

# The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

## UG Course Syllabus

Art and Digital Culture

HUMA 1673

**Name:** Dr. Steve MA

**Email:** hmhma@ust.hk

**Office Hours:** Mondays 14:30-16:30, Room 3351 (by appointment)

### Course Description

This course explores the key concepts, histories and practices of digital culture, offering students a comprehensive introduction to the ways digital technologies shape society, media, and artistic expression. Through lectures and tutorials, students will examine the origins and evolution of the internet, digital media and online communities, as well as the development of digital arts, publishing, photography, cinema, music and video games. The course combines theoretical reading with case studies, including the study of internet memes, digital relationships and the collective memories of popular music in Asia. By the end of the course, students will have a deeper understanding of how digital culture operates, its impact on society and its ongoing transformations across multiple media forms.

### Assessment and Grading

The following assignments will count toward your final grade and be included in the assessment:

#### Group Presentation (35%)

*Students need to form groups of 3-4 people and complete the following two steps:*

1. Each group needs to give one group presentation. (30%) The topic of the group presentation can be any topic of digital culture or digital art. Each group's presentation should not exceed 15 minutes. Please register your group members and the order of presentations using the link below. The registration deadline is September 13.  
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tJgYktOdWf1y4NcaaOApBxwNyJK4yliTrNlcclx8NxA/edit?usp=sharing>
2. Each group must also complete one peer review for another group. (5%) The peer review should give constructive comments to the group being reviewed. Each peer review should not exceed 5 minutes. The arrangement of peer reviews will be assigned by the instructor or TA after Week 2.

*The group presentation grade is divided into the following parts: group presentation 30% and peer review 5%.*

*Grading criteria for Group Presentation:*

Criterion	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary
Completeness 50%	Introduces multiple digital culture topics,	Smoothly introduces one digital culture	Fully explains the history of a digital

	or introduces an offensive topic, or fails to explain the basic history, context, and background of the topic, or is seriously under/over the 15-minute limit.	topic and helps classmates understand its basic context.	culture topic, important events, its connections with other cultures and communities in society, and gives critical reflections.
Academic Quality 25%	Contains factual errors about the digital culture topic, or entirely copies other author's article/lecture.	Able to cite references to support arguments.	Able to correctly apply methodologies from cultural studies, or critically evaluate previous research on the digital culture topic, or discuss the cultural phenomenon from social and interdisciplinary perspectives.
Collaboration 25%	The group did not collaborate well	The group completed the group presentation through cooperation	The group members actively helped each other and showed good division of work

*Notes:*

1. For the convenience of the peer review groups, please send your group presentation materials at **least two days** in advance to me and the review group **via email**. Otherwise, your points will be deducted, and bonus points will be given to the peer review group affected.
2. If you cannot register for the group presentation before the deadline, the instructor will randomly assign you to a group and give you a time slot.
3. To ensure fairness, groups that actively choose earlier presentation dates (Week 3 and Week 4) will receive bonus points, until all slots are filled.
4. With the unanimous agreement of group members, not everyone is required to stand on stage for the final presentation. Members can also contribute by preparing materials, creating slides, and other tasks.
5. To avoid disputes, any changes to the presentation time or group members must be communicated by email to the instructor or TA. In particular, if you have concerns about the workload of your group members, please also contact us by email rather than telling us directly in class.
6. You will receive your group presentation grade before the end of the semester.
7. If you need to confirm whether a topic is suitable for presentation, please consult the instructor or TA by email.
8. Any application for special circumstances should be submitted by email with official proof recognized by the university. Thank you.

**Written Assignment (35%)**

Each student must submit an essay **by December 4**, introducing a topic in digital culture or digital art that was not covered in your previous group presentation. The essay should not exceed 500 words.

Please submit your assignments **by email, not via Canvas**. My email is [hmhma@ust.hk](mailto:hmhma@ust.hk). There is no need to submit a hard copy.

Grading criteria for the Written Assignment:

Criterion	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary
Academic Quality 50%	Uses non-academic language or format, or violates the university's academic integrity and ethics policy, or unfairly and inappropriately uses AI tools, or chooses an inappropriate/offensive topic	Able to write in any recognized academic format (APA, Chicago, etc.) with basic citations and references	Fully adheres to academic formatting without errors, and correctly applies theories from cultural studies or an interdisciplinary research perspective
Knowledge and Skills 25%	Unable to clearly describe cultural or artistic phenomena, or contains obvious factual or common knowledge errors	Able to describe cultural and artistic phenomena, and further discuss them using knowledge learned in class	Demonstrates accumulated knowledge in the field of culture and art, and discusses it in relation to social, cultural, or disciplinary contexts
Innovation 25%	No original viewpoint	Shows thoughts and insights on the topic	Critically engages with the topic and connects it to other academic research in the field

Notes:

1. Submissions after the deadline will not be accepted.
2. Essays should not be significantly shorter or longer than 500 words; otherwise, points will be deducted. Footnotes and references are not counted in the 500-word limit.
3. According to the university's guidelines on generative AI use, you may use generative AI in this assignment, but only for the purpose of stimulating creativity. Any use of generative AI must be clearly marked or explained, including which AI tool was used and which parts of the writing were assisted by the AI tool.  
[https://cei.hkust.edu.hk/en-hk/system/files?file=hkust\\_policy\\_principles\\_for\\_genai\\_for\\_tl\\_student\\_version.pdf&check\\_logged\\_in=1](https://cei.hkust.edu.hk/en-hk/system/files?file=hkust_policy_principles_for_genai_for_tl_student_version.pdf&check_logged_in=1)
4. For fairness, in accordance with university requirements, you must maintain academic integrity and comply with the university's Academic Honor Code. Violations will be handled by the Academic Registry.  
<https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/resource-library/academic-honor-code-and-academic-integrity>

5. If you are not sure about your final essay topic, you may schedule an office hour or contact the instructor or TA by email.

### **Attendance (30%)**

*Your participation in class is very important, and we encourage you to take part in every class.*

#### *Attendance:*

1. You need to attend every class marked as Lecture (please check the Course Outline and Schedule section in the syllabus). Your attendance will only be counted if you sign the attendance sheet. If you stayed for more than 80% of the class but forgot to sign, please register with the instructor or TA after class.
2. Missing one Lecture will result in a 5% deduction from your Attendance grade.
3. During the Add & Drop week, we will not take attendance.

#### *Class participation:*

1. We encourage participation in class, but because there are 100 students and only one TA, it is not realistic to record everyone's comments during lectures. Therefore, we encourage you to share your opinion more in tutorial sessions. Before asking a question or making a comment, please state your name and student number so the TA can record it. Any comments without name and student number will not be recorded.
2. All sessions marked as tutorial will take attendance, but tutorials are not mandatory. Attendance at tutorials will be seen as active participation, which will improve your Attendance grade.
3. Offensive or inappropriate comments in class may affect your grade.

#### *Leave of absence:*

1. According to university policy, any leave request must be supported by official documents, such as a medical certificate from a hospital or proof of attending an event or academic conference. Please send these documents by email to the instructor or TA. Showing the documents during class or office hours will not be valid.
2. If your leave affects your group presentation, it will also affect your own group presentation grade.
3. All leave requests must be submitted before you are absent. According to university policy, we cannot accept leave requests after you are already absent.

#### *Office Hours:*

1. To be fair to everyone, communication with the instructor or TA outside of class, such as meeting in Starbucks or during booked office hours, will not affect your grade.
2. However, we still welcome your questions at any time and will do our best to support your success.

### **Support and Assistance**

- If you need any help, please contact the instructor or TA by email. We apologize that due to a busy schedule, the instructor or TA cannot guarantee an immediate reply to every email, but they will do their best to respond to each of your reasonable requests.
- To avoid your email being marked as spam, your email should at least include your name, your division/department, and the course you are enrolled in (HUMA 1673 Art and Digital Culture).

- Students with disabilities or special needs are encouraged to contact the instructor or TA to arrange appropriate accommodation.

## Course Outline and Schedule

\* *The course schedule may be adjusted according to actual needs.*

### **Week 1            1 Sep (Lecture)            3 Sep (Lecture)**

What is Digital Culture?  
Key Elements of Digital Culture

### **Week 2            8 Sep (Lecture)            10 Sep (Lecture)**

The History of the Internet  
What is the Digital Media?

### **Week 3            15 Sep (Tutorial)            17 Sep (Lecture)**

The Evolution of the Chinese Internet

- Guo, S. (2020). A historical overview through technological platforms. In *The Evolution of the Chinese Internet: Creative Visibility in the Digital Public* (pp. 23–58). Stanford University Press.

### **Week 4            22 Sep (Tutorial)            24 Sep (Lecture)**

Memes in Digital Culture

- Shifman, L. (2014). Defining internet memes. In *Memes in digital culture* (pp. 37–54). The MIT Press.

### **Week 5            29 Sep (Tutorial)**

Group Presentation Only

### **Week 6            6 Oct (Tutorial)            8 Oct (Lecture)**

Digital Relationships

- Boyd, D. (2014). Identity: Why do teens seem strange online? In *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens* (pp. 29–53). Yale University Press.

### **Week 7            13 Oct (Tutorial)            15 Oct (Lecture)**

Types of Digital Arts

- Paul, C. (2015). Introduction. In *Digital art* (3rd ed., pp. 7–26). Thames & Hudson.

### **Week 8            20 Oct (Tutorial)            22 Oct (Lecture)**

History of Digital Publishing

- Anderson, C. W., Bell, E., & Shirky, C. (2012). *Post-industrial journalism: Adapting to the present*. Tow Center for Digital Journalism, Columbia Journalism School.

### **Week 9            27 Oct (Tutorial)**

Group Presentation Only

**Week 10**      3 Nov (Tutorial)      **5 Nov (Lecture)**

History of Digital Photography

- Rubinstein, D., & Sluis, K. (2013). The digital image in photographic culture: Algorithmic photography and the crisis of representation. In M. Lister (Ed.), *The photographic image in digital culture* (2nd ed., pp. 22–40). Routledge.

**Week 11**      10 Nov (Tutorial)      **12 Nov (Lecture)**

History of Digital Movies

- Elsaesser, T. (2016). Digital cinema: Delivery, event, time. In *Film history as media archaeology: Tracking digital cinema* (pp. 231–252). Amsterdam University Press.

**Week 12**      17 Nov (Tutorial)      **19 Nov (Lecture)**

History of Digital Music

- Guest Speaker: Dr. CHENG Chen Ching, James
- Dr. CHENG Chen Ching holds a PhD in Film Studies from Peking University and a PhD in Musicology from The University of Edinburgh. He was also a Senior Journalist at China Times and a host at Uni FM 96.7. His research mainly focuses on Asian popular music during the Cold War, including the collective memories of Teresa Teng's music.

**Week 13**      24 Nov (Tutorial)      **26 Nov (Lecture)**

History of Video Games

- Mejeur, C. (2025). Definitions and misunderstandings in game studies: An interview with Espen Aarseth. In A. Karabinus, C. A. Kocurek, C. Mejeur, & E. Vossen (Eds.), *Historiographies of game studies: What it has been, what it could be* (pp. 121–145). punctum books.