



# History and Philosophy of Computing MM3B03

Winter 2009, Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia  
Seminar: Wed 2:30 – 4:30 p.m. | Room TBA | Tutorial: Mon 2:30 p.m.

Instructor: Lori Shyba MFA PhD

Office hours: M/W/F 12:00 – 2:00 or by appointment. Location: 304 Togo Salmon Hall.  
Email: shybal@mcmaster.ca / Course site: <http://hccmoodle.mcmaster.ca>

## 1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the history and philosophy of computing and communications technology. Topics include computers and culture, new media ecologies, ethical and political implications of technology, humanistic informatics, and 21st-century literacies.

## 2. QUESTIONS AND TOPICS WE CAN EXPLORE:

- What are the substantive, theoretical, and methodological foundations of humanities computing?
- What new forms of cultural expression emerged with the advent of the digital age and how do they build upon or break with the old?
- How should we assess the ethical and political implications of digital technologies?
- What kinds of tools and methodologies do we have or do we need to develop in order to make sense of and/or to take advantage of these new technologies?

## 3. SCHEDULE

Week	Topics and Disciplines ( <i>Subject to Change</i> )	Tutorial/Field Trip
1	Digital History and Foundations	Group One
2	Philosophers of Technology*	Group Two
3	Cognition, Perception, and Emotion	Group Three
4	New Media Ecologies*	Group Four
5	Computers and Culture	Group Five
6	Ethical and Political Implications*	Group Six
7	Human-Computer Interaction	Group Seven
8	Cyborgs and Synthetic Humans*	Group Eight
9	Humanistic Informatics	Group Nine
10	Computers in Education*	Group Ten
11	Paradigm Shifts and Revolution	Group Eleven
12	Interdisciplinarity	Review

\* Indicate response paper submissions.

#### 4. ASSIGNMENTS:

Descriptions of assignments and due dates will be available on the Moodle CMS.

Group Presentations ( <i>Due dates ongoing</i> )	15%
Statement of Purpose, research questions, and bibliography <i>Due on January 21, 2009.</i>	10%
Research Paper Draft, <i>Due March 18</i>	15%
Research Paper Final, <i>Due March 25</i>	35%
Participation (includes responses and in-class writings)	25%

**5. EVALUATION:** Evaluation criteria specific to each project will be identified as we go along. Given the nature of the artistic process, grading will include subjective assessment.

#### 6. RESOURCES

- The New Media Reader. Edited by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort. Cambridge: MIT Press 2003.
- The New Media Reader CD ROM. (If you purchase a second-hand copy of this book, ensure that you have this disk.

Descriptions of weekly readings and case studies will be available on the Moodle CMS.

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#### 7. CLASS FORMAT AND POLICIES:

**Attendance is mandatory for succeeding in this course.** Only two unexcused absences will be allowed, after which time it will be suggested to you that you drop the course. If you are more than 10 minutes late for class, it will be considered an absence. Positive and consistent class participation is essential. I expect to hear everyone's voice during class discussions and I have no hesitation to cold call for responses. During presentations, you are expected to participate or observe with interest and enthusiasm.

You are responsible for completing all reading assignments, without exception, by the day they are discussed. Be prepared to come to class prepared to comment on all readings in class. Also, be prepared for regular "response writings," five- to ten-minute in-class writing assignments that focus on the readings and tutorial work. Sometimes these responses will be written at the beginning of class, to evaluate your preparation; sometimes they will be written at the end of class, to gauge your participation.

Assignments must be completed and submitted/presented at the time they are due, or they will be considered late. Assignments drop half a letter grade for each day they are late, including weekends. Assignments more than three days late will not be accepted unless prior special permission has been granted.

Please focus on classwork during class time. Checking email or working on other course material is not allowed. Web surfing or playing games is likewise not permitted if not related to course material. Unless permitted to do otherwise, during seminars, presentations, and discussions you will be required to close your laptop or turn off your computer's monitor in order to give your full

attention to the class proceedings. If you choose to breach these requests, you will be dismissed from class.

**8. ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at [http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac\\_integrity.htm](http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not your own and where credit is not cited.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

**Email:** It is the policy of the CSMM Department that all email communication between students and instructors (including TAs) must originate from their official McMaster University email accounts. This policy protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information and confirms the identities of both the student and instructor

**Accommodations For Students With Disabilities:** If you require special accommodation for learning or have any special needs, please let me know of them as soon as possible in order that arrangements can be made. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Centre for Student Development.

**Safewalk:** For a safe walk any time, call S.W.H.A.T., 905 527-7070, Ext. 27500.