

Background Information Pack for "Digitality" Lecture

Recitation Guide

1. Suicide of Rutgers student Tyler Clementi

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_of_Tyler_Clementi

- Tyler Clementi was an eighteen-year-old student at Rutgers University in Piscataway Township, New Jersey, who jumped to his death from the George Washington Bridge on September 22, 2010. This occurred after his sexual encounter with a man in his dorm room was video streamed over the internet without Clementi's knowledge, by his roommate Dharun Ravi and a fellow hallmate Molly Wei, and after a second attempt was made by Ravi to record Clementi's sexual encounters. Ravi and Wei were charged with invasion of privacy.

2. Marshall McLuhan – "The Medium is the Message"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Understanding_Media:_The_Extensions_of_Man

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_medium_is_the_message

- "The 'content' of a medium is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind." -Understanding Media (1964)

- Perhaps the most widely read medium theorist is Marshall McLuhan, known for his claim – in sound-bite form – that the "medium is the message"

- McLuhan argued that if the influence of the media interests us, we should focus our attention on the ways each new medium disrupts tradition and reshapes social life. The real message was not in the actual content of the media but the ways in which the media themselves extend our senses and alter our social world.

Lecture Materials

1. George Turklebaum Won't Die

<http://urbanlegends.about.com/cs/horrors/a/turklebaum.htm>

<http://www.snopes.com/horrors/gruesome/fivedays.asp>

DEAD MAN WORKS FOR A WEEK!

NEW YORK — Conscientious employee George Turklebaum was the ultimate working stiff. He stayed on at the job for a week after he died — and nobody knew he had croaked!

Police say that when the 51-year-old proofreader suffered a fatal heart attack while sitting at his desk, none of his 23 co-workers realized he'd passed away.

"George was always the first guy to get here in the morning and the last to leave at night," explains Elliot Wachiaski, Turklebaum's boss at the publishing-services company where the deceased man had labored for 30 years.

"So no one found it unusual that he was in the same position all that time and didn't say anything."

He had a heart attack at his desk and co-workers didn't even know it!

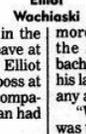
"People would pass him every morning, say 'Hello George,' and go right on by."

Turklebaum's job was to proofread manuscripts for medical textbooks. Some would take 10 days or more to check for errors, so the fact that the bespectacled bachelor hadn't yet turned around his latest assignment didn't set off any alarm bells.

"We just assumed that George was taking his time to go over the text very carefully, as he always did," said Wachiaski.

A coroner determined that Turklebaum probably died on the morning of October 23, a Monday. And it wasn't until the following Saturday — after a full work week — that the clean-up crew thought his body looked funny, touched it and found to their horror that it was stone-cold.

Surprisingly, this sort of thing happens more often than you might think — and Turklebaum doesn't hold the record, even in New York. In 1975, a Manhattan insurance company employee died in his cubicle and wasn't discovered for an astonishing 18 days, police remember.



George Turklebaum, proofreader.

2. "Amazing catch by ball girl!" is actually a viral video ad campaign by Gatorade
<http://www.snopes.com/photos/advertisements/ballgirl.asp>

- While video can be a powerful tool for verification, it can also be used to deceive us. After all, "seeing is believing," yet what we see may not be a true representation of what is real.
- The lesson for news consumers in the digital age is that we need to evaluate all information using the VIA guidelines, rather than simply accepting something as true because it is popular and has been passed around on the internet.

3. Map of Online Communities (XKCD)

2007: <http://xkcd.com/256/>

2010: <http://xkcd.com/256/>

4. Pornography's share of internet traffic is remarkably hard to come by

- In terms of overall internet bandwidth use in the U.S., online streaming video has overtaken peer-to-peer (p2p) applications as the largest service, according to estimates from Cisco and other internet service providers. Netflix alone takes about 20% of U.S. internet traffic during prime time.
- Pornography and other adult sites, like online dating, represent the largest segment of web traffic, although social networking sites recently may have surpassed these (depending on how the metric is calculated)
- CBS News Report - "Porn in the U.S.A." - suggests that pornography is a \$10 billion per year industry, perhaps bigger than Hollywood (also ~\$10 billion in revenue)
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/11/21/60minutes/main585049.shtml>