

Zombie Media (SP23)

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Zombie Media: Memes, Truth, and Forgetting to Remember

Instructor: [John Bell \(mailto:john.p.bell@dartmouth.edu\)](mailto:john.p.bell@dartmouth.edu)

Writing Assistant: [Alexandra Salyer \(mailto:alexandra.t.salyer.24@dartmouth.edu\)](mailto:alexandra.t.salyer.24@dartmouth.edu)

Location: Carson 61

Week 1 via Zoom at [this link](https://dartmouth.zoom.us/j/95352371557?pwd=UVNnQ1hob1dUYmJYRDR6QVdvdv2d0UT09)  (<https://dartmouth.zoom.us/j/95352371557?pwd=UVNnQ1hob1dUYmJYRDR6QVdvdv2d0UT09>)

Time: T/Th, 4:30-6:20

Fulfills First Year Seminar Requirement

Course Description

This course develops research and writing techniques enabling students to craft essays for the public sphere. As our starting point, we will examine what it means to live in a media culture suffused with noise that claims to be signal and develop well-supported theses investigating the implications of online digital media.

More than a decade ago, the *New York Times* declared that “the Web means the end of forgetting.” The headline mirrors a common belief that the information era has made media immortal so music, videos, and games put online will always be perfectly stored and instantly findable. If media has been made immortal, though, it is only in the same way a zombie is immortal: falling to pieces and haphazardly lurching forward forever with no sense of direction, unthinkingly causing arbitrary damage to everything around it.

Through a scaffolded series of writing experiments we will look at the claim that the internet never forgets and explore how and when it does; learn how and why societies form collective memories around media artifacts; and discuss the ways the weight of over a century of recorded media culture can be both oppressive and liberating to today’s creators. Our classroom discussions will bring together threads of ideas from many different disciplines that students will be expected to merge into persuasive writing targeting specific audiences. This course will provide the flexibility for students to pursue topics of their own interest while building on a scaffolding helping students understand the nature of researching, describing, and writing for public audiences.

Course Learning Outcomes

This course is a First-Year Seminar focusing on writing and communicating original ideas to an audience. First-Year Seminars emphasize the inherently iterative process of developing and crafting your contributions to ongoing academic or societal conversations. You can read more about the goals of a First-Year Seminar [here \(https://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/curriculum/writing-courses/first-year-seminars/first-year-seminar-course-outcomes\)](https://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/curriculum/writing-courses/first-year-seminars/first-year-seminar-course-outcomes).

In this course, students will:

- Read critical views of media and memory meant for scholarly and public audiences.
- Discover how both directed and accidental processes of media destruction shape our perception of the past—and the present.
- Analyze how media that is disconnected from context takes on new meanings, both good and bad.
- Strategize how to engage with a social media landscape where media artifacts are weaponized.
- Reflect on how they will make use of legacy media as future creators when “everything has already been done.”
- Practice crafting public media and writing that present compelling arguments to general audiences.

Teaching Methods & Philosophy

This course explores digital cultures and its methods embody the practices that make up those cultures. As such, it may function a bit differently than other courses you have taken. Some examples include:

- "I know Google-Fu" – classroom discussions are expected to be supported by open laptops and real-time research. I fully expect you to make use of the ability to multitask and dig up information as we talk. Just make sure you're still paying attention to the discussion!
- "Plan to throw one away; you will, anyhow" – all submitted assignments may be revised and resubmitted after you receive feedback (though you do need to submit a legitimate attempt at an assignment on time in order to take advantage of this privilege). Most assignments will have a structure in place you will need to follow to take advantage of this option.
- "Good artists copy; great artists steal" – we encourage reuse, remix, and derivatives of existing ideas and media, so long as it is significantly transformative and pulls together divergent threads. Note that plagiarism and uncited sources are still very much against the rules and will be referred to the Committee on Standards.

The goal of the course is to collectively develop these and other methods that encourage critical analysis, discussion, and self-reflection as both individuals and a group. Defining, evaluating, and setting these philosophies will be an explicit part of everybody's participation in the course.

Expectations & Norms

Participation

This course develops a shared understanding of media culture that will evolve as your ideas bounce off of and are transformed by others in the class. If the only time you talk is when you're reporting out then you will have little opportunity to contribute to the shared understanding developed by the class and I will not have much information to use when evaluating your success in the class (i.e., grade). Ask questions, throw in comments, and generally add to the discussion as much as possible, particularly if you think you missed something or you have a stupid question. The odds are good that I failed to clearly state whatever you missed and other people are as confused as you are.

You will be expected to meet with collaborators outside of class. I encourage you to use the designated x hour for these meetings when we do not use it for class, but you are free to set them as needed to accommodate your schedules.

Accommodations

Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS): [Getting Started with SAS webpage \(https://students.dartmouth.edu/student-accessibility/students/working-sas/getting-started\)](https://students.dartmouth.edu/student-accessibility/students/working-sas/getting-started); [student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu \(mailto:student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu\)](mailto:student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu); 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its [Testing Center \(https://students.dartmouth.edu/student-accessibility/services/testing-center\)](https://students.dartmouth.edu/student-accessibility/services/testing-center) may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Zoom Backup Plan

If at some point it becomes necessary to temporarily move the course to remote learning, either because Dartmouth policy dictates or because I am unable to teach in person, we will hold class using Zoom.

(1) Consent to recording of course and group office hours

- You affirm my understanding that this course and any associated group meetings involving students and the instructor, including but not limited to scheduled and ad hoc office hours and other consultations, may be recorded within any digital platform used to offer remote instruction for this course;
- You further affirm that the instructor owns the copyright to their instructional materials, of which these recordings constitute a part, and distribution of any of these recordings in whole or in part

without prior written consent of the instructor may be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including expulsion;




- You authorize Dartmouth and anyone acting on behalf of Dartmouth to record my participation and appearance in any medium, and to use my name, likeness, and voice in connection with such recording; and
- You authorize Dartmouth and anyone acting on behalf of Dartmouth to use, reproduce, or distribute such recording without restrictions or limitation for any educational purpose deemed appropriate by Dartmouth and anyone acting on behalf of Dartmouth.

(2) Requirement of consent to one-on-one recordings

By enrolling in this course, you hereby affirm that you will not under any circumstance make a recording in any medium of any one-on-one meeting with the instructor without obtaining the prior written consent of all those participating, and understand that if you violate this prohibition, you will be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including expulsion, as well as any other civil or criminal penalties under applicable law.

Writing Style

Whether anyone outside the course ever sees it or not, everything you produce in this course will be created as though it is targeted at either the general public or specific public audiences. The goal is to write with style, rigor, and persuasion. The applicable norms are those of public humanities; unfortunately, those norms are not as well defined as more traditional academic writing. My biggest tip is that you remember that all writing, even a class assignment, is storytelling. Create a clear narrative, use concrete examples, construct an argument, add own your perspective—if you do these things, then you will be on the right path. I encourage you to ask questions about how to improve your ability to work with this style of writing and media production throughout the term, but a few resources for learning more include:

- <http://www.kellyjbaker.com/writing-for-a-public-audience/>  [\(http://www.kellyjbaker.com/writing-for-a-public-audience/\)](http://www.kellyjbaker.com/writing-for-a-public-audience/) This blog post describes some of the common mistakes people make when moving from academic to public writing.
- <https://theconversation.com/us>  [\(https://theconversation.com/us\)](https://theconversation.com/us) Examples of this style of writing can be found on The Conversation (though how successful each author is at employing it will vary).
- <https://workingnarratives.org/story-guide/>  [\(https://workingnarratives.org/story-guide/\)](https://workingnarratives.org/story-guide/) This is a bit more in-depth, but if you're interested in this kind of writing for public impact there is a more comprehensive guide here as well.

Collaboration Policy

You are encouraged to use outside resources, including people you know from outside the course, as research sources. All such sources must be referenced in the deliverable for the assignment you

discuss with them.

Collaboration within the course will vary depending on the requirements of the assignment.

Notes on Logistics

- All assignments will be submitted via Canvas. Any ongoing resource sharing and discussion should take place in Slack.
- I may occasionally ask to share a presentation or project outside the classroom (e.g. on Twitter). You are under absolutely no obligation to agree to this and, if you do not, I will not penalize you in any way.
- I'm happy to chat about any concerns with the course or the material we're discussing. To schedule an appointment for office hours, send email to john.p.bell@dartmouth.edu (<mailto:john.p.bell@dartmouth.edu>)

Class Climate & Inclusivity

As with all classes, it is expected that you will treat others with respect. Participation in discussion should be a constructive dialog integrating your ideas with mine and those of other students; while disagreements and counterarguments that test ideas are expected and encouraged, they must always be presented in a civil fashion. If you are repeatedly abusive toward your classmates you will be asked to leave and the day will be considered an absence for purposes of the attendance policy.

Texts & Materials

Readings will be provided in Canvas. There is no required textbook for this course.

Assessment & Grading

Participation and Attendance: 20%

Participation includes taking an active role in classroom discussions. Remember that the topics I introduce in class are only seeds and examples; I expect you to bring in your own related interests, respond to your classmates' ideas, and take our discussions and hands-on projects in directions that I can't predict ahead of time.

I will be taking attendance at each class meeting. If you are more than five minutes late, that day will be marked as an absence. After two absences, your final grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each additional absence. If you need to take a planned absence or will not be attending due to illness, let me know via email ahead of the class you will be missing. If your circumstances lead you to believe you will not be able to meet this attendance policy, let me know and we can discuss it. Covid-related absences are considered excused under this policy-if you have a question about your Covid status, I encourage you to let me know ahead of class and get tested rather than coming in and potentially causing a wider outbreak among your classmates.

Commentary on Readings and Media: 40%

You will be given readings and media as a launching point for your own investigations into the impact of zombie media on society. You and a partner will need to form a thesis in response to these readings and then research additional background to support (or not!) your thesis. Please feel free to be creative about where you take the initial readings—they are meant to give you enough background to develop your own ideas, not to be the ideas you write about!

Over the course of the term there will be three iterations of a two-week commentary cycle, beginning in week two. Each iteration includes several components:

- An initial reaction to the provided readings that will be written individually
- An ideation and research phase where you and your partner review your reaction papers, generate a thesis of interest to both of you, and seek out additional background to investigate that thesis
- A combined essay developing your thesis that is meant for general audiences (we will define what that means)
- An individual variation of the combined essay that has been adjusted to target a specific audience you wish to target and persuade

For example, the cadence for the first cycle that begins in week 2 will be:

- Week 2, Class 1: Each student will turn in an individual response on Canvas
- Week 2, Class 2: Read your partner's individual response and discuss a combined thesis
- Week 3, Class 1: Both partners turn in a new combined response reflecting your research and aimed at a general audience
- Week 3, Class 2: Each student will turn in a version of your combined response that is targeted at a specific audience – partners will choose different specific audiences to target

This pattern represents a collaborative process where each person contributes to the ideas you examine, you work together to meld those ideas together, and you each take away an aspect of the merged result to meet your own goals.

Final Essay: 40%

The final essay for this course will be an individual explainer suitable for public dissemination. You will submit a proposal for an individual research topic related to the ideas we have discussed in class and integrating your own interests and background. By the end of the term, you will research your topic, create a public bibliography of sources related to your topic, and craft an essay targeted at a specific platform and audience. We will discuss methods for identifying these specifics and adapting your writing to meet them in class.

Your grade for the final essay will be a composite of the grade for its components, including:

- Topic proposal
- Audience analysis and comparable works
- First draft
- Peer feedback to first drafts
- Bibliography
- Cutting room floor collection (don't worry, this will also be explained)
- Final draft

To submit your final project you will need to upload the final text file, link to bibliography, and audience analysis to Canvas. I would also encourage you to make the essay public and will help you figure out the best distribution channel for doing so. Publication is not a requirement of the course, however—just something that I think you should do because part of participating in digital culture is putting your work out there for people to see.

Dartmouth Policies

Statement on Mental Health

The academic environment is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including: the Counseling Center which allows you to book triage appointments online, the Student Wellness Center which offers wellness check-ins, and your undergraduate dean. The student-led Dartmouth Student Mental Health Union and their peer support program may be helpful if you would like to speak to a trained fellow student support listener. If you need immediate assistance, please contact the counselor on-call at (603) 646-9442 at any time. Please make me aware of anything that will hinder your success in this course.

Religious Observances

Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Class Climate & Inclusivity

Our group will demonstrate a commitment to:

- Respect
- Civility
- Conduct
- Language
- Personal Responsibility
- Acknowledging bias (e.g. in personal viewpoints, of researchers, in course materials)

- Giving and receiving feedback

Offensive Materials

Due to the nature of contemporary media and subject matter, this course may include difficult materials and challenging content that may prove to be offensive due to their language, visual features, theme, or overall orientation. Difficult content can be difficult to one individual and not difficult for another; this is the nature of interpretation. Such content may appear in readings, lectures, in-class discussions, screenings, software and game examples, student projects, or other materials. These forms of cultural expression are used as objects of description and analysis, not as promoting any view on sensitive issues. They are meant to be examined in the context of intellectual inquiry of the sort encountered at the university level. The ideas or perspectives contained or implied in such materials do not necessarily reflect the views of the professor, the Department of Film and Media Studies, or Dartmouth College.

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Additionally, activities that give the professor an inaccurate idea of the student's skills violates the Dartmouth College honor principle. As a Dartmouth Student you are required to comply with the Academic Honor Principle:

<https://students.dartmouth.edu/judicial-affairs/policy/academic-honor-principle>
(<https://students.dartmouth.edu/judicial-affairs/policy/academic-honor-principle>)

See additional information on College policies on misconduct,

<https://student-affairs.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle> (<https://student-affairs.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle>)


Honor Code Addendum

The Academic Honor Principle depends on the willingness of students to maintain and perpetuate standards of academic honesty. Students may not ask anyone other than the professor of their course to correct written work for this course. Students must rely on their judgment and conscience to determine whether a specific question might be addressed to a classmate or a friend (e.g. help with an idiom not readily available in a dictionary, or the conjugation of a rare irregular verb), but in any case, such aid must be minimal, occasional, and acknowledged. Outside proofreading/correcting changes the student's work, gives the professor an inaccurate idea of the student's skills, and as such violates the Dartmouth College honor principle. As a Dartmouth Student you are required to comply with the Academic Honor Principle: <https://students.dartmouth.edu/judicial-affairs/policy/academic-honor-principle> (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/judicial-affairs/policy/academic-honor-principle>)

Dartmouth's Anti-Hazing Policy

The Film and Media Studies Department is a firm supporter of Dartmouth's Anti-Hazing Policy. We reject hazing in all of its manifestations. In order to promote a safe environment for all students and not interrupt the learning experience at Dartmouth College, evidence of hazing-related practices, as defined by the Dartmouth College Anti-Hazing Policy, will not be considered appropriate in the classroom.

Course Schedule and Topics

Class	Date	Topics	Readings Completed by Class
Setting goals and expectations			
1	3/28	Scaffolding and collaboration	
2	3/30	Research and expression of ideas	https://www.ideo.com/pages/design-thinking  (https://www.ideo.com/pages/design-thinking)
Phase I: What does it mean to remember?			
3	4/4	Discussion on memory and time	Phase I Readings (see assignments page) (https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403652)
4	4/6	Reflection: Reading for editing	
5	4/11	Reflection: Writing together	
6	4/13	Reflection: Audience selection	
Intermission I: Final project setup			
7	4/18	Final topic development	
8	4/20	Scaffolding, planning, and scheduling	

Phase II: How does media live forever, and when does it not?

9	4/25	Discussion on preservation, discoverability, and media	Phase II Readings (see assignments page)
10	4/27	Reflection: Sharing ideas	
11	5/2	Reflection: Authority and trust	
12	5/4	Reflection: Arguments of form	

Intermission II: Writing for audiences

13	5/9	Developing empathy	
14	5/11	Iterating on impact	

Phase III: What does it mean to live in information overload

15	5/16	Discussion on creativity, information processing, and non-fungible writing	Phase III Readings (see assignments page)
16	5/18	Reflection: New ideas	
17	5/23	Reflection: Developing style	
18	5/25	Reflection: Assessing impact	
19	5/30	Final Presentations	

There will be no final exam for this course.

Assignments Due Matrix








Writing in this course is highly structured and you are working on multiple assignments at the same time. This chart shows what components of each project you are expected to turn in for each class, broken down by the type of assignment. While it looks like a lot, keep in mind that much of what is











being asked for are the intermediate steps necessary to complete a larger writing so each component builds on what came before.




Class	Date	Commentary	Final Essay
1	3/28		
2	3/30		Set up and share Zotero account
3	4/4	Individual response draft	
4	4/6		Topic proposal
5	4/11	Pair essay draft	
6	4/13	Individual final response for chosen audience	
7	4/18		Comparable works, audience profile
8	4/20		
9	4/25	Individual response draft	
10	4/27		
11	5/2	Pair essay draft	First draft
12	5/4	Individual final response for chosen audience	
13	5/9		Peer review
14	5/11		
15	5/16	Individual response draft	Bibliography

16	5/18		
17	5/23	Pair essay draft	
18	5/25	Individual final response for chosen audience	
19	5/30		All paper components


Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Thu Mar 30, 2023	 Design Thinking Introduction https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403653	due by 4pm
	 Zotero setup https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403551	due by 4pm
Tue Apr 4, 2023	 4/4 Individual Draft (Phase I) https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403553	due by 9am
	 4/4 Readings (Phase I) https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403652	due by 9pm
Thu Apr 6, 2023	 Topic Proposal https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403654	due by 9am
Tue Apr 11, 2023	 4/11 Pair Response Draft (Phase I) https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403556	due by 9am
Thu Apr 13, 2023	 4/13 Individual Essay (Phase I) https://canvas.dartmouth.edu	due by 9am

Date	Details	Due
	/courses/57978/assignments/403560	
Tue Apr 18, 2023	 Environment Scan /courses/57978/assignments/403655	due by 9am
Tue Apr 25, 2023	 4/25 Individual Draft (Phase II) /courses/57978/assignments/403554	due by 9am
Tue May 2, 2023	 5/2 Pair Response Draft (Phase II) /courses/57978/assignments/403558	due by 9am
	 First Draft /courses/57978/assignments/403656	due by 9am
Thu May 4, 2023	 5/4 Individual Essay (Phase II) /courses/57978/assignments/403562	due by 9am
Tue May 16, 2023	 5/16 Individual Draft (Phase III) /courses/57978/assignments/403555	due by 9am
	 Bibliography Draft /courses/57978/assignments/403657	due by 9am
Tue May 23, 2023	 5/23 Pair Response Draft (Phase III) /courses/57978/assignments/403559	due by 9am
Thu May 25, 2023	 5/25 Individual Essay (Phase III) /courses/57978/assignments/403564	due by 9am
Tue May 30, 2023	 Cutting Room Floor /courses/57978/assignments/403658	due by 9am

Date	Details	Due
	 Final Essay (https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403660)	due by 9am
	 Attendance (https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403546)	
	 Participation (https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/57978/assignments/403544)	



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