HAR 480
Media Culture + Theory

Spring 2008 Syllabus
Tuesdays, 6:15-8:45 pm, Peirce 218

Instructor: Prof. Mariam Ghani
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Office: Morton 204, hours Tuesday 2:30-4 pm or by appointment

Description:
This course will survey key benchmarks and documents in the history of media and new media technologies, while also introducing critical readings of 20th and 21st century media culture, both from the theoretical field of media studies and the creative works of artists, filmmakers and writers. The course is loosely divided into two halves. In the first half of the term, we will explore the history of how media technologies from print and photography through film, radio, television, video, the PC, video games and the Internet have been successively introduced, disseminated and commodified; how contemporary thinkers reacted to the mediations these technologies introduced to their experiences of society and culture; and how their re-mediations have in turn affected our expectations and experiences of older media. In the second half of the term, we will look at some visionary theories of proposed and possible forms, contents, and superstructures for media technologies, from the Turing test to the rhizome; branch into some of the most important critiques and complications posed to those theories; discover some of the earliest examples of their practical application in the works of pioneering new media artists, writers and educators; and investigate whether new developments in networked social software can be applied to realize, question, or transgress the theories we study.

Objectives:
Through their work in the class, students will:
gain an understanding of the parallel and intertwined development of media technology, social theory and cultural studies in the 20th and 21st century;
become familiar with key issues and ideas in media studies and new media theory;
acquire the vocabulary and skills to engage more critically with the media they encounter, whether as producers, consumers or users;
and encounter seminal models of possible artistic practices within media and new media networks.

Methods & Assignments:
The course objectives will be met through readings, presentations, discussions, lectures, screenings, research, projects and graded papers. Students will be required to complete readings every week; each student will also take at least one turn producing an in-class presentation that introduces, contextualizes and responds to one of the readings due that week. Presentations should be 5-10 minutes long and can include text, audio, visuals, networked resources, or any other elements that might deepen or complicate the discussion. Powerpoint presentations have often been used by former students in this course. At a minimum, you must outline the main points of the reading, do some basic

research on any references in the text which are unfamiliar to you, and present for group discussion any questions that you might have about the text or the issues it raises. Keep in mind that you are expected and encouraged to be critical, rather than passively accepting, readers; media theory is very much a work in progress. All students will be expected to participate in discussion of readings, screenings, artwork and other material covered in the class, and will also be required to contribute to the ongoing build-up of the class resource links on del.icio.us. Bookmark the page (del.icio.us/media_culture) and login information (login: media_culture / password: spring08) and add anything you find relevant to the class whenever you come across it online, making sure to tag it with your name. (If you have your own del.icio.us bookmarks set up already, you can just add them to the network of the Media Culture account.) You should plan on attending one of the Media Industry Forum events presented by the Department of Art, Music & Technology (I will forward you the schedule via email) as well as at least one exhibition in NYC that we will decide on and discuss as a class. Please note that you should bring the readings with you to class every week, as we will be discussing readings in detail and you will need to refer to the text.

One midterm paper (3-4 pages) and one final paper (5-7 pages) are also required. For both papers, you will be asked to submit a 2-3 sentence thesis for your paper to the instructor before starting your paper. We will then meet individually to discuss the basic idea and how you plan to expand it. Papers will be graded based on clarity of thesis, clarity of ideas, clarity of language*, strength of argument, structure*, grammar*, and degree to which they demonstrate your understanding and synthesis of concepts discussed in the course. You can also propose a creative project as a substitute for either the midterm or the final paper (but not both), with pre-approval from the instructor. Creative projects will be graded based on clarity of concept, relationship of concept to ideas discussed in the course, effectiveness of formal strategies, integration of content and form, and success of execution. Creative projects may be produced collaboratively, in which case each member of the collaborative group will be asked to submit an evaluation of each group member"s contribution when they hand in the project. Remember that when an assignment is produced collaboratively, all group members are expected to contribute equally to the planning, execution, and reporting of the work. If you produce a creative project, please be prepared to present it in class.

*Papers should follow MLA Style. Citations may be parenthetical or footnotes, but must be formatted consistently throughout the paper. When you paraphrase a text without changing any of its ideas, the reference MUST be cited. All papers must include a list of works cited in the proper MLA format at the end of the paper. Title pages are not required, but please do include a header stating your last name and current page number in the top right corner of every page. I grade style and grammar according to the classic Strunk and White rules. If you are having trouble with your writing assignments, please see me during my office hours, or take advantage of the tutoring available in the Writing and Communications Institute (drop-in hours at the Humanities Resource Center, M-Th, 3-5, Morton 210).

EVALUATION

Criteria:

GRADE	QUALITY	EXPLORATION	WORK	DISCUSSIONS	ATTENDANCE
A	**Outstanding**	Insightful, generous, energetic	Excellent form & content	Always prepared for class, makes intelligent & considered contributions	Always present, work in on time
B	**Good**	Inquisitive, engaged	Good form & content	Usually prepared for class, able to make interesting contributions	Always present, work in on time
C	**Average**	Just sufficient	Holds together, but unconvincing	Not always prepared, only able to make obligatory contributions	Misses some classes, work sometimes late
D	**Poor**	Limited, formulaic	Work thrown together just before class	Only makes very limited contributions	Excessive absences, work late & incomplete
F	**Unsatisfactory**	Virtually none	Virtually none	Makes almost no contribution	Absent most of the time

Grading:
Your grade will be based on: your reading presentation(s); your midterm paper or project; your final paper or project; and your class participation (your contributions to discussion and resource sharing).

Grade allocation is as follows:
final paper/project 40%
midterm paper/project 30%
presentations 20%
class participation 10%

Assignments will be graded on a scale of four. Your final course grade will be determined as follows: 4=A; 3.67=A-; 3.33=B+; 3=B; 2:67=B-; 2.33=C+; 2=C; 1.67=C-; 1.33=D+; 1=D; .67=D-; below this is an F. Once issued, all grades are final and will not be changed unless a student hands in a substantially revised paper. I reserve the right to determine borderline grades on a case-by-case basis. If you have questions about how grades are assigned in this course, please bring them up at the beginning of the semester, not the end.

Office hours/meetings:
Morton 204 is an office temporarily being shared by several Art + Technology faculty members. My office may be moved later in the semester. Until then, I will usually have office hours on Tuesdays from 2:30-4 pm. Please drop me a line if you are planning to stop by my office hours so that I can confirm that I will be in the office that day. You can always reach me by email if you have questions or concerns about the class. We will schedule individual meetings before midterm and final papers are due to discuss your paper/project proposals and your progress in the course. If you are having any difficulties in the course, please do not hesitate to ask for extra help.

Required texts:
Noah Wardrip-Fruin & Nick Montfort, eds. The New Media Reader (MIT Press, 2003) referred to in this syllabus as **NMR**
Other texts as distributed via email/Pipeline/online syllabus by the instructor

Recommended texts:
Online resources relevant to each week's lecture will be linked from the online version of the syllabus and/or supplemented by email distributions. A preliminary list of recommended readings for each week is already built into this syllabus. If you are presenting a reading, it's probably a good idea to take a look at the recommended texts/links for that week - often they speak to the historical context, contemporary reception, intertextual references, or possible critiques of a particular text. Also, it's always a good idea to look up the text and/or the author in Wikipedia, and see where that takes you (though you should keep in mind that Wikipedia is not always entirely accurate). For readings from the New Media Reader, the introductions and notes to the text are included in the required reading.

A list of additional resources for your papers and projects is linked from the online syllabus. Links compiled by the Fall 06 Media Culture class can be found at del.icio.us/MTC_fall06. I will be adding new resources that I discover during this semester to the bookmarks at del.icio.us/media_culture.

SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. I will do my best to notify you of changes a week in advance, either in class or through email. If you do not attend class, it is your responsibility to find out if changes to the schedule were made. When in doubt about an assignment, check your email or the online version of the syllabus for the most recent information. If we have to cancel a class for any reason, we will try to schedule a make-up session during the following week.

Tuesday, January 15th
Week 1: Intro & Overview
Introductions, course goals & expectations; assign reading presentations
Discussion: timelines and chronologies of media, technology & culture; producers, consumers, and "produsers"; how we experience and engage with different media technologies; del.icio.us setup.
Recommended for this week:
-Axel Bruns, "Notes on Produsers and Produsage" (2004 post to iDC list) as a PDF download
-Edward A. Shanken, "Historicizing Art & Technology: Towards Forging a Method & Firing a Canon" (commissioned for Rhizome"s 10th anniversary festival, 2006) as an MS Word download

Tuesday, January 22nd
Week 2: Reproduction and Remediation
Reading due:
1) Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935/36) on reserve in the library or online at Wikipedia
2) "Introduction: The Double Logic of Remediation" from Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin's *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (2000) as a PDF download from MIT Press online
Recommended for this week:
-John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* in the Stevens library
-Erkki Huhtamo, "From Kaleidescomaniac to Cybernerd: Towards an Archaeology of the Media" online at Stanford
Discussion: guiding themes; mediation and remediation; the Frankfurt School, Marxism and media theory; aura and the machine; industrialization and media technology; Dada, Futurism, Bauhaus

Tuesday, January 28th
Week 3: Text and Technotext
Reading due:
1) J. David Bolter, "Seeing and Writing" (1991) NMR pp 679-686 (only up to section "Diagrammatic Space") - also available as a MS Word download
2) N. Katherine Hayles, *Writing Machines* (2002) pp 19-33 as PDF download
Recommended for this week:
-Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies* (2006 edition)
-Marshall McLuhan, "The Gutenberg Galaxy" NMR pp 193-203
Discussion: orality, literacy and media "literacy"; media-specific analysis

Look/discuss: Lettrists, Oulipo, Burroughs, *A Humument* and *House of Leaves* (also on reserve in the library)

Tuesday, February 5th
Week 4: The "Industry"
Reading due:
1) David Bordwell & Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (5th ed., 1997), chapter 1, on reserve in the library or as a PDF download
2) Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (1944) **only up to the first ellipse** - online at marxists.org
3) Lev Manovich, "Cinema and Digital Media" (1996) pp 1-4 as a PDF download
Recommended for this week:
- Vivian Sobchack, "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic 'Presence'" (1994) on Pipeline
-Jaine M. Gaines, "Political Mimesis" in *Collecting Visible Evidence* (U of Minnesota, 1999) - in the library
-Jeffrey Shaw, "Movies after Film: The Digitally Expanded Cinema" in *New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative* (BFI, 2002) in the library
Screening: clips: Lumiere, Melies, Vertov, Sunset Boulevard, Rear Window, Day for Night, Peeping Tom/The Red Shoes, Videodrome
Discussion: The cinematic experience; self-reflexive media; montage in analog vs. electronic media
Guest Lecturer – Jay King

Tuesday, February 12th
Week 5: On Photography
Reading due:
1) Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1968), chapter 1 ("In Plato"s Cave") as a PDF download
2) William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (1992), pp 1-57, as a PDF download (including chapter notes)
Recommended for this week:
- Eastman House timeline of camera technology
- Susan Sontag, "Looking at War: Photography's View of Devastation and Death" (2002) online at the New Yorker
-Michael Starenko, "Sontag's On Photography at 20," Afterimage, March-April 1998, online at FindArticles
-Catalogue for the 2006 Met show On Photography: A Tribute to Susan Sontag
Look: WPA photographs, Arbus, police pictures @ SFMOMA, "decisive moments," American Memory project; screen Harun Farocki's Images of the World and the Inscription of War
Discussion: On photography, memory, evidence, the digital shift and the frozen moment

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Tuesday, February 19th
Monday class schedule - no class

Tuesday, February 26th
Week 6: Broadcast Ready
Midterm paper/project proposals due; please make an appointment to meet with me before next week.
Reading due:
1) Bertolt Brecht, "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication" (1934) pp 51-53 as a PDF download
2) Raymond Williams, "The Technology and the Society" (1974) NMR pp 289-301
Recommended for this week:
-Douglas Kahn & Gregory Whitehead, ed., *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde*. (MIT Press, 1994) - related essay online at New American Radio
- Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid, *Rhythm Science* (MIT Press, 2004) - in the library
-Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922*. (JHU Press, 1987).
Listen: neurotransmitter, NYC sound mapping groups, New American Radio sound art
Screen: Good Night, and Good Luck; Network
Discussion: The coproduction of users and technologies; sound hunters, hams and pirate radio; film, radio and video in context; broadcast technology - origins and implications; broadcast news

Tuesday, March 4th
Week 7: Consolidation and Representation
Reading due:
1) Ben Bagdikian, "The Endless Chain" (1985, rev 2000) NMR pp 471-485
2) Ella Shohat & Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (Routledge, 1994), sections "Stereotype, Realism"; "The Question of Realism"; "The Burden of Representation"; "The Racial Politics of Casting"; "Cinematic and Cultural Mediations"; "The Orchestration of Discourses"; and "Media Jujitsu" - as a 3.3 MB PDF download
3) Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (Picador, 2005) pp 214-229 and 381-399, as a 4.6 MB PDF download
Recommended this week:
Lawrence Lessig, articles available in PDF via Creative Commons license on his website, especially "An Information Society: Free or Feudal?", "The Creative Commons," "The Architecture of Innovation," "Privacy as Property," "Zoning Speech on the Internet," and "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Copyright."
Bring in: television clips, magazine ads or newspaper stories to analyze
Screening: Control Room; The Corporation; discuss media ownership and story control
Look/discuss: Brownout & NAPALC reports, Josh On's They Rule, mass media examples, consolidation statistics; control, censorship, power and representation; copyright law extensions, legislating the Internet, and legal models for an information society; alternatives proposed by Creative Commons and others

Tuesday, March 11th
Week 8: Video Records and Viral Media

Midterm papers/projects must be handed in at the beginning of class.
Reading due:
1) John Belton, "Looking through Video: The Psychology of Video and Film" (1996) as a 3.5 MB PDF download
2) Situationist International/Guy Debord, "Definitions" and "Report" in Stiles & Selz, *Theories & Documents of Contemporary Art*, pp 702-704 as PDF download or in library
Bring in: viral videos
Recommended for this week:
- Vito Acconci, "Television, Furniture & Sculpture: The Room with the American View" (1991) as a 1.4 MB PDF download
-Vito Acconci, edited by Gloria Moure. *Vito Acconci: Writings, Works, Projects* (Ediciones Poligrafa S.A., 2002) – in the library
-Doug Hall & Sally Jo Fifer, eds., *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (Aperture, 1991) – in the library
-Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) online at WikiSource
-Guy Debord (and other) experimental films downloadable from Ubu.com
-Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage, 1979) – in the library
Screen: The Truman Show; discuss: Video evidence and performance, video confessions and narcissism, the panopticon, the mediated subject.
Look/discuss: [ctrl] space: Rhetorics of Surveillance; Surveillance Camera Players; rTMark, eToy, CAE, EDB, The Interventionists, Contagious Media Project. The Barbie/GI Joe project: in the society of the spectacle, is it enough to convince the media you've carried out a tactical action, or do you actually have to implement it?

Tuesday, March 18th
Spring break - no class

Tuesday, March 25th
Week 9: Media Visions, Part 1: Dream Machines and Networks
Reading due:
1) Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think" (1945) NMR pp 35-49
2) Theodor H. Nelson, "Computer Lib/Dream Machines" (1970-74) NMR pp 247-259
3) Tim Berners-Lee et al., "The World Wide Web" (1994) NMR pp. 791-796
Recommended this week:
-J.C.R. Licklider, "Man-Computer Symbiosis" (1960) NMR pp 73-82
-Seymour Papert, *Mindstorms* excerpt (1980) NMR pp 413-432
-Theodor H. Nelson, "Proposal for a Universal Publishing System and Archive" (1981) NMR 441-462
Discuss: The network that is and might have been; what features of Bush & Nelson's visions may have been implemented by new developments since the publication of the NMR in 2003

Tuesday, April 1st
Week 10: Media Visions, Part 2: Medium, Message, Producer, User and Network
Reading due:
1) Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message" (1964) NMR pp 203-211

2) Hans Mangus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media" (1970) NMR pp 259-275

3) Jean Baudrillard, "Requiem for the Media" (1972) NMR pp 277-288

Recommended this week:

-Roy Ascott, "The Construction of Change" (1964) NMR pp 127-132

Discuss: How do these texts critique and inform each other? How have some of their ambitions or predictions been realized by current systems like commenting, reblogging, tagging and P2P - and how might they have been disappointed by the spreading consolidation or commodification of systems like Digg, del.icio.us, and Facebook? Can this help us think through our own positions in the network of user-producer interactions?

Tuesday, April 8th

Week 11: Media Visions, Part 3: Rhizomes, Myths, and Manifestos

Reading due:

1) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* excerpt (1980) NMR pp 405-411

2) Richard Stallman, "The GNU Manifesto" (1985) NMR pp 543-550

3) Bill Nichols, "The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems" (1988) NMR pp 625-642

4) Trebor Scholz and Paul Hartzog, "Toward a critique of the sociable web" (2007) online at Re-public

Recommended this week:

-Langdon Winner, "Mythinformation" (1986) NMR pp 587-598

-McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto* (version 4.0, 2004) online at C3

-Trebor Scholz, "A History of the Social Web" (draft in progress) at http://tinyurl.com/338pyp

Look/discuss: Rhizome community, FLOSS and P2P, ICANN

Discussion: Is the rhizome a viable model for resistance or distributed processing of information? Histories of hacktivism, activism organized through the net, indymedia, the commons, the sociable web, web 2.0, open source vs. corporate software, hardware, OS development. Do the tools matter as much as the content?

Tuesday, April 15th

***Final paper/project proposals due; please make an appointment to meet with me before next week. ***

Week 12: Cyborgs and Second Selves: Games and Data Bodies

Reading due:

1) Sherry Turkle, "Video Games and Computer Holding Power" (1984) NMR pp 499-514

2) Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (1985) NMR pp 515-542

3) Chip Morningstar and F. Randal Farmer, "The Lessons of Lucasfilm"s Habitat" (1991) NMR pp 663-678

Recommended this week:

-Malcolm LeGrice, "Kismet, Protagony, and the Zap Splat Syndrome," printed in Millenium Film Journal No. 28 (Spring 1995) Interactivities - online at MFJ

-Katie Salen, *Rules of Play* in the library

-Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self* and *Life on the Screen* in the library

-Michele White, *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship* in the library
Screening: Ghost in the Shell (Mamoru Oshii, 1995) / Ghost in the Shell 2 (Oshii 2004)
Look/discuss: Video and networked games; game-form artworks and subverted games;
choice, chance, and what we learn through play; console vs. MMORPG gaming culture,
how identities are dis- and re-embodied through interaction; ghosts in the machine

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Tuesday, April 22nd
Week 13: Database and Interface
1) Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (1950) NMR pp 49-64
2) Joseph Weizenbaum, *Compuer Power and Human Reason* excerpt (1976) NMR pp 367-376
3) Lynn Hershman, "The Fantasy Beyond Control" (1990) NMR pp 643-648
4) Grahame Weinbren, "The Digital Revolution is a Revolution of Random Access,"
Telepolis Magazin der Netkultur, Movie Special Issue (1997) - online at Telepolis
Look/discuss: AI; the Turing test; Eliza; Lorna; Sonata and Erlking; Deep Contact; Jason van
Anden's Smile project; the CaVE; artists and database forms; cross-currents in AI R&D;
Future Cinema, New Screen Media, Database Imaginary, Ars Electronica CD-ROMs

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Tuesday, April 29th
**If you chose to produce a project for your final, you must be prepared to present it in
class today. It can still be a work-in-progress but it should be finished enough for us to be
able to discuss both your ideas and formal strategies.***
Week 14: Cyberpunk, Cyberspace, Cybernetics
Reading due:
1) Stuart Moulthrop, "You Say You Want a Revolution? Hypertext and the Laws of Media"
(1991) NMR pp 691-704
2) Myron W. Krueger, "Responsive Environments" (1977) NMR pp 377-390
3) William Gibson and Neil Stephenson excerpts as PDF downloads
Recommended this week:
-Michael Joyce, "Siren Shapes: Exploratory and Constructive Hypertexts" (1988) NMR pp
613-625
-Espen J. Aarseth, "Nonlinearity and Linear Theory" (1994) NMR pp 761-781
-Michael Joyce, online hypertext fictions and collaborative hyperfictions linked from his
website
-Stuart Moulthrop, online hypertexts and cybertexts linked from his website
-William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (reprint ed. Ace, 1986) - in the library
  + *Pattern Recognition* (reprint ed. Berkeley Trade, 2004)
-Neil Stephenson, *Cryptonomicon* (paperback ed. Harper Perennial, 2000)
  + *Snow Crash* (reprint ed. Bantam Spectra, 2000)
-Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (reissue ed. Del Rey, 1996)
Discussion: digital writing and writing the digital; hypertext fiction vs. cyberpunk visions of
cyberspace; virtual space and virtual reality; cybernetic futures
Screen: Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982)

May 1st -12th: Spring review/final exam period

Your final projects/papers must be emailed to me by 5 pm on Tuesday, May 6th.