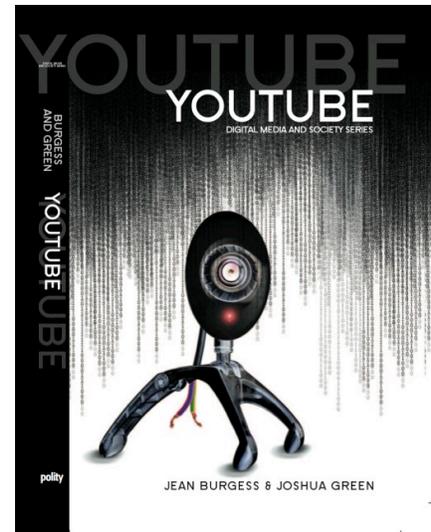


YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture

The three presentations in this session discuss work in the forthcoming Polity title *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (2009) by Joshua Green and Jean Burgess. In this timely and comprehensive introduction to how YouTube is being used and why it matters, Burgess and Green discuss the ways that it relates to wider transformations in culture, society and the economy. The book critically examines the public debates surrounding the site, demonstrating how it is central to struggles for authority and control in the new media environment.

Drawing on a range of theoretical sources and empirical research, the authors discuss how YouTube is being used by the media industries, by audiences and amateur producers, and by particular communities of interest, and the ways in which these uses challenge existing ideas about cultural 'production' and 'consumption'. Rich with concrete examples and featuring specially commissioned chapters by Henry Jenkins and John Hartley, the book is essential reading for anyone interested in the contemporary and future implications of online media. It will be particularly valuable for students and scholars in media, communication and cultural studies.



Jean Burgess: YouTube: A Short History of Competing Futures

YouTube is arguably the first mass-popular platform for user-created media content. It launched without knowing exactly what it was for, and it is this under-determination that explains the scale and diversity of its uses today. Although its underlying architecture is provided by YouTube, Inc, YouTube as a site of participatory culture has been co-created by the corporate, professional, everyday and organisational users who upload content to the website, and the audiences who engage around that content. Each of these participants approaches YouTube with their own, frequently conflicting, purposes and aims; and they have collectively if not collaboratively shaped YouTube as a social network and a popular archive. But at the same time, it is this openness, scale and diversity that are primarily responsible for the ongoing and escalating conflicts around the meanings, uses and possible futures of YouTube, as represented in recent controversies over corporate takeovers and copyright violations. This paper will discuss the relationship between YouTube's underdetermined origins; the complexity and diversity of its contemporary uses; and the implications of its uncertain futures for participatory culture.

Joshua Green: Mapping YouTube's Common Culture

Studying a dynamic cultural system like YouTube requires an approach that balances the range of participants and co-created media space. Determinations about what counts as content are difficult to make from the data alone, and require an examination of the videos. At scale, this poses a challenge to the methods of cultural and media studies. The methods of media and cultural studies are particularly adept at the close, richly contextualised analysis of the local and the specific, bringing this close analysis into dialogue with context, guided by and speaking back to cultural theory. But scale at the level which YouTube represents tests the limits of the explanatory power of even the best grounded or particularist accounts—among the millions of videos hosted at YouTube, it is relatively simple to find sufficient examples of whatever phenomenon the researcher wishes to investigate; it is much more difficult to use this approach to account for how YouTube itself works as a cultural system. Attempting to address the missing middle between large-scale quantitative analysis and the sensitivity of qualitative methods, the study discussed combined the close reading of media and cultural studies with a survey of 4,320 of the videos calculated to be ‘most popular’ on the website at a particular moment -- gathered between August and November 2007. This paper discusses the research approach and attendant challenges, as well as opportunities for understanding dynamic co-created cultural systems.

Henry Jenkins: What Happened before YouTube?

News coverage has depicted YouTube as an unprecedented expansion of grassroots creativity. This presentation will argue, however, that YouTube intervenes in a much larger history of participatory culture, offering new mechanisms for promotion and circulation of amateur media. Youtube emerged from the utopian fantasies of early cyber-advocates and from the decisions made by a range of different subcultural communities and interest groups to seek a shared rather than localized platform for distributing their content.