

New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
The Digital and the Analog (MCC-GE 3150)

FALL 2017

Professor Alexander R. Galloway
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Office Hours: Tues 2-4pm; Thurs 9-10:30am

Time: Wed, 2 - 4:50pm
Location: East Building 712

Digital devices permeate contemporary life. But what exactly does the digital mean? Are all computers digital? What about other media like photography or film? Is rationality itself digital? Is philosophy? We begin the seminar by developing specific definitions of the analog and the digital using sources from philosophy, media theory, and aesthetics. With these definitions in hand, we turn to contemporary digital media theory. Sections of the course are devoted to analogicity, digitality, the logical, the illogical, the absurd, cybernetics, digital computers, digital audio and compression. Readings are drawn from the work of Simone Browne, Gilles Deleuze, Elizabeth Grosz, Katherine Hayles, Jonathan Sterne, and others.

Books & Readings

The syllabus contains articles and books. Articles will be distributed electronically. The following books are available at the NYU Bookstore:

- Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015). 9780822359388
- Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). 9780816643424
- Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). 9780231059831
- Hubert Dreyfus, *What Computers Still Can't Do: A Critique of Artificial Reason* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992). 9780262540674
- Elizabeth Grosz, *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism* (New York: Columbia UP, 2017). 9780231181624
- N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). 9780226321462
- Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012). 9780822352877

September 6
Course introduction

PART I: ANA-LOGIC

September 13
Elizabeth Grosz, *The Incorporeal*, 1-129.
Kaja Silverman, "Introduction," *The Miracle of Analogy* (PDF).

September 20
Elizabeth Grosz, *The Incorporeal*, 130-262.
Brian Massumi, "On the Superiority of the Analog" (PDF).

September 27
Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 5-98.
Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societies" (PDF).

PART II: LOGIC

October 4
Hubert Dreyfus, *What Computers Still Can't Do* (first half).
Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" (PDF).

October 11
Hubert Dreyfus, *What Computers Still Can't Do* (second half).
Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation" (PDF).
Hans Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, chap 4 (PDF).

October 18
Simone Browne, *Dark Matters*.
Kara Keeling, "Queer OS" (PDF).

PART III: THE SURD & THE ABSURD

October 25
Henri Bergson, "The Delimiting and Fixing of Images" (PDF).
Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 1-108.

November 1
Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 109-185.
Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image" (PDF).
Aria Dean, "Poor Meme, Rich Meme" (<http://reallifemag.com/poor-meme-rich-meme/>).

PART IV: NEW MEDIA THEORY / DIGITAL STUDIES

November 8

Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, chaps 1 & 2.

Wendy Chun, "On Software, or the Persistence of Visual Knowledge" (PDF).

Yuk Hui, "On a Possible Passing from the Digital to the Symbolic" (PDF).

November 15

Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, chaps 3 & 4.

Tara McPherson, "U.S. Operating Systems at Mid-Century" (PDF).

Wendy Chun, "Race And/as Technology, Or How To Do Things To Race" (PDF).

November 29

Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, chaps 6 & 9.

Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (PDF).

December 6

Jonathan Sterne, *MP3* (first half).

Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant than the Sun* (excerpt) (PDF).

December 13

Jonathan Sterne, *MP3* (second half).

Gregory Chaitin, "Epistemology as Information Theory: From Leibniz to Ω " (PDF).

Monday, Dec 18, 5pm

All papers due.

Course Assignments

Reading -- Students are expected to read the assigned texts in advance of class.

Discussion Leaders -- Students are required to act as a discussion leader for two different weeks during the semester.

Writing -- Students are required to write 20 pages total for the semester, preferably split between a midterm paper and a final paper, although the combination is flexible. Suggested paper topics will be provided. Papers should adhere to standard format (12 point font, double spaced, one inch margins, no spaces between paragraphs, etc.) and follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. All writing should demonstrate a close reading of the required materials and exhibit a method of critical analysis.

Grade Formula

Papers	80%
Class participation	20%

Laptop Policy

I discourage the use of laptops, tablets, and phones in class and consider them to be detrimental to the social and pedagogical climate of the classroom. Exceptions can be made for readings that have been distributed in electronic format, and for students with special learning needs.