

COURSE GUIDE:

Education and digital cultures

Session 2018/19

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Welcome

Welcome to *Education and Digital Cultures*.

This course is about some of the ways in which digital cultures intersect with educational cultures online. Alongside a broad understanding of some of the most engaging perspectives on digital culture in its popular and academic forms, we'll be considering how our practices as teachers and learners are informed by various interpretations of digital culture.

The course is unlike many of the others on the MSc in Digital Education programme, in that we make no use of Moodle – apart from for assignment submission – or of private learning spaces. All course content – apart from copyright-protected readings – is publicly available on the web. Similarly, we ask you as course participants to conduct much of the business of the course in public, including the assessed elements. The most significant element of the assessment in this regard is the 'lifestream-blog'. There's more on this below, but in short it is an attempt to 'capture' something of the process and path of your learning, in all its variety and complexity.

Because the technological environments we are using are a bit different, you'll find there's more technical information in this guide than in other course handbooks. So please read it through thoroughly and get back to us if you have any questions.

We want participation in this course to be a collective experiment in being part of the wider social web. We expect that some or even most course participants will have active personal or professional presences on the web already, and so for you this course will be about translating some of those experiences to a formal learning context. For those whose presence on the web has been less public, it is perhaps a chance to understand and reflect on what difference this makes to you as a student, to what you do and don't wish to share and say, and how that changes for you over the period of the course.

We are also exploring alternative ways for presenting academic knowledge, encouraging you to think about digital methods for conveying understanding, and to use digital spaces in new ways to present your work for assessment. The course is therefore experimental in several ways, and we hope you will embrace and enjoy the general ethos! Best of luck over the coming semester.



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Course learning outcomes

The outcomes for this course are as follows. On its completion, you will:

- have a critical awareness of the key concepts emerging from the study of digital culture
- be able to assess the implications of this thought for the history, development and deployment of online education
- be able to synthesise these ideas in order to develop critically aware, media-specific pedagogies for online learning
- have developed the ability to use social media and digital spaces in the presentation of academic discourse online.

Delivery mode and participation etiquette

The course is delivered – entirely online – through a combination of environments. Its core is built on the WordPress blogging platform, and is available at:

<http://edc18.education.ed.ac.uk>

This is where you will find the course activities, your lifestream-blog space, and links to the readings. We will also be conducting Google hangouts and Togethertube tutorials. You'll find details of how to go about these things below. As the course progresses we may also find it helpful to make use of other online environments: we will keep you posted on these.

As with other MSc courses, participation is flexible within certain bounds. You will need to keep up with the week by week structure, and to plan your time for the film festival weeks, the ethnography, and the synchronous discussions, particularly.

As we said in the introduction, the ethos of the course is one of (public) commentary on each other's work, and of public sharing of your own thoughts. Your immediate public is of course your own peers and your tutors, but given that much of the course process and content is open, there is potential for a global audience. It's not necessary that you actively solicit this audience for your work on this course, though if you choose to do so you may find that provides some interesting material for your reflections. We do however strongly encourage you to engage with the work of your peers on the course, through commenting on and referencing their work, and being open to their comments on your work. You can get a sense of how this might work by looking at a previous instance of the course at:

<http://edc17.education.ed.ac.uk/>, or <http://edc15.education.ed.ac.uk/>

Equipment you will need

As with other courses on the programme, you will require the usual computer equipment to view and create content. Please ensure that you have access to a computer which meets the requirements to view online videos, and that you have speakers or headphones so that you can hear sound.

You will need a Google account to attend the Hangout tutorials, and we recommend a Twitter account to take part in discussions.

Course structure and format

The course will be organised in three blocks. Learning activities throughout will focus on the creation of your lifestream (see assessment), on blogging, synchronous and asynchronous discussion. You will be produce: a film review and visual artefact (block 1); an ethnographic artefact (block 2); an account of 'algorithmic play' and a final blog post (block 3), each in any digital medium, and all of which will contribute to your assessed lifestream-blog. In addition, you will contribute to a music playlist in each block. You will also produce a final assignment: the 'digital essay'.

Block 1: Cyberculture (week 1-3)

This first block will consider some of the over-arching narratives within popular culture which have driven our understanding of digital culture and its relation to education. It will begin with a course 'cyberculture film festival' and accompanying tutorials in Togethertube, connecting these with readings which familiarise you with some orienting theories of cyberculture. It will then link these to the notion of 'technology enhanced learning', considering how such representation continues to inform our understanding of the nature of education online. You will be tasked with writing a brief 'film review' during the festival, and at the end of the block, you will produce an online representation of the themes covered, using visual methods only. This might be in the form of a composite image, a YouTube video, a Flickr photostream or some other medium of your own invention. This artefact should be reviewable by peers and must feed into your assessed lifestream-blog (more about this below, in 'Assessment').

Block 2: Community culture (week 4-7)

This second block will consider the concept of online community and will look at digital ethnography as a research method. Readings will be provided on both. The main work of this block will involve you in working alone to conduct a micro virtual ethnography of a massive open online course (MOOC). There is information on the course web site about the ethical and practical issues you should take into account in doing this. You will end your work in the block by creating an ethnographic snapshot of this community using an online medium of your choice. This must also feed into the assessed lifestream-blog.

Block 3: Algorithmic culture (week 8-10)

This block will look at the ways in which large quantities of digital data, and the algorithms that operate across it, are informing contemporary culture within and beyond educational contexts. Ted Striphas defines 'algorithmic culture' as: 'the ways in which computers, running complex mathematical formulae, engage in what's often considered to be the traditional work of culture: the sorting, classifying, and hierarchizing of people, places, objects, and ideas.'¹ In this block we will consider this idea and its implications for digital education. During the block, you will produce an account of 'algorithmic play', and feed this into your lifestream blog. You will also write a final blog post describing how your lifestream may have been influenced by algorithmic processes.

Final 2 weeks: the 'digital essay' assignment

The final 2 weeks of the course will be devoted to developing and submitting your final assignment: the digital essay (see below for further details). You will work independently on this task, with the opportunity for an individual tutorial with your tutor.

¹ <https://medium.com/futurists-views/algorithmic-culture-culture-now-has-two-audiences-people-and-machines-2bdaa404f643>

Week by week plan

Block 1: Cyberculture

	activity	medium	mode	assessment
week 1: 17 th September <i>cybercultures</i>	readings film festival tutorial	Togethertube tweeting	synchronous Togethertube chat Twitter exchanges	lifestream-blog
week 2: 24 th September <i>cybercultures</i>	readings film festival tutorial blog task: film review	Togethertube tweeting peer feedback on blogs	synchronous Togethertube chat Twitter exchanges peer blog commentary	lifestream-blog
week 3: 1 st October <i>cybercultures</i>	readings visual artefact creation	Google hangout visual environment of choice	synchronous hangout tutorial blog commentary	lifestream-blog

Block 2: Community culture

	activity	medium	mode	assessment
week 4: 8 th October <i>community culture</i>	readings brainstorming on blogs	blogging peer feedback on blogs	peer blog commentary	lifestream-blog
week 5: 15 th October <i>community culture - micro-ethnography</i>	researching	MOOC of choice Google hangout	MOOC and blog synchronous hangout tutorial	lifestream-blog
week 6: 22 nd October <i>community culture - micro-ethnography</i>	researching	MOOC of choice	MOOC and blog	lifestream-blog
week 7: 29 th October <i>community culture - micro-ethnography</i>	'writing-up' the ethnography peer feedback	reporting environment of choice various environments	working alone providing and receiving peer feedback in blogs	lifestream-blog

Block 3: Algorithmic culture

	activity	medium	mode	assessment
week 8: 5 th November <i>algorithmic culture</i>	readings algorithmic play	Social media/digital space of choice	lifestream blog peer blog commentary	lifestream-blog
week 9: 12 th November <i>algorithmic culture</i>	readings	Lifestream and blog	lifestream blog peer blog commentary	lifestream-blog
Week 10: 19 th November <i>algorithmic culture</i>	readings blog task: algorithms and the lifestream	Google hangout	synchronous hangout tutorial peer blog commentary	

Assignment preparation

	activity	medium	mode	assessment
weeks 11-12: 26 th November and 3 rd December <i>final assignment</i>	final assignment: developing and submitting the digital essay	To be negotiated with tutor	seeking peer feedback on ideas individual hangout tutorials offered	digital essay

Assessment

The course is assessed in two ways:

1. a public lifestream-blog and written summary (50%)
2. a digital essay (50%)

1. The lifestream-blog (50%)

The first part of the assessment is the lifestream-blog, which you will set up and create over the first 10 weeks of the course. A 'lifestream' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lifestreaming>) is a means whereby an individual's tweets, blog postings, image postings, YouTube favourites, and other 'feeds' can be pulled together into a single blog stream. For this course, you will be supported in setting up and maintaining a lifestream-blog in WordPress, which will bring together all the digital fragments of knowledge generated by your studies. The film review and visual artefact (block 1), the micro-ethnography (block 2), as well as the 'algorithmic play' and final blog task (block 3) will feed into this, as will your music playlist suggestions, other content you choose to include in the stream, and peer comments.

The lifestream is designed to demonstrate your engagement with the academic themes and content of the course – you are not expected to include personal and social content. If you wish to include a feed which is both social *and* course-related (a Facebook status update, for example), you will be able to edit the purely social 'events' out of the lifestream-blog as you go along, as you wish, keeping in mind that the course is public. The detail of how to do this is given below, in the 'Technologies' section.

You will be expected to maintain the lifestream-blog from week one to week ten of the course. Each week you will write a brief (250-word maximum) synthesis of the week's lifestream-blog content within your blog. You will be able to edit the content of the stream before you submit it for assessment at the end of week 10.

What is a lifestream?

A lifestream (or 'presence stream') is an aggregation of user-created or collected content from various web services and tools, organised chronologically like a weblog. The web site at <http://lifestreamblog.com/> provides an excellent resource for understanding more about lifestreaming – start with <http://lifestreamblog.com/about/>.

As you'll see from that site, there are many lifestreaming services freely available on the web. However, because we are using our lifestream for assessment purposes on this course, we have set up individual, centrally-hosted WordPress blogs, within which you will create and present your lifestream. Your blog space within the course will therefore consist both of blog posts you make, and feeds that you decide to pull into it automatically. For this reason, we are calling it a 'lifestream-blog', rather than just a 'blog'. To create the automatic lifestream updates within your WordPress blog, we will be using the service 'If This Then That' (<https://ifttt.com/>). Full technical guidance is given on this below. For those to whom lifestreaming is new, you might find it a bit of a fiddle at first, but you will soon be able to make sense of it, and we will give you all the support you need.

Why are we doing this?

There are several reasons why we are using lifestreaming to assess this course, rather than just an ordinary blog:

- to encourage you to create and collect content in a variety of media and styles
- to emphasise visuality, multimodality and digital volatility
- to give you the experience of using a range of services and environments for learning and reflection
- to challenge you to create and manage a coherent presence from a ‘mashup’ of sources.

What is expected

There is more on this in the assessment criteria but, in brief, your lifestream-blog is expected to have three broad elements:

1. It should demonstrate regular feeding of content – evidence of new material every day or so – links, blog postings, tweets etc. This will happen automatically once the lifestream is set up, but the amount of content will reflect your level of activity on the wider internet (though we should stress again that you will be able to edit the lifestream as you go along – it is *not* intended to include all your personal and social uses of the web).
2. In addition, we ask you to make a blog posting at the end of every week which reflections upon the lifestream-blog content for that week, and provides explanations for why content was added. This does not have to be long, and shouldn't be more than 250 words, but it should itself form part of your WordPress lifestream-blog. Rather than reflecting directly on the course content (as you did in IDEL, for example), **the purpose of these weekly postings is to synthesise, review, interpret and explain the content of your lifestream.** It is expected that each summary post will contain references to the content from that week.
3. You must also submit each of the tasks from the three blocks of the course: the film review and visual artefact (block 1), the micro-ethnography (block 2), as well as the ‘algorithmic play’ and final blog task (block 3). You will also nominate a song for a course playlist during each block, as a structured blog task. Your lifestream-blog should end on 25th November 2018.

Important tip: You will want your lifestream-blog content to be as demonstrative of your engagement with the course as it possibly can be. For this reason, try always to get in the habit of adding metadata wherever possible to links, photos and so on, in the form of commentary, description or whatever is available, and ensure that you include this within your posts in WordPress (see below). These will greatly enrich the lifestream, and allow you to explain why the content is relevant to your engagement with the course.

In addition, the style of the lifestream-blog is intended to be different to more traditional blogging – we're not looking for lengthy reflective writing, but rather a focus on feeds (see below) accompanied by shorter posts that critically engage with the course themes. Shorter posts are also likely to attract more comments from peers.

Being public

By this point on the programme you will all have experienced blogging for assessment in ‘An introduction to digital environments’ and possibly other courses. One of the key differences of the assessed lifestream-blog for this course is that, unlike the default in IDEL, anything in your lifestream-blog is publicly viewable on the web. In practice your audience is likely primarily to be your tutors and the other students on the course, but you may find your work gets attention from a wider group at some point during the course – this has happened

in a small-scale way in all previous course runs. We encourage you to be reflective about how you create your public presence, and we recognise that this will be different for everyone – however, please ensure your lifestream-blog is clearly visible to peers and tutors. We invite both your caution and your creativity as you approach what may feel like quite a different sort of learning experience. And please talk to your tutor about any concerns or questions you have.

At different times across the course it is quite likely that you will want to make use of content from the web, perhaps in the creation of your visual artefact or perhaps within blog posts. While we fully encourage you to do this, it is important to think about attribution and copyright when using content that someone else has created, for instance when it comes to making use of photographs or music as you try to put ideas over. This is particularly the case when we will be sharing all our work publicly. We encourage you to acknowledge other people's work where possible, and see this is a useful discussion topic throughout the course.

Assessment criteria

The following criteria apply and are consistent with our Postgraduate Common Marking Scheme as far as is possible.

Activity

Is the lifestream-blog well-maintained? Does it demonstrate regular and reasonably varied activity across a range of internet spaces, services and applications?

Reflection

Are the end-of-week summaries, and has metadata been used to contextualise lifestream items effectively? Do they demonstrate an appropriate level of insight into the process and content of the lifestream-blog and the course?

Knowledge and understanding

Is the lifestream-blog content indicative of a good level of engagement with the course themes and curriculum? Are the structured blog activities in place and are they of high quality in terms of analysis and creativity? Do the lifestream-blog weekly summaries provided give further evidence of depth of engagement?

For example, a lifestream-blog graded at 70% or above (an A), would meet the criteria in the following way:

Activity

Content is being fed into the lifestream-blog regularly – nearly every day – and this is demonstrated across the whole period of the course. The content in the lifestream-blog is drawn from a range of appropriate sources, and is consistently appropriate to the course content.

Reflection

The lifestream-blog includes 10 end-of-week summaries, each of which are well-written, appropriately reflective and help build a genuine sense of engagement with the lifestream-blog and the course process. Feed items in the lifestream-blog include metadata content that effectively and insightfully explains the relevance of the content.

Knowledge and understanding

All lifestream-blog content is demonstrative of a very high level of engagement with the course themes. The structured blog tasks are complete and are scholarly and imaginatively presented. The lifestream-blog summaries and metadata are consistent with a high level of scholarly engagement with the course curriculum.

2. The digital essay (50%)

You are required to submit an essay on an aspect of the course content defined by yourself. **You must present this digitally.** Similar to the opportunities for assignment submission for IDEL, this might be a web essay, a video, an animation, and so on. In other words, we are using the term 'essay' very broadly. The idea is that you explore the possibilities presented by digital, networked media for representing formal academic knowledge. You should agree the topic, medium and any additional assessment criteria (up to three – see below) for your essay with your course tutor before embarking on it.

You should choose a medium which is most suitable to your own levels of technical ability. For example, if you are not able to, or have no interest in, making a video or doing something in Prezi, you might build a simple hypertext essay using a free wiki like PBworks or free web building sites like Weebly. **Technical prowess is not formally assessed – we are rather looking for imaginative and rigorous ways of presenting your academic work online.**

Please note that, while we welcome assignments which reflect the instability of digital texts and ways of working, assessment regulations require that **at least a version of the assignment is stable enough to be preserved for several months beyond the end of the course.** Please speak to your tutors about this if you have any doubts.

Assessment criteria

The core criteria for assessment are as follows.

Knowledge and understanding of concepts

Does the digital essay show a critical engagement with the content of the course? Does it demonstrate breadth of understanding of the concepts and theories covered?

Knowledge and use of the literature

Have the relevant key references been used? Have other relevant sources been drawn on and coherently integrated into the analysis? Is a critical and creative stance taken toward the new kinds of literatures which exist on the web?

Constructing academic discourse

Is the assignment produced with careful attention to the exposition of ideas through the chosen representational form of the work? Does it use digital media in an effective and appropriate way? Is it scholarly in its approach to topic and form?

You are also invited to nominate up to three of your own criteria in addition to these, which should be appropriate to the particular medium and topic you have chosen. You should discuss these with your course tutor before embarking on the assignment. Note that additional criteria are not intended to provide additional marks. Rather, they allow you to receive specific feedback on particular aspects of your digital essay not covered in the criteria above.

Submission dates

Your lifestream-blog should end by **the end of week 10** of the course, **Sunday 25th November 2018**. You must submit a link to your lifestream-blog in Moodle.

Your assignment should be submitted by **the end of week 12** of the course, **Sunday 9th December 2018**. You should submit it by venturing into Moodle and posting instructions as to how to access it using the assignments dropbox. We are using Moodle to do this so that we have a clear record of the assignment submission which is accessible by our external examiner. We will also collate all the assignments together and provide links to them, where possible, from within the EDC Wordpress site.

Technologies: what you need to know

Introduction

Education and Digital Cultures works differently from other courses on the MSc in Digital Education. The reason for this is that we are committed on this course to maintaining a public, open presence on the web. Virtual Learning Environments like Moodle, and the majority of our programme discussion, blog and wiki spaces have all been designed to provide safe and private spaces for course participants and course content. This course, because it is exploring the nature of digital culture and more open modes of production and exchange, has a different ethos. Course materials (with the exception of e-reserve materials, for copyright reasons) are publicly available on the course web site at:

<http://edc18.education.ed.ac.uk>

This is the main course space. It is built on the Wordpress blogging platform, and contains:

- all course materials, assessment information, tutor allocations, announcements, aggregated comments and tweets from the course, and links to readings
- a link to a WordPress blog for each course participant which will become your lifestream-blog; the content of this will account for 50% of the final mark for the course.

At the very start of the course, you'll receive an email with details of your course site account. When you log in, you'll have access to your WordPress site – instructions for getting started are below.

Other core tools and environments we will use on the course include:

- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/>
- Google hangouts: <https://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/>
- Togethertube: <https://togethertube.com/>

Please read the sections below for detailed information about the technical landscape of the course. This is broken down by activity. Some of the technologies on this course may be new to you, so if you have questions at any time, please get in touch with your tutor.

Setting up the lifestream-blog in WordPress

You will receive an email at the beginning of the semester (via your student email address) welcoming you to your blog. The email will tell you your blog name, and give you a direct link to it.

For the lifestream-blog, we'll be using 'If This Then That' (<https://ifttt.com/>), for which you will need your WordPress blog details. Here's how to set up your IFTTT account, and create a feed for your blog:

1. Go to the IFTTT site <https://ifttt.com/> and click 'Sign up'.
2. Supply an email and password. Then click 'Sign up'.
3. The welcome screen will offer you lots of different 'Applets', but we are going to skip this and get started making our own. An 'Applet' in IFTTT is a really simple and flexible way of setting up an automatic connection between your social media accounts, and we'll be using it specifically to create feeds for our WordPress blog.

4. Click on **'My Applets'** in the top menu, and then the **'New Applet'** button. This will take you to the 'Applet Maker' page.
5. You may recognise the phrase 'If This Then That' if you are familiar with programming. It is an example of a [conditional statement](#) which allows certain actions to happen if a particular condition is met. 'If this' specifies the condition, while 'then that' defines what will happen if the condition occurs. Our use of IFTTT will follow this kind of pattern: *if I am active in this particular social media service, then automatically post to my WordPress blog. So, the action will be the same each time (post to my blog), but we will need to set up conditions for each of the social media services you want to use* (e.g. Twitter, YouTube, Delicious etc). The example here will be: *if I send a tweet, automatically post to my WordPress blog.*
6. On the 'Applet Maker' screen you will see the **IfThisThenThat** statement, with the 'This' highlighted as a link. This means we are going to create the condition. Click 'This'

if this then that

7. On the next screen, you will see a long list of icons representing the possible trigger channels, from which you can create a feed. For this example, locate and click on the Twitter icon.



8. You will now be asked to activate your Twitter account. Click the activate button and provide your Twitter username and password in the pop-up box. Note that you only have to activate any social media account once, after that you can use it for multiple applets.

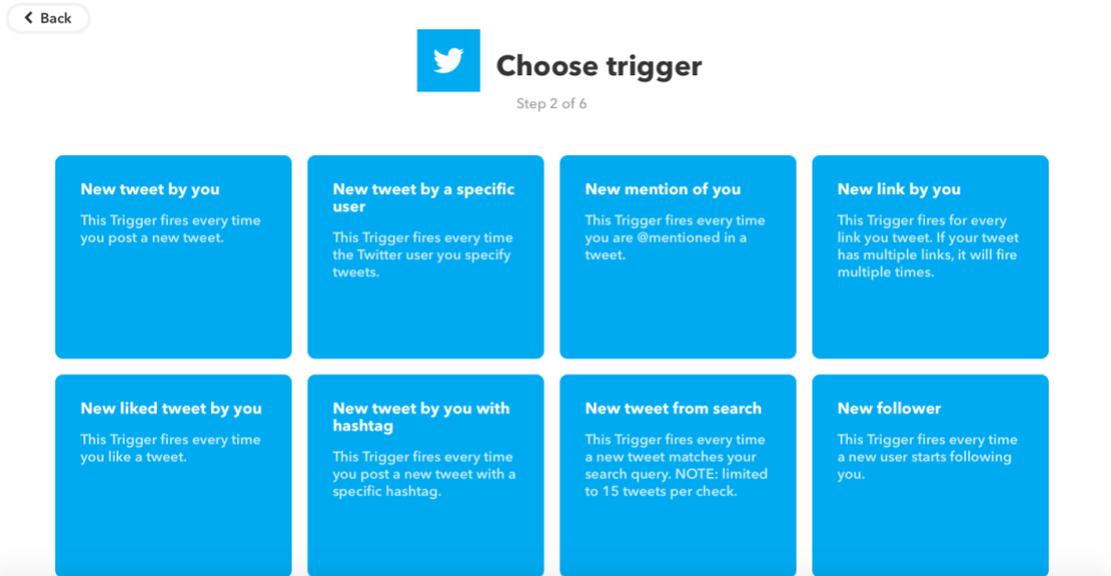
Please activate the Twitter Channel.

You'll only have to do this once.

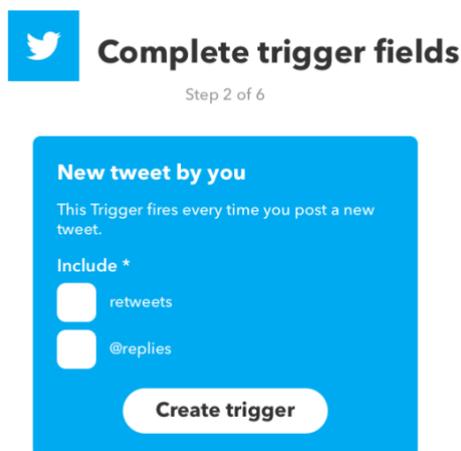


Activate

9. Click 'continue to the next step', where you will see a number of 'trigger' options. These are the activities in Twitter that you want to trigger a post in your WordPress blog.



10. You can only choose one trigger for each recipe, and for this example, click the first one 'New tweet by you'. This means that whenever you send a tweet, it will add a post to your WordPress blog. (Note: if you are already a regular Twitter user, you may want to create your IFTTT recipe with the condition 'New Tweet by you with hashtag', and use the course hashtag #mscedc. This will mean that your personal tweets do not get into the lifestream.)
11. Choose whether you want to include retweets and replies, then click 'create trigger'. We're half way there!



12. You will now see that we have completed the 'this' part (our condition), and replaced it with the Twitter trigger. Now click 'that' to complete the action part, which will be to create a post in your WordPress blog.

if  then  that

13. Just as in the step above, you will be presented with a long list of social media icons showing you all the potential actions you can set up. However, while you will be choosing lots of different triggers in setting up the various feeds for your lifestream,

you will always choose the same action: **post to your WordPress blog**. This step will therefore be the same for every recipe you create. Look through the list of icons and click WordPress

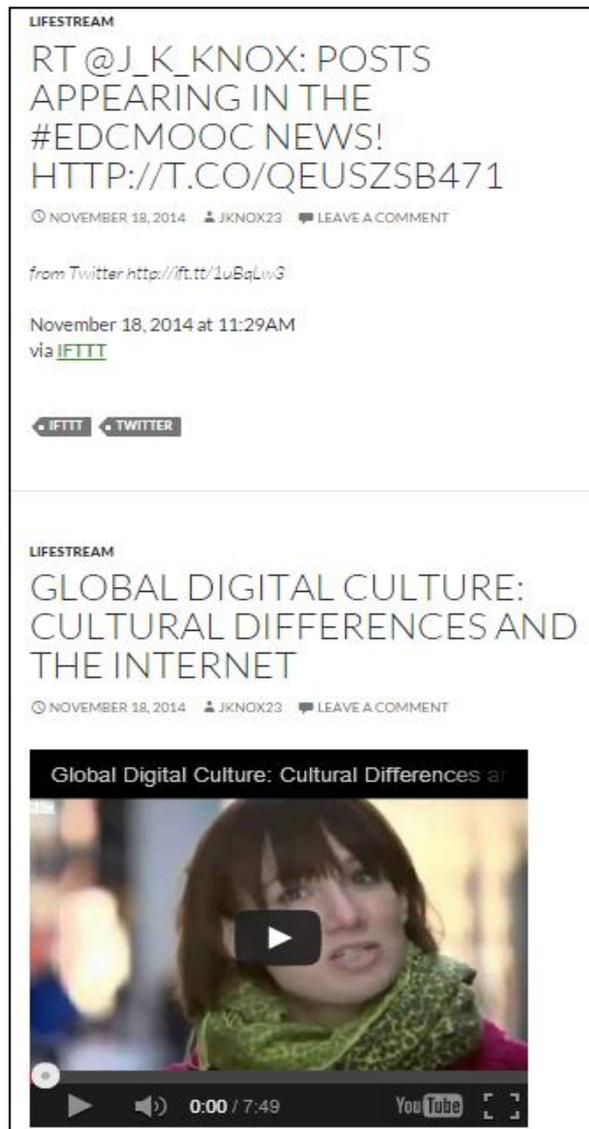


14. Click the button to activate your account, have your login details from the EDC email handy. Remember, you will only need to activate your WordPress account the first time. In the pop-up window, add your blog URL, username, and password. Click 'done'.
15. Click 'continue to the next step', where you can choose the type of action



16. Choose the first option here 'create a post'. (You could experiment with 'create a photo post' here, but remember that you will have to supply a URL, and that it will be the same image each time the recipe triggers).
17. The next screen shows a number of action fields that you can customise. While this might look a little complicated, the default settings are perfectly adequate, and most of the time you just need to click the 'create action' at the bottom of the page. One edit you might want to make, is to specify the 'category' field as 'Lifestream'. This will appear above the entry in your WordPress blog and differentiate it from any written posts you do, such as your weekly summaries.
18. After you have clicked 'create action', you will be at the final step, and your IfThisThenThat statement will be completed. **Make sure to click the 'finish' button to finish and save your recipe.**

Below is an example of what your resulting lifestream-blog might look like. The top entry shows the result of the IFTTT Twitter recipe we have just created, while underneath you will see what a YouTube IFTTT recipe will look like.



Stopping your lifestream-blog

As noted above, your lifestream-blog should **end on the 25th of November 2018**. As the recipes you will have set up in IFTTT will be automatic, you will need to stop them posting to WordPress after this date. When you want to stop your lifestream-blog, you will need to go to your 'My Applets' page in IFTTT and turn off each of your recipes. The 'on/off' button is at the bottom of each of your recipes. Once turned off, your recipes will turn grey to show that they are no longer operating. Note: **you don't have to necessarily stop all of your feeds, however only those from before the deadline will be considered for the assessment.**

Suggested lifestream-blog content

Now that you know how IFTTT works, here is some guidance about the kinds of content we recommend you incorporate. **It is a requirement of the course that all of the structured blog tasks are included in the lifestream-blog (see 'Assessment' section above).** However, you will also want to explore some of the many other potential feeds that can be created with IFTTT. The following are a few ideas to help you to get started, but we also encourage you to be creative about the kinds of feeds you add.

Blogging in WordPress

As well as holding your lifestream-blog, your WordPress blog will also function as your main blogging space for the course. Blogging will be important not only for those times when you want to write a longer or more narrative piece than Twitter or other media will allow, but also if you need to bring in content not otherwise available to your lifestream – you could do this by copying and pasting text, uploading images or screenshots and so on.

Of course, this won't require the use of IFTTT, and the features within WordPress will allow you to create and add any number of blog posts, with lots of different media content. Remember to make any posts for this course public.

There is nothing to stop you importing posts from other blogs in to your lifestream-blog as well, if they are relevant to the course, but the bulk of your blogging for this course should be done in WordPress.

Note: we expect a range of different feeds to be the core focus of your lifestream, with more traditional 'blog writing' to support them. This is where the lifestream differs from the IDEL blog – in EDC we are not expecting long, reflective posts in your lifestream.

Twitter

We will be using Twitter quite a lot in the course as we explore representations of digital culture and participate in 'tweetstorms', so you will almost certainly want to feed your contributions to these into your lifestream-blog. You may also wish to use Twitter apart from this to post brief thoughts, links or other material. See the guide above for adding a Twitter IFTTT recipe to your lifestream-blog.

Flickr and Instagram

Flickr is a popular photo sharing web site, and might be useful if you want to create a visual component to your lifestream-blog. If you don't have a Flickr account, you can set one up at <http://www.flickr.com/>. Alternatively, you could set up an IFTTT recipe with **Instagram**.

You will need to activate your Flickr or Instagram account in IFTTT, and you can create recipes that trigger when you add a new image or favourite an existing one, and embed this image in the resulting WordPress post. As noted in the assessment section above, it is worthwhile annotating your images to explain why it is that you are adding them to your lifestream-blog, and how they connect with the subject matter of the course. You can do this simply by editing and adding text to the post in WordPress.

YouTube and Vimeo

Video sharing sites may provide you with useful resources around the themes of digital cultures, or indeed space to host your own video creations. YouTube might therefore provide a useful feed for your lifestream-blog, and there are triggers in IFTTT for favouriting and uploading YouTube videos. As an addition or an alternative, you could also activate your Vimeo account in IFTTT.

As noted above, adding comments to contextualise your YouTube additions would provide important additional information about why they are relevant to your lifestream, and this can be done within the resulting WordPress post.

Pocket, Delicious or Diigo

Many of you will have used bookmarking tools such as delicious (<https://del.icio.us>), Pocket (<https://getpocket.com/>), or Diigo (<https://www.diigo.com/>) already in one or more of your courses on the MSc. Bookmarking tools give you a way to capture, tag and annotate links to sites of interest or relevance. With these tools, you can specify a tag you want to use, and

only links using that tag will be added to your lifestream-blog. This means you could devise a tag specifically for the Education and Digital Culture course, and keep your lifestream-blog links separate from your other bookmarks.

Facebook

You may wish to include your Facebook status update feeds, and there are a range of trigger options to explore in IFTTT. You may wish to keep your more social or personal updates out of the lifestream-blog, so if so, be careful about which trigger you choose. **As your lifestream is simply a collection of WordPress blog posts, you can always delete individual entries within WordPress if you find that you want to remove any feed item.**

Comments

Comments on your own or others' WordPress postings could be captured as an RSS feed, which can be used as a trigger in IFTTT. Everyone's WordPress site will have a feed for their comments, and the format is this: <http://example.com/comments/feed/>. Just replace 'example.com' with the blog you want to get comments from, and use that URL with the RSS trigger in IFTTT. **Commenting on each other's blogs is a really important part of the course, so you will certainly want to make sure your own comments are included in the lifestream-blog, in order that they can count toward your final mark.**

Note on RSS (Really Simple Syndication): the RSS trigger is a great way of adding extra feeds in IFTTT that are not formally supported.

You have probably seen the RSS feed symbol in a number of places on the web – it usually looks like this:



When you see this, or a link which invites you to 'subscribe' via RSS, on one of your web services, it means you can probably add it to the RSS trigger in IFTTT. Right click on the RSS subscription link or image and copy the link.

Remember that the lifestream is meant to be a collection of content that *you* have created or collected, so don't add subscriptions to just anything – only to sites and tools you have an account with and are creating content for.

You can learn more about RSS from the RSS in Plain English video - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0klgLSxGsU>

The non-digital. There is a whole world of 'stuff' out there – how can you get some of it into your lifestream? (hint – record it, photograph it, scan it, draw it, describe it...)

Other course environments: Twitter, Togethertube, Google hangouts

Twitter

We will use Twitter throughout the course for general discussion and 'ambient collegiality'. For this activities you will need a Twitter account. The *Technologies Handbook* explains how to create one.

The hashtag for the course is **#mscedc**.

We recommend you install a program like Tweetdeck (<http://tweetdeck.com/>), which has a more sophisticated interface and lets you sort tweets into columns according to their hashtags. There is guidance in the *Technologies Handbook* about setting up Tweetdeck, and subscribing to hashtags.

Once you're set up, simply post thoughts to Twitter (making sure your tweets are public) and include the hashtag #mscedc somewhere in each tweet. For example:

#mscedc I would have taken the blue pill!

Togethertube

As part of our opening 'film festival' we will be using a synchronous chat environment called "Togethertube" to create a tutorial space in which to discuss the film festival clips. This essentially wraps a text chat environment around a video (or series of videos), enabling people to watch and discuss a video in 'real time' with one another. We will post more detail about this on the course web site.

Google hangouts

Hangouts enable easy, free videoconferencing to take place. You will need a Google account to join the hangouts, so please set one up during welcome week, or week 1.

Suggested resources

In each of the course blocks, you will be working independently to on structured blog tasks. You should explore different ways of creating digital artefacts in response to these tasks, that can be fed in to your assessed lifestream. You will have considerable freedom in choosing how to respond to each of the blog tasks, and to use the methods and tools which suit you best. The following are suggestions only, intended to help you get started and find what you need.

For example, in completing these activities you might choose to do any of the following:

- create a composite digital image (block 1) (mount it in Flickr or elsewhere for commentary/lifestreaming)
- make a Flickr photostream with comments/description (<https://www.flickr.com>)
- make a Pinterest board (<http://www.pinterest.com>)
- make a Pearltrees collection (<http://www.pearltrees.com>)
- make a YouTube video or response video (www.youtube.com)
- create a slide show on Slideshare (<http://www.slideshare.net>)
- create a multimodal poster in Glogster (www.glogster.com)
- make a presentation in Prezi (www.prezi.com)
- blog it (block 2), photoblog or videoblog it (block 1)
- storytell it (see resources below)

You will have other ideas and favoured applications of your own – use whatever works best, just bear in mind that the artefact you create should feed in to your lifestream-blog in some way. In terms of actual applications, the following list of suggestions may be useful:

Image editing and creation software

Online (browser-based):

Pixlr: <http://www.pixlr.com/>

PicMonkey: <http://www.picmonkey.com/>

Google + creative kit:

http://support.google.com/plus/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1053729&p=picnik_creative_kit

Queezy: <http://www.queezy.com/>

Mac:

ArtRage: <http://www.artrage.com/artragedemo.html> (scroll down for free 'starter' version)

Paintbrush: <http://paintbrush.sourceforge.net/>

Image Tricks: <http://www.belightsoft.com/products/imagetricks/overview.php>

Seashore: http://seashore.sourceforge.net/The_Seashore_Project/About.html (based on GIMP)

Windows:

ArtRage: <http://www.artrage.com/artragedemo.html> (scroll down for free 'starter' version)

Paint.NET - <http://www.getpaint.net/>

Photoscape - <http://www.photoscape.org/ps/main/index.php>

GIMP - <http://www.gimp.org/> (open source, very steep learning curve, but a powerful tool)

Digital Storytelling resources

Voicethread: <http://voicethread.com>

Steller: <https://steller.co/> (mobile)

Pixton: <http://pixton.com/uk/>

Issuu: <http://issuu.com/>

Storybird: <http://storybird.com/>

Weebly: <http://www.weebly.com/>

Animoto: <http://animoto.com/>

Other possibly useful resources:

Wordle: <http://www.wordle.net/>

Bubbl.us: <http://bubbl.us/>

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Good luck with your studies, and we look forward to seeing you online!