FALL 2010

The Politics of Code
E57.3153: Special Topics in Technology Studies
Wednesdays from 2 - 4:10pm
East Building, room 404
Prof. Alexander R. Galloway

This doctoral seminar focuses on political analyses of computational media. We begin with an overview of cybernetics, information theory, systems theory, distributed communications networks, and theories of postmodernity. Next, we examine the rise of immaterial labor in the service economies and the extension of codified labor practices into the realm of daily life. The seminar will also consider the ramifications of informatic capture and the formation of coded objects and bodies. Finally, we explore networked struggle and, through it, a political theory of the present moment. The course will favor both close readings of specific technologies as well as social and cultural claims about the information age.

Required Readings

- Course Reader.
- D. N. Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- Tiqqun, Introduction to Civil War (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010).
Schedule

September 8. Course Introduction

September 15. On the Concepts of “Information” and “Media”

September 22. Cybernetics and Cellular Automata

September 28, 5-7pm. Special guest lecture: Alberto Toscano speaking on “Fanaticism: The Uses of an Idea.” Location: Humanities Initiative at NYU, 20 Cooper Square (at East 5th Street), Fifth Floor.

September 29. Postmodernity

October 6. Theories of Technology

October 13. The World as Target

October 20. Politics at the New Millennium, Part I: Tiqqun
Special guest lecture by Jason Smith.
- Tiqqun, Introduction to Civil War (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010).

October 27. Politics at the New Millennium, Part II: Debord and Wark
November 3. Methodology and “the Poetics of Social Forms”

November 10. Networks

November 17. Netwar
  • John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "The Advent of Netwar (Revisited)," Networks and Netwars (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 1-25.

November 24. Identity and Labor Online

December 1. Software and Ideology
December 8. Cinematic Versus Computational Media


**Course Assignments**

*Reading*
All students are expected to read the assigned texts in advance of class.

*Writing*
Each student should write a total of 20 pages for the semester, preferably split into two shorter papers of 10 pages each, but other combinations are also possible. Suggested paper topics will be provided, but students are also encouraged to create their own topics. All papers should be on par with doctoral level work and should demonstrate a close reading of the required materials and exhibit a methodology of critical analysis.

**Grading Requirements**

Each student will be evaluated based on the course assignments. All students will be expected to do the course reading, and to write papers of approximately 20 pages total. Grades will be determined according to the following formula:

80% paper(s)
20% in-class participation and discussion