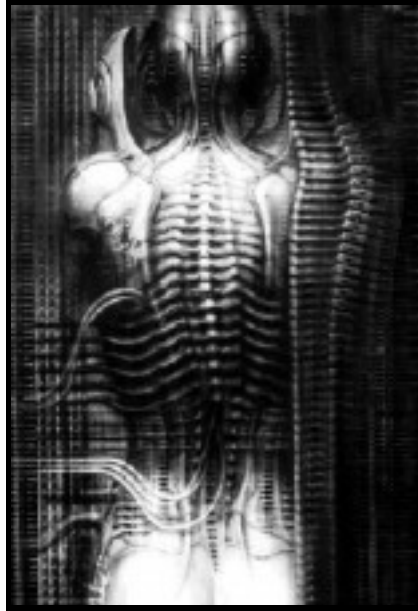


Cyberculture



Free speech, free software, MOOS, MUDs, anime and cyberpunk. All of these are elements of a broad set of social, technical and political phenomena generally associated with the emergence of a nascent “cyberculture.” In this seminar we explore the ways in which recent developments in information technology - the computer and the Internet in particular-relate to changing contemporary notions of community, identity, property, and gender. By looking at an eclectic collection of popular and scholarly resources - including film, fiction and the World Wide Web - we will situate the development of “cyberculture” into the larger history of the complex relationship between technology and Western society. **Fulfills the distribution requirement for Sector I: Society.**

History & Sociology of Science
HSSC 213 • Spring 2006

HSSC 213: Cyberculture

Office Hours: Monday 1:30-3:30 PM, Wednesday 12-2 PM in 362 Logan Hall

Contact Info: nathanen@sas.upenn.edu

Course Format: The seminar meets only once a week. This means that attendance is particularly important. If you do need to miss class please let me know in advance. Grading will be based on three components: class participation (30%), two short papers (40%), and a final paper /presentation(30%). Your class participation grade will be based on attendance and your ability to actively demonstrate your mastery of the readings during in-class discussions. The two short papers will be 4-5 page responses to specific readings that emphasize synthetic and analytical thinking. The final project will be developed over the course of the second half of the semester, and will allow you to research a topic of individual interest. The final product will be a 10-1:3015 research paper or a combination paper/presentation (depending on the particular project that you choose – some projects are better suited to a multi-media presentation than a traditional research paper).

Required Readings: The bulkpack for this course is available at Wharton Reprographics. The books are available at the Penn Bookstore. All other readings listed on the syllabus will be handed out in class or made available in electronic form.

Coupland, Douglas. *Microserfs*. Regan Books (1996).

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. Ace Books (1984).

Turkle, Sherry. *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. Simon & Schuster (1997)

Borsook, Paulina. *Cyberselfish* Public Affairs (2000).

Course Schedule:

I Introduction

January 12: First Meeting. No readings.

II Cyberspace

January 19: Neuromancer

Readings

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer* (1984).

III Origins

January 26: The Hacker Ethic

Readings

Levy, Steve. "The Model Railroad Club," and "The Hacker Ethic," Chapters 1,2 in *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution*.

Douglas, Susan. "Popular Culture and Populist Technology," in *Inventing American Broadcasting* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), Chapter 6.

Turkle, Sherry. "Hackers: Loving the Machine for Itself" from *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1984) - Chapter 6.

IV Community

February 2:

Readings

Rheingold, Howard. *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Selected chapters TBA. Available on the web at:
<http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/2.html>

Dibbell, Julian. "A Rape in Cyberspace: or How an Evil Clown, a Haitian Trickster Spirit, Two Wizards, and a Cast of Dozens Turned a Database Into a Society."

V Identity

February 9:

Readings

Turkle, Sherry. *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. Simon & Schuster (1997)

VI Utopia

February 16: One world, one future . . .

Readings

Richard Coyne, *Technoromanticism: Digital Narrative, Holism, and the Romance of the Real* (MIT Press, 1999). Chapter 1, "Digital Utopias."

Segal, H. *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Movie Night: *The Matrix*

VII Dystopia

February 23: Rogues, Hackers, and Criminals

Readings

Slatalla, Michelle and Joshua Quittner, *Masters of Deception: The Gang That Rules Cyberspace*, HarperCollins, 1995. Chapters 3, 5, 10, 12.

Movie Night: *Dr. Strangelove, Wargames*

VIII Cyberselfish

March 2: Ayn Rand Rules

Readings

Borsook, Paulina. *Cyberselfish Public Affairs* (2000).

• First Short Paper Due

IX Spring Break

March 9: Spring break, no class.

X Gender

March 16: Where did all the women go?

Readings

Millar, Melanie Stewart. *Cracking the Gender Code: Who Rules the Wired World?* (New York: Second Story Press, 2000). Chapters 4, 5.

Cohn, Carol. "War, Wimps and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War." In Miriam Cooke and Angela Wollacott (eds.) *Gendering War Talk* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)

XI Work

March 23: Microserfs

Readings

Douglas Coupland, *Microserfs* (1995).

XII Race & Place

March 30: Silicon Valley Syndrome

Readings

Eglash, Ron. "Race, Sex and Nerds: from black geeks to Asian American hipsters." *Social Text* 71(20), 49-64.

Nakamura, Lisa. "Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet."

Siegel, Lenny and John Markoff. *The High Cost of High Tech*, Chapter 7, "The Silicon Rush," and Chapter 8, "Toxic Time Bomb."

XIII Politics

April 6: Free as in speech, free as in beer ...

Readings

Richard Stallman, "Why Software Should Be Free."

<http://www.gnu.ai.mit.edu/philosophy/shouldbefree.html>

Timothy May, "The Crypto Anarchists Manifesto."

<http://www.activism.net/cypherpunk/crypto-anarchy.html>

Bill Gates, "An Open Letter to Hobbyists"

<http://www.blinkenlights.com/classiccmp/gateswhine.html>

Eric Raymond, "The Cathedral and the Bazaar." <http://www.tuxedo.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar/cathedral-bazaar/>

• Second Short Paper Due

XIV Resistance is futile

April 13: Luddites?

Readings

Winner, Langdon. "Mythinformation?" in *The whale and the reactor: a search for limits in an age of high technology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986)

XV Big Finish

April 20: In which all is made clear ...

Wrap-up/presentations.