“The Internet is a place where race happens. In the early days of the Net, technological visionaries imagined the online world as a utopian space where everything—even transcending racism—was possible.”

-- Lisa Nakamura, *Cybertypes*

For virtual reality to be interesting, it has to emulate the real. But you have to be able to do something in the virtual that you couldn’t in the real. For me, my female characters are interesting because I can say and do the sorts of things
that I mentally want to do, but if I did them as a man, they
would be obnoxious. I see a strong woman as admirable. I
see a strong man as a problem. Potentially a bully.

-- Sherry Turkle, “Computer Games as Evocative Objects”

Ours is a world that is both everywhere and nowhere, but it
is not where bodies live. We are creating a world that all
may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race,
economic power, military force, or station of birth.

-- John Perry Barlow (1996)

In cyberspace, it is finally possible to completely and
utterly disappear people of color. I have long suspected that
the much vaunted "freedom" to shed the "limiting" markers
of race and gender on the Internet is illusory, and that in
fact it masks a more disturbing phenomenon—the
whitinizing of cyberspace.

-- Kali Tal (1996)

This gap between rich and poor is also mirrored in the new
information economy. A digital divide—the name given to
the disparity in information resources—is emerging
between North and South. Industrialized economies are
moving towards greater dependence on and access to
increasingly sophisticated information technologies. Yet
more than one-half of humanity has never used a telephone,
and there are more telephones [in] Montréal than in all of
Bangladesh.


Course Description:

The term 'eBlack Studies' describes the ongoing application of current digital information
technology towards the production, dissemination, and collection of historical knowledge
critical to the discipline of Black Studies and to the overall black experience. We will
chart the future of scholarship, teaching, and community work through the use of eBlack
Studies. We will explore digital culture as it critically interrogates, interprets, defines, and
documents the experiences of people of African descent. Applications like Google,
Facebook, MySpace, and Second Life will be examined. Students will be asked to build an e-product—either a blog, wiki, web page, or digital archive as part of the applied aspects of the course.

This seminar course explores cyberspace, the most powerful and frequently inhabited site within contemporary culture. Students will explore specific themes such as, identity, community, bodies, virtuality, and sexuality through the lens of critical race theory (CRT) and intersectional analysis.

Course Objectives:

The overall goal of this course is to give students the critical and analytical tools with which to examine, discuss, and understand the ways in which the internet both informs and reflects culture. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand and articulate the current and potential future implications of cyberspace on culture, as well as the way in which culture also impacts the advancement of internet technology.
2. Use theories to analyze, describe, and further develop interpretive and evaluative arguments about the culture of cyberspace.
3. Conduct a cyber-research project.
4. Understand the many digital representations of racial difference
5. Understand and critically evaluate many of the current scholarly topics and debates that occur within Cyberculture studies.
6. Understand the role of the internet and the web in building and maintaining marginalized communities.
7. Understand the challenges of providing greater access to digital media for disadvantaged groups.