VM655

Civic Media Seminar: Part 1

Fall 2016

Mondays 4-8

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# Course description

This is the first part of a two-semester seminar on the theory and methods of civic media. We define civic media as:

*the technologies, designs, and practices that produce and reproduce the sense of being in the world with others toward common good. While the concept of “common good” is deeply subjective, we use the term to invoke the good of the commons, or actions taken that benefit a public outside of the actor’s intimate sphere.  To this end, the civic in civic media is not merely about outcomes, but about process and potential. It is about the mechanics of acting in the world with the tools and conditions available. Civic media, then, are any mediated practice that enables a community to imagine themselves as being connected, not through achieving, but through striving for common good.*

In the fall semester, students will be introduced to a range of theories about what makes media civic, or how media come to define civic life. These perspectives come from fields such as Sociology, Human Computer Interaction, Communications, Media Studies and Philosophy. What holds this work together is the intentional use of media or technology for the “common good.” Students will learn a range of methods in Participatory Action Research (PAR) to put this knowledge of civic media into action.

In the spring semester, students will continue the exploration of civic media and PAR, but inquiries will be guided by student thesis topics. Students will compile their own reading lists and lead research sessions around their area of interest.

# Learning Objectives

The first semester of the seminar seeks to develop intellectually curious civic media practitioners. Students will:

* Understand core theories of civic media
* Understand a range of methods in civic media production
* Be able to critique popular media practices using theoretically informed language
* Be able to practice Participatory Action Research methods
* Be able to investigate how civic media applies to other academic disciplines
* Conduct an academic literature review on a specific interest area related to civic media
* Be able to talk to a range of stakeholders (academics, community partners, funders) about why civic media matter
* Be able to assess whether a media intervention has value for a diversity of stakeholders

# Required Reading

* Eric Gordon and Paul Mihailidis (2016). *Civic Media: Technology | Design | Practice,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
* Jacques M. Chevalier and Daniel J. Buckles (2013). *Participatory Action Research: Theory and Methods for Engaged Research,* New York: Routledge.

All other reading will be available online.

# Requirements

Participation 20%

Discussion Lead 20%

Reading Journal 20%

Proposal: Theory and Methods 40%

**Assignment Descriptions**

**Participation (20%) -** Students are expected to complete all reading assignments and to be an active participant in class discussion and activities.

**Discussion Lead (20%)** - Each student will be responsible for leading the presentation and discussion of reading material during one class period.  Leading discussion entails creating a presentation of the reading material as well as leading an in-class discussion and providing a concise prompt for students to reply to online. Students should be as creative as possible and will be graded on clarity, concision, and engagement with the class.

**Reading Journal (20%) -** Each week, students will respond to the prompt provided by the discussion lead. Responses will be due on the Wednesday following class.

**Proposal (40%) –** The CMAP thesis proposal is due at the end of the semester. This document is one half of the proposal, with the other half coming out of the work of the Design Studio. This piece is an articulation of research questions grounded in and supported by the appropriate academic literature. It will provide a methodological framework and justification with a clear implementation plan. Proposals should address all relevant course reading. Proposals will be roughly 15-20 pages in length.

# Attendance

Students are required to attend all scheduled classes on time. More than oneunexcused absence will result in a reduction of one full grade. More than two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. And please show up on time. Arriving late three times to class translates to one absence.

# Late Work

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day listed in the syllabus. If assignments are not turned in at the beginning of class, they will be considered late. Grades will be reduced by 10 points for each day beyond the due date. There will be no grace period for the final presentations. They must be turned in by the date specified in the syllabus.

Disability Statement

*If you believe you have a disability that may warrant accommodations in this class, I urge you to register with the disability services coordinator, Dr. Anthony Bashir at 216 Tremont Street, 5th Floor (617-824-8415), so that together you can work to develop methods of addressing needed accommodations in this class.*

Plagiarism

All information or content in papers and projects must include the proper attribution of its source. “Plagiarism is the act of using another person’s ideas or expression in your writing without acknowledging the source. The word comes from the Latin word plagiarius (‘kidnapper’), and Alexander Lindey defines it as ‘the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of a person’s mind, and presenting it as one’s own’ (Plagiarism and Originality [New York: Harper, 1952] 2). It is also possible to plagiarize from yourself: turning in a project or paper from a previous class without asking both professors’ permission. So, careful acknowledgment and documentation is the best way to avoid plagiarism, a serious offence in the academy that can result in failure, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the situation and the degree of the act.

Diversity Statement

Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences, talents, and backgrounds. Students will be treated fairly regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, socio-economic status, or national identity. Issues of diversity may be a part of class discussion, assigned material, and projects. The instructor will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students. If you any have concerns or suggestions for improving the classroom climate, please do not hesitate to speak with the course instructor or to contact the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at 824-8528 or by email at [diversity\_inclusion@emerson.edu](mailto:diversity_inclusion@emerson.edu).

**Course Outline**

*All reading assignments are due on the dates listed.*

**Week One: Why Civic Media?**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | In Class | Due |
| 9/12 | Eric Gordon and Paul Mihailidis,“Introduction” (CM 1-26)  Chevalier and Buckles, “Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2” (PAR 1-46) | Introductions, Introduction to software and other lab resources | *n/a* |

**Part 1: BIG PICTURE**

**Week Two: Citizenship**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | In Class | Due |
| 9/19 | Peter Levine, “Democracy in the Digital Age” (CM 29-48)  Ethan Zuckerman, “Effective Civics” (CM 49-76)  Chevalier and Buckles, Chapters 2-3 (PAR 47-67) | Action, Research, Training (ART); Interview classmates using interview guide | Interview Guide (“Day in the Life of a CMAP student”) |

**Week Three: Activism**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | In Class | Due |
| 9/26 | W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg “The Logic of Connective Action” (CM 77-106)  Stefania Milan, “Liberated Technology” (CM 107-124)  Chevalier and Buckles, Chapters 4-6 (84-118) | Planning Research Project | Reading response |

**PART 2: SYSTEMS + DESIGN**

**Week Four: Government Technology**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | In Class | Due |
| 10/3 | Beth Simone Noveck, “Re-Imagining Government Through Civic Media” (CM 149-164)  David Karpf, “The Partisan Technology Gap” (CM 199-216)  Chevalier and Buckles, Chapter 7 (PAR 121-148) | The Socratic Wheel | Reading Response |

**Week Five: Data and Engagement**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | In Class | Due |
| 10/11 *Tues* | Sarah Williams, “Data Visualizations Break Down Knowledge Barriers in Public Engagement” (CM 165-198)  Chevalier and Buckles, Chapter 8 (PAR 149-186) | Brainstorming and Ordering  View: *Citizen Four* (2014) | Reading Response |

**PART 3: PLAY + RESISTANCE**

**Week Six: Play and Imagination**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | Class | Due |
| 10/17 | Eric Gordon and Stephen Walter, “Meaningful Inefficiencies” (CM 243-266)  Henry Jenkins, et. al., “Superpowers to the People!” (CM 295-320)  Chevalier and Buckles, Chapter 9 (PAR 190-220) | Resource mapping; Play @Stake | Reading Response |

**Week Seven:** **Play and Art**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | Class | Due |
| 10/24 | Beth Coleman, “Let’s Get Lost” (CM 267-294)  Jessica McLean and Sophia Maalsen, “From #destroythejoint to Far-reaching digital activism” (CM 327-332)  Laurie Phillips Honda, “It Gets Better Project” (CM 333-340)  Catherine D’Ignazio, “Terra Incognita” (CM 341-348)  Chevalier and Buckles, Chapter 10, (PAR 221-251) | Forcefield  View: *PressPausePlay* | Reading Response |

**PART 4: LEARNING + ENGAGEMENT**

**Week Eight: Literacies**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | Class | Due |
| 10/31 | Renee Hobbs, “Capitalists, Consumers, and Communicators” (CM 355-370)  Paul Mihailidis and Roman Gerodimos, “Connecting Pedagogies of Civic Media” (CM 371-392)  Chevalier and Buckles, Chapters 11-12 (PAR 255-292) | Stakeholder Identification and Analysis; Play Emerging Citizens | Reading Response |

**Week Nine:  Informal Learning**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | Class | Due |
| 11/7 | Elisabeth Soep, “Youth Agency in Public Spheres” (CM 393-420)  Katie Day Good, “Tracking Traveling Paper Dolls” (CM 421-428)  Chevalier and Buckles, Chapter 14 (PAR 311-334) | Blue Sky Thinking | Reading Response |

## PART 5: COMMUNITY + ACTION

**Week Ten: Community Media/Community Hacking**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | Class | Due |
| 11/14 | Molly Sauter, “Activist DDoS, Community and the Personal” (CM 443-460)  Colin Rhinesmith, “Community Media Infrastructure as Civic Engagement” (CM 481-500)  Chevalier and Buckles, Chapter 16 (PAR 362-378) | Attribution and Contribution | First Draft of Proposal and Presentation |

**Week Eleven: Community Engagement**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | Class | Due |
| 11/21 | Ceasar McDowell and Melissa Yvonne Chinchilla, “Partnering with Communities and Institutions” (CM 461-480)  Eric Gordon, Roadmap for Public Engagement  Digital Crossroads? Civic Media & Migration? Or does that go into systems and design? | Play: Accelerator Game! | Reading Response |

## PART 6: RESEARCH + FUNDING

**Week Twelve: Civic Media Methods**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | Class | Due |
| 11/28 | Benjamin Boyer and Joseph Kahne, “Revisiting the Measurement of Political Participation for the Digital Age” (CM 539-562)  Marcus Foth and Martin Brynskov, “Participatory Action Research for Civic Engagement” (CM 563-580) | Workshop Research Plan | Reading Response |

**Week Thirteen: Funding Civic Media**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | Class | Due |
| 12/5 | Valerie Chang and Beth Gutelius, “Field-Building in Stages” (CM 581-596)  Glenda Amayo Caldwell, et. al. “Guerilla Research Tactics” (CM 597-604) | Workshop: Philanthropy and Funding | Reading Response |

**Week Fourteen: Final Presentations**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Reading | Class | Due |
| 12/12 | n/a | Presentation | Final Paper |