

DIGITAL ANTHROPOLOGY: THEORY & PRACTICE

Elad Ben Elul

Fall Semester

eladbenelul@mail.tau.ac.il

Office Hours: by request

Short description:

How does the digital age influence cultures and communities around the world? How do classic and contemporary theories in anthropology help us understand the role of digital technologies in society? This course offers a detailed introduction to a young and promising sub-discipline, digital anthropology, in aim of better understand the meaning of new technological tools such as mobile phones, smart televisions, social media platforms, and computer games, in their socio-cultural context. We will sail off to different countries and cultures, discuss the fascinating relationship between online and offline worlds, and address the differences between communities online and “online communities”. We will maintain a fertile dialogue with neighbouring and relevant disciplines such as media anthropology, anthropology of science and technology, media studies, and cultural studies. The course begins by introducing the discipline’s founding theories in media anthropology and visual/material culture, continuing to the examination of digital anthropology in various contexts such as Facebook in Trinidad, home computers in China, virtual worlds in Second Life, and many more.

Our target is to learn how to apply anthropological tools and thinking to internet and social media studies, as well as incorporating practical methods on how to represent academic research in alternative forms. The first part of each lesson will include a lecture and open discussion while the second part will be a practical workshop with various tasks that include photography, writing, and recording.

Assessment:

Minor assignments:

Response to reading, participation in discussions, completing tasks in class (10%)

Mid Term:

Practical/Artistic assignment - using digital tools for ethnographic representations (40%)

Final requirement:

A paper between 6 and 10 pages long: an internet-related ethnography combining theory and original data (50%)

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three absences without penalty. Any additional absences will affect the final grade and may result in failure of the course.

Academic conduct:

Plagiarism is taken extremely seriously. Any instance of academic misconduct which includes: submitting someone else's work as your own; failure to accurately cite sources; taking words from another source without using quotation marks; submission of work for which you have previously received credit; working in a group for individual assignments; using unauthorized materials in an exam and sharing your work with other students, will result in failure of the assignment and will likely lead to further disciplinary measures.