Death in the Digital Age

DIG 215 Guidelines

Instructor Info

Dr. Mark Sample
Office: Chambers 3286
Office Hours: MW 3-4:30pm and by appointment

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of the semester, students will be able to:

- Apply specific discursive and theoretical concepts to the analysis of representations of death in 21st century popular culture
- Describe significant cultural shifts in the relationship between death and technology over the past 100 years
- Create original multimodal work that communicates informed theoretical and speculative perspectives on some aspect of death and technology
- Engage in intellectually valuable discussions about culture and technology
- Analyze literary, cinematic, ludic, or theoretical perspectives of death, horror, and disaster in the 21st century with original insights, evidentiary reasoning, effective use of sources, and awareness of multiple perspectives and cultural contexts

Reading and Other Course Materials
There are two books to purchase for DIG 215:

- Emily St. John Mandel, *Station Eleven* (2014)

In addition to these two novels, there will be various journal articles, book chapters, and online material to read throughout the semester. I strongly urge you either to print out the material or to use a PDF application to take notes on the digital version of the material. You are required to bring the day’s reading to class with you.

We will also watch several videos, which are either available on Netflix or through the Residence Life movies site.

Please be aware that some material we study this semester may disturb you. We will encounter scenes of graphic violence, substance abuse, explicit language, sexual content, and references to abuse. Research shows that emotionally challenging material can still be engaged in productive and intellectually rigorous ways, provided you are prepared with coping strategies that allow you to regulate your emotional response to that material. I am always willing to help you strategize appropriate approaches to our course material.

**Work**

There are five major assignments over the course of the semester:

1. Weekly blogging
2. Postmodern Horror Snapchat Story (Project 1)
3. Comparative Contemporary Horror Analysis (Project 2)
4. Haunted Media Project (Project 3)
5. Final Analytical project

In addition to these five tasks, this class places a high premium on engagement. It is essential that everyone has carefully considered the day’s material, attends class, and participates. I also expect students to bring the day’s readings to class, marked up with notes and annotations. Missing class outside of excused absences will lower your final grade. Religious observation, medical emergencies, or college-sanctioned commitments count as excused absences.
Grading Specifications

DIG 215 will use an unconventional form of assessment called “specifications grading.” All of the details are available on the Grading Specifications page.

Inclusive learning

I am committed to the principle of inclusive learning. This means that our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices, and our interactions be as inclusive as possible. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen and observe others carefully are crucial to inclusive learning.

The college welcomes requests for accommodations related to disability and will grant those that are determined to be reasonable and maintain the integrity of a program or curriculum. To make such a request or to begin a conversation about a possible request, please contact the Office of Academic Access and Disability Resources, which is located in the Center for Teaching and Learning in the E.H. Little Library: Beth Bleil, Director, bebleil@davidson.edu, 704-894-2129; or Alysen Beaty, Assistant Director, albeaty@davidson.edu, 704-894-2939. It is best to submit accommodation requests within the drop/add period; however, requests can be made at any time in the semester. Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive.

Academic Integrity

Students at Davidson College abide by an Honor Code. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form.

Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Classroom Courtesy

While this course embraces the digital world it also recognizes that digital tools and environments complicate personal interactions. Studies have shown that students who use laptops in class
often receive lower grades than those who don't. Even more worrisome are studies that show laptop users distract students around them. I permit laptops and tablets in class, but only when used for classroom activities, such as note-taking or class readings. Occasionally I may ask students to turn off all digital devices.

Messaging or other cell phone use is unacceptable. Any student whose phone rings during class or who texts in class will be responsible for kicking off the next class day’s discussion.

Late arrivals or early departures from class are disruptive and should be avoided.

Related

The Death of Technology (Weeks 13-15)
January 10, 2019
Similar post

Representations (Weeks 1-6)
January 8, 2019
Similar post

Augmented Death (Weeks 10-12)
January 10, 2019
Similar post
Death in the Digital Age

Representations (Weeks 1-6)

In this section we’ll explore the way various narrative forms represent the intersection of death and technology, focusing particularly on horror. These representations include examples from fiction, film, and videogames.

Monday, January 14 (Week 1)

- Introduction to course guidelines and overview of the semester

Wednesday, January 16

- Ray Bradbury, “There Will Come Soft Rains” from The Martian Chronicles (1950), pages 205-211

Friday, January 18

- Alan Weisman, chapters 2 and 3 of The World Without Us (2007), pages 15-38

Monday, January 21 (Week 2)

- Isabel Pinedo, “Recreational Terror: Postmodern Elements of the Contemporary Horror Film” from The Journal of Film and Video (1996), pages 17-31
- Tasha Robinson, “Modern Horror Films Are Finding Their Scares in Dead Phone Batteries”
Wednesday, January 23

- Paul Tremblay, chapters 1-10 of *A Head Full of Ghosts* (2016), pages 1-60
- Blog (Round 1): Group B

Friday, January 25

- Chapters 11-14 of *A Head Full of Ghosts*, pages 61-101
- Blog (Round 1): Group C
- Postmodern Horror Snapchat project handed out

Monday, January 28 (Week 3)

- Chapters 15-17 of *A Head Full of Ghosts*, pages 102-150
- View *The Exorcist* (dir. William Friedkin, 1973) through the RLO Movie Channel
- Blog (Round 1): Group D

Wednesday, January 30

- Chapters 18-20 of *A Head Full of Ghosts*, pages 151-201
- Blog (Round 1): Group E

Friday, February 1

- Chapters 21-22 of *A Head Full of Ghosts*, pages 202-232
- Postmodern Horror Snapchat Story due
Monday, February 4 (Week 4)

- Chapters 23-26 of *A Head Full of Ghosts*, pages 235-284

Wednesday, February 6

- Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)” (1996), pages 3-25
- Blog (Round 2): Group A
- Comparative Horror Analysis assigned

Friday, February 8

- Open Discussion Day

Monday, February 11 (Week 5)

- *Dead Set*, episodes 1-2 (search for “Dead Set” on Netflix)
- Blog (Round 2): Group B

Wednesday, February 13

- *Dead Set*, episodes 3-5
- Blog (Round 2): Group C

Friday, February 15

- Blog (Round 2): Group D
Monday, February 18 (Week 6)

- Ewan Kirkland, “Resident Evil’s Typewriter: Survival Horror and Its Remediations” from *Games and Culture* (2009)
- Blog (Round 2): Group E

Wednesday, February 20

- “Be Right Back” from *Black Mirror* (season 2, episode 1)
- Blog (Round 3): Group A

Friday, February 22

- “Be Right Back” continued
- **Comparative Horror Analysis due**

**Header:** Still from “Be Right Back” (*Black Mirror*, Season 2, Episode 1)

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January 10, 2019
Similar post

**Haunted Media (Weeks 7-9)**
January 9, 2019
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Death in the Digital Age
DIG 215 (Spring 2019)

Haunted Media
(Weeks 7-9)

In this section we’ll examine death and its expression and consequences on social media and the Internet, including the recurring theme of communing with the dead through technology.

Monday, February 25 (Week 7)

- Mark Fisher, “Approaching the Eerie” from The Weird and the Eerie (2016), pages 61-64
- Blog (Round 3): Group B

Wednesday, February 27

- Jonathan Sterne, “A Resonant Tomb” from The Audible Past (2003), pages 287-311
- Haunted Media Project assigned
- Blog (Round 3): Group C

Friday, March 1

- Bethan Bell, “Taken from Life: Victorian Death Photos” from the BBC (2016)
Monday, March 4 – Friday, March 8 (Spring Break)

Monday, March 11 (Week 8)

- Kate Pullinger, “Breathe: A Ghost Story” (2018)

Wednesday, March 13

- Whitney Phillips, *LOLing at tragedy: Facebook trolls, memorial pages and resistance to grief* online from *First Monday* (2011)
- Megan Garber, *Enter the Grief Police* from *The Atlanta* (2016)
- Blog (Round 3): Group E

Friday, March 15

- Blog (Round 4): Group A

Monday, March 18 (Week 9)

- Blog (Round 4): Group B

Wednesday, March 20
Haunted Media MVP due in class

Friday, March 22

- Blog (Round 4): Group C

**Header:** “His Master’s Voice” by Francis Baraud (1899)

**Related**

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https://courses.digitaldavidson.net/death19/portfolio/social-media-weeks-7-10/
Death in the Digital Age
DIG 215 (Spring 2019)

Augmented Death (Weeks 10-12)

In this section we’ll consider the changes to death, dying, and the afterlife in the offline world wrought by contemporary technology.

Monday, March 25 (Week 10)

- Haunted Media Project due
- Final Project handed out

Wednesday, March 27

- Haunted Media showcase

Friday, March 29

- Shahak Shapira, “Yolocaust” (2017) (Now and Archived Version)

Monday, April 1 (Week 11)

- Lex Berko, Death on the Internet: The Rise of Livestreaming Funerals from The Atlantic (2014)
- Tamara Kneese, QR Codes for the Dead from The Atlantic (2014)
Wednesday, April 3

- Celebrity Deaths and Afterlife: Selling the dead, Behind the Tupac hologram, and the resurrection of Hollywood actors

Blog (Round 4): Group E

Friday, April 5

- Open Discussion Day

Monday, April 8 (Week 12)

- Danny Yadron and Dan Tynan, “Tesla Driver Dies in First Fatal Crash While Using Autopilot Mode” from *The Guardian* (June 30, 2016)

Blog (Round 5): Group A

Wednesday, April 10


Blog (Round 5): Group B

Friday, April 12

- Ganna Yankovska and Kevin Hannam, “Dark and Toxic Tourism in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone” from *Current Issues in Tourism* (2014), pages 929-939
Augmented Death (Weeks 10-12) – Death in the Digital Age

- Blog (Round 5): Group C

Header: “Ferris Wheel, Pripyat, Ukraine” (2008) via Flickr, Creative Commons

Related

Haunted Media (Weeks 7-9)
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The Death of Technology (Weeks 13-15)

In this section we’ll imagine the death of technology itself, including obsolescence, e-waste, and the post-digital world.

Monday, April 15 (Week 13)

- Raiford Guins, “Landfill Legend” from Game After: A Cultural Study of Video Game Afterlife (2014), pages 207-235
- Blog (Round 5): Group D

Wednesday, April 17

- Blog (Round 5): Group E

Friday, April 19

- Reading TBD

Monday, April 22 (Week 14)
The Death of Technology (Weeks 13-15) – Death in the Digital Age

- No Class

**Wednesday, April 24**

- Emily St. John Mandel, chapters 1-18, *Station Eleven* (2014), pages 1-115

**Friday, April 26**

- Chapters 19-26 of *Station Eleven*, pages 69-164

**Monday, April 29 (Week 15)**

- Chapters 27-44 of *Station Eleven*, pages 165-264

**Wednesday, May 1**

- Chapters 45-55 of *Station Eleven*, pages 265-333

**Friday, May 3**

- Course Wrap-Up

**Header:** Rafael Castillo, “Cracked Cell Phone” (2011) via Flickr / Creative Commons

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- *Representations (Weeks 1-6)*
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