ENG 6801: Texts and Technology in History

Section 0M01, Class # 11195, 3 Credit Hours
Spring 2024

Professor: Melody Bowdon, Ph.D.   email: mbowdon@ucf.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4 p.m. and by appointment   Office: TCH 170E
Class meetings Tuesdays, 6 to 7:50 p.m., TCH 351   Phone: 407-823-2168

This course is offered through the College of Arts and Humanities. Any concerns should be brought to the attention of the faculty member. If resolution cannot occur with the faculty member, contact Dr. Anastasia Salter, Program Director, at anastasia.salter@ucf.edu.

Catalog Course Description: Explores the history of relations between the Texts and Technology. We examine how various technologies have influenced the nature of texts they produce.

Prerequisites: Acceptance into the Texts and Technologies program, graduate standing, or C.I.

Required Course Materials
All books are available at the UCF bookstore but may be significantly cheaper either used or as ebooks through the publisher or Amazon. Some are available through open access or archival providers as noted below.

- Brock, Andre Jr. *Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures*. NYU Press, 2020. Open Access through several options via UCF Libraries, including: https://academic.oup.com/nyu-press-scholarship-online/book/34192
- Eubanks, Virginia. *Digital Dead End: Fighting for Social Justice in the Information Age*. First Edition, MIT Press, 2011. (Available online via UCF Libraries)
- Headrick, Daniel R. *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700 - 1850*. Oxford Univ. Press, 2000. Open Access: https://archive.org/details/wheninformationc00head/page/n13/mode/2up
- Kuhn, Thomas S., and Ian Hacking. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 50th Anniversary Edition*. Fourth edition, University of Chicago Press, 2012. Open Access: https://archive.org/stream/ThomasS.KuhnTheStructureOfScientificRevolutions/Thomas_ S._Kuhn_The_structure_of_scientific_revolutions_djvu.txt Montfort, N., & Wardrip-Fruin, N. (Eds.). (2003).
- Marvin, Carolyn. *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*. 1. issued as an Oxford Univ. Press paperback, 9. print, Oxford Univ. Press, 1990. Available online via UCF Libraries.
- Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy*. 3rd edition, Routledge, 2012. Open Access: https://archive.org/stream/OngWalterOralityAndLiteracy/Ong%20Walter%20%2C%20or ality%20and%20literacy_djvu.txt
- M. Wardrip-Fruin, Noah, and Nick Montfort, editors. *The New Media Reader*. HAR/CDR edition, The MIT Press, 2003.
- Various book excerpts, articles, and web readings available as pdfs or links on our WebCourses site in accordance with Fair Use Doctrine; do not distribute for use outside of course/study. Optional supplementary readings will be provided as links or PDFs within Webcourses.

Section-Specific Course Description
This class is a core requirement of UCF's Texts and Technologies PhD program. It explores the history of connections, tensions, and other relationships between and among texts and technology. Readings and assignments will examine how technologies (including digital and mechanical) have influenced the nature of texts they produce and societies in which they circulate. We will explore a wide range of tools and timeframes through a variety of humanities-based methodologies.

Course Objectives
In this course, students will:
- Gain an understanding of changes in texts and technologies over time, with attention to orality, literacy, print, and digital media and their impacts on texts and cultures
- Consider challenges of inclusion and omission in archives and textual history
- Recognize and navigate challenges in historical research methods, particularly when working with digital culture and texts
- Explore the history and role of science, technical inventions, changing platforms, and print as they intersect with written forms
- Experiment with digital tools to create a texts and technology timeline
- Expand their academic writing skills through exercises positioning their proposed research trajectory within the history of texts and technology discourse

Contacting Me
I am available through WebCourses email Monday through Friday; I'll check in by 2 p.m.
each day and will endeavor to answer all course emails within 24 hours during the work week. If you have an urgent question, you can email me at my university address, mbowdon@ucf.edu and possibly get a faster response. When you email, please follow professional standards: provide a clear subject line (including our course name) and an appropriate greeting, and close with your full name. I will typically respond to your e-mail within 24 hours during the work week.

My office hours for this course will take place from 2 to 4 p.m. on Tuesdays. I will be available to meet with you in person in my office in TCH or via Zoom or phone. If you would like to meet with me and this schedule does not work with yours, please email me to schedule a mutually convenient alternative.

Course Policies
We all face challenges that can occasionally make it difficult to accomplish our goals. The policies below describe my general expectations for all students. You are in this class because you are accomplished and capable. Your success in this course matters, but not more than your mental or physical health. If you face one-time or ongoing barriers to success as defined below, reach out to me as early as possible to discuss options for accommodation to minimize impacts on your learning experience and grade. I will address these concerns in an equitable manner in keeping with UCF policy.

Some of the policies below include a requirement of documentation, but some emergency circumstances may be difficult to document. Please reach out to me if you find yourself in this situation; we can work together to address your concerns.

Grading and Deadlines
- A grade of "I" (Incomplete) may be assigned when a student is unable to complete a course due to extenuating circumstances and when all requirements can be completed in a short time

following the end of the term. I will assign an incomplete in this class **only** in exceptional circumstances supported by documentation.

- This course moves quickly, making it critical that you stay on track throughout the semester. Generally speaking, **I do not accept late assignments for credit**. Any changes in deadline must be negotiated in advance unless they are due to documented emergencies (medical, in most cases).
- This course syllabus and our class calendar are **subject to change** if unanticipated circumstances arise. If a change is needed, we will negotiate the details together, and I will post a revised syllabus on our WebCourses site.

Online Learning Expectations
This course includes reduced seat time, which means that in addition to participating in our in-person class session each week you will participate actively in online learning, typically in the form of discussion posts and responses.

Ethical Behavior
- I expect to have a positive and intellectually engaging class environment where students feel free to express their viewpoints and to have their experiences and perspectives respected and honored. It is my responsibility as a faculty member to ensure that outcome. I pledge to do so to the best of my ability and ask that students assist me with this effort by holding each other and me to high standards and alerting me to any circumstances that require my intervention.
- This course will address a variety of complex issues, including in relation to professional ethics. You are not required to *believe* or *accept* any position that we discuss. You are expected, however, to have an open mind and to critically examine and respectfully discuss relevant arguments, ideas, and evidence.
- All UCF students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the university's Rules of Conduct (see https://scai.sdes.ucf.edu/student-rules-of-conduct/). Please pay particular attention to Section 4, which prohibits harmful behaviors such as bullying, threatening, intimidation, discriminatory harassment, and invasion of privacy. I will **not** tolerate these behaviors in or adjacent to our course.
- As reflected in the UCF creed, integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide our conduct and decisions as members of the UCF community and in this course. Plagiarism (representing someone else's work as your own) and cheating are serious academic offenses that contradict these values. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, or suspension or expulsion from the university. See 5.015StudentAcademicBehavioralStandardsFINALSept21.pdf (ucf.edu) for full details of the UCF policy regarding the academic misconduct review process.
- Special Note about Artificial Intelligence: This class may provide opportunities for you to make use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in some specific ways. In fact, AI is central to the contemporary academic research landscape, so we will discuss it together, but it will not be an acceptable research method in our course. You are permitted to use AI only in the manner and means described in the assignments and/or approved by the professor. Any attempt to represent AI output inappropriately as your own work will be treated as plagiarism. Please see this link for information about citing AI generated content in MLA: https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/.

Support When You're Struggling: UCF Cares
Please visit UCFCares.com if you are seeking resources and support, or if you are worried about a friend or classmate. Free services and information are included for a variety of student concerns, including but not limited to alcohol use, bias incidents, mental health concerns, and financial challenges. You can also e-mail ucfcares@ucf.edu with questions or for additional assistance. You can reach a UCF Cares staff member between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. by calling 407-823-5607. If you are in immediate distress or believe someone is in danger, please call Counseling and Psychological Services to speak directly with a counselor 24/7 at 407-823-2811, or call 911.

Accommodation of Disabilities
UCF is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities, and we consider the diversity of our students and other community members to be a strength that is critical to the university's educational mission. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or your experience within this course that result in barriers to your participation or accurate assessment of your achievement, please notify me as soon as possible and/or contact Student Accessibility Services, Ferrell Commons 185, phone 407-823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone 407-823-2116. If you need assistance accessing any resources or course materials, I am happy to help you. You may contact SAS without notifying me if you wish; you may also speak with me without contacting SAS at all.

Title IX
Title IX is a federal regulation that prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu and http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/.

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students
Students who are deployed active-duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make related arrangements.

Academic Details
Class Assignments
Below are brief overviews of our class assignments. Additional details and expectations will be provided within the Assignments section of our WebCourse.

Weekly Reading Responses (20% of course grade)
Most weeks during the semester you will be expected to post a written response to our course readings in the appropriate discussion area. Posts should typically be 250-300 words long and should include the SRR format—75-100 words of summary/key arguments; 75-100 words in which you respond to the key arguments/explain what you think about the topic; and 75-100 words of reflection, in which you comment on how this reading shapes your thinking about your research focus or even the world more broadly. Please respond to at least one classmate's post each week. A reply to a classmate's post should be substantive rather than something like "I agree/disagree" or "I found this interesting."

Responses should demonstrate deep engagement with specific ideas in the readings, focusing on key passages or elements, relating them to your views or experiences, discussing them through examples, and/or evaluating their arguments. **The highest top ten post scores will count toward your course grade.**

Supplemental Reading Presentation (15% of course grade)
Our time in the course is limited, as is the number of texts we can read and discuss together. To provide each student a chance to engage deeply with at least one other text relevant to their academic interests, at some point in the semester each class member will make a short (10 minute maximum, plus five minutes for questions) presentation about a book of their choice selected from a list provided by the professor. Several specific framing questions for this project will be posted in the assignment in WebCourses. (Several of the proposed texts are included on the Texts and Technology core comprehensive exam reading list.)

Leading a Class Discussion (10% of course grade)
Each student will take a leadership role in our class discussion of one featured course reading. Responsibilities will include posting 3-5 key thought-provoking questions about the reading for us to think about **the day before class** and generally encouraging engagement in the discussion. For some topics, more than one discussion leader may be assigned. The discussion leader is not expected/required to drive the entire conversation around the text up for discussion, which will follow in a variety of directions according to class members' interests, etc., but simply to help us frame our initial engagement with the text.

Post about a Digital Timeline Tool (5% of course grade)
One of our major projects for the course will be a Digital Timeline, which will be accompanied by a short paper explaining the argument behind the artifact. To generate a variety of options for everyone to choose from and encourage early thought about design tools, each student will identify at least one such tool. Tools that are free or inexpensive for UCF students and have a relatively mild learning curve are generally recommended, though students with more experience and comfort with digital tools may select whatever wish to. Short descriptions of these tools will be posted by the established course deadline.

Tentative Comprehensive Exam Reading Lists (10% of course grade)
Students will prepare their core exam and one tentative specialized exam list, using Zotero to gather and collect sources. These lists should incorporate readings found through coursework thus far as well as aspirational readings students have identified for the future. Each list will include a 200-250 word contextualizing statement/rationale and clear thematic header. An appropriate alternative assignment will be available for students not pursuing the Texts and Technology degree.

Digital Timeline Project (25% of course grade)
Using the tool/s of their choice, students will create a digital timeline that traces relationships between texts and technologies within a timeframe/focus of their choice. This assignment is an opportunity to think creatively about material within and beyond our course and to explore the intriguing power of looking at time as a series of complicated and synergistic moments. The timeline will be accompanied by a short (8-10 page) paper that will explain the argument/perspective/lens that informs the project.

Final Presentation (5% of course grade)
During the final exam class session, each student will make a short (5-7 minute) presentation presenting their timeline and reflecting upon their learning experiences during the semester.

Practice Core Comprehensive Exam (10% of course grade)
Following a modified version of the exam guidelines for T&T, students will outline and draft a mock Core exam. The exam will consist of one fixed-topic question addressing the relationship of students' work to

the field, and a second question engaging the core texts from the course syllabus. Exams will be assessed using the T&T exams rubric.

Grading Standards for Written Work
This is a graduate-level class with appropriately high standards. No one is perfect, but please carefully **proofread** every assignment before you submit it. I will grade according to how well your work meets the assignment and course requirements and how well it addresses its rhetorical situations. Specifically, I will frame my responses to and evaluation of your written work in major assignments in terms of the five canons of classical rhetoric, which is one of many useful heuristics for thinking about the important elements of communication. See the detailed handout about this heuristic in our WebCourse.

After receiving grades, carefully read all my comments and wait at least a day before asking questions.
- An *A* text is exceptional. It presents sophisticated and significant critique and is guided by a meaningful argument. It contains the required elements of the assignment, is written in an engaging style, is arranged in a logical manner, is memorable, and is visually appealing. It is free of mechanical errors.
- A *B* text is strong. It contains all required elements of the assignment. It is generally above average in terms of the criteria mentioned above but falls short of excellence in one or more category. It is free of mechanical errors.
- A *C* text is competent. It contains all required elements of the assignment. It is generally average in terms of the major criteria listed above. It has few mechanical errors.
- *D* work is weak. It does not include the required elements of the assignment and it falls below average in terms of one or more of the major criteria.
- F work fails in terms of one or more of these criteria.

Grade Distribution

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Grade
Weekly Summary, Response, and Reflection Posts	Throughout the semester (10 graded)	20
Supplemental Reading Presentation	Throughout the semester	15
Leading a Class Discussion	Throughout the semester	10
Post about Digital Timeline Tool	March 12	5
Tentative Comprehensive Exam Lists	March 26	10
Digital Timeline Project	April 16	25
Final Presentation	April 26	5
Practice Core Comprehensive Exam	April 30	10

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Events/Deadlines	Homework Activities and Assignments
1	1/9	Course Introduction	Optional Office Hours	Online by Friday, 1/12 at 8 a.m.: • Post introduction (financial aid verification activity) • Sign up to lead a weekly discussion AND sign up for your supplemental text presentation
2	1/16	Frameworks for History	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday 9/1 at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for *Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Kuhn)
3	1/23	Language and Culture	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for *Orality and Literacy* (Ong)
4	1/30	Structures of Thought	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for Chs. 1-4 *When Information Came of Age* (Headrick)
5	2/6	Structures of Thought, cont'd	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for Chs. 5-7 *When Information Came of Age* (Headrick)
6	2/13	Technologies for Communication	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for Intro and Chs. 1-3 In *When Old Technologies Were New* (Marvin)
7	2/20	Technologies for Communication, cont'd	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for Chs. 4-5 and Epilogue In *When Old Technologies Were New* (Marvin)
8	2/27	Gender, Technology, and Machines	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for assigned sections of Making Technology Masculine (Oldenziel) (PDF provided; small groups will be assigned sections)
9	3/5	New Media	Optional Office Hours	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for Intros and selections from Section One In

			Discussion Leader:	*New Media Reader* (Wardup-Fruin and Montfort) (small groups will be assigned sections)
			Report:	
10	3/12	New Media, cont'd	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for selections from Section Two In *New Media Reader* (Wardup-Fruin and Montfort) (small groups will be assigned sections) • **Post comment on Digital Timeline Tool in appropriate discussion area**
11	3/19	Spring Break		
12	3/26	New Media, cont'd	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for selections from Sections Three and Four In *New Media Reader* (Wardup-Fruin and Montfort) (small groups will be assigned) • **Submit Tentative Comprehensive Exam Lists via WebCourses**
13	4/2	Digital Technologies and Race	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Friday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for *Distributed Blackness* (Brock)
14	4/9	Digital Technologies and Class	Optional Office Hours Discussion Leader: Report:	Online by Thursday at 10 p.m.: • Post SRR (Summary, Response, Reflection) for Digital Dead End (Eubanks)
15	4/16	Making Connections	Optional Office Hours	• **Submit Digital Timeline Project via WebCourses**
16	4/23	Final Exam	**Research Presentations Due**	
	4/30			• **Submit Comprehensive Exam Outline and Draft via WebCourses**