When I first signed up for this class, I was not sure to expect. I had no idea what a tactical media project, civic engagement project, or even participatory culture meant. However, what I did know was that I wanted to take a class that was different- I still needed to satisfy my continued writing requirement, but I did not want to do it by reading books and writing essays on them. For that reason, I decided to give this class a shot.

I began to take interest in the course material upon reading [Writing on the Wall](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/03/books/review/writing-on-the-wall-by-tom-standage.html?_r=0) by Tom Standage. I found it fascinating how ancient versions of participatory culture could be compared to modern social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. While I was always aware that these older systems existed, this book allowed me to see them in a whole new light and opened my eyes to the fact that the historic world is really not that different from the modern world.

Other readings, such as those of [Fuchs](http://www.amazon.com/Social-Media-A-Critical-Introduction/dp/1446257312) and [Wark](http://www.versobooks.com/books/1162-the-spectacle-of-disintegration), were slightly less orthodox and more confusing at first, but once I began to understand them, their messages were quite fascinating as well. I agree with Fuchs that social media takes advantage of its followers and uses them as a form of capital, whether or not the users see that as a negative. Wark also brought up a very good point- that our minds are shaped by the concept of the spectacle, which includes social media.

While these readings and their [related writing assignments](http://joshuambloom.weebly.com/) are not directly related to the [final project](http://www.jewishsecularism.weebly.com/), both helped me get a better understanding of what participatory culture is. My final project discussed the reasons as to why Jewish college students at American universities are becoming more secular or “losing their religion”. I realized that the way these students are raised has a large impact on their religiosity during their college years. How does this relate to participatory culture? One way that they learn the importance of their religion is through Hebrew school, a prime example of PC. Instructors pass down knowledge to their students, who then pass down knowledge to future generations. Socialization within Jewish families is also notable in that parents pass down knowledge to their children, who then pass the knowledge down to their children. However, each generation may choose to modify or “remix” the information that is passed down. They achieve this through cutting out some information and adding new information or opinions of their own. This relates to the concept of “remixing” discussed in Writing on the Wall- how the word one receives is based on what the sender chooses to convey, not what the original instructor believed.

My data collection for the project also revolved around the concept of participatory culture. In order for my survey to reach dozens of people, I shared it on Facebook, a website where thousands of individuals contribute to a “news feed” and also directly interact with one another through wall posts, comments, and direct messaging. Members of Facebook participated in my survey by responding to it—I would have no direct data had it not been for their contributions. Fuchs and Standage both explore Facebook as a means of participatory culture: Fuchs focuses on its exploitative side while Standage sees it as a modern adaptation of PC, which has existed for thousands of years.

An important thing that I learned from taking this class is that just because two people disagree on an issue does not make one person right. During our in-class discussions (another form of participatory culture), we have debated many hot-button issues, and sometimes I have noticed that the students politely disagreed. Rather than take one person’s side, I often agreed with certain aspects of each of their arguments. As a student, the best thing you can do is to be strong-minded while being open to hearing what other people have to say- otherwise, you can never grow as a person.

The most important thing that I have learned from this class is that participatory culture is how information is spread, how new things are learned, and how ideas come to fruition. When I complete this class, my knowledge of participatory culture will serve me well in my future endeavors. I now know that if there ever is an idea or belief that I feel strongly about, an issue that I want to tackle, I will spread my ideas via social media, blogging, or a campaign. While there are many things that I already do feel strongly about, I know that one day there will be something else that I think is truly worth fighting for. When that day comes, I will reflect on my final project and use that as a grounds for my campaign.