# DIGITAL MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE

*visitor seminar*

with visiting Associate Professor
## ALBERTO N. GARCIA
University of Navarra, Spain

**THURSDAY**
30 OCTOBER 2025

**TIME**
10AM – 12PM

**VENUE**
QUT KELVIN GROVE,
Z9-607 OR VIA ZOOM

# *Negotiating Representation in Contemporary Screen Media: Paratexts, Identity, and the Politics of Engagement*

Streaming and cinema have become persistent sites of cultural contention in public debates often described as "culture wars," yet this talk suggests that these conflicts stem less from ideology than from gaps between paratextual promises and their narrative integration. Promotional infrastructures—platform interfaces, trailers, and marketing campaigns—act as mediating frameworks that anticipate stories and can align them with social justice claims before audiences engage with the work. When marketed diversity is not matched by coherent diegetic grounding, it can generate interpretive instability and intensify audience polarisation.

The presentation introduces the concept of aesthetic accountability to describe this dynamic: the expectation that identity claims advanced in paratexts be narratively sustained through character agency, affective congruence, and processes of identification. Through close case analysis (e.g. The Little Mermaid, The Rings of Power) and mapping of paratexts and audience reception, the talk outlines three recurrent modes of failed aesthetic engagement: narrative friction, emotional dissonance, and ruptured identification. Rather than reducing polarized responses to ideological confrontation, I interpret them through the lens of aesthetic negotiation, showing how these controversies emerge from the entanglement between textual promises, platform mediation, and the interpretive practices of digital publics.

**Biography |  Alberto N. García** is an Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Navarra (Spain) and Visiting Fellow at QUT's Digital Media Research Centre. His research integrates cultural studies with cognitive approaches to media to examine how contemporary screen narratives shape identity, emotion, and social imagination within the current landscape of digital transformation and cultural controversy.

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