Digital Practices is a seminar series organized jointly by scholars from USC and from the University of Paris 8 in the context of the MOU linking our institutions.

This initiative stems from the observation that a new “print revolution” is happening before our eyes with the extent to which the use of social and digital media is changing our everyday lives. We are interested in empirically grounded approaches that question, from various analytic angles and disciplinary perspectives, the uses and effects of such technologies. The phrase “Digital Practices” refers to the methodological choice not to disconnect the study of “digital data” from the very activity of the people who create them (and from the context of this activity, the meaning of this activity in their own eyes, the interactions that govern this activity etc.). While most studies of digital/online phenomena exclusively or mostly rely on analyzing websites and social media outlets (therefore creating “digital/online data”), the originality of our approach is to advocate for the need of getting closer to the participants, the social actors involved, to understand how they deal with digital tools, shape them, respond to them, subvert them, and so on.

We are especially interested in contributions that link the analysis of digital content with that of the activity that makes up such products. The study of processes, on one hand, and content analysis, on the other hand, are too often conducted in disconnected ways and our seminar series intends to fuel the dialogue between both types of work, as well as to discuss approaches that directly integrate both.

The conversation that this workshop intends to start goes into various analytic directions, each session being based on the presentation of specific case studies. These analytic directions are numerous, including:

- One aspect of our discussions will address the visual dimensions attached to digital technologies and their particular role in creating and communicating meaning and emotion, and in making up (collective) memory. How the digital media transform the making of cultural products and popular culture is also a topic of interest.

- Another strong angle is the methodological question of how to do fieldwork so as to unveil and analyze the practices that do the “digital revolution,” as well as the new repertoires of action that emerge from it. How to define and conduct “digital ethnography” falls into such types of question, for instance.

- At a more theoretical level, we will therefore question how current technological changes redefine perception and activity, and what combinations of practices shape, in turn, such changes. The emergence of digital media does not only translate into the diffusion of new tools, but it also generates new relationships to time (work and life paces) as well as to physicality and distance, new modes of interrelation, etc. It also has to do with new ways of imagining the future and collectively bringing it into existence.
Program

Friday October 31, 2014 – 10am-2pm
Politics of Digital Languages
Location: VKC, Room 329

Tok Thompson, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, USC
"Memes, Mashups, and More: Modernity in Hindsight"

G. Thomas Goodnight, Professor, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, USC
"Rhetorical Anthropology for a Digital Age: Inquiry into Discourse Communities, Biopolitics as Case"

Friday January 30, 2015 – 10am-2pm
Digital Practices of Popular Culture
Location: Social Sciences Building (SOS), Room B40

Joanna Demers, Associate Professor of Musicology, Thornton School of Music, USC
"Music for free and for sale: Do you get what you pay for?"

Alex Leavitt, PhD student, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, USC
"Algorithmic Ethnography: Mixing Methods for Exploring Digital Cultures"

Friday March 6, 2015 – 10am-2pm
Telling History in Digital Form
Location: Social Sciences Building (SOS), Room B40

With Thomas Brisson, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Paris 8
And Dan Leshem, Associate Director for Research, Shoah Foundation, USC

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Maps:

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