Module Title: LIB5203

Module Code: Digital Culture and Society

Credit Value: 15

Level: 5

Pre-requisite modules:

Content Description

It was never supposed to be this way. Despite early hopes that the internet would bring about greater egalitarianism, democracy, and access to knowledge within a new kind of digital society, we are now living through the so-called 'culture wars' and a continuous 'infodemic'. From the weaponization of musical memes by white supremacist terrorists; to the algorithmic co-option of creative free labour; to the global spread of online conspiracy theory content, it is now clear that human society has not ascended to a new plane of enlightened consciousness via 'cyberspace' as some early web users imagined. Yet our present societal operating system is also characterised by remarkable online performances, collective acts of creativity, and passionate forms of cultural fandom that offer vivid insights into what it means to be human at the dawn of the artificial intelligence (AI) era.

In this course we will discuss a wide range of case studies and reflect on our own experiences of digital culture and society through a series of challenging questions. To what extent is social media a machine that we feed at the cost of our own lives (Klein 2023: 63 after Lilly Singh)? How should we deal with falsehoods, rumours, and political 'dog whistles' in the continuing climate of 'post-truth'? And in the age of influencers, who has the greatest influence on the future of digital culture and society?