COURSE MANUAL

Tweet Me Up, Scotty: Exploring Transnational Cybercultures

Course Instructor: Dr Rukmini Pande

Semester B 2025-26

Cross Elective

This document is prepared by the course instructor and contains basic information relevant to the execution of the course. It is the official record for all intends and purposes as far the elective course, **Tweet Me Up, Scotty: Exploring Transnational Cybercultures**, is concerned.

This course manual can be used as a general guide to the subject. However, the instructor can modify, extend or supplement the course (without tampering its basic framework and objectives) for the effective and efficient delivery of the course. Albeit, the instructor will provide the students with reasons for such changes.

Part I

Course Title: **Tweet Me Up, Scotty: Exploring Transnational Cybercultures**
Course Code:
Course Duration: **One Semester (15 Weeks)**
No. of Credit Units: **4 credits**
Level:
Medium of Instruction: **English**
Pre-requisites:
Pre-cursors:
Equivalent Courses:
Exclusive Courses:

1. Course Description

The internet and other digital artifacts now mediate our interactions with the world and society to a considerable degree. While the influence of these artifacts are both praised and decried in equal measure, it is more useful to conceptualise the realm of cyberculture as a space for cultural production engaged in critical debates regarding the nature of 'humanity' itself. Cybercultures also carry within them older institutional matrixes of identity and power such as gender, sexuality, race, class, and caste that continue to influence both technical aspects like platform design as well as issues around regulation of free speech, political dissent, bullying, and harassment.

The purpose of this course is therefore to approach the study of cyberspace and cyberculture from a series of critical entry points including historical texts, pop-cultural imaginings and theoretical interrogations. It will chart the origins of the ideas of cyberspace from when it was seen as a utopian construct in the 1970's-1990's and trace the ways this construction has been questioned in recent years. This will be a class that requires a strong level of interactivity as students will be encouraged to apply the concepts they learn in a classroom context to the digital world throughout the semester.

2. Course Aims

1. To understand the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of notions of cyberspace and its attendant cybercultures.
2. To gain an introduction to basic research methods and ethical issues in digital humanities and execute research projects incorporating those skills. Students will be introduced to digital research methodology including data scraping, visualisation tools, and content analysis. We will also discuss ethical issues in digital environments. This will prepare students to undertake internal assessment projects.
3. To identify the operation and intersection of historical axes of 'offline' identity in online contexts including gender, sexuality, caste, race, and class.
4. To discuss both technical and communitarian aspects of cyberculture to come to a nuanced understanding of today's technosocial age.

3. Teaching Methodology

The course is divided into 6 modules spread over 15 weeks. Teaching will consist of 3.5 hours of lecture and classroom discussion per week. The course assessment will comprise of an end-term examination, continuous assessment through reflection pieces on the content discussed in class, and a research paper.

4. Intended Learning Outcomes

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Weightage	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessment Tasks/ Activities
Analytically and critically engage with the various topics covered in class.	40%	Discussion/debate, reflection on readings	Class Participation + Reading reflections on class blog
Undertake a research project utilising the ideas introduced in class.	30%	Online data collection and analysis.	Research Paper
Critically apply theoretical concepts to creative texts discussed in class to produce critically engaged and grounded analyses.	30%	End-term exam encapsulating material discussed in class.	End Term examination

5. Grading of Student Achievement

Of the total score required to pass this course, a minimum of 50% shall be obtained by the student in the course work (i.e., combined score of internal assessments and end semester examination).

Grade Sheet

Percentage of Marks	Grade	Grade Value	Grade Description
80 and above	O	8	**Outstanding** – Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability
75 – 79	A+	7.5	**Excellent** - Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability
70 – 74	A	7	**Very Good** - Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing materials and originality in thinking and presentation
65 – 69	A-	6	**Good** - Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills
60 – 64	B+	5	**Fair** – Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills

Percentage of Marks	Grade	Grade Value	Grade Description
55 – 59	B	4	**Acceptable**- Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
50 – 54	B-	3	**Marginal**- Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials and, poor critical and analytical skills
Below 50	F	0	**Fail** - Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course

6. Criteria for Student Assessments

Internal assessment of the participants will be based on the following criteria. See details of each at the end of the document.

Assessment	Weightage	Remarks
Class Participation	50%	Weekly discussions of material in class will be recorded via individual blog posts and class discussions. Readings will be assigned for presentations.
Research paper:	20%	1000-1500 research paper on any aspect of cyberculture.
End Semester Examination:	30%	End-semester take-home examination.

Assessment Schedule:

Assessment	Marks	Details	Submission Date
Class Participation	30 marks	The student must contribute atleast one substantial comment on the topic/reading under discussion that week.	Continuous
Presentation on assigned reading	20 marks	The student will be assigned a reading from the syllabus and present on it in class.	Continuous
In class Quiz/ Response paper:	20 Marks	Mid-semester in-class quiz or response paper on topics covered in class up to that point.	TBA
End Semester Examination:	30 Marks	End-semester in-class examination.	14th May, 2024

Assessment	Marks	Details	Submission Date
		Students will have to answer 2 out of 5 questions. Notes will be allowed. 15 x 2 = 30 marks	

Part IV

Course/Class Policies

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Learning and knowledge production of any kind is a collaborative process. Collaboration demands an ethical responsibility to acknowledge who we have learnt from, what we have learned, and how reading and learning from others have helped us shape our own ideas. Even our own ideas demand an acknowledgement of the sources and processes through which those ideas have emerged. Thus, all ideas must be supported by citations. All ideas borrowed from articles, books, journals, magazines, case laws, statutes, photographs, films, paintings, etc., in print or online, must be credited with the original source. If the source or inspiration of your idea is a friend, a casual chat, something that you overheard, or heard being discussed at a conference or in class, even they must be duly credited. If you paraphrase or directly quote from a web source in the examination, presentation or essays, the source must be acknowledged. The university has a framework to deal with cases of plagiarism. All form of plagiarism will be taken seriously by the University and prescribed sanctions will be imposed on those who commit plagiarism.

Disability Support and Accommodation Requirements

JGU endeavors to make all its courses accessible to students. All students with any known disability needing academic accommodation are required to register with the Disability Support Committee dsc@jgu.edu.in. The Committee has so far identified the following conditions that could possibly hinder student's overall well-being. These include: physical and mobility related difficulties; visual impairment; hearing impairment; medical conditions; specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia; mental health.

The Disability Support Committee maintains strict confidentiality of its discussions. Students should preferably register with the Committee during the month of June/January as disability accommodation requires early planning. DSC will approve of and coordinate all disability related services such as appointment of academic mentors, arranging infrastructural facilities, and course related requirements such as special lectures, tutorials and examinations.

All faculty members are requested to refer students with any of the above-mentioned conditions to the Disability Support Committee for addressing disability-related accommodation requirements.

Safe Space Pledge

This course may discuss a range of issues and events that might result in distress for some students. Discussions in the course might also provoke strong emotional responses. To make sure that all students collectively benefit from the course, and do not feel disturbed due to either the content of the course or the

conduct of the discussions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all within the classroom to pledge to maintain respect towards our peers. This does not mean that you need to feel restrained about what you feel and what you want to say. Conversely, this is about creating a safe space where everyone can speak and learn without inhibitions and fear. This responsibility lies not only with students, but also with the instructor.

Plagiarism

Any idea, sentence or paragraph you take from another source must be credited to that source. If you paraphrase or directly quote from a web source, presentation or essays, the source must be explicitly mentioned. You SHOULD NOT plagiarise content, be it from scholarly sources (i.e. books and journal articles) or from the internet. This is an issue of academic integrity on which no compromise will be made. As law students, you are entering a profession that is responsible for upholding the rule of law. Please do not harm the integrity of the profession or your reputation by being dishonest in your academic work. The university has strict rules with consequences for students involved in plagiarism. This policy also applies to the use of AI assisted writing tools. Unless expressly allowed through a discussion with me, use of such tools will be considered plagiarism and be penalized accordingly.

Part V

Reading Materials

For the list of relevant reading materials, *see* Relevant Readings provided in and at the end of weekly course plan.

Keywords for the Syllabus

Cybercultures, Digital Culture, Internet Studies, Gender Politics

Course Design and Overview (Weekly Plan)

Week	Topic and Description	Reading Materials
1.	**Module I:** **What is cyberculture?** This week will focus on introducing the topic of cyberculture. Students will be introduced to ideas that will form the core of the course including cyborgism, virtuality, technoculture, new media, the technosocial etc.	See below for list of weekly readings.
2.	**Module II:** **Historical Approaches:** Building on previous discussions we will now look at some of the early texts, both critical and creative, that shaped cyberculture from the 1970-90's.	
3.	**Module III:** **Cyberculture and Identity I – Gender, Sexuality, Disability**	

	We dive deeper into the issues raised by these historical texts to see how issues that were considered "outside" the concerns of cyberculture – race, gender, sexuality, caste etc, have emerged to challenge early formulations of cyberpunk utopia.	
4.	**Module IV:** **Cyberculture and Identity II – Race, Class, Caste**	
5.	**Module V:** **Cyberculture and Politics/Power:** We will examine pressing contemporary concerns including issues like "big data," debates concerning net neutrality, and "hacking" of democratic processes.	
6.	**Module VI: Cyberculture and Conflict:** This section will examine questions of conflict – both between state actors and interpersonal – as played out on internet-enabled platforms. Are these new forms of aggression being enabled by the design features of specific internet forums? And if so, how should these activities and their effects be regulated?	

Part V Relevant Readings

Module I: What is cyberculture?

6th Feb, Week 1: Introductions

13th Feb, Week 2: What is cyberculture?

Viewing and discussion: *Ghost In The Shell* (1995)

Module II: Historical Approaches

Week 3, 20th Feb: Introduction to Cyborg Theory

- Reading and discussion: *Cyborg Manifesto* by Donna Haraway

Week 4, 27th Feb: Introduction to Cyborg Theory

Reading and discussion:

- *Cyborg Manifesto* by Donna Haraway
- "A Rape in Cyberspace" by Jullian Dibbel

Module III: Cyberculture and Identity I: Gender, Sexuality, Disability

Week 5, 5th March: Disability

Text: *The Girl Who Was Plugged In* (1974) by James Tiptree

- Reading: "Cyborgs, Cripples and iCrip: Reflections on the Contribution of Haraway to Disability Studies" - Donna Reeve

Week 6, 12th March

Research Leave: No Class

Week 7, 19th March April: Games and Identity

Text: "Striking Vipers" *Black Mirror*

Reading:

- "Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet"- Lisa Nakamura
- "'When I click "ok" I become Sassy – I become a girl'. Young people and gender identity: subverting the 'body' in massively multi-player online role-playing games" - Nic Crowe & Mike Watts

Module IV: Cyberculture and Identity II – Race, Class, Caste

Week 8, 26th March: Race/Gender Technology

Text: *Ex-Machina*

Reading:

- Umoja Noble, 2018 "A Society, Searching." Chapter 1 In *Algorithms of Oppression*, New York University Press

- danah boyd, "White Flight in Networked Publics? How Race and Class Shaped American Teen Engagement with MySpace and Facebook" in *Race After the Internet*. (Routledge 2011)

Week 9, 2nd April: Internet Intimacies

    Text: "Fake Famous" dir. Nick Bilton

    Reading:

- Rohit Dasgupta, "Imagined Queer Communities" – Digital Queer Cultures in India

Week 10, 9th April: Caste and New Media

    Text: Caste, Privacy, & Digital Technologies (Manoj Mitta & Nikita Sonavane) | #PrivacySupreme 2023: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RO3KY9oZCXc

    Reading:

- The digital life of caste: Affect, synesthesia and the social body online by Sucharita Kanjilal

Module V: Cyberculture and Politics/Power:

Week 11, 16th April

Guest Lecture by Dr Kajori Sen: Misinformation/Propaganda and New Media Networks

Week 12, 23rd April: Big Data and Privacy

Text: *Citizen Four (2014)*

- Saif Shahin And P Zheng, (2018). Big Data and the Illusion of Choice.

Week 13: 30th April: Artificial Intelligence and other techno-utopic promises

- Reading TBA

Week 14: 7th May:

Revision Class

Week 15: 14th May

Final Exam