, and World-Making

Focus: Nature of Media; Human/Machine Co-Evolution. | **Theme:** Myth as Operating System.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 3) — Thu, 01/22 @ midnight.

Session 5: Tue, 01/20 | Myth Engines: Why News and Wrestling Tell the Same Story

Core Idea: Myth is the operating system of modern media. **Key Question:** Language is generative; it actively brings worlds into being. **Prompt:** Barthes (wrestling) + Ptah (words) + AI "world models": how does language make worlds?

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT1.W3.S5.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Barthes, How to Read Signs in News](#)
    - ACT1.W3.S5.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Barthes, World of Wrestling](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT1.W3.S5.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [LLMs, From Word Models to World Models](#)
    - ACT1.W3.S5.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Brier, Ptah Creating World with Words](#)
    - ACT1.W3.S5.B.3 (DL: [ ]) [Memphite Theology, Shabaka Stone & Intro](#)

Session 6: Thu, 01/22 | The Medium as Operator: From Ritual Belonging to Technical Systems

Core Idea: Media don't just transmit messages; they script social life. **Key Question:** Are media cultural rituals (Carey) or deterministic systems (Kittler)? How does this inform AI text–image?

Prompt: Compare Carey's "ritual view" with Kittler's materialist view. Apply to "operative ekphrasis" in AI.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT1.W3.S6.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Carey, Cultural Approach to Communication](#)
    - ACT1.W3.S6.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT1.W3.S6.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Keats, Ode on a Grecian Urn](#)
    - ACT1.W3.S6.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Bajohr, Operative Ekphrasis](#)
    - ACT1.W3.S6.B.3 (DL: [ ]) [Wild, Say What You See](#)
    - ACT1.W3.S6.B.4 (DL: [ ]) [Apollinaire, Poet Who Painted with Words](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 3) — Thu, 01/22 @ midnight.

Week 4: Digital Media Logics: Transparency and Layers

Focus: Nature of Media. | **Theme:** Immediacy, Hypermediacy, and Remediation.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 4) — Thu, 01/29 @ midnight.

Session 7: Tue, 01/27 | Windows & Mirrors: The Special Effect of Immediacy

Core Idea: All "immediacy" is a special effect, remediating what came before. **Key Question:** New media oscillate between transparent immediacy and hypermediated self-awareness. **Prompt:** Analyze a digital medium (social media, game UI) for immediacy, hypermediacy, remediation (Bolter & Grusin), and closure (McCloud).

- Side A Readings:

- ACT1.W4.S7.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Bolter & Grusin, Immediacy, Hypermediacy, and](#) Remediation
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT1.W4.S7.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [McCloud, Understanding Comics (ch. 1–3)](#) Guest: Jay Bolter (Q&A).

Session 8: Thu, 01/29 | Aura After Copies: The Angel of History Meets the Algorithm

Core Idea: Reproduction doesn't kill aura; it relocates it, shaping memory and progress.
Key Question: Algorithmic reproduction demands new authenticity, memory, and progress.

Prompt: Using Benjamin ("Work of Art," "Thesis IX"), discuss how mechanical to algorithmic reproduction changes aura/historical consciousness.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT1.W4.S8.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Benjamin, Work of Art in Age of Mech. Repro.](#)
    - ACT1.W4.S8.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Benjamin, Thesis IX: Angelus Novus](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT1.W4.S8.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Video Essay, Angel of History](#)
    - ACT1.W4.S8.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Stanley, "Work of Art in Age of Algo. (Re)production"](#) Guest: Ben Brewer (Memory, media, temporality).

Due: Reading Response (Wk 4) — Thu, 01/29 @ midnight.

Act II — Seeing Like a Medium (Weeks 5–7)

Stakes: Reality, belonging, perception. **Core Idea:** Every medium tells us what is real. Cameras, broadcasts, feeds — each claims objectivity, each encodes bias. Media define what is seen, heard, and valued, shaping both cultural consensus and individual experience. **Your Task:** Unpack the codes embedded in images, popular culture, and soundscapes, revealing how they construct our shared reality.

Week 5: The Photographic Image: Reality, Illusion, and Code

Focus: Nature of Media; Media, Power, & Social Construction. | **Theme:** Photography & the Frame.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 5) — Thu, 02/05 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 9: Tue, 02/03 | Caves of Light: How Photography Rewrote Reality

Core Idea: Photography frees us from reality by convincing us we've captured it. **Key Question:** All media create illusions of presence; "IRL fetish" is paradoxically born from

seeking the unmediated.

Prompt: Compare Bazin's "ontology" with Sontag's framing. How does Jurgenson's "IRL fetish" expand or challenge these?

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT2.W5.S9.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Sontag, In Plato's Cave](#)
    - ACT2.W5.S9.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Bazin, Ontology of Photographic Image](#)
- Side B Readings: (No additional readings for this session)

Session 10: Thu, 02/05 | To Shoot Is to Program: Flusser's Camera Rules

Core Idea: To take a photograph is to follow a program. **Key Question:** Photos are outputs of a technological program, making even "IRL" experience mediated/coded. **Prompt:** Using Flusser's "coded system," analyze how a photographic practice (filters, surveillance) distorts perception. Connect to Jurgenson's online/offline.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT2.W5.S10.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Flusser, Towards a Philosophy of Photography](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT2.W5.S10.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Jurgenson, The IRL Fetish](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 5) — Thu, 02/05 @ 11:59 PM.

Week 6: Media, Power, and the Politics of Representation

Focus: Media, Power, & Social Construction; Human/Machine Co-Evolution. | **Theme:** Encoding Bias, Decoding Ideology.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 6) — Thu, 02/12 @ 11:59 PM.

Due: Short Paper 1: Media-History Case Study — Tue, 02/17 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 11: Tue, 02/10 | Encoding, Decoding, and the Politics of the Popular

Core Idea: Encoding aims at control, but decoding organizes culture. **Key Question:** Media perpetuate or challenge ideologies via their "grammar" of representation. **Prompt:** Using Hall's encoding/decoding, analyze algorithmic bias (Buolamwini). What challenges for oppositional readings when the encoder is an algorithm?

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT2.W6.S11.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Hall, Encoding/Decoding in TV Discourse](#)
    - ACT2.W6.S11.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Hall, Race, Gender, Class in Media](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT2.W6.S11.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Buolamwini, AI, Ain't I a Woman?](#)

- ACT2.W6.S11.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Film, Coded Bias](#)
- ACT2.W6.S11.B.3 (DL: [ ]) [Buolamwini & Gebru, Gender Shades](#)

Session 12: Thu, 02/12 | The Popular as Battleground: Whose Stories Stick?

Core Idea: The popular is what power cannot stabilize, not just what people like. **Key Question:** Popular culture is struggle (Hall); media bias (Innis) shapes enduring stories. How to design media for the deep future? **Prompt:** Analyze a contemporary "popular" phenomenon via Hall + Innis. Consider 10,000-year endurance.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT2.W6.S12.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Hall, Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular"](#)
    - ACT2.W6.S12.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Innis, The Bias of Communication](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT2.W6.S12.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Gaiman, How Stories Last](#)
    - ACT2.W6.S12.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [99% Invisible, Ten Thousand Years](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 6) — Thu, 02/12 @ 11:59 PM.

Due: Short Paper 1: Media-History Case Study — Tue, 02/17 @ 11:59 PM.

Week 7: The Sensory World: Soundscapes, Orality, and Perception

Focus: Nature of Media; Human/Machine Co-Evolution. | **Theme:** Listening as Interface.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 7) — Thu, 02/19 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 13: Tue, 02/17 | Tongues Before Text: Orality, Memory, and the Sounding World

Core Idea: Literacy is a cognitive plugin replacing memory with inscription. **Key Question:** Consciousness is shaped by media (Ong), soundscapes (Schafer), and now artificial sonic intelligence. **Prompt:** Compare Ong's "primary orality" and Schafer's "soundscape." How do AI sounds reshape listening/world experience?

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT2.W7.S13.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Ong, Orality and Literacy (ch. 1)](#)
    - ACT2.W7.S13.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Schafer, The Soundscape](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT2.W7.S13.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [99% Invisible, Ep 15: Sound of Artificial World](#)
    - ACT2.W7.S13.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Herndon, PROTO](#)
    - ACT2.W7.S13.B.3 (DL: [ ]) [Haskell, When Earth Started to Sing](#)

Session 14: Thu, 02/19 | Silence Has Rules: Sound, Absence, and the Shape of Attention

Core Idea: Silence is a medium with laws structuring how we listen/belong. **Key Question:** How do different media environments choreograph attention through sound and silence? **Prompt:** Analyze a media form/space (podcast, silent film) for how it uses sound/silence to guide perception/attention/connection (Cage, Sterne).

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT2.W7.S14.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Cage, Silence](#)
    - ACT2.W7.S14.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Sterne, The Audible Past](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT2.W7.S14.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Sapir/Whorf, Status of Linguistic Relativity](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 7) — Thu, 02/19 @ 11:59 PM.

Act III — Sensing and Ritualizing (Week 8) (Week 8)

Stakes: Mind, attention, and the architecture of knowledge. **Core Idea:** Media retrain our bodies and minds — engineering how we listen, when we stay silent, and the rituals that bind belonging. Attention isn't natural; it's designed.

Your Task: Uncover the hidden curricula of digital platforms, showing how their logics shape our cognition, focus, and collective patterns of thought.

Week 8: Expanding Cognition: From Memex to Attention Economy

Focus: Nature of Media; Media, Power, & Social Construction; Human/Machine Co-Evolution. | **Theme:** Media as Cognitive Extension.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 8) — Thu, 02/26 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 15: Tue, 02/24 | Trails Before Links: Bush, Hypertext, and the Technotext

Core Idea: The memex was about association as interface. **Key Question:** How do Bush's "memex" and Nelson's hypertext vision reshape human intelligence? **Prompt:** Using Bush/Nelson, analyze a digital platform (Wikipedia, Notion) as an "extension of mind." How does its design influence thought/memory?

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT3.W8.S15.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Bush, As We May Think](#)
    - ACT3.W8.S15.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Nelson, Literary Machines (Ch. 2)](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT3.W8.S15.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Herzog, Lo and Behold](#)

Session 16: Thu, 02/26 | Custodians & Feeds: The Hidden Curricula of Platforms

Core Idea: Moderation is the hidden curriculum of the internet. **Key Question:** How do algorithmic feeds and moderation train us in valid speech, creativity, and belonging? **Prompt:** Using Gillespie/Conte, analyze a platform's moderation/discovery. Connect to attention economy (Scanland) and individualism (Curtis).

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT3.W8.S16.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Gillespie, Custodians of the Internet](#)
    - ACT3.W8.S16.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Conte, Death of the Follower](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT3.W8.S16.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Curtis, Can't Get You Out of My Head (Ep 6)](#)
    - ACT3.W8.S16.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Ezra Klein Show, How Attention Economy Devours](#) Gen Z

Due: Reading Response (Wk 8) — Thu, 02/26 @ 11:59 PM.

Act IV — Computation and Futurity (Weeks 9-11)

Stakes: Your future. **Core Idea:** If code generates worlds, who writes the rules we'll live by? **Your Task:** As an algorithm-age designer, build rules that make futures feel playable.

Week 9: Computation and Futurity (cont.)

Focus: Media as Play & Persuasion: Cybernetics, Games, and the Brain.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 9) — Thu, 03/05 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 17: Tue, 03/03 | Procedural Arguments: When Rules Persuade

Core Idea: Games persuade by what they let us do, not what they show. **Key Question:** How do Youngblood's "expanded cinema" and Bogost's "procedural rhetoric" show that rules argue more powerfully than images? **Prompt:** Apply "procedural rhetoric" to *Everything*. Relate to earlier cybernetic/algorithmic moving-image lineage.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT4.W9.S17.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Youngblood, Expanded Cinema (selections)](#)
    - ACT4.W9.S17.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Bogost, "Procedural Rhetoric" (chapter overview)](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT4.W9.S17.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [OReilly, Everything (official site)](#)
    - ACT4.W9.S17.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Ars Technica, Sunspring (AI-written short)](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 9) — Tue, 03/03 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 18: Thu, 03/05 | Eyes That Organize Desire: Cinema and the Gaze

Core Idea: Mainstream cinema is an algorithm for desire. **Key Question:** Where do "gaze," attention design, and neuro-cinematic control intersect in film/games, and how are counter-gazes coded?

Prompt: Using Mulvey, analyze how one film/game organizes looking. Include a title-sequence/VFX that trains attention.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT4.W9.S18.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT4.W9.S18.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Art of the Title, Saul Bass designer page](#)
    - ACT4.W9.S18.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Art of the Title, Westworld titles](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 9) — Thu, 03/05 @ 11:59 PM.

Week 10: Computation and Futurity (cont.)

Focus: Human-Machine Co-Evolution: Technogenesis and Thinking Machines.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 10) — Thu, 03/12 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 19: Tue, 03/10 | Reading with Machines: Cognition in the Digital Age

Core Idea: We're already hybrid readers (close/hyper/machine). **Key Question:** How does technogenesis (Hayles) reshape cognition/labor as AI scales? What do we gain/lose?
Prompt: Use Hayles + one artifact (Grey/Cheng) to map a concrete cognitive or labor shift you've observed.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT4.W10.S19.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Hayles, How We Think (Ch.1 "Digital Media &](#) Contemporary Technogenesis")
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT4.W10.S19.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Grey, Humans Need Not Apply](#)
    - ACT4.W10.S19.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Cheng, Life After BOB: The Chalice Study](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 10) — Tue, 03/10 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 20: Thu, 03/12 | The Imitation Game: Conversation as Interface

Core Idea: Asking if machines "think" redesigns the medium of dialogue. **Key Question:** What does the Turing Test reveal about intelligence as a *media* problem (performance, interface, genre)?

Prompt: Read Turing + view 1968 film. Argue what kind of *conversation* should count as intelligence today.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT4.W10.S20.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"](#) (Mind)
    - ACT4.W10.S20.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [1968 film, "THE THINKING MACHINE" (NJ Bell /](#) MIT)
- Side B: (Short Paper 2: Spacing/Presence Analysis assigned today.)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 10) — Thu, 03/12 @ 11:59 PM.

Week 11: Computation and Futurity (cont.)

Focus: Speculative Design & Future-Making: Critical & Community Approaches.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 11) — Thu, 03/19 @ 11:59 PM.

Due: Short Paper 2 — Thu, 03/19 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 21: Tue, 03/17 | Diegetic Prototypes: Futures You Can Hold

Core Idea: Objects can argue a future without saying a word. **Key Question:** How do diegetic prototypes (design fiction) provoke ethics/policy more effectively than white papers? **Prompt:** Analyze one design-fiction artifact (Bleecker, Dunne/Raby, or *Selfish Ledger*). What future does it *argue* into being—and for whom?

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT4.W11.S21.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Bleecker, "Design Fiction" (PDF)](#)
    - ACT4.W11.S21.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Dunne & Raby, Speculative Everything (Ch.1 PDF)](#)
    - ACT4.W11.S21.A.3 (DL: [ ]) [Google X, The Selfish Ledger (video)](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT4.W11.S21.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [DiSalvo, Adversarial Design](#)
    - ACT4.W11.S21.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [MIT Media Lab, Shelley (AI horror)](#)
    - ACT4.W11.S21.B.3 (DL: [ ]) [Blade Runner 2049 , "Memory Maker" clip](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 11) — Tue, 03/17 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 22: Thu, 03/19 | Community Signal: Local Futures, Afrokosmic Media

Core Idea: Futures scale when they start small and stay situated. **Key Question:** How do community-rooted practices (Afrofuturist/queer ecologies) build durable futures beyond extractive tech? **Prompt:** Draft a *local* diegetic prototype (policy, object, ritual) using Sankofa principles and "real-fictional entanglements."

- Side A Readings:

- ACT4.W11.S22.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Exhibition, KAOS THEORY: Ben Caldwell](#)
- ACT4.W11.S22.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Baumann et al., Sankofa City (community AR](#) futures)
- Side B Readings:
  - ACT4.W11.S22.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Biggs, "Fabulating Bog Girl…" (CHI '24)](#)
  - ACT4.W11.S22.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Wong et al., "Real-Fictional Entanglements…" (DIS](#) '17)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 11) — Thu, 03/19 @ 11:59 PM.

Due: Short Paper 2 — Thu, 03/19 @ 11:59 PM.

🏖️ Spring Break — March 23-27, 2026

No classes this week. Enjoy the break and prepare for the final stretch!

Act V — Haunted Presents & Ethical Futures (Weeks 12-14)

Stakes: Time, memory, and kinship. **Core Idea:** Media fold time, carrying ghosts and canceling futures. Authenticity, memory, and ethics are redefined by new forms of reproduction and interaction. **Your Task:** Read what the past left unfinished via remix, Afrofuturist myth, or uncanny AI image. Grapple with the ethical implications of co-existing with intelligent machines and the shaping of future realities. *If media fold time, the fight is over which pasts and presents remain audible.*

Week 12: Haunted Presents & Ethical Futures (cont.)

Focus: Hauntings, Hyperstitions, and Sympathetic Worlds.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 12) — Thu, 04/02 @ 11:59 PM.

Due: Project Proposal — Thu, 04/02 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 23: Tue, 03/31 | Haunting the Future: Afrofuturism, Hauntology, and the Uncanny

Core Idea: The future is always haunted; what haunts depends on whose time has been broken. **Key Question:** How do Freud's "uncanny" and Fisher's "crackle" intersect with Afrofuturism/hyperstition in tech futures? **Prompt:** Using Freud/Fisher, analyze *Black Metal* or Okorafor's *Mother of Invention*. How do they stage hauntings? Where does hyperstition turn fiction into reality?

- Side A Readings:
  - ACT5.W12.S23.A.1 (DL: [ ]) Black Metal / Odyssey of Imagination
  - ACT5.W12.S23.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Fisher, Metaphysics of Crackle](#)
  - ACT5.W12.S23.A.3 (DL: [ ]) [Freud, The Uncanny](#)
- Side B Readings:
  - ACT5.W12.S23.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Short Prehistory of CCRU](#)

- ○ ACT5.W12.S23.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Okorafor, Mother of Invention](#)
  - ○ ACT5.W12.S23.B.3 (DL: [ ]) [CCRU as Philosophy in Digital World](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 12) — Tue, 03/31 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 24: Thu, 04/02 | Sympathetic Interfaces: Magic Rules Still Rule

Focus: Hauntings, Hyperstitions, and Sympathetic Worlds. **Core Idea:** Interfaces work because magic rules still rule. **Key Question:** How do sympathetic magic's principles shape the ethics of representing memory, identity, community in media? **Prompt:** Use Frazer's laws to analyze a photographic/filmic project (*Portraits and Dreams* , *Stranger with a Camera*). How does its "magic" raise ethical questions?

- Side A Readings:
  - ○ ACT5.W12.S24.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Sympathetic Magic: Photo Essay](#)
  - ○ ACT5.W12.S24.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Sachs, Sympathetic Magic (Talk)](#)
  - ○ ACT5.W12.S24.A.3 (DL: [ ]) [Frazer, The Golden Bough (pp. 18–19)](#)
- Side B Readings:
  - ○ ACT5.W12.S24.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Lawton, Expanded Childhood](#)
  - ○ ACT5.W12.S24.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Ewald, Portraits and Dreams](#)
  - ○ ACT5.W12.S24.B.3 (DL: [ ]) [Barret, Stranger with a Camera](#)

Due: Project Proposal — Thu, 04/02 @ 11:59 PM.

Week 13: Haunted Presents & Ethical Futures (cont.)

Focus: Ethical Futures: Cyborgs, Kinship, and AI Alignment.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 13) — Thu, 04/09 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 25: Tue, 04/07 | Machines of Loving What, Exactly?

Core Idea: Alignment is a pastoral fantasy—until it isn't. **Key Question:** How do utopian visions of "machines of loving grace" clash with AI alignment and control realities? **Prompt:** Compare Brautigan's poem with Amodei on AI alignment and Curtis's critique. What shifts in hope/anxiety emerge?

- Side A Readings:
  - ○ ACT5.W13.S25.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Brautigan, All Watched Over By Machines of Loving Grace](#)
  - ○ ACT5.W13.S25.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Amodei, Machines of Loving Grace](#)
  - ○ ACT5.W13.S25.A.3 (DL: [ ]) [Curtis, Machines of Loving Grace (Ep. 2)](#)
- Side B Readings:
  - ○ ACT5.W13.S25.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [The Incredible Machine (1968)](#)
  - ○ ACT5.W13.S25.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Finn, What Algorithms Want (excerpts)](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 13) — Tue, 04/07 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 26: Thu, 04/09 | Cyborg Kin: Making Relatives with Machines

Core Idea: If we made kin with machines, problems might dissolve into negotiated obligations. **Key Question:** How does treating machines as kin (Haraway, Indigenous protocols) change posthuman futures? **Prompt:** Apply Haraway's cyborg ontology and "making kin" to envision ethical, reciprocal AI relationships.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT5.W13.S26.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Haraway, A Cyborg Manifesto](#)
    - ACT5.W13.S26.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Lewis et al., Making Kin with the Machines](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT5.W13.S26.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [McDowell, Designing Neural Media](#)
    - ACT5.W13.S26.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Pharmako-AI](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 14) — Thu, 04/09 @ 11:59 PM.

Week 14: Haunted Presents & Ethical Futures (cont.)

Focus: Platform Power, AI Slop, and the Limits of the Machine.

Due: Reading Response (Wk 15) — Thu, 04/16 @ 11:59 PM.

Due: Artifact Draft + Bibliography — Tue, 04/14 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 27: Tue, 04/14 | Platform Vernaculars & Enshittification: Who Owns the Feed?

Core Idea: Platforms don't just host culture—they feed on it. **Key Question:** How do communities resist/adapt as platforms degrade through "enshittification"? **Prompt:** Use Doctorow/Brock to analyze a platform's trajectory, factoring in AI slop and memetic trends.

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT5.W14.S27.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Brock, From the Blackhand Side](#)
    - ACT5.W14.S27.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Doctorow, "Enshittification" of TikTok](#)
    - ACT5.W14.S27.A.3 (DL: [ ]) [Tufekci, Twitter and Tear Gas](#)
    - ACT5.W14.S27.A.4 (DL: [ ]) [U.S. created "Cuban Twitter"](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT5.W14.S27.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Oliver, AI Slop](#)
    - ACT5.W14.S27.B.2 (DL: [ ]) [Hard Fork , Italian Brainrot](#)
    - ACT5.W14.S27.B.3 (DL: [ ]) [Short Film, Writing Doom](#)

Due: Artifact Draft + Bibliography — Tue, 04/14 @ 11:59 PM.

Session 28: Thu, 04/16 | Aesthetic Alignment: Do AIs Deserve Their Own Audiences?

Focus: Platform Power, AI Slop, and the Limits of the Machine. **Core Idea:** Reproduction doesn't just shift aura—it may create non-human audiences. **Key Question:** Must aesthetic alignment serve human taste, or should machines pursue alien beauty? **Prompt:** Using Arielli/Dreyfus, debate whether AI aesthetics should be human-aligned or independent. Manovich's cultural analytics?

- Side A Readings:
    - ACT5.W14.S28.A.1 (DL: [ ]) [Arielli & Manovich, Made By and For Humans?](#)
    - ACT5.W14.S28.A.2 (DL: [ ]) [Dreyfus, What Computers Can't Do (Conclusion)](#)
- Side B Readings:
    - ACT5.W14.S28.B.1 (DL: [ ]) [Manovich, Language of Tomorrow](#)

Due: Reading Response (Wk 15) — Thu, 04/16 @ 11:59 PM.

Grading policy:

Grade Breakdown:

- Weekly Reading Responses: 25%
- Discussion Leader: 20%
- Short Paper 1 (Media-History): 15%
- Short Paper 2 (Spacing/Presence): 15%
- Final Project (Sankofa Futures): 25%

IV. Late Work:

- RRs: 10% deduction/day. Due Thursday @ midnight for full credit. (80% completion of RRs earns full RR grade).
- Papers/Projects: 10% deduction/day (max 3 days). >3 days = no credit without prior written, documented extension (24hrs in advance). Tech issues not typically excused. Communicate ahead of time.

Attendance policy:

III. Classroom Engagement & Attendance:

- This is a 95% in-person, interactive course. Active attendance and respectful participation are crucial for your learning and classmates' success. All members are expected to treat peers with kindness and respect, engaging constructively with diverse views. Inappropriate/abusive behavior will be reported. If uncomfortable, contact instructor immediately.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

II. Academic Integrity & Honor Code:

- This course demands the highest academic integrity. All work must be original, properly cited, and adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code. Plagiarism (deliberate use of unacknowledged outside sources) and undisclosed AI use are violations. Penalties include zero on assignment, course failure, Dean's report.
- (Full GT Honor Code: [GT Honor Code](#))

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

Core IMPACTS | Arts, Humanities & Ethics

This is a **Core IMPACTS** course in the **Arts, Humanities & Ethics** area, providing essential knowledge in foundational academic areas to support students' broad academic and career goals.

Orienting Question: - How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Learning Outcome: - Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or works in the visual/performing arts.

Career-Ready Competencies: - Ethical Reasoning - Information Literacy - Intercultural Competence