Perspectives on the Humanities:

DIGITAL IDENTITIES

CCCFSHU 101W41

Fall 2021
T-Th 9:45-11, 11:15-12:30, 1:45-3:00
Room 601
Prerequisite: Writing as Inquiry

Daniella Gáti, Lecturer
Office: Room 926
Zoom Personal Meeting ID: https://nyu.zoom.us/j/6245087759
Office Hours: W 10-12, or by appointment
Email: dgati@nyu.edu

Subject to Change Statement

*** The syllabus and course schedule may be subject to change. Changes will be communicated via email and in Brightspace. It is your responsibility to check email messages/Brightspace and course announcements to stay current in the course. ***

Course Description

Identity is often imagined as tied to the body—to the color of our skin, the sound of our accent, or the way that we inhabit gender. Yet in the digital domain, bodies become tenuous or even inexistent; writing—in text, sound, film, and hypertext—is everything. How then do individuals and communities use digital media to articulate their identities, tell their stories and imagine their futures? How do virtuality and multimedia transform identity formation, and what is the role of digital networks in creating new or reinforcing existing social groups? In this academic writing class, we will examine these and similar questions in digital fiction and nonfiction as we elaborate our research and analytical skills through the lens of theories of digital sociality, in-group formation, digital redlining, and algorithmic oppression. In so doing, we will sharpen our reading and writing skills across the various media of the digital: text, hypertext, image and sound.

Learning Objectives:

- To gain a good understanding of writing and communication across multiple media as these enable the articulation of identity and sociality;
- To gain firsthand experience in using multimedia forms of writing across several genres;
- To be able to interrogate critically the architecture of the digital world and the narratives we construct about its agents;
- To become sensitive to how the expression of inquiry forms the latter, and to how both depend fundamentally on audience;
- To develop familiarity with digital exhibition/nonlinear text authoring tools (audio, video, WordPress, Twine) and to be able to critically appraise their usefulness as well as their limitations;
- To gain comfort with and appreciation for notions of research and writing, and to have fun!

Required Reading

The materials for this class range across various forms of digital primary texts (electronic literature, games, social media platforms, etc.) and scholarship from across humanities disciplines (sociology, media studies, digital humanities, game studies, gender studies, psychology, and philosophy) discussing the digital world. All readings will be made available on the course website on Brightspace, but you will occasionally have to go outside of class materials to play a game online or access another online-only resource. It is your responsibility to check Brightspace regularly for updates on readings etc. Also please remember that *Rules for Writers* is a required resource for students in writing classes.

Course Requirements

Assignments

Essay 1

Analytical Argument - (750-1,250 words) / 3-5 pages

For your first essay, you will produce an analytical argument based on a research question (which I will provide). Make an argument and support it with evidence from primary material and from other scholarship (1-2 sources). You must have a clear argument, demonstrate how your argument is justifiable based on evidence in the digital world, and how it relates to existing

scholarship—does it contradict, support, modify or add on to work by previous scholars? You can use the scholarship we have read together; you are not required to find new sources (though of course you can!). I expect correct and consistent citation following any citation style. I will provide a rubric to my assessment of your work.

Essay 2
Research Paper - (2,500+ words) / 10+ pages // 5+ sources

Your task in the research paper is to set up and carry out your own research project. This means, first, identifying your research question, which will relate to the class topic but will be entirely up to you. You will have to justify why your question is worth pursuing. Then, you will examine existing scholarship and set up the adequate research methodology that will best enable you to investigate your question, with an adequate choice of primary materials to examine. Remember, the readings for this class come from a vast range of humanities approaches: you can use these to model your own approach, and you can certainly combine methodologies. In every case, you will have to justify why you chose to set up your project in your particular way. The research paper will then describe this whole process, including the analysis of primary materials, and conclude where your work places you among the work of scholars in your chosen field—that is, how your work contributes to existing research. I expect correct and consistent citation following any citation style. I will provide a rubric for assessment.

Digital Exhibit
With accompanying Reflective Essay - (250-500 words) / 1-2 pages

For your final project, you will explore how digital presentation/expression formats might help communicate your research to a wider audience. How might academic work be made more accessible to non-specialists through digital media? You can construct a nonlinear essay using Twine, build a simple website (WordPress) to present your work, do a short podcast or video (aim for no more than 2 minutes), or come up with something else entirely. You will not be evaluated on how polished or complex your digital project is: in fact, it's fine if the digital project is not fully fleshed out at the time of submission. Rather, the aim of the exercise is to enable you to experiment in practice with the digital forms of expression we have analyzed throughout the class. What counts is concept, not technical ability. For this reason, your project will be accompanied by a short (1-2 pages) essay in which you reflect on aims with the digital project, on your choices, and on their consequences. The reflection essay is not an academic paper; it is an informal opportunity for you to engage with the implications of the digital medium and your own digital expression. I will provide a rubric for assessment for both the digital project and the accompanying reflection essay.

Grade Breakdown

Participation	10%
Essay 1: Analytical Argument	25%
Essay 2: Research Paper	35%
Digital Project • Digital project (30% = 9% of class grade) • In-class presentation (20% = 6% of class grade) • Reflection essay (50% = 15% of class grade)	30%

A note on grading policy:

Writing is a process, which means that perfection cannot be expected during a project's development. Most writers, myself included(!), produce terrible first drafts (and second, and third…), but this is a necessary part of the process of writing and shouldn't make the writer feel bad. For this reason, and in order not to discourage experimentation, I will not be grading first drafts (but I will of course be providing feedback). This is intended to allow you to test out different writing methods and strategies and work towards the one that works the best for you individually. Therefore, the grade you will receive for a final essay will include a process component where I consider your individual workflow and determine whether I see evidence of development in this regard. I will provide grading rubrics for each of the three major assignments.

Grade Scale (Letter Grades)

Letter Grade	Points	Percent
A	4.00	Example: 92.5% and higher
A-	3.67	Example: 90.0 – 92.49%
B+	3.33	Example: 87.5% - 89.99%
B	3.00	Example: 82.5% - 87.49%
B-	2.67	Example: 80% - 82.49%

C+	2.33	Example: 77.5% - 79.99%
C	2.00	Example: 72.5% - 77.49%
C-	1.67	Example: 70% - 72.49%
D+	1.33	Example: 67.5% - 69.99%
D	1.00	Example: 60% - 67.49
F	.00	Example: 59.99% and lower

View Grades

You will be able to access your grades via Brightspace. I encourage you to inquire about your standing at any time.

Schedule of Classes

	Readings (due before class)	Assignments Due (6pm)
Week 1		
T, August 31	-	
R, September 2	Zhang, "Stories behind China's super app WeChat, told by its founder" Gathman, "Cell Phone"	Short post about your relation to phone/WeChat due on Wednesday, September 1, 6pm
Week 2		
T, September 7	Deena Larsen, *Marble Springs*: explore Marble Springs to see if you can assemble a story.	By class: post one observation about *Marble Springs* on our discussion forum.
R, September 9	Bolter, "Hypertext and the Remediation of Print" Continue to explore *Marble Springs*. What do you notice having read Bolter?	

Week 3		
T, September 14	Anthropy, *Dys4ia* Reed, *Blue Lacuna*, excerpt: https://blue-lacuna.textories.com/index.html Suchman, "Interactive Artifacts," pp. 33-44	
R, September 16	Chen, "Inside China's experiment to find friends for 230 million old people" (also watch the video in the article) Turkle, from *Life on the Screen* (Touchstone, 1997), pp. 102-124	By class: Submit an argument about WeChat's popularity
Week 4		
T, September 21	Mid-Autumn Festival; no class, classes meet on Sunday	
R, September 23	Play an MMOG (*The Sims*, *World of Warcraft*, *Zelda*, etc.) of your choice, OR watch playthroughs by friends or online (see suggested videos) Taylor, "Finding New Worlds"	
Sunday, September 26	(Classes meet on Tuesday schedule) Chan, "Performing Chinese Masculinities on Dating Apps: Interpretations, Self-presentations, and Interactions"	Draft due on Monday, September 27, 6pm
Week 5		
T, September 28	Conferences: no class	
R, September 30	Conferences: no class, but complete additional assignment. Additional assignment: create a revision log of the minimum 3 areas of focus in your revision. What is the issue you are tackling? What are you changing and why? What questions remain?	Essay 1 + revision log due on Sunday, October 3, 6pm
------------------------------------- **FALL HOLIDAYS** ---		
Week 6		
T, October 12	Play *Digital: A Love Story* to where the game seems to crash Hardey, "Life Beyond the Screen"	
R, October 14	Play *Digital: A Love Story* to the end Waern, "'I'm in love with someone that doesn't exist!' Bleed in the context of a computer game"	Submit research question (tentative) on Discussion Forum by Friday, October 15, 6pm
Week 7		

T, October 19	Huang et al., "How Digital Contact Tracing Slowed Covid-19 in East Asia" Wernimont, "Every Step You Take"	
R, October 21	Bring one or two examples of online communities that you're a member of, and be prepared to discuss why you have joined them Gray, "CyberQueer: Finding community on the Internet"	

Week 8

T, October 26	Noble, Introduction to *Algorithms of Oppression* Lambrecht and Tucker, "Algorithmic Bias?"	Submit **first research proposal** by class today
R, October 28	Library Session: Complete the introductory research modules in advance of class	By Monday, November 1, 6pm: submit a **fully fleshed out research proposal** + (optional:) some pages of your draft if you would like feedback

Week 9

T, November 2	Conferences: no class	
R, November 4	Conferences: no class, but complete additional assignment. Read: Brey, "Evaluating the Social and Cultural Implications of the Internet" and reflect on how Brey sets up the stakes of his work and why that might translate well or not to your own project. (1 paragraph due with essay draft)	Draft + 1 paragraph due on Friday, November 5, 6pm

Week 10

T, November 9	Each other's drafts, as assigned in class/on Brightspace	
R, November 11	Suler, "The Dynamic Digital Psyche"	
Sunday, November 14	(Classes meet on Thursday schedule) -	

Week 11

T, November 16	Curley, "The Ethical Concerns of GANs"	
R, November 18	O'Neil, "How to Lie with Statistics (in the Age of Big Data)	Essay 2 due on Sunday, November 21, 6pm

Week 12		
T, November 23	Heggestad, "Who's It Gonna Be?" For Harriet, "WAP and the Spectacle of Sexual Liberation" – recommended, first watch "WAP" online The digital exhibit "Visualizing Abolition": http://visualizingabolition.org/database/	
R, November 25	Thanksgiving Day – No classes	
Week 13		
T, November 30	Explore examples of digital exhibits from among the following: https://www.mappingthegayguides.org/map/ https://coloredconventions.org/	
R, December 2	-	Submit the link to your digital project by Sunday, December 5, 6pm
Week 14		
T, December 7	In-class presentations	
R, December 9	In-class presentations	Reflection essay due tonight (December 9) at 11:59pm

Course Policies

Public Health Requirements and COVID-19 Student Code of Conduct

You are expected to comply with the COVID-19 Student Code of Conduct, including the requirements for physical distancing and face coverings. Classrooms have been configured accordingly. If you violate the COVID-19 Student Code of Conduct or fail to follow your instructor's related warnings, you may be asked to leave the classroom and/or may be subject to disciplinary action. You may review the Code on NYU Shanghai's Community Standards page (https://shanghai.nyu.edu/campuslife/community-standards).

Late and Missed Assignments

Late assignments will receive a one-third deduction for each day late (ex. B+ to B). Missed assignments will earn a zero (an F). Sole exceptions will be given to medical emergencies, family emergencies, and to accommodate disability. Obligations outside this class (such as other coursework or sporting events) will not justify lateness.

Attendance

- You are expected to attend all scheduled classes. If you are unable to attend a class, notify me before that class.
- Unexcused absences will affect your ability to complete the course successfully.
- Regardless of your performance, if you are absent the equivalent 5 times, your final grade will be lowered a full letter grade (e.g., from a B+ to a C+). If you are absent the equivalent of 7 times, you will fail the course. The two single exceptions to this policy are the following:
  - You may miss class for the observance of religious holidays. If you anticipate being absent because of religious observance, notify me in advance so we can create a plan for making up missed work.
  - If you are ill and need to miss more than one week of classes, you must speak to the Health & Wellness Office. Once Health and Wellness verifies the reasons for your extended absence, I will consult with Academic Affairs and recommend the best course of action so that you may complete the course successfully. I will not look at doctor's notes, both for your health privacy reasons and because I cannot verify the authenticity or content of the notes.
- Coming late to class will adversely impact your participation grade.
- In-person students who cannot attend class due to quarantine/isolation should communicate their situation in a timely fashion and be prepared to adapt to the provided accommodations to continue contributing to the class. The method of accommodation is at my discretion. Being in quarantine does not give you a "pass" to skip class or submit work late without prior arrangement.
- Outside of religious absences and those verified by university administration, I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. For remote students, I also do not distinguish between absence from a synchronous class and absence from an asynchronous class (that is, failure to make the minimum contributions required to be considered "present" during the submission window for asynchronous work).

Electronics Policy

Electronic Devices: Do not use electronics (phone, computer, social media, etc.) in class for any reason other than for class work. I will notice. That said, this is a class about the digital, so class-related electronics use is permitted.

Recording Class: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, you may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without my advance written permission; if permitted, any such recording can be used solely for your own private use. If you have approved accommodations from the Office of Disability Resources permitting the recording of class meetings, you must present the accommodation letter to me in advance of any recording. Distribution or sale of class recordings is prohibited without the written permission of the instructor and other students who are recorded.

Instructional Technology

Email Communication: I will contact you regularly via the Brightspace system. You should check for emails from me (reminders, logistics, updates, etc.) at the email address connected to Brightspace. Please note that I will try to respond to your emails within 24 hours; but please do not expect responses late at night or on the weekends.

Assignment Notification: All assignments will be posted to our class Brightspace site. You are responsible for looking at Brightspace after each class period to learn about the next homework assignment.

Instructional Tools: We will be using various instructional technology resources in this class. You can learn about the tools used in this class through the Student Digital Learning Toolkit. You are responsible for communicating with me in a timely fashion if you are facing any challenges using these tools.

Instructional Technology Assistance: If you need assistance with these tools, check the RITS website here or the RITS Toolkit here, or you may email shanghai.rits@nyu.edu.

Academic Integrity

As my colleague Marcos Martínez puts it, "[a]cademic writing builds on the work of others who have written and created before us. Academic writers use and cite the ideas, words, and images of others in order to document grounds for knowledge, illuminate contexts of argument, acknowledge intellectual influences, distinguish our own analytical voices, and encourage further investigation and inquiry. If, on the other hand, we take others' work as our own--using their phrases, images, concepts, or arguments without acknowledgement--we not only hamper these goals but also cross the line into academic dishonesty. **The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism"** (**Martínez, n.d.).**

Carefully read NYU Shanghai's *Statement on Academic Integrity* (in the Undergraduate Bulletin [https://shanghai.nyu.edu/academics/curriculum/bulletin]). Breaches of academic integrity could result in failure of an assignment, failure of the course, or other sanctions, as determined by the Academic Affairs office.

Disability Disclosure Statement

NYU Shanghai is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. It is NYU Shanghai's policy that no student with a qualified disability be excluded from participating in any NYU Shanghai program or activity, denied the benefits of any NYU Shanghai program or activity, or otherwise subjected to discrimination with regard to any NYU Shanghai program or activity. Any student who needs a reasonable accommodation based on a qualified disability should register with the [Moses Center for Student Accessibility](https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility.html) (https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility.html) for assistance. Students can [register online](https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility/academic.html) through the Moses Center (at https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility/academic.html) and can contact the Academic Accommodations Team at shanghai.academicaccommodations@nyu.edu with questions or for assistance.

Title IX Statement

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs. It protects victims of sexual or gender-based bullying and harassment and survivors of gender-based violence. Protection from the discrimination on the basis of sex includes protection from being retaliated against for filing a complaint of discrimination or harassment. NYU Shanghai is committed to complying with Title IX and enforcing University policies prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex. Mary Signor, Executive Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity, serves as the University's Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator is a resource for any questions or concerns about sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or sexual misconduct and is available to discuss your rights and judicial options. University policies define prohibited conduct, provide informal and formal procedures for filing a complaint and a prompt and equitable resolution of complaints.

Links to the Title IX Policy and related documents:
- [Sexual Misconduct, Relationship Violence, and Stalking Policy](#)
- [Procedures for Complaints Against Students](#)
- [Procedures for Complaints Against Employees](#)
- [Resource Guide for Students](#)
- [Resource Guide for Employees](#)

Academic Resources

ARC Services

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers both individual, one-on-one tutoring as well as group sessions in a variety of ways, in a variety of courses. You can log on to [WCOnline](#) to book

an appointment with a Global Writing & Speaking Fellow or a Learning Assistant (LA). The Global Writing & Speaking Fellows conduct individual consultations on writing, speaking, reading, and academic skills coaching. LAs provide both individual and small-group tutoring support in over 30 STEM, Business, Economics, IMA/IMB, and Chinese Language classes. Visit shanghai.nyu.edu/arc for more information about ARC services.

Library Support

The Library is available to support your research needs. They have access to over 20,000 print resources, 2,000 DVDs, and 1,000 databases (including over a million e-books, as well as streaming audio and video and image databases).

Librarians with expertise in your research topic are available to meet either *in person* or *online* by appointment or by email to help you navigate the research process, from developing a research question and formulating a research strategy, to selecting databases, requesting materials, and citing your sources. Visit shanghai.nyu.edu/library for more information on:

- 24/7 access to e-books, e-journals, streaming media, and databases
- Booking one-on-one consultations for research help
- Asking the Library questions via chat or e-mail

Electronic Reserves: Students can access course readings using their NYU credentials for courses they currently enrolled in at https://ares.library.nyu.edu/

Interlibrary Loan Service: For materials not available to you immediately, you can request scanned copies of a book chapter or journal article through our Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service. If you don't know which chapter you need, you can request a Table of Content through ILL.