

New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
The Digital and the Analog
(Special Topics in Critical Theory -- MCC-GE 3010)

SPRING 2021

Professor Alexander R. Galloway
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Office Hours: by appointment

Time: Weds 9am - 11:50am EST
Location: online

Special note: The first hour of class will be an open-access webcast, followed by two hours of (closed) seminar only for enrolled students. The open-access portion will begin on February 10, 2021. If you are not enrolled, feel free to join the lecture for the first hour. Email professor Galloway for access URL.

Digital and analog, what do these terms mean today? One common response to the question of the digital is to make reference to things like software, hardware, or computers in general. Indeed the definition of “digital” is too often eclipsed by a kind of fever-pitched industrial bonanza around the latest technologies and the latest commercial ventures. Like the digital, the analog also seems to go through various phases of popularity and disuse, its appeal pegged most frequently to nostalgic longings for non-technical or romantic modes of art and culture. The analog is difficult to define, with attempts at definition often consisting of mere denotations of things: sound waves, the phonograph needle, magnetic tape, a sundial.

In this doctoral seminar we will define the digital and the analog explicitly, not merely by reference to actually existing media technologies, but also, and perhaps more importantly, through encounters with theory and philosophy. If digital and analog describe media artifacts, they are also modes of thinking and being, with the digital closely aligned with rationalism, logic, and politics, while the analog with empiricism, aesthetics, and ethics. Sections of the course are devoted to analogicity, digitality, the logical, the illogical, interfaces, cybernetics, psychoanalysis, geometry, and arithmetic. Readings are drawn from the work of Alain Badiou, Wendy Chun, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, Katherine McKittrick, Kaja Silverman, and others.

Books & Readings

The syllabus contains articles and books. Articles will be distributed electronically. Students should also obtain the following books:

- Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
- Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).
- Shane Denson, *Discorrelated Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).
- Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

Schedule

February 3 -- Course Introduction

Closed session for enrolled students only.

February 10 -- What is the Digital?

Anthony Wilden, "Analog and Digital Communication."

Lev Manovich, "What is New Media?"

Jonathan Sterne, "Analog."

February 17 -- The Golden Age of Analog

Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 1-108.

Kaja Silverman, "Introduction," *The Miracle of Analogy*.

February 24 -- Four Interfaces

Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 109-185.

Brian Massumi, "On the Superiority of the Analog."

March 3 -- A Theory of Points

Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*.

Alain Badiou, "Point as Choice and as Place."

March 10 -- A Brief History of Digital Philosophy in 10 Expressions

Midterm paper topics given out today.

Edward Fredkin, "An Introduction to Digital Philosophy."

Luciano Floridi, "Against Digital Ontology."

Calvin Warren, "The Catastrophe: Black Feminist Poethics, (Anti)form, and Mathematical Nihilism."

March 17 -- Structuralism (as Digital Method)

Jacques Lacan, "Psychoanalysis and cybernetics, or on the nature of language."

Lydia H. Liu, "The Cybernetic Unconscious: Rethinking Lacan, Poe, and French Theory."

Gilles Deleuze, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?"

March 24 -- Midterm paper writing workshop

Closed session for enrolled students only.

March 31 -- What Is Number?

Midterm papers due.

Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (first half).

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "Queering Homophily."

April 7 -- Anatomy of a Monad

Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (second half).

Kevin Quashie, "To be One."

April 14 -- On the Gender of Math

Joan Copjec, "Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason."

Elizabeth de Freitas, "Calculating Matter and Recombinant Subjects: The Infinitesimal and the Fractal Fold."

Katherine McKittrick and Alexander G. Weheliye, "808s & Heartbreak."

April 21 -- The Standard Model of Digitality

Final paper topics given out today.

Shane Denson, *Discorrelated Images* (first half).

Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image."

April 28 -- Alternatives to the Standard Model

Shane Denson, *Discorrelated Images* (second half).

Aria Dean, "On the Black Generic."

May 5 -- Final paper writing workshop

Closed session for enrolled students only.

Monday, May 10, 5pm

Final papers due.

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Course Requirements -- For Enrolled Students Only

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

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

Writing -- Enrolled students are required to write 20 pages total for the semester, split between a midterm paper and a final paper. 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.