

Anthropology 185-20, Spring 2018

How to Pay Attention

301 Eaton Hall, Tuesdays 9:00–11:30am

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Office Hours: Monday / Tuesday 1-2pm, sign up online at nickseaver.youcanbook.me

Course Description

Antsy middle-schoolers are prescribed Ritalin so they can focus in class. White-collar workers embrace meditation to increase productivity. Politicians use trivial scandals to distract from serious ones. Websites optimize their interfaces to keep users engaged, so they can sell more ads. You worry about how often you check your phone. New parents worry about the dangers of screen time. Neural networks, feeding on huge datasets, learn to see and hear from deep inside the world's richest corporations.

This course is an advanced seminar in the anthropology of attention. What makes the anthropology of attention different from other ways of studying attention (e.g. psychology) is that we study it as a *social* and *cultural* phenomenon: attention is not just a matter of individual minds selecting objects from environments. Rather, attention is collectively organized and valued. We learn how to pay attention and what to pay attention to from other people; other people make technological and media systems to intentionally organize collective attention. We learn to value certain kinds of attention (e.g. intense focus on work, mindfulness, or multi-tasking) and to criticize others (e.g. absent-mindedness, distraction, intense focus on entertainment) in cultural contexts. So, while we will be experimenting with our own attentions throughout this course, we will remember that our attentions are not really our own. No one pays attention alone.

This course will be run at an advanced level, with substantial reading and writing commitments. *One prior anthropology course is required.* I expect that you will already be familiar with ethnography as a method and genre of writing. This course will build on that familiarity to help you think critically and expansively about attention.

Each week has a set of assigned texts and an exercise. You should complete the readings and the exercise *before* the class they are listed with. Start the readings before trying the exercise, and take notes on everything. These will provide the materials for our in-class discussions and activities.

v2.3

Roughly every other class will meet at the Tufts University Art Gallery. Locations are marked below.

1. Orientations | January 23 | Eaton

We will be reading from these in class:

James, William. 1890. "Attention" (excerpts). In *The Principles of Psychology*. Henry Holt and Company, 402–458.

Horowitz, Alexandra. 2013. "Amateur Eyes." In *On Looking: A Walker's Guide to the Art of Observation*. Scribner, 1–16.

Hayles, N. Katherine. 2007. "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes." *Profession*, 187–199.

In class: Introductions, journals, reading, What does everyone know?

2. Distraction | January 30 | Gallery

Arata, Stephen. 2004. "On Not Paying Attention." *Victorian Studies* 46 (2): 193–205.

Phillips, Natalie. 2011. "Distraction as Liveliness of Mind: A Cognitive Approach to Characterization in Jane Austen." In *Theory of Mind and Literature*, edited by Paula Leverage, Howard Mancing, Jennifer Marston William, and Richard Schweickert. Purdue University Press, 105–122.

Daston, Lorraine. 2004. "Attention and the Values of Nature in the Enlightenment." In *The Moral Authority of Nature*, edited by Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal. University of Chicago Press, 100–126.

Crary, Jonathan. 1998. "Attention and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century." In *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, edited by Caroline Jones and Peter Galison. University of Chicago Press, 475–499.

Gregg, Melissa. 2015. "The Productivity Obsession." *The Atlantic*, November 13. theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/11/be-more-productive/415821/.

Exercise 1: Drop everything and read. While doing the reading this week, keep track of the distractions that interrupt you. These may be things like notifications, friends knocking on the door, or your own mind wandering. You can do this any way you choose, from using a service like *Rescue Time* (rescuetime.com) that automatically tracks your computer activity, to

recording yourself with your computer or smartphone camera and reviewing the video afterwards, to keeping your journal nearby and marking down distractions as they arise. Write some reflections on the experience and sketch two diagrams of your results in different styles, of your choosing. (You can find some nice examples of diagrams here: dear-data.com/by-week.)

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In class: Morality, history, modernity, productivity
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3. Immersion | February 6 | *Eaton*

Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects* (selection). Duke University Press, 1–22.

Perec, Georges. [1973] 2002. “Approaches to What?” In *The Everyday Life Reader*, edited by Ben Highmore. Routledge, 176–178.

Perec, Georges. [1975] 2010. “Day 1.” In *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, translated by Marc Lowenthal. Wakefield Press, 5–27.

Boellstorff, Tom. 2008. “The Subject and Scope of this Inquiry: Arrivals and Departures, Everyday Second Life” and “Place and Time.” In *Coming of Age in Second Life*. Princeton University Press. 3–16, 89–117

Nelms, Taylor. 2014. “Immersion: Four Beginnings for an Anthropology of Big Data.” *Medium*, June 19. medium.com/@tnelms/immersion-4c103c0fcac5.

Fernandez-Duque, Diego, and Mark L. Johnson. 1999. “Attention Metaphors: How Metaphors Guide the Cognitive Psychology of Attention.” *Cognitive Science* 23 (1): 83–116.

Exercise 2: *Immerse.* [Read Stewart and Perec first.] Go to a public place that you already frequent (either on campus, like the student center, or off-campus, like a coffee shop or museum). Stay put for one hour and take notes in your journal about what surrounds you (you can draw pictures, make diagrams, whatever you like). Then, write a 500-word summary report (either longhand in your journal or typed up and printed so it can be taped into your journal).

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In class: Ethnography, the endotic, the infra-ordinary, peripheral vision, *Leviathan*
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4. Sight | February 13 | *Gallery*

Guest: Elizabeth Canter (Tufts Art Gallery)

Goodwin, Charles. 1994. "Professional Vision." *American Anthropologist* 96 (3): 606–633.

Grasseni, Cristina. 2004. "Skilled Vision. An Apprenticeship in Breeding Aesthetics." *Social Anthropology* 12 (1): 41–55.

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. 2009. "What is Staring?: A Physical Response, a Cultural History, a Social Relationship." In *Staring: How We Look*. Oxford University Press, 13–46.

Greenblatt, Stephen. 1991. "Resonance and Wonder." In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, edited by Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine. Smithsonian, 42–56.

Monahan, Torin. 2015. "The Right to Hide? Anti-Surveillance Camouflage and the Aestheticization of Resistance." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12 (2): 159–178.

Exercise 3: *Work*. [Read Goodwin and Grasseni first.] Watch someone work, either in person or in a video online. Look at how they look; attend to how they attend. Are they using more of their body than their eyes? What can you tell about the way they are dividing up and interpreting the things they see? (You can, of course, ask them; or you can look up more information about work you're watching online.) Sketch a diagram, describe the basic operations of the work, and imagine what Goodwin or Grasseni would say about the practice you see.

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In class: Visual thinking strategies, art, camouflage, skill, classification
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5. Cities | February 20 | *Eaton*

Solnit, Rebecca. 2000. "The Mind at Three Miles an Hour." In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. Viking, 14–29.

Milgram, Stanley. 1970. "The Experience of Living in Cities." *Science* 167: 1461–1468.

Manaugh, Geoff. 2016. "Inside Job" (excerpt). In *A Burglar's Guide to the City*. Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 193–219.

Burrington, Ingrid. 2015. "A Network of Fragments." *The Atlantic*.
www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/12/a-network-of-fragments/419469/

Larkin, Brian. 2015. "Techniques of Inattention: The Mediality of Loudspeakers in Nigeria." *Anthropological Quarterly* 87(4): 989–1015.

Exercise 4: *Hide/Seek*. [Read everything first.] Go for a walk, ideally in an urban area. Look around you. What is trying to capture your attention, and what is trying to escape your attention? What happens when you try to attend to things you're not meant to, or to ignore things that try to entice you? Can you avoid being attended to?

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In class: Burglaries, infrastructures, going for walks
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6. Information | February 27 | Gallery

Blair, Ann. 2003. "Reading Strategies for Coping With Information Overload ca. 1550-1700." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (1): 11–28.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2013. "Introduction: Infoglut and Clutter-Cutting." In *Infoglut: How too Much Information is Changing the Way we Know*. Routledge, 1–18.

Denning, Peter. 1982. "ACM President's Letter: Electronic Junk." *Communications of the ACM* 25(3):163–65.

Simon, Herbert. 1971. "Designing Organizations for an Information-Rich World." In *Computers, Communications, and the Public Interest*, edited by M. Greenberger. The Johns Hopkins Press, 38–52.

Paasonen, Susanna. 2016. "Fickle Focus: Distraction, Affect and the Production of Value in Social Media." *First Monday* 21 (10). firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/6949.

Exercise 5: *Search*. [Read Paasonen and Andrejevic first.] Go online, and use the search engine of your choice to look something up. This something should ideally be your intended final paper topic. While trying to find information for your paper, pay attention not only to the results you find but the process of searching itself. What do you do without thinking as you search? (Are you clicking back and forth, correcting typo, accepting auto-complete suggestions?) What happens if you go past the tenth page

of search results? What kinds of information do you find there? What does it feel like to search?

You should also turn in a short paper proposal by class time today, to me via email. A paper proposal consists of a topic (either a metaphor, object, or book that you intend to focus on—see the tracks in the paper section below), a couple sentences about what you think your argument or angle will be, and a couple more sentences about the sources you'll need to make your argument. This can evolve over the course of the term, of course, but it should be very concrete by this point, so you have something to evolve *from*. It doesn't need to be any longer than 200 words or so, but if it's vague, I'll send it back. If you want to meet with me beforehand to talk about potential topics, come to office hours!

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In class: Overload, affect, novelty, paper topics
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7. Economy | March 6 | Eaton

Goldhaber, Michael. 1997. "The Attention Economy: The Natural Economy of the Net." *The WELL*. <http://www.well.com/user/mgoldh/natecnet.html>.

Polanyi, Karl. 1957. "The Economy as Instituted Process." In *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, edited by Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg, and Harry W. Pearson. Gateway, 243–250.

Cancian, Frank. 1966 "Maximization as Norm, Strategy, and Theory: A Comment on Programmatic Statements in Economic Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* 68 (2): 465–470.

Read, Jason. 2014. "Distracted by Attention." *The New Inquiry*, December 18. thenewinquiry.com/essays/distracted-by-attention.

Citton, Yves. 2017. "Foreword" and "Introduction." In *The Ecology of Attention*, translated by Barnaby Norman. Polity, ix–23.

Bucher, Taina. 2012. "A Technicity of Attention: How Software 'makes Sense.'" *Culture Machine* 13: 1–13.

Bosker, Bianca. 2016. "The Binge Breaker." *The Atlantic*, November. theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/11/the-binge-breaker/501122/.

Exercise 6: *Captive*. Pick a specific web site or smartphone application and analyze how it tries to capture your attention. What features seem designed to capture your attention, and how do you think they work? What does it do with the attention it captures? Is your attention turned into money? How? You may want to look up supplementary information to support your analysis.

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In class: Enchantment, traps, metaphors, clickbait
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8. Research | March 13 | *Nowhere*

This week we will not be meeting. You should take this time to make a start on the research for your final paper (remember, with the class time and reading time together that's something like nine hours!). By now, you should have at least a rough idea of your topic. If you're doing the book review option, you can use this week for your first read-through of the book (so make sure you have a copy already). Otherwise, try sketching possible outlines, finding new sources to read and take some notes on. Write down what you did in your notebook.

SPRING BREAK

9. Sound | March 27 | *Eaton*

Herbert, Ruth. 2012. "Modes of Music Listening and Modes of Subjectivity in Everyday Life." *Journal of Sonic Studies* 2(1). journal.sonicstudies.org/vol02/nr01/a05.

Helmreich, Stefan. 2007. "An Anthropologist Underwater: Immersive Soundscapes, Submarine Cyborgs, and Transductive Ethnography." *American Ethnologist* 34 (4): 621–41.

Seaver, Nick. 2015. "Listening." Working paper. 34 pages.

Mockus, Martha. 2008. "Meditation" (selection). In *Sounding Out: Pauline Oliveros and Lesbian Musicality*. Routledge, 37–51.

Exercise 7: *Native*. [Read Mockus first.] Perform, by yourself or with a friend from outside of class, Pauline Oliveros' sonic meditation piece "Native."¹ This is

¹ For more on Oliveros' relationship to Native American concerns, see: Taylor, Timothy D. 1993. "The Gendered Construction of the Musical Self: The Music of Pauline Oliveros." *The Musical Quarterly* 77 (3): 385–96.

the score: "Take a walk at night. Walk so silently that the bottoms of your feet become ears." Afterwards, write (and draw, if you like) about your experience in your journal.

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In class: Deep listening, audiovisual litany, cocktail party problems
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10. Body | April 3 | Gallery

Csordas, Thomas. 1993. "Somatic Modes of Attention." *Cultural Anthropology* 8(2): 135–56.

Geurts, Kathryn Linn. 2002. "On Rocks, Walks, and Talks In West Africa: Cultural Categories and an Anthropology of the Senses." *Ethos* 30 (3): 178–98.

Myers, Natasha. 2008. "Molecular Embodiments and the Body-Work of Modeling in Protein Crystallography." *Social Studies of Science* 38(2): 163–99.

Prentice, Rachel. 2005. "The Anatomy of a Surgical Simulation: The Mutual Articulation of Bodies in and through the Machine." *Social Studies of Science* 35 (6): 837–66.

Exercise 8: *Gait.* [Read Geurts first.] Go for a walk. Pay attention to your feet: How far apart are your steps? Do you feel yourself sway when you walk? What part of your body leads? Now, look at people walking around you; watch their gait, and try to emulate it—take shorter steps, sway more, etc. Pay attention to how your body responds. How does it feel? Write, draw, and diagram about it in your journal.

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In class: Balance, gestures, machinery, How many senses are there?
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11. Politics | April 10 | Eaton

Sarachild, Kathie. 1973. "Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon." *Redstockings* 144–50.

Tufekci, Zeynep. 2013. "'Not This One': Social Movements, the Attention Economy, and Microcelebrity Networked Activism." *American Behavioral Scientist* 57 (7): 848–70.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. 2006. "The Rules of Denial" and "The Politics of Denial." In *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life*. Oxford University Press, 17–46.

Turner, Fred. 2013. "Where Did All the Fascists Come From?" In *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties*. University of Chicago Press, 15–38.

Watch: Pariser, Eli. 2011. "Beware online 'filter bubbles.'" *TED*, March. [ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles](https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles). 9 minutes.

Exercise 9: *Puncture*. [Watch Pariser first.] Find a political media object (TV show, podcast, news site, etc.) that represents a political view you do not personally hold. Watch, listen to, or read it and try to identify how it asks you to pay attention to the world: Whose point of view are you supposed to share? What does it show you that you don't usually see? Beyond the content, how does the thing itself try to capture, organize, or direct your attention? How are these different from the media you encounter in your usual media bubble? Write some notes about your experience.

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In class: The point of protest, homophily, @realDonaldTrump, creeping fascism
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12. Non-humans | April 17 | Eaton

Tsing, Anna. 2015. "Arts of Noticing." In *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton University Press, 17–25.

Jakob von Uexküll. 1957. "A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men: A Picture Book of Invisible Worlds" (selections). In *Instinctive Behavior: The Development of a Modern Concept*, edited and translated by Claire H. Schiller. International Universities Press.

Myers, Natasha. 2015. "Conversations on Plant Sensing: Notes from the Field." *NatureCulture* 3: 35–66.

Vertesi, Janet. 2012. "Seeing like a Rover: Visualization, Embodiment, and Interaction on the Mars Exploration Rover Mission." *Social Studies of Science* 42 (3): 393–414.

Candea, Matei. 2010. "'I Fell in Love with Carlos the Meerkat': Engagement and Detachment in Human–animal Relations." *American Ethnologist* 37 (2): 241–58.

Exercise 10: *Stroll*. Schedule a walking meeting with me to discuss your progress on your final paper and the course so far. I'll set up a sign-up sheet. We will go for a walk together and talk about your plans, so be prepared to talk in

some detail about them. (Bring your journal, and write some notes afterward.)

In class: Umwelt, environment, distributed cognition, Meerkat Manor

13. Disorder | April 24 | Eaton

Hacking, Ian. 1986. "Making Up People." In *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, edited by Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery. Stanford University Press, 222–236.

Messinger, Seth D. 2013. "Vigilance and Attention among U.S. Service Members and Veterans After Combat." *Anthropology of Consciousness* 24 (2): 191–207.

Milman, Noriko. 2011. "Focused: How Students Construct Attentiveness in First-Grade Classrooms." In *The Well-Being, Peer Cultures and Rights of Children*, edited by Loretta E. Bass and David A. Kinney. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 77–107.

Jacobson, Ken. 2002. "ADHD in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Some Empirical Results." *American Anthropologist* 104(1): 283–87.

Schwartz, Casey. 2016. "Generation Adderall." *The New York Times Magazine*, October 12, 2016. [nytimes.com/2016/10/16/magazine/generation-adderall-addiction.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/16/magazine/generation-adderall-addiction.html).

Nielsen, Mikka. 2017. "Structuring the Self: Moral Implications of Getting an ADHD Diagnosis." *Ethnos* 0 (0): 1–16. doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2017.1362454.

Exercise 11: *Portfolio.* Before the last class, go through your journal and mark pages for your portfolio with sticky flags. We will discuss in class the numbers of various kinds of pages you should mark. I will be grading these as a set—the point is to highlight work you thought was especially good and demonstrates breadth or growth. You can rewrite, revise, or annotate these pages however you like: you may want to add more details, another level of analysis, or a new version of a drawing; you may want to layer in annotations in a different color to show me how your thinking has changed.

Along with the portfolio, write a 500-word cover letter—a short reflective essay explaining to me why you've chosen the pieces you've chosen, how you think they fit together, and what you learned from them. This can be

informally written; the point is to direct my attention to features of the portfolio you think are important.

In class: Social constructions, the normal and the pathological, being well-behaved

Final papers due by 11:59pm, May 9, via email.

Your grade is divided as follows:

Assignment	Due Date	% of Grade
Discussion preparation	Weekly	15
Journal		40
Completion	Weekly	20
Portfolio	April 24	15
Cover letter	April 24	5
Final paper		45
Proposal	Feb 27	5
Cover letter	May 9	5
Final draft	May 9	35
Attendance (extra credit only, see below)	Weekly	up to +3

There may be occasions to earn extra credit throughout the semester by attending events at Tufts or in the greater Boston area and writing a short report. These occasions, should they arise, will be announced in class.

Learning Objectives

This course has been designed to help you learn how:

1. To think expansively and critically about attention, identifying how it is constituted differently in different contexts including politics, science, and art.
2. To continue developing critical reading and writing skills.

3. To pay attention.

Engagement

This is a discussion-based advanced seminar, and it depends on your active engagement and preparation. Please come to all class sessions with copies of the assigned readings and be ready to offer insights and questions concerning that week's chosen materials.

People learn differently and have different propensities for participating in class, so I do not think of engagement as simply a matter of speaking some number of times in class. Rather, I expect you to engage constructively, respectfully, and generously with the ideas of your classmates and the readings. This means coming to class prepared, using inclusive language, not having side conversations, and not burying your attention in your computer screen. You play an important role in this class, and failing to engage actively harms the learning experience of your fellow students.

I do not have a policy restricting the use of technology in class. Take notes with whatever technology suits you. Some research indicates that note-taking on computers reduces the amount of information students retain from class. I do not find these results compelling, given the assumptions about course structure and what counts as "learning" embedded in most of the experiments. I am also concerned that restrictive technology policies harm students with learning disabilities who work better on a keyboard and don't want to be outed to the class as having an exception. Some instructors justify no-laptop policies by saying that it will be good to practice for your future to pay attention to something not on a screen during class time; I agree with this, except that in most of your life, you'll need to learn to pay attention while having a screen available to you, so realistic practice involves having laptops around, not put away.

So, I encourage you to experiment with your technical supports. However, if your devices appear to be distracting you or others, I reserve the right to revoke these privileges immediately and permanently. I am not shy about spontaneously calling on students who are obviously lost in social media, and it is very obvious when you are. The websites that students find themselves compelled visit while in class have been painstakingly designed to capture your attention, they have trained you to check them compulsively, and I do not have enough venture funding to compete with them. If your devices appear to be distracting you or others, I reserve the right to revoke these privileges immediately and permanently (tip: if you want to use your computer to read and take notes, try turning off the wifi during class to avoid the pull of precisely engineered attention-sucking websites, or install an app that blocks these sites for you).

In other words: don't be an asshole.

Attendance

Your attendance in class is important to your learning and to everyone else's. However, things happen and you're all adults; you can make decisions about how to allocate your time. So, although I will be noting attendance in class, it will only count for extra credit. That means that there is no grade penalty for missing class—you can, in principle, get 100% without ever showing up (obviously, this is unlikely). Habitual absence so will harm your own ability to learn as well as your classmates', so please do come.

Because you do not lose credit for missing class, I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, and I do not need you to let me know if you're going to be absent. If you miss only one class, you will get 3% added to your final grade (this is enough to summarily bump you from, say, a B+ to an A-). If you miss two, I will add 1%. If you miss three, then I'll add .5%. After that, there's no extra credit.

I do not respond to emails that ask me to explain what happened in missed classes, nor do I summarize missed classes in office hours. Ask your classmates to fill you in if necessary. I also respond very poorly to grade complaints from students who regularly miss class or show up but do not engage. In extreme circumstances, I may decide not to count you present if you are here but actively disengaged from class. This is rare and I will let you know if it happens promptly, so you can cut it out as soon as possible.

Reading

Yes, there is a lot of it. But keep in mind: typical seminar reading loads are a book a week, and here I've tried to limit each week to roughly four article-length pieces or their equivalent (there are many short pieces scattered throughout, so don't let the number of entries for any given week scare you). So, while there are more pieces per class than you may be used to, the total page count is not too bad. According to the Tufts credit hour guidelines, you should expect to spend *six hours* per week preparing for this seminar, at minimum. If you find the combination of readings and exercises taking significantly longer than that, let me know and we can talk more about skimming strategies.

I expect that by now you have had some practice parsing academic arguments; these readings will give you more chances to practice that skill. Class time will not be dedicated to reviewing each of the readings in turn. Rather, we'll be working from your notes to draw out common themes from the week and to tie them together with broader themes from the course. So, take notes on the readings (see **Journal**, below) and be prepared to discuss all of them in class. I will not be shy about calling on you individually and expecting you to have something to say. (If you are concerned about this, let me know and we can come up with alternative arrangements.)

The readings are intentionally eclectic, and relatively few of them are from disciplinary anthropology. Think of the readings as both primary and secondary sources—that is, as analyses of attention and as examples to be analyzed. In particular, be wary

of simply agreeing with and applying theories from the readings (many of them disagree or work from entirely different premises). You should approach these readings with an eye for pattern: what is similar? what is different? why? The readings and exercises are the raw materials for our discussion, not the limits of it.

Many of the readings are journal articles available through the library. You should download these yourself—I will not provide copies of them. This is part of your training in how to do research, and download statistics help the librarians justify their subscriptions. If you do not know how to do this, we will go over it in class. I will provide copies of readings not available digitally through the library. If you're having trouble accessing something, send me an email in advance and I will help you. Failure to acquire the reading is not an acceptable excuse for not doing it.

You are expected to have done the reading *before* the class for which it is assigned.

Discussion preparation

To make the most of our time together in class, you need to be ready to discuss the day's topic in detail and depth. In addition to completing the readings, you should, every week, **by midnight before class**, post one or more questions for discussion to the appropriate topic in our Trunk forum (as text, not as an attachment). These should be relevant to one or more readings from the day, but they can be any kind of question: how to interpret an argument in the reading, how an argument applies to some outside concern, whether two readings are in opposition to each other, etc. I will use these to help guide our discussion. Although I'll just be marking these as complete or incomplete, your questions should be *good* and reflect actual engagement with the contents of the reading—it's obvious when you're phoning it in, so please don't. If you feel unsure about what constitutes a good discussion question, don't worry: we'll be practicing and improving these over the course of the term.

Every week, you should also find an example to contribute to class discussion. This can be a news article or blog post relevant to the day's topic, or a product, or a practice you just learned about, etc. Put a link to it (or its Wikipedia page or somewhere else we can learn a bit about it) in your Trunk post, with a one sentence description of what it is. These will constitute a pool of potential final paper topics and give us some examples to talk about in class. (So we'll be treating all of this stuff as material to be analyzed, more than as a source of argument/theory in its own right, though we can do that too.)

You can miss one of these postings without penalty. (Keep in mind that they count for a total 15% of your grade, which means they are a very easy way to boost—or sink—your final grade.)

Journal

We will be journaling in this class, and you should acquire a blank notebook of your choice to use. It needs to be at least 60 pages and should be large enough to allow you to draw, diagram, and tape things into it, but otherwise, it's up to you. It should be dedicated exclusively to this class, as you'll be needing to turn it in to me on occasion. You can fill it with whatever else you want, relevant to the class (like interesting things for your final paper, news stories that catch your eye, etc.). Be sure to date the pages. You can write in it longhand, or if you are concerned about your handwriting, you might type things up, print them out, and tape them into the book. You should bring it to every class, and I encourage you to keep it with you as often as you can for capturing spare thoughts. We will spend some time in each class sharing our journal contents with each other. This is an analog experiment, and I encourage you to be experimental with it. What do you notice when you've got somewhere to write it down?

At minimum, your journal should hold the results of the weekly exercises (see **Exercises**, below). The journals are open-ended in that while they must in some way address the week's readings and theme, they may do so in a range of ways - consisting of synthesis of/ reflection on readings and class discussions, extension of topics covered in readings to other domains of attention, reflections on ongoing research or projects, etc. Aim for a mix of jottings (i.e. scratchy notes that may only make sense to you), and more thought-out notes written in intelligible sentences. You may want to revise old entries, annotate them with things you learned later, or use them as raw materials for later reflections. Practice thinking in dialog with your journal. I'll be assessing these as we go, so you'll know how you're doing.

At the end of the term, you will turn in your journals with some of the pages marked: a number of exercises, pages of reading responses, and pages of your own invention (we'll go over the precise quantities in class). I will grade these as a portfolio of your work, representing what you see as your best efforts in the journal. These can be revised, annotated, or otherwise altered versions of previous assignments, but they can also be originals. I will be grading these for how well they demonstrate your ability to think across the readings, to find unifying themes, to pose meaningful and interesting questions, and to critique positions. Along with the journal, you will hand in a typed-up 500-word "cover letter"—a short reflective essay explaining to me why you've chosen the pieces you've chosen, how you think they fit together, and what you learned from them. This can be informally written; the point is to direct my attention to features of the portfolio you think are important.

Exercises

Every week, in addition to the readings, there is an exercise for you to complete and write up in some form in your journal. You should do these exercises *before* the classes

for which they are assigned. In general, it will be more productive to do the readings before the exercise, but it's up to you; in some cases, I've listed specific readings you should do before particular exercises. These will also serve as material for our in-class discussions.

You can miss one exercise in the journal without penalty. I will be checking these in class, so if you are not in class, you will need to find another way to show them to me. (Clear smartphone photos of the relevant pages, emailed to me by the end of the day on class days, are sufficient.)

Paper

There are three tracks you can choose from for final papers in this class. The tracks are very open-ended and may overlap with each other—the point is to give you some broad parameters within which to construct an original paper. Papers should take the form of a 2800–3000-word essay, due 11:59pm on Wednesday, May 9 (during finals week). They should directly relate to the topics of the course, drawing on materials from both on and off the syllabus, and they will require regular work over the course of the entire term. Because of this, I will be asking to you commit to a track fairly early in the term; you may migrate across tracks and that is okay, I just want you to always have a rough orienting destination for your work during the term. We will be checking in regularly on these during class.

Metaphorical analysis

One of our main focuses in the course will be the metaphors people use to talk about attention (payment, exercise, filtering, etc.). For this paper, you will undertake a critical analysis of a particular metaphor, describing it in detail, demonstrating its consequences in practice, its shortcomings, and potential alternatives. This paper should be grounded in concrete examples and it should represent an original argument (i.e. don't accidentally parrot an argument from one of the readings in class). You might use as your key examples some of the objects people brought into class for discussion, but for this topic, the metaphor should be the center of your argument.

Object analysis

This paper will be centered on a particular object, broadly defined: it could be an app, a physical device, a well-defined practice, a film, or something else of interest to you. You should analyze that object for how it embodies a particular idea about attention, how it fits into broader attentional ecologies, or how it relates to any of the arguments from the course more generally. You may end up discussing metaphors here, too, but the point of this track is to thoroughly investigate an object through an attentional lens. You may

worry that some objects are not deep enough to reward extended analysis—this is almost never the case, so keep thinking.

Book review

This paper will take the form of an academic book review essay on a book about attention. Drawing on your new expertise in the topic, you will summarize and *critically* assess the argument of the book, putting it in the context of other arguments about attention from the course. This track may prove especially appealing to those of you who are having trouble coming up with clear topics for the track above, or for those interested in continuing on to graduate school: this level of engagement with a book is very good practice for the kind of reading that will be expected of you in graduate programs. Your review should address one of the following books (if you want to review a book not listed here, let me know and we can see if it would work—it should be centrally concerned with attention as a topic, not only incidentally related to attention, because everything is incidentally related to attention):

- Yves Citton, *The Ecology of Attention*
- Tim Wu, *The Attention Merchants*
- Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas*
- Paul Roquet, *Ambient Media*
- Maggie Jackson, *Distracted*
- Winifred Gallagher, *Rapt*
- Alex Soojung Kim Pang, *The Distraction Addiction*
- Adam Gazzaley and Larry Rosen, *The Distracted Mind*
- Thomas Davenport and John Beck, *The Attention Economy*
- Matthew Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head*
- Max Bazerman, *The Art of Noticing*

Note that these books vary widely in discipline, and some are academic, while most are aimed at a popular audience. This will affect how you approach your critiques, and it may make things easier or harder for you depending on your interests. Look them up online, skim their introductions and tables of contents, and ask me as you decide what to pursue. For the popular audience books, do not be swayed by the fact they typically offer advice—I do not care if the advice is good or useful, I care to learn how the argument works, what unstated ideas about attention and its related supports the book relies on. For some of the more academic books, you may need to be already familiar with their disciplines of origin to make sense of them. (So this is a chance to make this course relevant to your major if it isn't anthropology! I can recommend more to you, if you're looking for something along these lines.)

The biggest risk in any of these tracks is vagueness: I do not want to see arguments that get away from their evidence, or which become so abstract that they no longer seem to have a clear point. So, be wary of that.

Your final paper should be submitted to me as a Word document (Pages is okay, too) via email. It should be accompanied by a short (250 words is enough) cover letter telling me about the experience of writing the paper in more informal language. This will not be graded (except for completion). Your cover letter might tell me what you learned through writing; things you thought went well or badly; how writing went in general; what you now think of as your main point; some important choices you made while writing; surprises you encountered while writing. It should definitely include any questions you have for me or areas of your paper you'd like me to address in more detail in my comments. This will take you some time to write, so don't leave everything until the last minute!

Accessibility

Your success in this class is important to me. If there are any circumstances that may affect your performance, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to adapt assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. These may be personal, health-related, family-related issues, or other concerns. The sooner I know about these, the earlier we can discuss possible adjustments or alternative arrangements as needed for assignments or classes. Any such discussion will remain confidential. (With one exception: I am a mandatory reporter under Title IX, which means that I am obligated to report instances of on-campus sexual harassment or discrimination to the University if I find out about them.)

If you need accommodation as a result of a documented disability, you should register with the Disability Services Office at the beginning of the semester. You can find out how to do so here: <http://students.tufts.edu/student-accessibility-services>. Even if you do not have a documented disability, remember that other support services are available to all students.

I try to be available via email, and you should generally receive a reply within 24–48 hours of emailing me. Some topics are easier dealt with in conversation, so I may ask you to come to office hours. As a rule, I do not answer email over the weekend or after 5 pm. Plan ahead.

I am available for meeting with students during office hours or by appointment if you absolutely cannot make my scheduled office hours. I expect you all to meet with me at least twice during the term. My office in Eaton Hall is only accessible via stairs (Tufts calls this “accessible with assistance”). If stairs don't accommodate you, let me know, and we can meet elsewhere.

Late Policy

I may grant extensions on assignments if you provide three days' notice and can send me evidence that you are working on an idea that requires more time. These are necessary, not sufficient, conditions for an extension: we will negotiate a new deadline, and there may be reasons for me to decline to extend one. Do not ask for an extension if you have not started writing yet. Late assignments will be docked a half grade (+/-) per day (i.e. after 10 days, you cannot earn a grade higher than F).

Academic Integrity

Our expressions are not our own. Humans communicate with words and concepts—and within cultures and arguments—that are not of our own making. Writing, like other forms of communication, is a matter of combining existing materials in communicative ways. Different groups of people have different norms that govern these combinations: modernist poets and collagists, mashup artists and programmers, blues musicians and attorneys, documentarians and physicists all abide by different sets of rules about what counts as “originality,” what kinds of copying are acceptable, and how one should relate to the materials from which one draws.

In this course, you will continue to learn the norms of citation and attribution shared by the community of scholars in the social sciences. Failure to abide by these norms is considered plagiarism, as laid out in the Tufts Academic Integrity Policy, which you should familiarize yourself with: students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy. I am required to report suspected violations of this policy to the Dean of Student Affairs, and consequences can be severe. If you have any questions or doubts about this policy or my expectations regarding assignments, please get in touch with me immediately. Cheating in any form will not be tolerated and offenders will be penalized, reported, and potentially removed from the class.

However, plagiarism policies tend to focus on the less productive side of the issue, urging students to be “original” and telling them what not to do (buying papers, copying text from the internet and passing it off as one's own, etc.). While you should follow these rules, I encourage you to take a more expansive view of what academic integrity means. Academic integrity is not a matter of producing purely original thought, but of recognizing and acknowledging the resources on which you draw. In light of this, I do not use “plagiarism detection” services like Turnitin. Rather than expending your energy worrying about originality, I suggest that you think instead about what kind of citational network you are locating yourself in. What thinkers are you thinking with? Where do they come from? How might their positions in the world inform their thoughts? What is your position relative to them? How might you re-shape your citational network to better reflect your priorities or ideals?

If you are interested in these issues, I recommend these pieces:

Ahmed, Sara. 2013. "Making Feminist Points." *feministkilljoys*. <http://feministkilljoys.com/2013/09/11/making-feminist-points/>

Biagioli, Mario. 2014. "Plagiarism, Kinship and Slavery." *Theory, Culture & Society* 31(2-3): 65–91.

Introna, Lucas. 2016. "Algorithms, Governance, and Governmentality: On Governing Academic Writing." *Science, Technology & Human Values* 41(1): 17–49.

You may write a 500-word response to these readings for extra credit. See me in office hours for details.

The Syllabus is a Living Document

This syllabus is a starting point for the course. It is subject to change as the term unfolds, in response to your feedback and my assessment of how things are going. I'll be seeking out your feedback regularly. Some adjustments are likely. These adjustments may involve altering assignments or adding, removing, or modifying readings. Any changes will be discussed in class and announced via email, so attend class and check your inbox. The current syllabus version number is on the front page.