

Manlio Della Marca, Ph.D.
American Studies Initiative 2024-2025
Department of Linguistic and Cultural Studies
University of Modena and Reggio Emilia
manlio.dellamarca@unimore.it
www.manliodm.com

Explorations in Media Ecology and American Literature

What are the implications for humanities scholars of Marshall McLuhan's provocative notion that "**the medium is the message**"? How can we better understand the complex relationship between the rise of new media and the decline of elite culture in the context of what the American media theorist David Bolter has recently called "**the digital plenitude**"? Are there specific ways in which the disciplinary field of "**media ecology**" could be put in conversation with **literary and cultural studies** to generate new readings of both classic works of literature (such as Herman Melville's 1851 *Moby-Dick*) and contemporary ones (like Kristen Roupenian's "Cat Person," a short story, published in the *New Yorker* in December 2017, that rapidly went viral, becoming the most-read and most-shared piece of short fiction in the magazine's history)? These are some of the questions we will explore in this doctoral seminar. In addition, we will devote some time to discussing **how to integrate some of the critical methodologies covered in class into your research project.**

No previous knowledge of media theory or American literature is required, but students will be expected and encouraged to discuss, challenge, and agree or disagree with the assigned readings, the instructor, and each other. Seminar readings will be made available in electronic form. If you are interested in taking this seminar, **I would appreciate it if you could send me a short e-mail at manlio.dellamarca@unimore.it** so that I can get a sense of how many students will participate.