

New York University  
Media, Culture, and Communication  
Fall 2021  
MCC-GE 3101  
Wednesday 2-4:50  
Room 712/239 Greene St.

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## **Doctoral Methods Seminar**

### **Course description:**

This doctoral methods course focuses on the philosophical and theoretical assumptions behind, and rationales for, qualitative and interdisciplinary methodologies and approaches. The aim of the course is to establish a vocabulary for methodological approaches to research, to examine the nature of research questions served by different methods, to analyze the usefulness and limits of certain methods, and for students to be able to design a research project and apply methods to research. Readings include explanations of method as well as examples of particular theoretical/methodological approaches. This course is a survey of methodological approaches, so it will inevitably not provide a deep dive into particular methods so much as a general sense of what they involve. You may, depending on what methods you are drawn to, want to take a method specific course (on ethnography, for example) in addition.

Our approach will thus be both practical and meta-theoretical. We will unpack the assumptions, techniques, and aims of different methods, and do short exercises in using them. We will look at the methodological aims and approaches of a range of texts, examining the ways in which various scholars construct their arguments, define their materials, data, units of analysis, and objects of study, and justify their examples as representative of broader cultural and media contexts. With each approach, we will examine what kinds of questions a method will help us to ask (and not ask) and the limits and strategies of each approach. Fundamental to this collective inquiry will be an examination of the kinds of knowledges that particular approaches can help us to understand, and the kinds of case studies, objects of study, and expanded definitions of data we can work with.

In looking at readings we will consider the following questions: What questions is the author asking? What is the object of study? What is the “data”? What is the unit of analysis? What archive is constructed by this work? How does that archive reveal its method? What are the primary and secondary sources? What is the argument? What methods is the author using to make this argument?

How do you know, i.e. how does the author reveal their method and what consequence does this have? How persuasive is the argument? How does the author argue that their object(s) of study is representative of a larger field? What is gained by this choice of method? What is not available to the author through this choice?

In addition, we will also examine the politics of method, how disciplines define (and police) methods, and the relationship of method to interdisciplinary approaches in the humanities and social sciences.

This class also serves as an introduction to the MCC faculty. The class session will be divided into two for most classes, with MCC faculty visiting in the first half and discussing their research and their methodological approaches.

We will also be looking at recent books published by MCC PhDs out of their dissertations as part of our reading. These are indicated by an \*.

### **Assignments and requirements:**

Students are expected to do all designated readings in preparation for class, to participate fully in class discussions, and to come prepared to ask faculty guest speakers informed questions. Each week has many more readings than we will actually do. Each week we will have several shared readings, including those by the faculty guest speakers, and then 2-3 students will be assigned to report on one additional reading.

We will have a class blog, on which you will post a minimum of 8 reflections. Grades will consider blog posts 70% and class participation 30%.

The reading structure and blog mean that we will have some shared readings and that you will have access to your colleague's assessment of readings you have not read.

### **Readings:**

Articles/chapters listed on the syllabus are linked under each week in Brightspace.

### Recommended Books:

Jessica McCrory Calarco, *A Field Guide to Grad School: Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum* (2020)

Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials 4th Edition* (2016)

Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, eds., *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (2011)  
 Adele E. Clarke, *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Postmodern Turn* (2005)  
 Eszter Hargittai and Christian Sandvig, ed., *Digital Research Confidential: The Secrets of Studying Behavior Online* (2015)

Jonathan Sterne's website is a valuable resource on academia and graduate studies: <http://sternetworks.org/academe/>

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

### **Week 1, Sept 8: Introduction**

Reading:  
 Paul Edwards, "How to Read a Book"

### **Week 2, Sept. 15: Considering Evidence**

Reading:  
 Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes"  
 Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading"  
 Kristen Ross, excerpt from *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*

### **Guest: Marita Sturken ☺**

Reading:  
 Marita Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial"  
 Marita Sturken, *Terrorism in American Memory* Introduction and Chapter 3

### Recommended:

Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History*, Introduction  
 Adele Clarke, *Situational Analysis*: Chapter 3 Doing Situational Maps and Analysis, Chapter 4, Turning to Discourse(s), and Chapter 5: Mapping Narrative Discourses  
 Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy"  
 Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex"  
 Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Chapters 6, 8, 9

**Week 3, Sept. 22:****Guest: Lisa Gitelman**

Reading:

Lisa Gitelman, Paper Knowledge, Introduction

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/lib/nyulibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1656071>

Lisa Gitelman, "Models and Manufacture: The Shoe as Commodity"

Lisa Gitelman, "Metadata"

**Media History/Media Archaeology**\*David Parisi, *Archaeologies of Touch: Interfacing with Haptics from Electricity to Computing*\*Jacob Gaboury, *Image Objects: An Archaeology of Computer Graphics*Shannon Mattern, *Code + Clay ... Data + Dirt*, IntroductionJonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*, excerpt

Erica Robles-Anderson and Patrik Svenssen, " 'One Damn Slide After Another': Powerpoint at Every Occasion for Speech"

Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, *Media Archaeology*, Introduction**Week 4, Sept. 29:****Guest: Nicole Starosielski**

Reading:

Nicole Starosielski, *The Undersea Network*, IntroductionNicole Starosielski, *Media Hot and Cold*, IntroductionMatthew Hockenberry, Nicole Starosielski, and Susan Zieger, *Assembly Codes: The Logistics of Media*, Introduction

Nicole Starosielski, "The Ends of Media Studies"

**Media Infrastructure**John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*, Introduction and Chapter 1Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski, Introduction to *Signal Traffic*

Lisa Parks, "Water, Energy, Access: Materializing the Internet"

Nicole Starosielski, "Fixed Flows: Undersea Cables as Media Infrastructure"

Helga Tawil Souril, "Cellular Borders: Dis/Connecting Phone Calls in Israel-Palestine"

Jennifer Holt and Patrick Vonderau, "Where the Internet Lives: Data Centers as Cloud Infrastructure"

Tung-Hui Hu, *A Prehistory of the Cloud*, excerptKeller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*, excerpt

**Week 5, October 6:****Guest: Nicole Fleetwood**

Reading:

Nicole Fleetwood, *Marking Time*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Nicole Fleetwood, "The Case of Rhianna"

**Unpacking Blackness/Race/Colonialism**\*Max Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism* excerpt\*Naomi Angel, *Fragments of Truth: Visual Culture and the Work of Reconciliation in Canada*, ChapterChristina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Chapter 1Cheryl Finley, *Committed to Memory: The Art of the Slave Ship Icon*, excerptsCharlton McIlwain, *Black Software: The Internet & Racial Justice, from the AfroNet to Black Lives Matter* (2019)Safiya Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*, excerptKelli Moore, *Legal Spectatorship: Slavery and the Visual Culture of Domestic Violence*, excerpt**Week 6, October 13:****Guest: Laine Nooney**

Reading:

Laine Nooney, "A Pedestal, A Table, A Love Letter: Archaeologies of Gender in Videogame History"

Laine Nooney, "The Uncredited: Work, Women, and the Making of the U.S. Computer Game Industry"

Laine Nooney, Book proposal

**Historical Research**Lynn Spigel, "Introduction to *Welcome to the Dreamhouse*" and "Outer Space and Inner Cities"Robert Darnton, "An Early Information Society," <http://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/robert-darnton>Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, The Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*, Intro and Chap 3John Harwood, *The Interface: IBM and the Transformation of Corporate Design 1945-1976*, Chapter 2: The Architecture of the ComputerJason Gallo, "Doing Archival Research" from *Research Confidential*

**Week 7, October 20:****Guest: Angela Wu**

Reading:

Angela Xiao Wu, (Under revision). Journalism via Systems

Cybernetics: Reforming the Socialist Press for Modernization in 1980s China.

Angela Xiao Wu, (Forthcoming). The ambient politics of affective computing. *Public Culture*, 34(1).Angela Xiao Wu and Harsh Taneja, (2020). Platform Enclosure of Human Behavior and its Measurement: Using Behavioral Trace Data against Platform Episteme. *New Media & Society*.Angela Xiao Wu, Harsh Taneja, and James Webster, (2020). Going with the flow: Nudging audiences online. *New Media & Society*.**Digital Methods**\*Tamara Kneese. *Death Glitch: What Social Networks Leave Behind*

Alex Galloway, "The Cybernetic Hypothesis"

Christian Sandvig and Eszter Hargittai, "How to Think about Digital Research"

"The Digital in the Humanities: An Interview with Alexander Galloway"

<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-digital-in-the-humanities-an-interview-with-alexander-galloway/>Lev Manovich, <http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/tag:Article>

Brooke Foucault Welles, "Big Data, Big Problems, Big Opportunities: Using Internet Log Data to Conduct Social Network Analysis"

Recommended:

Richard White, "What is Spatial History?"

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29>Drucker, Johanna. (2011) Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display. *Digital Humanities Quarterly*5, <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html>Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Chapter 11**Week 8, October 27:****Guest: Natasha Schull**

Reading:

Natasha Schull, *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas* (2012)  
Introduction

Natasha Schull, "Gambled Away: Video Poker and Self-Suspension"

Natasha Schull, "Data for life: Wearable technology and the design of self-care"

"Natasha Schull, The data-based self: Self-quantification and the data-driven (good) life"

## **Ethnography**

Helga Tawil-Souri, "Checkpoint Time" or "New Palestinian Centers: An Ethnography of the 'Checkpoint Economy'"

Gabriella Coleman, *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking* excerpts

danah boyd, "Making Sense of Teen Life: Strategies for Capturing Ethnographic Data in a Networked Era"

Mizuko Ito et al, *Hanging out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out*, Introduction

Elizabeth Chin, "Writing as Practice and Process" from *My Life with Things: The Consumer Diaries*

Gabriella Coleman, "Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010)

Tom Boellstorff, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, TL Taylor, *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*, excerpts

Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Chapter 10

## **Week 9, Nov 3:**

### **Guest: Ted Magder**

Reading:

Ted Magder. "Gambling, The WTO, and Public Morals: A Short Review of Antigua vs the United States."

Ted Magder. "The End of TV 101: Reality Programs, Formats, and the New Business of Television"

Ted Magder. "The Origins of International Agreements and Global Media: The Post, the Telegraph, and Wireless Communication before World War 1"

### **Second Guest (4-5:15) James Wahutu**

Reading:

J. Siguru Wahutu, "Representations of Africa in African Media"

J. Siguru Wahutu, "What African Media?"

J. Siguru Wahutu, "Fake News and Journalistic 'Rules of the Game'"

### **Political Economy/Analyzing Media Industries**

Shawn Shimpach, "Realty Reality: HGTV and the Subprime Crisis"

Susan Murray, *Bright Signals: A History of Color Television* (2018), Introduction and Chapters 1, 5

Juan Piñon, "Corporate articulations of transnationalism: the U.S. Hispanic and Latin American television industries"

David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Bakker, "Toward a Political Economy of Labor in the Media Industries," in Wasko, Murdock and Sousa, eds., *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications* <https://search-proxylibrary.nyu.edu/content/title/wileyhpoec?tab=contents>

John Caldwell, "Cultural Studies of Media Production: Critical Industrial Practices"

Dan Schiller, *How to Think about Information*, Intro and Chapter

### **Week 10, Nov. 10:**

#### **Guest: Whitney Pow**

Reading:

Whitney Pow, "A Trans Historiography of Glitches and Errors," *Feminist Media Histories*

Whitney Pow, "Danielle Bunten Berry: People Orientations"

Whitney Pow, "Outside of the Folder, the Box, the Archive: Toward a Reparative Game History" <https://romchip.org/index.php/romchip-journal/article/view/76>.

#### **Psychoanalysis/Affect Theory**

\*Hannah Zeavin. *The Distance Cure: A History of Teletherapy*

\*Lana Lin, *Freud's Jaw and Other Lost Objects: Fractured Subjectivity in the Face of Cancer*

Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* Introduction

Ben Kafka, *The Demon of Writing: The Powers and Failures of Paperwork* (Intro and Chapter 4)

Lisa Cartwright and Elizabeth Wolfson, "Introduction: Affect at the Limits of Photography"

Thomas Elsaesser, "Freud and the Technical Media: The Enduring Magic of the Wunderblock"

Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, "In the Shadow of NAFTA"

Anne McClintock, "The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism," from *Imperial Leather*

Patricia Clough, "The Affective Turn"

Anne Cvetovich, "Public Feeling" from *After Sex*

Recommended:

Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Chapter 7



**Week 11, Nov. 17:****Guest: Nicholas Mirzoeff**

Reading:

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, Introduction

Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Capital Insurgency and the Monument"

<https://monumentlab.com/bulletin/the-capitol-insurgency-and-the-monument>

Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Artificial Vision White Space"

Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Whiteness of Birds"

**Visual Culture Analysis:**

\*Hatim el-Hibri, *Visions of Beirut: The Urban Life of Media Infrastructure*, excerpt

\*Nadja Millner-Larsen, *Up Against the Real: Anti-Representational Militancy in 1960s New York*, excerpt

\*Scott Selberg, *Mediating Alzheimer's: Cognition and Personhood*, excerpt

Erica Robles-Anderson, "The Crystal Cathedral: Architecture for Mediated Congregation"

Arvind Rajagopal, "Notes on Postcolonial Visual Culture"

**Week 12, Nov. 24:****Guest: Radha Hegde**

Reading:

Radha Hegde, "Fragments and Interruptions: Sensory Regimes of Violence and the Limits of Feminist Ethnography"

Radha Hegde, "Itinerant Data: Unveiling Gendered Scrutiny at the Border"

Radha Hegde, "Food Blogs and the Digital Reimagination of South Asian Diasporic Publics"

Shani Orgad and Radha Hegde, "Crisis-ready responsible selves: National productions of the pandemic"

**Feminist Method**

Reading:

Sandra Harding, "Is There a Feminist Method?"

Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges" and "Apes in Eden, Apes in Space"

**Global/Transnational Research**

Amin Alhassan and Paula Chakravartty, "Postcolonial Media Policy Under the Long Shadow of Empire"

Paula Chakravartty and Srirupa Roy, "Mediatized Populisms: Inter-Asian Lineages"

Arvind Rajagopal, "Putting American in Its Place"

Shannon Mattern, "The Pulse of Global Passage: Listening to Logistics"

Aihwa Ong, "'What Marco Polo Forgot': Contemporary Chinese Art Reconfigures the Global"

David Morley, *Communications and Mobility: The Migrant, the Mobile Phone, and the Container Box*, Introduction and Chapters 8, 9

Angharad N. Valdiva, "The Gendered Face of Latinidad: Global Circulation of Hybridity"

Sujata Moorti, "Digital Cosmopolitanisms: The Gendered Visual Culture of Human Rights Activism"

Alhwa Ong, "Introduction: Worlding Cities or the Art of Being Global"

**Week 13, Dec. 1:****Guest: Stephen Duncombe**

Reading:

Stephen Duncombe, *Notes From Underground*

Introduction and one chapter

**Unpacking Culture/Activism:**Lauren Berlant, Introduction to *Queen of American Comes to Washington City*\*Melissa Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*\*Elizabeth Patton, *Easy Living: The Rise of the Home Office*Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas* excerptJeffrey Juris and Alex Khasnabish, *Insurgent Encounters: Transnational Activism, Ethnography and the Political*, IntroductionJack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism* excerptJack Halberstam, *Trans* excerpt**Week 14, Dec. 8:****Guest: Mara Mills**

Reading:

Mara Mills, "On Disability and Cybernetics: Helen Keller, Norbert Weiner, and the Hearing Glove"

Mara Mills, "Hearing Aids and the History of Electronics Miniaturization"

Jonathan Sterne and Mara Mills, "Second Rate"

<https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/second-rate>

Mara Mills, "Optophones and Musical Print"

<https://soundstudiesblog.com/2015/01/05/optophones-and-musical-print/>

Mara Mills, "Optophonic Reading, Prototyping Optophones"

<https://amodern.net/article/optophonic-reading/>**Science, Technology, and Society Studies (STS)/Actor Network Theory**Finn Brunton, *Digital Cash: The Unknown History of the Anarchists, Utopians, and Technologists Who Created Cryptocurrency* (2019), Intro and first 3 chapters

John Law, "STS as Method"

Alondra Nelson, *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation After the Genome* excerpts

Ignacio Fariás and Anders Blok, "STS in the City"

Banu Subramaniam, Laura Foster, Sandra Harding, Deboleena Roy, and Kim TallBear, "Feminism, Postcolonialism, Technoscience"

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory*, Introduction and excerpts