CONVERSATIONS ON MEDIA TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE/IIMC 500 ATEK 520
FALL 2019

FACULTY: TOM LEESER
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https://centerforintegratedmedia.org

Class time: 3-3.5 hours (depending on the flow of the class)
Room: Center for Integrated Media (C108)
Meetings: Monday 7p--9pm
Office Hours: Thursdays 1-4pm (by appointment) C108

Owing to the condition of rapid change and exchange within our globalized economy, the words technology, media and culture by themselves can be considered an over-statement; generalized labels adhered to ambiguous and at times, unintelligible fragments. They are terms that have achieved an exaggerated status through the late twentieth century and have continued to expand into hyper-objects within our present moment.

This class will investigate these terms and apply an analysis that can lead to a more focused understanding which can help us navigate our creative practices and to help us establish a sense of urgency and agency in these precarious times.

This investigation will be pragmatic, grounded within a discursive context that engages a selection of contemporary artists that are currently working within the juncture of contingency and the ubiquitous mesh of digital information.

"To say, as many traditional modernists do, that art's meanings reside exclusively in its strict formal qualities and stated conventions begs many questions. Among them are how those conventions came into being and how they have evolved, why a material has been chosen and what its history was and its future might be, where the work is encountered and by whom, what social, political, and economic contexts impinge on our experience, and whether the work is permanent or intentionally mutable, ephemeral, or even perishable...significance is not fixed but contingent by design."

-Rob Storr
Artist, Critic
Former Dean, Yale School of Art

Methodology

The course will include visiting artist presentations, lectures, readings and discussion.

Participation in the discussions are required.

In this class you will:

• Actualize and analyze the complex intersections between technology, media and culture within a process of creative research;

• Present the results of your research through an interactive dialogue with your peers and the visiting artists;

• Think critically and communicate persuasively about the larger social, political and aesthetic possibilities inherent in contemporary technology, media and culture.

• Create a collaborative "Commonplace Book" that incorporates your creative research as a working method and a component for actualization.

The "Commonplace Book" will be in the form of a shared Google doc. It will remain online for the duration of the semester. Each week you will enter a response to the lectures and readings. Initial each response. Responses should range from 100-300 words.

Grading will be based on three course requirements:

1) Participation in the class discussions and visiting artist presentations
2) The quality of your responses to the visiting artist lectures
3) For the final assignment, you will be present a discussion of your research from the "Commonplace Book" to the class.

Attendance: no more than 3 absences

CalArts does not grade on the A-F scale. We grade using:
High Pass (HP): Passing with Excellence Pass (P): Passing with Quality
Low Pass (LP) No Credit (NC) NC grades must appear on external records to ensure accurate reporting to peer institutions and for financial aid reporting.

The longer withdrawal period (through the 10th week of the semester) will provide an option for students to exit a course without receiving a failing grade. To drop a course during the extended withdrawal period, a student will obtain the Course Withdrawal form from the Registrar's Office, consult with his or her mentor, obtain the course instructor's signature verifying the last date of attendance, and return the form to the Registrar's Office. The course will remain on the student's record with a "W" grade, but the grade of "W" will have no effect on the grade point average.

2019 Fall Visiting Artists:

Fran Illich 9/23
Inigo Wilkins 10/7
Yolande Harris 10/21
Morehshin Allahyari 10/28
Marjan Sharifi 11/04
Keith and Mendi Obadike 11/11
Salome Asega 11/18
Charles Lindsay 11/25

Lectures and Discussions: 9/9, 9/16, 9/30,12/2, 12/9

Required Reading:

Network Aesthetics, Patrick Jagoda
https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/022634651X

The Commonplace Book
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonplace_book

Tom Leeser, Lea Rekow
https://viralnet-v4.net/category/selections-from-the-archive/

Nigel Warburton
"What does a portrait of Erica the android tell us about being human?"
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/09/robot-human-artificial-intelligence-philosophy

Zoë Corbyn
Decentralisation: the next big step for the world wide web
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/sep/08/decentralisation-next-big-step-for-the-world-wide-web-dweb-data-internet-censorship-brewster-kahle

Robert Morris
Notes on Sculpture
https://monoskop.org/images/8/84/Morris_Robert_1966_1968_Notes_on_Sculpture_Parts_1-2.pdf

Jack Burnham
Systems Aesthetics
https://monoskop.org/images/0/03/Burnham_Jack_1968_Systems_Esthetics_Artforum.pdf

Liking and Critiquing, New Museum
https://archive.newmuseum.org/videos/10335

Brian Doherty
Inside the White Cube
http://arts.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/arc-of-life-ODoherty_Brian_Inside_the_White_Cube_The_Ideology_of_the_Gallery_Space.pdf

Dick Higgins
Statement on Intermedia
http://www.artpool.hu/Fluxus/Higgins/intermedia2.html

Eshun, Kodwo.
Further Considerations on Afrofuturism
https://www.kit.ntnu.no/sites/www.kit.ntnu.no/files/KodwoEshun_Afrofuturism_0.pdf

Thomas Saraceno
https://studiotomassaraceno.org/projects/

There is no rigid time-line for each of these readings. They are self-directed and it is recommended that you familiarize yourself with all of them. Skimming the list to see what might peak your interest is a good starting place --- with the goal of expanding your practice, engaging in conversation during the discussions in class and for feeding the fire in Q&A sessions with our visiting artists.