Key concepts in the course will be risk and habits. We will consider risk as central to any rigorous understanding and practice of empowerment and freedom: risk, that is, as central to the experience of networks as public. We will consider habits as central to comprehending the impact of new media technologies: rather than focus on the “new” and the practices of first adapters, we will investigate the ways in which technologies matter most when they seem not to matter at all, when they have moved from new devices that we voluntary engage to nearly invisible ones that structure our daily actions.

Key topics will include: ways in which new media habits make possible something like communal action in the era of neoliberalism, how new media habituate us to the logic of update and the rise of big data, and how new media habits are further entrenching unquestioned habits of once-new but still-persistent old media. We will engage a series of case studies for reflecting on critical moments of contemporary new media.

This is course is intended to provide graduate students from a range of disciplines with an introduction to, and deeper engagement with, some of the major theoretical approaches to new media as an object of critical inquiry. The course will thus survey, and attempt to deepen our understandings of, emerging themes of inquiry gaining importance across a range of contemporary disciplinary formations including not only new media studies, but also science and technology studies, the history and philosophy of technology and science, and political philosophy and social theory.