

ENG 394: Passionate Affinity Spaces and Online Ethnography

Course Description:

Digital communication has become increasingly important to business, social relationships, and education. This course seeks to explore online digital spaces through two related frames. Passionate affinity spaces are places in which informal learning takes place. They are often (but not exclusively) online and require groups of people to come together “to learn something connected to a shared endeavor, interest, or passion” (Gee and Hayes, 2011, p. 69). This class seeks to explore the learning that goes on in these places by engaging in online ethnography, a mostly qualitative research method in which the researcher observes the behavior of an online community, participates in that community, and then comes to conclusions about the communities behavior and “shared endeavor.”

Course Goals:

The main purpose of the class is to encourage students to engage in passionate affinity spaces as a researcher and explore how they function. Through this process, students will learn to:

- Learn terms and concepts related to research into online spaces.
- Identify the elements that make a functioning passionate affinity space.
- Effectively and objectively take notes on a complex social system.
- Gather primary evidence for research purposes.
- Break down gathered evidence in order to make conclusions.
- Develop theories on social behavior within an online space.
- Develop research questions based on observation and participation.
- Learn what it means to be an effective observer/participant.
- Synthesize multiple, likely competing views.
- Analyze language to get at deeper, possibly hidden or unintended meanings.
- Engage with multiple other researchers, allowing them to learn from the other students research successes and problems.
- Learn how to share research with other researchers.

Required Texts:

Baym, N. K. (2010). *Personal connections in the digital age*. Malden, MA: Polity.

Gee, P. J., & Hayes, E. R. (2011). *Language and learning in the digital age*. New York:

Routledge.

Additional readings will be available through the class website.

Grading:

Grades in this class will be based on the following:

- Final Online Ethnography: 45%
- Final Online Ethnography Presentation: 15%
- Online Ethnography First Draft: 5%
- Passionate Affinity Space Proposal: 5%
- In-Class and Participation: 10%
 - Reading Discussion
 - Conferences
 - Peer Response Discussion
- Homework: 20%
 - Written Peer Responses
 - Passionate Affinity Space Notes
 - Reading Responses

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	Before Class	In Class
Week 1: Class 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Class • What are Passionate Affinity Spaces? • What is Online Ethnography?
Week 1: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gee & Hayes, pp. 1-22 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and literacy discussion
Week 2: Class 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gee & Hayes, pp. 23-53 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive language, online relationships, and interpretation discussion
Week 2: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gee & Hayes, pp. 54-76 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and passionate affinity spaces discussion
Week 3: Class 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gee & Hayes, pp. 77-97 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory crafting and expertise discussion
Week 3: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gee & Hayes, pp. 98-120 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New capitalism and images discussion
Week 4: Class 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gee & Hayes, pp. 121-142 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social formations and multitasking discussion
Week 4: Class 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passionate Affinity Space Proposal Due • Round robin proposal discussion
Week 5: Class 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal Conferences • Proposal revisions due (if necessary)
Week 5: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Introduction to primary research.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual-Entry Note Taking • Observer-Participant Status
Week 6: Class 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s not plagiarism if it’s on the web, right?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen captures and filing
Week 6: Class 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation Group Practice
Week 7: Class 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes 1 Due • Notes breakdown session
Week 7: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baym, pp. 1-21 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal communication discussion
Week 8: Class 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baym, pp. 22-49 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New media discussion

Week 8: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baym, pp. 50-71 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication in digital spaces discussion
Week 9: Class 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes 2 Due • Notes breakdown session
Week 9: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baym, pp. 72-98 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and Networks discussion
Week 10: Class 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baym, pp. 99-121 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships discussion
Week 10: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baym, pp. 122-155 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational development and maintenance discussion
Week 11: Class 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes 3 Due • Notes breakdown session
Week 11: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lammers, “Is the Hangout... The Hangout?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hangout discussion
Week 12: Class 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black, “Access and affiliation: The literacy and composition practices of English-language learners in an online fanfiction community” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fanfiction discussion
Week 12: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Androutsopoulos, “Potentials and limitations of discourse-centered online ethnography.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourse-centered online ethnography discussion
Week 13: Class 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes 4 Due • Notes breakdown session
Week 13: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herring, “Computer-mediated discourse analysis: An approach to researching online behavior.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourse analysis discussion
Week 14: Class 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Ethnography First Draft Due
Week 14: Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online written peer responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Ethnography First Draft Peer Review

Week 15: Class 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Draft Conferences
Week 15: Class 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online Ethnography Presentations
Week 16: Class 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online Ethnography Presentations
Week 16: Class 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online Ethnography Presentations• Final Drafts of Online Ethnography Due

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