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SYLLABUS. FALL 2010.
PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Maria A. Simone
Office: Hawthorn 316
Email: simone@rowan.edu (preferred mode of contact)
During the week, I will reply to email within 24 hours (unless otherwise noted in class). If you email me on Saturday or Sunday, I will likely be unable to reply until Monday. I typically check my email until 5-6 p.m., after that, I need some “offline” time ☺.

Twitter: masteach
Wiki: http://fall2010participatorymedia.pbworks.com/
Office Phone: 856-256-4500 ext. 3155
Office Hours: Drop by hours: Tuesdays: 12:15-1:30; Wednesdays: 12:30-3:00; Thursdays, 3:15-4:30. Other days and times are available by appointment. If the drop by hours do not work for you, please contact me so that we may find a mutually agreeable day and time.

FEEL FREE TO EMAIL, VISIT OR CALL. YOU ARE NOT BOTHERING ME.
IN FACT, WE JUST MIGHT HAVE A NICE CHAT 😊

ABOUT THE SYLLABUS

A syllabus is a very important document because it serves as our agreement. I include all the vital information you will need to succeed in this course. (I'm a bit compulsive that way. Hopefully you'll get used to it! 😊) You are responsible for knowing and following the contents of this document. I stick very closely to the syllabus, so you should too. Any substantial changes to the syllabus or the schedule will be emailed and/or posted to the class Wiki.

**NOTE:** I expect that you will read this syllabus in its entirety and ask questions if something is not clear. Pleading ignorance about the rules and expectations outlined in this document, project descriptions, and other official correspondence is not a good excuse. Of course, if you have any questions, or if something I've written or said is unclear, please feel free to ask questions. I'm happy to help.

PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT THIS COURSE.

ABOUT THE COURSE

All learning begins with curiosity and asking questions. In this course, we will ask and begin to answer several interesting questions about the relationship between technology and collective life. For example:

- How does technology affect our lives?
- Can technology create connection, community? If so, how? If not, why not?
Simone, Participatory Media, 3

- Can we use technology to improve our lives?
- What can (or should?) we do about negative consequences of technology use?
- Can technology help us achieve personal, professional and civic goals?
- What is a participatory media culture? How is it different from a mass media culture?
- What motivates humans to collaborate and engage in collective action?

Perhaps what is most interesting about these questions is that there is not a single, correct answer. So, these questions will lead us on a far-ranging and multifaceted exploration of participatory media, the use of which has moved from an underground culture embodied by tech geeks and entrepreneurs, to become an integral part of the wider civic, social, political and economic culture.

Participatory media have become the technological infrastructure for our social networks, for our relationships with others. They include some well-known platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia, GoogleDocs, and Twitter, as well as other less-known platforms that are built from easily available web development software, blogging communities and so on. But, what makes these media forms so different from traditional outlets, such as television, radio or books?

*The answer: WE are the media.*

It used to be that professional media producers and gatekeepers made and controlled the media content that we consumed. Consider the case of a Hollywood film, a newspaper, or a television show. Well, not anymore. Participatory media are different. They don't require professionals because amateurs can play this media production game, too.

So, participatory media challenge the once-traditional relationship between the producer and the consumer of mediated messages. Individuals who were once consumers of centralized, commercial programming are now active producers of mediated content, whether that be a social networking profile, a video posted to YouTube, a website or blog, a Wikipedia entry, a series of comments on a news site, a music playlist and so on. There are almost limitless ways in which the “audience” has become an active participant in at least some aspect of the creation of mediated content. And, we are creating in a multitude of ways from the mundane to the sublime.

This class examines the human relationships and technological tools that make this participation possible, as well as the social, political and cultural implications of this changing media environment. The theoretical base of the course stems from the concept of the *network*. A network is a collection of connections—some weak and some strong. But all of these connections represent some type of relationship that is constructed through communication.

The nature of these connections is dependent upon the people who populate the network, their actions and the motivations for those actions. Network characteristics, technological evolution, and social norms have influenced and will continue to influence the participatory media ecology. Over the course of the semester, we’ll examine these aspects through three general units:

1. Foundations of the participatory ethic
2. Community and social networking
3. Cultural convergence and changing modes of media production

The course schedule is organized around these three units and their subtopics.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. Challenge assumptions (your own and others’), resisting the temptation to stick with habits of thought. Upon challenging said assumptions, you will think critically about which ideas you wish to retain and which you wish to reject.
2. Engage in critical thinking about the relationship among the various topics of study and apply theories and concepts to analyze concrete examples from your experiences and the experiences of others.

3. Identify, analyze and evaluate:
   a. the contribution of network theory to understanding the social, political and cultural changes brought about by widely-available participatory media
   b. the technological history and political economy of the participatory media ecology
   c. the regulatory and ethical challenges of the participatory media ecology, such as privacy, intellectual property rights, and network neutrality
   d. the nature of and impact of social networking and community, enabled by participatory media technology
   e. the impact of amateur or grassroots media production on professional media production, and vice versa

4. Strengthen written and oral communication, as well as research competency.

CLASS FORMAT

This class is intended to be a seminar, which means limited lecturing (...and there was much rejoicing...). Rather than talk at you, we will engage in provocative and insightful discussion about readings, concepts and experiences.

I do not intend to monopolize every minute of every class. Both you and I will be bored to tears. But, without your help, I'll be forced to blabber on. Let's prevent this outcome at ALL costs. I welcome and encourage your participation. If you read, see, hear or experience something that is relevant to course concepts, please do not hesitate to discuss it or bring a copy of the item to class.

Please be prepared to bring your ideas and questions to the classroom. All students are expected to play an active role in discussions during each class meeting, on the class wiki, and on twitter. If completing the readings or participating in discussions is not "your thang", then this class may not be the best fit for your academic path. Learning happens through expression, and this class will require plenty of it in a variety of formats.

Please be sure to consult the descriptions for participation in class, on the wiki and via Twitter. Each of these components will be part of the assessment of your learning. Or said differently, your opportunity to show us what you are learning. ☺

EXPECT THIS CLASS TO BE CHALLENGING.

I know. You've heard this one before, right? But, I mean it—in a good way. We learn the most when we are pushed past our comfort levels, and encouraged to reach new goals for learning and expressing ourselves. Therefore, I design my courses to be challenging—and make no mistake, I will push you—so that you may learn and grow. In the end, any effort you expend will be rewarded with an increased understanding of the social world in which you reside.

While I will challenge you, I also offer plenty of support. If you feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or confused at any time, please come see me. I will be happy to help you work through any difficulties you are having. Don't let frustration impede your progress! Ask for help – and you shall receive it. ☺

ONLINE COMMUNICATION

What would a participatory media course be if we didn’t actively participate in these types of media environments? There are four ways that this course will take advantage of online communication technology, including:
1. Email
   a. I will use your official Rowan email address, mostly because it is the one that is most easily available to me. Please check it regularly. If necessary, you can have your Rowan email forwarded to a preferred address. Directions for how to perform this operation can be found at http://www.rowan.edu/toolbox/email/student/#afoward.
   b. I will email any important and last-minute announcements.
   c. Email is also a great way to contact me with individual or private questions, problems or comments.

2. A class wiki, available online at http://fall2010participatorymedia.pbworks.com/
   a. Our class will take advantage of wiki technology to serve as a clearing house of information and resources related to the class. It will be an example of and an experiment in the concept of collective intelligence.
   b. You will upload assignments to the wiki (if desired), post class notes, contribute to the glossary of terms, add your contact information to the directory and share information in ways that you decide are useful for the class community.
   c. Required readings, beyond the required textbook, will be posted to the wiki.
   d. When the answer to a question you might have will benefit the whole class, ask it on the wiki. I made a page specifically for this purpose, “I got a question; who's got my answer?” available here: http://fall2010participatorymedia.pbworks.com/I+got+a+question+-+who%27s+got+my+answer.

3. Twitter, http://twitter.com, class hashtag: #CMPM10
   a. We will use twitter for in and out of class discussions, reading reflections and questions.
   b. Commenting on the readings via Twitter is in lieu of reading quizzes, reading reflection papers and so on.
   c. If you already have a Twitter account, great. If not, we’ll talk about how to set one up in class.
      i. Please note, I realize some of you may be apprehensive about having a twitter account. If you are completely against having a twitter account, please come see me and we’ll try to find an alternate option for you.
   d. For those of you who do not have a laptop that you can bring to class, you can post to twitter via your cell phone. We will experiment a bit with using twitter in the classroom...

4. Blackboard
   a. You’ll consult Blackboard for:
      i. your grades
      ii. tests

5. The use of laptops is permitted in class.
   a. If you use your laptop for work or play unrelated to class, that is your choice. But, please realize, it will be difficult for me to be sympathetic to your concerns or problems if you don’t pay attention in class. That sounds reasonable, doesn’t it?

**READING**

This class requires approximately 20 +/- pages of reading per class period. (This number does not include any additional reading you may need to complete for the course assignments.)

This class is not the only responsibility you (or I) have. So, it is imperative that we manage our time accordingly. Students are expected to read any assigned chapters or articles prior to coming to class. See the course schedule for exact due dates for the various reading assignments.
It is important that you complete the assigned readings by the date indicated in the course schedule. Part of your participation score will be dependent upon your ability to ask and answer questions, and to critically analyze the content of the readings. Additionally, successful comprehension of the reading materials will affect your success in completing other course requirements.

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AS YOU READ, YOU SHOULD POST QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS YOU HAVE TO TWITTER, USING THE COURSE HASHTAG: #CMPM10. I WILL CHECK THIS HASHTAG BEFORE EACH CLASS AS A WAY TO GEAR OUR DISCUSSIONS.

C’MON, TRY IT – IT MIGHT BE FUN 😊.

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REQUIRED TEXT


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REQUIRED ARTICLES (POSTED TO THE WIKI)

In addition to the required text, there are a collection of articles we will read throughout the semester (see course schedule). These articles can be found in the Course Schedule, posted to the wiki (http://fall2010participatorymedia.pbworks.com/Course-Schedule). Many of these readings will be .pdf form, so Adobe reader is required to open most of these files (free software).

You may print the articles to bring to class, but it is not a requirement if you are comfortable reading them onscreen. I ask that you take notes as you read, and bring those notes to class for discussion—whether or not you print the article. (Taking notes while you read has the added benefit of improving your recall of the material and improving your critical analysis.)

If you do not print the reading, you may bring an electronic device (cell phone, lap top, reader) to class so that you can view the readings as we discuss them.

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STRONGLY RECOMMENDED REFERENCE:


This writer’s reference has been adopted by the Department of Communication Studies as the official writer’s reference. As such, purchasing the reference will allow you to use it throughout your time here at Rowan. If you have another writer's reference, that’s fine. There is no need to purchase another reference text.

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ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES

Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856-256-4234. The Center is located on the 3rd floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations. We look forward to working with you to meet your learning goals.
CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

The following policy is taken from the institution’s “Classroom Behavior Policy and Procedures”, the full text of which is available online: [http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/documents/ClassroomBehaviorPolicyandProcedures.pdf](http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/documents/ClassroomBehaviorPolicyandProcedures.pdf).

Rowan University recognizes that students play a major part in creating and supporting the educational environment and believes that students have a right to learn and a responsibility to participate in the learning process. While Rowan University is committed to the fundamental principles of freedom of speech, including controversial positions taken in the classroom, all types of speech and behavior must be balanced with principles of appropriate classroom behavior. Furthermore, course instructors have a right to establish clear expectations in this regard, and students share the responsibility for maintaining an appropriate, orderly learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to the behavioral expectations outlined by the instructor (either in the syllabus or at the time the behavior occurs) may be subject to discipline in accordance with the procedures described in this classroom behavior policy. Students and instructors are expected to follow the procedures described below when a concern about student behavior in the classroom arises.

WHAT CONSTITUTES DISRUPTION?

Disruptive behavior can be classified into two levels.

**Level I disruptive behavior can include (but are not limited to):**
- Persistent speaking or interruptions of others
- Engaging in activities not related to the class
- Inappropriate use of electronic devices, cell phones, or pagers
- Sleeping in class
- Chronically entering class late or leaving early
- Disrespectful argumentativeness with other students or faculty or peers

**Level II disruptive behaviors can include (but are not limited to):**
- Threats of any kind
- Harassment
- Physical altercations
- Destruction of property
- Any behavior that puts the health or safety of the instructor or other students in the classroom in jeopardy


ATTENDANCE

I expect you to come to every class. Since we are studying communication, communicating with your classmates and me is central to the learning experience. If you are not here, you cannot communicate; therefore, what you learn (and earn gradewise) will suffer. However, you are an adult, and quite capable of taking responsibility for your decisions – whether that decision includes attending class or not.

If you miss class it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to figure out what you missed. Emailing or calling me for a recap of the day’s events is not really appropriate. After all, the show must go on, right? Of course, if you require clarification, I'll
be happy to offer it. I recommend obtaining the phone numbers or email addresses of several other students to get notes, etc. (See the wiki directory.)

IF YOU MISS CLASS

- Please do not ask me if you missed anything. The answer is YES.
- You do not need to notify me of your absence or the reason for it.
- Your participation grade will be affected because you will not be here to engage in discussion and/or various in-class activities. Neither discussion nor in-class activities can be made up.
- Assigned work is due whether you come to class or not.

IF YOU ARE LATE TO CLASS:

- It is ruuuuuude. I realize that various extenuating circumstances do happen. Being late once or twice is sometimes par for the course. Being late on a regular basis is a pattern that communicates a lack of concern and respect (even if that is NOT your intention). So, if you have to work (or sleep, etc.) and it will make you late every week, you may want to consider a different class.
- Please realize that I start class promptly, so lateness can affect your progress.
- You will miss announcements. It is your responsibility to ask another student what those announcements might have been.

This attendance policy is in keeping with the university wide standards, which are available online: [http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/documents/AttendancePolicy-classroom_000.pdf](http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/documents/AttendancePolicy-classroom_000.pdf)

ASSESSMENT MEASURES

I do not give grades – you earn them (just like a paycheck). Your grade reflects your understanding of and your enthusiasm for the material as demonstrated in class sessions, tests and assignments.

**TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND ASK QUESTIONS AS NECESSARY.**

If you do not understand a given assignment or topic, please ask for clarification in advance of the due date so that my feedback can be useful to you. Successful and timely completion of the appropriate mix from the following activities will guarantee a favorable overall assessment.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS FOR EACH OF THESE CAN BE FOUND ON BLACKBOARD.

1. In-class participation & activities 100
   description: [http://fall2010participatorymedia.pbworks.com/f/In-Class+Participation+and+Activities.pdf](http://fall2010participatorymedia.pbworks.com/f/In-Class+Participation+and+Activities.pdf)

2. Wiki Participation 100

3. Twitter Participation 100

4. Tests
   a. Test 1 100
   b. Test 2 100
   c. Test 3 100
Please electronically submit your assignments. You may use email or the wiki. Tests will be taken via the blackboard site. There are several reasons for this method: 1) it’s more environmentally friendly; 2) it helps keep our costs down; 3) I can grade assignments more efficiently.

Assignments must be posted or emailed by 11:59 p.m. on the due date. If you are uncertain with how to upload documents to the wiki, please see me well in advance of the due date. Alternatively, if you do not want to upload your assignments to the wiki, you may email them to me.

Late work is highly unprofessional, as is excessive absence and lateness. Whether you mean to give this impression or not, late work connotes a lack of concern for the task at hand, as well as a lack of responsibility. While at times late work is unavoidable, it is not a habit aspiring, responsible professionals should develop.

- Late assignments are not accepted for full credit. Each day that the assignment is late will result in a deduction of one FULL grade level. (For example, if the paper is a B, but is turned in a day late, you will earn a C).
- The final project will not be accepted late under any circumstances. This strict deadline is due to restrictions on when grades are due and the time it will take me to grade the projects. Failure to hand in the final project on time will result in a zero for the assignment.
- Assignments left in my mailbox or under my office door will not be accepted.
- In-class activities and discussion CANNOT be made up.

You must conduct all work in keeping with the standards of academic honesty as described in the student handbook. Please see http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/documents/AcademicIntegrityPolicyandRAIVForm_000.pdf for the full text of the academic integrity policy, and the procedures taken in the event of an act of academic dishonesty. This link provides a full accounting of the various actions that are considered in violation of academic integrity.
In terms of citing sources, all secondary sources must be cited using either MLA or APA. Both systems of citation require in-text (parenthetical) cites, as well as a reference page at the end of the document. If you need help with citing sources, please feel free to make an appointment for additional help. I'm happy to assist with any difficulties you might have. The recommended writer’s reference includes easy to follow steps for how to cite sources properly using either style.

Penalties for the violation of academic honesty are dependent upon the severity of the offense. They range from a zero for the assignment to possible suspension from the university. In all cases, instances of plagiarism will be reported to the university via the Report of an Academic Integrity Violation (RAIV) form, as per university policy.

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT VIOLATIONS OF ACADEMIC HONESTY, PLEASE ASK! I'M HERE TO HELP.**

**INTERPRETING THE LETTER GRADE – OR WHAT MAKES AN “A” GRADE**

An extraordinary performance results in an extraordinary grade. Students earning an A have conducted their work in a manner that exceeds expectations, and is well above average. To use sports analogies, an A is like a touchdown or a grand slam or a three-pointer. For those of you who prefer music, an A is like a concert that makes you dance, sing and shout all night long. Or, it’s the party you never want to end.

A B grade connotes work that is above average. A B is like a field goal. You are very close to the end zone, but went for 3 points instead of 6. For those who prefer concerts, a B means the audience may sit down or wander about every so often. Maybe a song or two is off-key. Overall, the show was good, but it wasn’t extraordinary. Or, you’ve been to a good party, but you’re ready to leave when it’s over.

Students earning C grades have met the minimum expectations of the assignment, conducting their work in an average or acceptable manner. It is important to note that average does not mean “bad.” After all, plenty of average teams do well in the NFL. Plenty of average bands enjoy long touring and record contracts. Not everyone can be extraordinary in every task they undertake, but each person can be capable.

Students who receive a D or less have not met the minimum requirements for the assignment, test or course. Sometimes, poor attendance can cause students to earn a D. If you come to class, stay on top of the material, participate, complete the assignments to the best of your ability, and ask questions when necessary, there is no reason you should earn a D.

A student typically earns an overall failing grade (F) for one of three reasons: Infraction of academic policies (e.g., plagiarism), poor class attendance, or missed projects/tests. It is also possible to fail the course if every assignment disregards the majority of expectations for the project.

**GRADE QUESTIONS & CORRECTIONS**

If you ever have questions about a grade you have earned, you should come to see me to discuss the matter. Please review all comments before coming to see me, and do not wait longer than two weeks to discuss a particular assignment or test grade. If I have made an error in calculation, I will gladly and immediately correct the mistake. If there is no error, but you still have questions, we’ll review the criteria and discuss the assessment. Grades are only a part of your academic experience. The most significant part is learning. So, concentrate on learning and the grades will follow.

**EXTRA CREDIT**
As a general policy, I do not offer extra credit assignments. If extra credit is offered, it is usually due to rare circumstances, and the whole class will be given the option to complete the extra credit assignment. I do not offer individual extra credit options under any circumstances. This policy reflects my desire to be fair to all students. I do not believe it is fair to give one student the option for extra credit and not provide that same option to other students.

TEACHING & LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

Learning is a fantastic journey that includes many excursions, stops, and new beginnings. Each individual's journey is unique; therefore, in my role as a teacher, I serve as a guide, supporting you as you travel along a multi-faceted path that is particular to you. I believe that each student needs to take responsibility for his or her own learning, but that a teacher plays an important role in facilitating learning that is meaningful for each student. To this end, I strive for several goals as a teacher.

ENTHUSIASM

First, I like to encourage enthusiasm for the material we are covering. If you are enthusiastic and engaged, you are more likely to meaningfully and critically integrate the material into your journey.

DIVERSITY OF VOICE

The diversity of the college classroom enhances the learning experience, particularly when students are encouraged to share perspectives and experiences with each other. Students and professors are part of a community of learners and scholars. The emphasis on community values your participation, which in turn exposes you and your fellow classmates to a variety of viewpoints and experiences. I am only one voice in the classroom. In order to explore fully the subject matter, your participation is necessary.

CHALLENGE

If you are to learn, you must challenge yourself. Readings, assignments, lectures and discussions are designed to encourage you to push yourself past your comfort level, to take risks, and to understand that learning requires determination in the face of intellectual obstacles.

SUPPORT

An effective teacher, while challenging, is also supportive, and creates an atmosphere of respect and fairness. I respect students’ various experiences and hardships. I am accessible and generous with my time. I am also willing to support you in your endeavors outside of the classroom by writing reference letters (provided performance is above average), providing counsel about career and graduate school options, and helping you access resources.

Challenge should not mean that you feel frustrated or overwhelmed, and give up. If you have questions or experience difficulty at any time: come see me! If my office hours don’t work for you, then make an appointment for a time that works for both of us.

Support requires fairness, which means we adhere to clear policies for course requirements. I provide detailed syllabi, itemized course schedules, and in depth project descriptions and evaluation rubrics. I reserve time during each class for administrative questions. By being clear about my rules and expectations, you are able to identify any potential problems you may have before they become actual problems. Furthermore, each individual will be

1 Please note, to maintain the integrity of the content and the purpose of reference letters, I will write reference letters only after the semester has finished, and only for students who earn at least a B in the course. I find it very difficult to write letters before I know a student well enough to speak to his or her strengths.
assessed using the same criteria for excellence. Students are not compared to each other, but assessed based on the learning expectations and outcomes. This approach offers support, respects diversity and ensures that minimum standards are achieved.

KNOWLEDGE

To be an effective guide, I, too, must be a traveler along the path of knowledge and understand the many twists and turns that the road may take. My journey as a professor includes staying current by reading the research of others, attending conferences, and conducting research. My research allows me to provide you with a map of the terrain.

With an overview in place, you are encouraged to explore on your own, which strengthens personal initiative and encourages independent thought—valuable qualities for personal, public, and professional life. More than making you “employable,” I work to instill a love of knowledge and a joy in curiosity. By engaging, respecting, challenging, and supporting you, I hope to serve effectively as a guide for at least one part of your journey.

THANKS FOR TAKING THIS CLASS. I LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING EACH OF YOU, AND SERVING AS A GUIDE FOR THIS PART OF YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY.