The goal of this course is to collaboratively approach “the digital” from an anthropological perspective. This will take two forms: first, exploring ethnographic research on digital culture (from a range of disciplines); and second, using anthropological theories and frameworks to explore the digital and the human. There is an emphasis on anthropological and/or ethnographically informed work. However, the readings are interdisciplinary, drawing particularly on history and communications: during the course we will link such work to digital anthropology. There is by now a massive body of high-quality work on these topics, classic and contemporary, and there is no way to cover all this material within the limits of ten weeks. With this in mind, the course is organized around the following themes:

WEEK 1—BEGINNINGS
WEEKS 2 & 3—THEME 1: CULTURE
WEEKS 5 & 6—THEME 2: SELF
WEEKS 7 & 8—THEME 3: INTIMACY
WEEKS 9 & 10—THEME 4: INTELLIGENCE
FINALS WEEK—FUTURES

Note that we do not meet Week 4, but do meet Finals Week.

Throughout the course, a number of topics will interweave through these themes, including class, disability, games, gender, history, method, mobility, race, sexuality, and theory. There are six readings each week (save Week 1). All of the readings could have been assigned to multiple themes: the chosen thematic assignment simply foregrounds aspects of the argument in question. The readings are not divided into “required” or “recommended.” Instead, each week you will select two of the six readings to read closely and discuss in your précis (see below), depending on your own topical interests (you do not need to stick with one topical interest during the course). You are expected to skim briefly through the other
four readings so as to participate in the overall class discussion. This will provide you with practice in different reading styles, an invaluable scholarly skill.

The three books will be placed on course reserves. The remaining readings for the course are listed in the course schedule during the week they are assigned. These readings are accessible online, unless marked with ☐, in which case they will be made available as PDF files. Seminar discussions will follow three basic guidelines:

**Generosity.** With a ten-week course there simply is not time for substandard texts. All readings selected for the syllabus are insightful and theoretically innovative. If you find yourself rejecting an argument in toto, this indicates your reading is insufficiently generous.

**Provisionality.** You are allowed (indeed, encouraged) to think out loud, say something and then take it back, and speak in a provisional manner, knowing that those around you will be patient, supportive, and slow to take offense.

**Community.** Some individuals are quite comfortable speaking at length: this is desirable, but I may ask persons to wrap up their comments, or to solicit comments from anyone.

## Course Structure

1) *Seven précis*

You will do seven (7) précis, which we will share with each other. This means you can choose three weeks (including Week 1) in which you do not have to do a précis. Each précis should be 2,500–3,500 characters in length. This is approximately 400–500 words, or 1.5–2 double-spaced pages, but you will be assessed based on character count. Each précis should take the form of questions, commentary, and analysis about at least two of the six readings for that week. You may discuss more than two readings; you will not receive full credit if you discuss only one reading. A précis can link readings for a particular week to earlier course readings, or to readings from outside the course, but particularly the latter of these is discouraged. I discourage negative critiques; focus on generous engagement. As noted above, you should look briefly at all readings for any particular week and be prepared to discuss them, even if you do not do a précis at all that week.
A précis must be uploaded onto the course's Google Forms website before the beginning of class. You may optionally also bring one or more hard copies to class. A précis can never be turned in late. If you do not attend class, or leave class early, any précis you submit that day will not be counted. Each précis counts for 8 percent of your overall grade, so the seven précis together constitute 56% of the overall grade. Please note that falling even one précis short will thus severely impact your grade. You will receive only partial credit for a précis that does not meet the minimum requirements discussed above; if you do an additional (eighth, ninth, or tenth) précis, the grade for that additional précis can replace an earlier précis with a lower grade.

2) The final paper
You must write a course paper, which will be 44% of your overall grade. It must be emailed by the deadline as a single Word document (not pdf) to tboellst@uci.edu. Due to the emphasis on reading and précis, the final paper is relatively short. It should be 4,000–5,000 words long, inclusive of title, endnotes, and references. The paper can be on any topic that relates to the course, so long as you obtain my approval and so long as you cite and engage course texts and discussions in a significant manner. If you would like to write a paper that links up to research interests, including for your Master’s thesis, advancement to candidacy, or dissertation, that is allowed—but you must cite and engage course texts and discussions in a significant manner. You may use Chicago Style (used by the American Anthropological Association) or some other style you prefer (e.g., MLA style), so long as you are consistent. You must include full bibliographic references to course texts as they are used. You may bring in outside readings, but it is not necessary to do so and they should not overwhelm or substitute for course readings.

The course grade will thus be calculated as follows:

- Seven précis times eight points per précis = 56 points
- Final paper = 44 points
- Total = 100 points

You will then be assigned a letter grade as follows: A+ 96.7–100; A 93.4–96.6; A- 90–93.3; B+ 86.7–89.9; B 83.4–86.6; B- 80–83.3; C+ 76.7–79.9; C 73.4–76.6; C- 70–73.3; D 65–69.9; F 64.9 and below.

Students with disabilities: to quote from my colleague Karen Nakamura’s syllabus, “If you need a reasonable (or even unreasonable) accommodation, please let me know and I’ll make it happen. This goes triply for folks with non-visible disabilities or who pass or mask or
compensate. No need to do that here.” The Disabilities Services Center has many resources; registering with them can help ensure appropriate arrangements in all your courses (see http://www.disability.uci.edu/).

### COURSE SCHEDULE

**Week 1—BEGINNINGS**


**Week 2—THEME 1: CULTURE {PART 1}**


Week 3— THEME 1: CULTURE {PART 2}


Week 5— THEME 2: SELF {PART 1}


Week 6—THEME 2: SELF [PART 2]


**Week 7—THEME 3: INTIMACY [PART 1]**


**Week 8—THEME 3: INTIMACY [PART 2]**


Week 9—THEME 4: INTELLIGENCE [PART 1]


* Jones, Matthew L. 2017. Reckoning with Matter: Calculating Machines, Innovation, and Thinking about Thinking from Pascal to Babbage. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 6, Epilogue)


Week 10—THEME 4: INTELLIGENCE [PART 2]


Finals Week—FUTURES


Final paper due Tuesday, June 18, 5:00pm, emailed to tboellst@uci.edu.