Assignment 3: Research Exploration

This assignment has multiple components as described below. All components must be handed in for this assignment to be considered complete and to make it eligible for grading. The objectives of this assignment are
1) to take you through an exploratory process of critical and creative thinking about a theory in relation to a subject of study and research;
2) to start up the concrete conceptualization for potential research topics for your final paper.

Stage One: Declaration of Interest

Choose an information/communication technology and a theoretical framework from the course (for theoretical frameworks, look back at Assignment 2 guide) that you are interested in exploring and researching for your final paper. Write 1-3 sentences that tell the reader what your selected technology and theory are and why you are interested in them. Max 50 words. Include a word count.

What do we mean by technology?
For the purpose of this assignment, you may choose any ICT within the broad parameters we have established for communication media including oral/aural (e.g. conversation or song), visual (e.g. television, comic book, all print media...), physical (e.g. dance, rituals...), electronic (e.g. internet, chatrooms...). You may select a technological device (e.g. radio, video, typewriter, surveillance cameras, newspapers, PAs...) OR a type of material/content produced by an ICT (e.g. graffiti, comic books, blogs, rap music, radio talk shows, sports trading cards, dance hall music, video art, surrealist film, 24-hr news channels, newspaper op-eds...) OR a process or infrastructure related to ICTs (e.g. electronic voting, intranet, virtual workplaces…).

Stage Two: Brainstorm

The central objective of this step is to think as openly and creatively as possible about the potential **impacts**, **implications**, **influences** or **consequences** of your selected ICT. For this step, you will develop **a list of 10-15 (min-max) items in point form or short sentences**. Each item on the list articulates a potential impact, implication, influence or consequence. Identify each item (you may simply put a label beside or add short-hand explanatory notes in an adjacent column) in terms of **1-2 dimensions/aspects in studying/analyzing technology** as in the following*:
- Political: related to forms of political power and discourse.
- Psychological: related to individual attitudes, perceptions and personalities
- Cultural: related to specific collective formations, processes and expressions
- Aesthetic: related to artistic forms, processes, genres, expressions
- Philosophical/Spiritual/Metaphysical: related to structures of belief and their transformation
- Environmental: related to human environments (natural, built, social)
- Physical: related to human corporeal body
  * Please note that there are no rigid boundaries separating these dimensions. These are broad categories that overlap and intersect.

To do this step, give yourself an uninterrupted 20-30 minutes. Allow yourself to recall any course material (including lectures, tutorial discussions, readings – review them before starting this part), any outside reading or research you may have done, your own direct observations, experience and/or imagination. The following steps outline one way of approaching this part:

1- Write down in short form, on a scratch paper and without stopping for 10-15 minutes, any impact, influence, implication or consequence that comes to your mind (try to time yourself so you can stay focused). At this stage the order of items is not important. Think openly. Let your thoughts flow without censoring yourself. Write as quickly as you can. Do not stop to correct spelling or add explanation, etc.

2- Once you have generated this preliminary list, go over it, see if there are any overlaps, any items that can be combined, any that are redundant, any that need more clarification and fleshing out, etc. If you have generated more items than required for this step of the assignment, then make a selection by prioritizing them in the order in which they interest you personally.

3- Identify each item by 1-2 aspects/dimensions as listed above (it may be helpful to write a brief note for yourself that explains why you think the item is related to the 1-2 aspects/dimensions you have identified it with).

4- Now put your list in a more organized presentation on a clean sheet of paper. You may write it by hand (in pen, on un-ruled 8.5x11 paper, and if your hand-writing is legible) or type it into your word processor. This is what you will submit as part of your assignment.

Stage Three: Conceptual Map
There are three objectives in this part:
1) to identify the key concepts and arguments in your selected theory in a manner more visual and open than what you did in the abstract assignment;
2) to think creatively and openly about the implications of this theory in the study of your selected technology;
3) to find connections between these theoretical concepts/arguments and the impacts/influences/implications/consequences of your selected technology as you've listed in the Brainstorm stage.

Before you start your concept map, review the original article and any notes you may have in relation to it. One way to approach the conceptual map is as follows.

1- Write in the center of a sheet of paper the key thesis of the theory (you may want to review your own abstract in assignment 2 or find and read other abstracts of this theory). Around it write in point form or short sentences the major and minor concepts and/or sub-arguments that go into the making of this thesis (you may want to put these in bubbles or boxes that would allow easy visual recognition). Connect these concepts and sub-arguments with lines and arrows to the central thesis and/or to one another. You may use different colour pens to indicate how important the concept/argument is in relation to the central thesis of the theory.

2- Think of the implications or applications of the central thesis of the theory and its concepts/sub-arguments in relation to your selected technology. Write these down in point form or short sentences (you may want to put these in bubbles or boxes that would allow easy visual recognition) that branch off from and are plotted around the central thesis and/or concept/sub-argument.

3- Drawing from the list you generated in the Brainstorm stage, try to plot as many items from this list as you can in relation to the bubbles/boxes in steps 1 and 2 above. **You must include at least 3 items from your brainstorm list in this conceptual map.**

4- Review your conceptual map and, if needed, transfer it onto a clean sheet of paper to make it more organized and legible. This is what you will hand in. It may be hand-written or typewritten. You may use a larger sheet of paper for the map if necessary, but please fold it down to 8.5x11 size before you include it in your package.

If you have never done a concept map before (or even if you have), consult the following for more info on concept maps and their uses and approaches:
    http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concept_mapping (very good overview)
    http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/map_ho.html (very good explanation on
        various uses and approaches, and a few examples)
    http://www.udel.edu/chem/white/teaching/ConceptMap.html (a particular approach and some
        practical tips)

Stage Four: Expository Paragraphs and Research Questions
The objective of this stage is to articulate, now with more specificity, a potential research area/topic in relation to your selected theory and technology.

Take 2 impacts/influences/implications/consequences that you have plotted onto your conceptual map. Choose the ones that interest you the most. Write one paragraph (100-150 words min-max, include word count) for each of these where you expand on the relations between the theory and the technological impact/influence/implication/consequence. Your conceptual map should help you and be reflected in these paragraphs. Here you should also make clear the larger dimensional significance of these relations (note Stage 2 for these).

Follow each paragraph with 3-5 questions that indicate directions for further thinking and research (min-max 15-30 words each, not to be included in the word count for the paragraph above). These must be open-ended questions (that cannot simply be answered with Yes/No).

Assignment Submission
- All four stages must be completed and handed in on paper. All pieces must be stapled together as one package. NO FOLDERS, BINDERS, ETC. Think of and include an ORIGINAL title for your assignment, but DO NOT INCLUDE A TITLE PAGE. Be sure to have your name and tutorial number on the top sheet.
- Any external sources you have used must be properly cited and referenced in the MLA style.
- Use as few sheets of paper as possible by including as many stages as possible on the same sheet while keeping them in order they are listed (max sheets: 4).
- Use 1" margins all around, 12 point Times or Times New Roman font (where typewritten), and 1.5 line space. Please stick to this formatting guideline.
- Due date: **24/NOV** at the beginning of lecture. Late submissions are subject to 10% deduction per day, or fraction thereof, including weekends.