

SM6349: PLATFORM CULTURES

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Platform Cultures

Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

Course Number

6349

Academic Unit

School of Creative Media (SM)

College/School

School of Creative Media (SM)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course provides a panorama view of platform-incubated digital cultures locally, regionally, and globally and contemporary theories of digital culture. Platform cultures refer to each social media platform's distinctive blend of

aesthetic styles, cultural logics, and its own genre of communication, which are afforded by sociotechnical infrastructures of each platform. Platform studies is not just applied to contemporary platforms that are explicitly constructed, governed, inhabited as platforms, but also retroactively to its origins in earlier Web-based cultures and even analogue/postdigital media. The course will unpack platform cultures from two orientations. First, we focus on specific cultural artefacts: for instance, evolution of memes since the 1990s, from emails, image boards, Rickrolls, to Facebook 'dank memes', to r/WallstreetBets; the philosophies of selfies from Narcissus to CCD digital cameras to algorithmic filter. Through reviewing internet history and mapping new connections, this course situates the contemporary phenomena of influencers, YouTubers, Vtubers, and content creators in a longer timeline of cultural and social changes. Second, we focus on sociotechnical infrastructures: for example, understanding algorithms of TikTok in both technical language and folkloric myths; the gradual from the Web to mobile apps. The course will encourage students to merge media theory and cultural practices in their own "deep dives" into the history and present of platformed cultures.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Identify and classify the global, regional and local (pre)histories of social media platforms and its sociotechnical infrastructure.		x	x	
2	Describe and question relevant contemporary media and cultural theories (e.g. platform studies to media archaeology to new aesthetics).		x	x	
3	Strategically use global perspectives and media theories to local or regional settings and interpret how influencer culture is gradually constituted in the history of internet culture.		x	x	x
4	Implement research methodologies and creative skills to critically investigate specific examples of platform cultures.		x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	- Lectures on platform histories, artefacts, and sociotechnical infrastructures. - Lectures on platform studies, social media studies, and media archaeology	1, 2, 3	

2	Seminars	- Discussions on required readings - Cognitive mapping	1, 2, 3, 4	
3	Quiz	- Quiz on platform history and key concepts in platform studies	1, 2, 3	
4	Individual essay	- a thorough 'deep dive' into one example of platform vernacular in relation to a regional and/or global context; the outcome should be multimedia essay published as a webpage	1, 2, 3, 4	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Participation in seminar discussions and activities	1, 2, 3	20	-	Yes
2	Quiz on platform history and key concepts in platform studies and social media theories	1, 2, 3	40	-	No
3	Final essay to be published as a web page; a thorough "deep dive" into one example of platform vernacular in relation to a regional and/or global context	1, 2, 3, 4	40	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Minimum Continuous Assessment Passing Requirement (%)

0

Minimum Examination Passing Requirement (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Participation in seminar discussions and activities (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the seminar sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to their peer members.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-)

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate class discussion and comment on other points
- In-depth pre-class preparation and familiarity with readings and other materials for the seminars
- Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and debate others' views with an open mind

Good

(B+, B, B-)

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points
- Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with readings and other materials for the seminars
- Interpret opinions effectively during debates

Fair

(C+, C, C-)

- Attentive in in-class participation, listening with comprehension, but only infrequently contributing
- Adequate pre-class preparation but little familiarity with readings and other materials for the seminars
- Fair ability in interpreting opinions

Marginal

(D)

- Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people's views
- Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with readings and other materials for the seminars
- Poor ability in interpreting opinions

Failure

(F)

- Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher
- No pre-class preparation and familiarity with readings and other materials for the seminars

Assessment Task

Quiz (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

This quiz will students' knowledge on platform history and key concepts in platform studies and social media theories covered in the lectures and seminars.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Excellent level of knowledge on key concepts outlined during lectures and seminars.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Good level of knowledge on key concepts outlined during lectures and seminars.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Marginal level of knowledge on key concepts outlined during lectures and seminars.

Marginal

(D) Weak level of knowledge on key concepts outlined during lectures and seminars.

Failure

(F) Inadequate level of knowledge on key concepts outlined during lectures and seminars.

Assessment Task

Individual Essay (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Students should demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge and skills to undertake an independent research project into one example of platform vernacular in relation to a regional and/or global context

Excellent

(A+, A, A-)

- Excellent grasp of materials, ability to explain key concepts, assumptions, and debates, demonstrating sound knowledge of relevant media theories
- Rich content, exceptional ability to integrate various resources into the essay
- Excellent visuals and web design (e.g. figures, infographics, or animation)
- Design and conduct research which is firmly coherent structure, and systematic exposition with a strong sense of narrative built on thorough knowledge of existing theoretical frameworks
- Evaluative judgments about existing research and demonstrate application of strong critical thinking skills
- Strong organization of research findings with effective organization and procedural clarity

Good

(B+, B, B-)

- Firm grasp of materials, ability to explain key concepts and assumptions
- Adequate content, strong ability to integrate various resources into the essay
- Good visuals and web design (e.g. figures, infographics, or animation)
- Design and conduct research which is built on good knowledge of existing theoretical frameworks
- Appropriate judgments about existing research and demonstrate application of critical thinking skills
- Ability to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools

Fair

(C+, C, C-)

- Comprehensive grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts
- Adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources into the essay
- Adequate visuals and web design (e.g. figures, infographics, or animation)
- Design and conduct research which is built on basic knowledge of existing theoretical frameworks
- Appropriate judgments about existing research
- Weak ability to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools

Marginal

(D)

- Loose grasp of materials, cannot explain key concepts
- Weak content, and little citation of sources
- Weak visuals and web design
- Design and conduct research which is appropriate for the research objective
- Marginal judgments about existing research
- Poor ability to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools

Failure

(F)

- Poor grasp of materials
- Weak content, and no citation of sources

- No visuals and web design
 - Fail to design and conduct research which is appropriate for the research objective
 - Fail to make reasonable judgments about existing research
 - Fail to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools
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Assessment Task

Participation in seminar discussions and activities (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the seminar sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to their peer members.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-)

Engaging participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the seminar sessions.

Good

(B+, B)

Active participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the seminar sessions.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C)

Passive participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the seminar sessions.

Failure

(F)

Lack of participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the seminar sessions.

Assessment Task

Quiz (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

This quiz will students' knowledge on platform history and key concepts in platform studies and social media theories covered in the lectures and seminars.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-)

Excellent level of knowledge on key concepts outlined during lectures and seminars.

Good

(B+, B)

Good level of knowledge on key concepts outlined during lectures and seminars.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C)

Marginal level of knowledge on key concepts outlined during lectures and seminars.

Failure

(F)

Poor level of knowledge on key concepts outlined during lectures and seminars.

Assessment Task

Final Essay (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Students should demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge and skills to undertake an independent research project into one example of platform vernacular in relation to a regional and/or global context.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-)

Excellent ability to apply knowledge and skills to undertake independent research, build up analysis, write up and build a webpage for the presentation.

Good

(B+, B)

Good ability to apply knowledge and skills to undertake independent research, build up analysis, write up and build a webpage for the presentation.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C)

Marginal ability to apply knowledge and skills to undertake independent research, build up analysis, write up and build a webpage for the presentation.

Failure

(F)

Lack of ability to apply knowledge and skills to undertake independent research, build up analysis, write up and build a webpage for the presentation.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Platform Vernacular, Platform Studies, Internet Studies, Digital Cultural Studies, Social Media, Influencer Creativity, Media History, Media Archaeology, Media Philosophy, Meme Studies, Selfie Studies, Algorithm Studies, Visual Studies, Mobile Studies, New Aesthetics, Digital Aesthetics

Reading List**Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	Gibbs, M., Meese, J., Arnold, M., Nansen, B., & Carter, M. (2014). #Funeral and Instagram: death, social media, and platform vernacular. <i>Information, Communication & Society</i> , 18(3), 255–268.
2	Kaye, D. B. V., Zeng, J., & Wikström, P. (2022). TikTok: Creativity and culture in short video. <i>Polity</i> .
3	Taylor, T. L. (2019). <i>Watch me play: Twitch and the rise of Game Live Streaming</i> . Princeton University Press.
4	Tiidenberg, K., Hendry, N. A., & Abidin, C. (2021). <i>Tumblr</i> . <i>Polity</i> .
5	Dijk, J. van. (2013). <i>The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media</i> . Oxford University Press.
6	Seymour, R. (2019). <i>The Twittering Machine</i> . The Indigo Press.
7	Highfield, T. (2016). <i>Social Media and Everyday Politics</i> . <i>Polity</i> .
8	Leaver, T., Highfield, T., Abidin, C. (2020). <i>Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures</i> . <i>Polity</i> .
9	Peraica, A. (2017). <i>Culture of the Selfie: Self-Representation in Contemporary Visual Culture</i> . Institute of Network Culture.
10	Shifman, L. (2014). <i>Memes in digital culture</i> . MIT Press.

11	Lovink, G. (2019). Sad by design: on Platform Nihilism. Pluto Press.
12	Jerslev, A., & Mortensen, M. (2016). What is the self in the celebrity selfie? Celebrification, phatic communication and performativity. <i>Celebrity Studies</i> , 7(2), 249–263.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Nil