Course Program

IFI7141	Digital culture		
Study load – 5 ECTS	**Load of contact hours**: lectures/ workshops/ seminars : 8	**Study semester**: **S**pring	**Exam**
Objectives:	Nowadays society is more than ever immersed in a flow of technological innovations that shape our interactions and mediate our access to things and to other individuals. In this subject we will basically discuss why and how the future will be digital and fragmented. Objectives are: to understand the nature of the changes underpinnning both social and technonogical transformations, with a special enphasys on the consequences of those for the individual and society. Other objectives include the acquisition of theoretical and empirical information on the subject of digital culture and its implications for the study of media and computing.		
Course Outline	Individual work will consist of one assignemt - paper critic. Topics to be covered include: the notion of digital culture; culture as activity; the role of mediation; media culture as digital culture: the role of consumption; theories of innovation and technologies adoption, the role of social capital in today's social change.		
	The fundamental idea of Social Capital Theory (SCT) is particularly simple: *relationships matter and people's social networks count* (Field, 2003). Foremost, they count for the people who are engaged in the relationships, developing social and affective bonds through them, counting here in a subjective way; though they also count in a collective way for society as a whole in which people is involved. Burt (2005) defines social capital as the advantage created by the position of an individual in a relational structure, the more relationships he establishes the higher is his social capital and the easier is to get information or to accomplish what he pursues in that particular social network. Thus, the connections people maintain in a social network can contribute to their success in an individual way. The idea is that collective actions and commitments contribute to subjective achievements – social relationships offer people the possibility of achieving things they could not achieve by themselves or that would be of great difficulty to achieve on their own. However, some authors point out the importance of not simplifying the issue of social capital as an antagonism between collectivism and individualism in the context of social network (Ling 2008) but rather as a marker of cohesion and strength within a social system.		
	The concept of social capital has acquired a prominence that few scientific concepts had in the past, being applied in a variety of domains such as information systems (Bresnen et al, 2004), economy (Szreter 2001), politics and social science (Putnam 2000). However, the application of the concept in the current study is more related to the social domain and its implications on		

the organization of social life. When we mention *capital* we mean a resource investment on a particular historical and social context. *Social capital* is then a relational resource, not a material or economic capital, but a social type of capital that results from a constant individual effort of an individual in order to maintain and increase his/her own relationships inside a network of interconnected ties that need a continuous commitment. The value of social capital is related to the explanation it provides to the basis of social cooperation and social cohesion – why do people collaborate with each other in social networks. According to the foundations of the social capital theory, the concept of personal satisfaction is essential to explain why people cooperate (Field 2003). Since Bourdieu's assumptions (1980), the individual outcome of a personal network of ties is the basis for producing and maintaining social relationships. According to the author, social capital is the amount of resources resulting from a social network where interactions are maintained on a common daily basis, being the reason for that continuous effort to maintain relationships that meet a personal need or profit. Later, Coleman (1994) introduced in the theoretical framework of social capital the Theory of Rational Choice (TRC) by emphasizing the idea of satisfaction as a stimulus for social cooperation. The TRC proposes that all behaviors and actions are a consequence of individuals following their own best interests (Field, 2003). Although this theory seems, to a certain extent, egocentric, it is well-grounded and respects the foundations of the social capital theory.

The basis of the SCT is that the maintenance and reproduction of social capital depends on the social interactions that the members of a network support. This view points to a non-deterministic interpretation of technology. Although the issue of media and technology is not clearly present in most of the work on social capital, the importance this theory gives to the subjective components of social interactions allows us to interpret the notion of technology as having a secondary position, advocating that any result is not a consequence of technology's intrinsic properties, but an outcome of the relationships established within a particular network. As a practical concept, the notion of social capital appears to have a unique potential to facilitate the understanding of social relationships processes in networks, and thus in on-line networks, regardless of their nature or historical moment, emerging as a valuable concept also for the communication domain and media studies.

Social capital is also directly related to the concept of activity, a theoretical framework in which the project is explained in the previous section, since it is in the activity of individuals independently motivated that we find the explanation for the social interactions and use of technologies. In other words, the relationships and the activities performed within a social network, being it on-line or not, are more relevant than the process of mediation and the mediators themselves. Studies examining the relationship between the media and social capital present diverse perspectives marked by a strong ambivalence. Putnam (2000) was one of the first authors who approached this relationship, assigning responsibility of a decrease in the levels of social capital to the television usage in America, stating that television alienates people from social participation. Several studies followed Putnam's work and current ideologies (Katz & Rice 2002) assert that there is no evidence that the

	new technologies, particularly the Internet, contribute to a decrease in the levels of social capital produced within a community. Yet, the same authors also say that there is no evidence, so far, that the use of a particular technology is able, by itself, to influence the levels of social capital shared in a social network. Other studies on the social consequences of the Internet use found the existence of a relationship between the activities conducted on-line and off-line in face-to-face communities; however, they did not verify the existence of a negative relationship between the levels of social capital produced within a particular community and the activities members of the community conducted on-line (Katz & Rice 2002; Blanchard 2007). The results achieved in this area are complex and ambivalent, calling for a deeper research and analysis of the relation between the production of social capital and the uses of different media technologies as mediators for social relationships. It is precisely this that we will discuss in this seminar.
Learning Outcomes:	To understand the role of digital culture in current society; to relate digital culture with media culture; to understand the basis of activity theory; to understand the role and nature of social capital theory. Other outcomes include the acquistion of competences on the analysis of social networks and social capital theory methods.
Assessment Methods:	Written assessment
Teacher(s):	Manuel José Damásio (Phd)
Subject name in Estonian	Digitaalne kultuur
Prerequisite subject(s):	NA
Compoulsory Literature	Kaptelinin, V. (1996). Activity Theory: Implications for human-computer interaction. In B. Nardi, (ed), Context and Consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p. 107 – 110 Drotner(2008). Leisure is hard work: digital practices and future competencies. In Buckingham. *Youth, Identity and Digital Media.* Cambridge MA: MIT press. Katz & Rice (2002). *Social Consequences of internet use.* Cambridge: MIT Press Rheingold (2008). "Mobile media and political collective action" in Katz (Ed.), *Handbook of mobile communication studies.* Massachussets: MIT Press. Pp: 225-241
Replacement Literature	NA

Participation and Exam requirements	Max number of participants (depending on the workspaces in lab etc). NA Requirements that should be fulfilled in order for student to be admitted to exam or pass/fail evaluation (for example: participation in lectures, presenting 100% of the independent work, taking a number of tests, participating in seminars or group work). Participation in classes. Completion of assessment. Conditions for taking re-assessment. NA
Independent work	Reading of papers to be made available online
Grading criteria scale or the minimal level necessary for passing the subject	Grading criteria: 1st criterion – Quality of reading and interpretation 2nt criterion – Presentation and discussion skills **'A'** (excellent) – an outstanding and excellent level of achievement of learning outcomes characterised by free and creative use of knowledge and skills beyond a very good level; **'B'** (very good) – a very good level of achievement of learning outcomes characterised by purposeful and creative use of knowledge and skills. Un-substantive and non-conceptual errors may occur with regard to specific and detailed knowledge and skills; **'C'** (good) – a good level of achievement of learning outcomes characterised by purposeful use of knowledge and skills. Uncertainty and inaccuracies may occur with regard to specific and detailed knowledge and skills; **'D'** (satisfactory) – a sufficient level of achievement of learning outcomes characterised by the use of knowledge and skills in typical situations. Deficiencies and uncertainties may occur with regard to non-standard situations; **'E'** (poor) – a minimally acceptable level of achievement of learning outcomes characterised by limited use of knowledge and skills in typical situations. Significant deficiencies and uncertainty may occur with regard to non-standard situations; **'F'** (fail) – the level of knowledge and skills acquired by a student remain below the required minimum 'F' is a negative outcome and the examination/test etc shall be retaken.
Information about the course	Seminar: 24th and 25th March.