

**TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM**

[worth 25% overall]

**Due Date:**

- **Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at 9am:** Send your essay as an attachment via e-mail to jcmeloni@gmail.com or julie\_meloni@wsu.edu . The penalty for assignments submitted between 9am on Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> and 9am on Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> is 15% of the assignment grade (no midterms accepted after Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>).

**Instructions:**

In a new document, complete each of the essay questions below. Put all of your essays in one document. However, each essay should have its own title (Note: "Essay 1" is not a title) and works cited list. All essays should use standard MLA parenthetical citations to go with that works cited list. **It is assumed that you will be citing texts to make your argument, especially texts we have read but that are not explicitly stated as part of the question!** (in other words, you need to make those connections yourself...)

**Grading:**

Each essay is worth 25 points. A target of 750 words per essay would be appropriate, although you're certainly welcome to write more.

The breakdown of points for each essay is as follows:

- structural mechanics (title, margins, citations, etc): 2 pts
- grammar/style mechanics: 3 pts
- introductory paragraph (context for argument): 5 pts
- quality and clarity of overall argument: 5 pts
- logical construction of essay and its conclusion: 10 pts

**Select THREE of the following six questions and write one essay for EACH of the three selected questions:**

- In *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*, James Paul Gee derives a set of 36 learning principles from his study of the complex, self-directed learning each game player undertakes as s/he encounters and masters a new game. The complete list (with brief descriptions) can be found at <<http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/jamespaulgee2>>. Use three or more of these principles, and examples from your own gaming experience to extend discussion of these principles, in support of an argument **FOR** the use of video games in education. Then, describe a game (fictional or otherwise) that should be used in education (and explain why).
- Reflect back to the very first blog assignment, in which I asked you to work with the ten different descriptions of cyberspace that appear at the beginning of Michael Benedikt's essay "Cyberspace: First Steps." Re-read those ten different descriptions carefully again, and then once more (or even more). Construct an essay that finds the truth in every single one of those descriptions—in other words, provide one or more examples that would support each description—and then construct an argument that either supports or disagrees with his conclusion that "Cyberspace as just described does not exist."
- Ray Kurzweil (no, you didn't read anything by him) recently said "Mobile phones are misnamed. They should be called 'gateways to all human knowledge'". Using information and arguments from Adriana de Souza e Silva (you did read something by her), first determine if you agree or disagree with his statement, and then argue your case (including, most importantly, **WHY**).

- In a recent study (literally just published a few days ago and available at <<http://webuse.org/pdf/Hargittai-DigitalNativesSI2010.pdf>>), Eszter Hargittai concludes the following:

The particular societal positions that people inhabit are reflected in their Internet uses. Those who are already more privileged tend to have more Internet use autonomy and resources, more online experiences, higher levels of know-how and report engaging in more diverse types of uses than the less privileged, precisely the group that would stand a better chance of benefitting from these activities if they were more engaged with them. Given that the population under consideration here already represents a relatively privileged group (all respondents are in college), findings concerning the relationship of socioeconomic status to Internet know-how and diversity of usage are likely to be conservative as compared with what we might find for a more nationally representative sample. In sum, while the Internet certainly has the potential to level the playing field by offering numerous opportunities to its diverse users, the results presented in this article suggest that as things stand, *the more privileged stand to benefit from it more than those in less advantageous positions raising concerns about possibly increased rather than decreased inequality resulting from the spread of Internet use across the population.* (italics mine)

Using information in many different contexts (e.g. from different topics in class), provide an argument for why this (the italicized concluding statement) may be the case, what that means for culture and society in general, and how (if at all) culture and society would be affected if the hypothesis comes to pass.

- What is "identity tourism" and what is the effect of this on individuals and then on culture itself? After providing a definition in your own words, based on Nakamura's text, provide examples both from your own life and instances you have seen in the media. Note that the length of this question (very brief) does not do justice to the complexities inherent in the question itself.
- ChatRoulette is a new service that "brings you face-to-face, via webcam, with an endless stream of random strangers all over the world". Before you go to the ChatRoulette web site, if you even do, bear in mind that it **has great potential for being NSFW** (not safe for work, or graphic, explicit, not for the faint of heart, etc) and that upon connecting to the site your webcam will be immediately invoked and you will find yourself looking at someone else who is also staring back at you. You can stay and chat, or move on to the next person (hence the "roulette" aspect). A recent *New York* magazine article, "The Human Shuffle—Is ChatRoulette the future of the Internet or its distant past?" <<http://nymag.com/news/media/63663/>> describes the author's experience with ChatRoulette. Read this article, and then spend some time with ChatRoulette <<http://www.chatroulette.com>>. Compare your experiences to those of the author, and make some sort of argument about ChatRoulette, why it exists, where it fits in the realm of real/virtual interactions, and whether or not it is "the future of the Internet or its distant past."

#### Everyone, write your **FOURTH** essay on this:

As it says on the syllabus, the guiding question for the course is, broadly, how does cyberspace and online communities reinforce, transform, and/or resist inequalities found in what we can affectionately call "meatspace" (or "real life")? Answer that question given what you've engaged with in the course to date.