Critical Computer Science Narratives

Neptune Frost: Watch, Reflect, Discuss



For this assignment, you will critically analyze the 2022 Afrofuturist sci-fi musical film Neptune Frost through the lens of our course objectives in computer science and information technology. Neptune Frost presents a visionary world where an anti-colonialist computer hacker collective, formed by escaped coltan miners, attempts to overthrow an oppressive regime exploiting the region's natural resources and people.

The film explores intersections of technology, extractivism, resistance, and Afrofuturist thought through audacious artistic styling. By engaging with Neptune Frost, you will reflect on the diverse roles and impacts of computing from perspectives that re-imagine conventional narratives around technology's origins, functions, and futures.

Through research, active viewing, critical analysis, and discussion, this assignment asks you to connect the themes and aesthetics of Neptune Frost to issues surrounding ethical computing practices, technology labor, representations of computing cultures and histories, and forces driving change in our field. An Afrofuturist framing provides a unique vantage point for examining course objectives pertaining to computer science career landscapes, professional communication responsibilities, and the drivers of technological evolution.

Your critical reflections on this embodiment of Afrofuturist vision will deepen your understanding of computing's complex situatedness within struggles for liberation, self-determination, and provide the opportunity to discuss new modes of technological perspectives worldwide.

I. Introduction

Neptune Frost is an Afrofuturist vision, a sci-fi punk musical that’s a visually wondrous amalgamation of themes, ideas, and songs. The film takes place in the hilltops of Burundi, where a group of escaped coltan miners form an anti-colonialist computer hacker collective. From their camp in an otherworldly e-waste dump, they attempt a takeover of the authoritarian regime exploiting the region's natural resources – and its people. When an intersex runaway and an escaped coltan miner find each other through cosmic forces, their connection sparks glitches within the greater divine circuitry.

This critical reflection provides students with the opportunity to:

1. Engage with alternative narratives and artistic visions around technology, computing, and their sociopolitical contexts through the lens of Afrofuturism. This challenges students to step outside of mainstream Western perspectives that often dominate discourse around science and technology.

2. Foster critical thinking skills by prompting students to analyze the themes, imagery, and commentary presented in Neptune Frost as they relate to core issues and objectives in computer science and information technology studies.

3. Explore the diverse roles, impacts, and ethical implications of computing and IT from an underrepresented viewpoint. The film's depictions invite reflection on technology's entanglement with processes of extraction, labor exploitation, anti-colonial resistance, and radical reimagining of possible futures.

4. Develop communication skills by requiring students to articulate and discuss their analyses and insights from the film, both through writing and peer discussions.

5. Examine driving forces behind technological change from perspectives that centralize the experiences of the Global South. This allows us to better understand the diverse histories and contexts that shape computing's evolution.

6. Expand awareness of interdisciplinary connections between computer science/IT and other fields like postcolonial studies, science fiction, aesthetics, and social justice movements.

II. Pre-Viewing Activities

A. Research background on Afrofuturism and its place in science fiction and the intersection of extractive industries in today’s labor economy as well as their location within computer and information science histories.

* Read the Afrofuturism research starter:
* Caffrey, Cait. “Afrofuturism.” *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, January 1, 2023. <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=313c9926-0ec4-3d35-bc21-3ec5f1fee447>.
* Read the Introduction and at least One chapter of your choice from the eBook:
* Ytasha L. Womack. *Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013. <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=d93c26e3-2adc-3027-88ec-2db88f9cdd57>
* Provide the full citation to the chapter you choose to read from Step 2 and a short summary of the article 50 words or less.

The Chapter "The Divine Feminine in space" discusses how women are active in Afrofuturism and the ways that they discuss through their art many issues as well as the creative thoughts that lead to unique stories uninflueced by the oppresive white western culture.

Ytasha Womack. (2013). Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Lawrence Hill Books. Chapter 6

* Read one of the following articles and provide a 50 word summary on the article:
* Lèbre, É., Stringer, M., Svobodova, K. et al. The social and environmental complexities of extracting energy transition metals. Nat Commun 11, 4823 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-18661-9>

This Article explains the risks and negative affects of mining specifically for metals that are used in "clean" energy. Adding a new depth that allows one to see that through the process of lowering carbon emissions can cause other comparable negative affects

B. Are you familiar with the role of technology and computing in postcolonial African, Asian and Middle East countries? Now that you have finished reading these articles set a timer for five minutes and free-write your reflections. This is free writing so ignore sentence structure and grammatical correctness. We are looking for a stream of consciousness here.

BEGIN FREE WRITE

There are many impacts of technogogy and computing on post colonial countries, some major ones are mineral extraction an exploitation often at an economic disadvantage for the countries producing the metals. Ther are also social and enviormenatl problems that can occur as well. Such as competition over clean water with mining companies and humans, as well as ecological destruction of habitats. This si temeperd by the income these indusries can recieve and eb taxed for in their countires, e.g. south africa has a deal with china where they provide cobalt (used in electronics production) and inexchange china builds roads, hospialts and othed infrastuctre. Overall it is a two-edged sword and causes great harm to the countries involeved but they cannot stop as otherwise they would be at a signifcant disadvantage in developing.

STOP FREE WRITE

Your free writing can be handwritten or typed. If you typed the free write in this document provide a clear indication where your free write begins and ends. If you used the old-fashioned technology of paper and pen, then take a photo of your free writing and embed it within the document.

III. Film Viewing

A. Create your Kanopy account and access the Kanopy library. You may also login to Kanopy on most streaming devices as well. <https://help.libraries.vsc.edu/using/faq/393546>



B. As you watch the film Neptune Frost (<https://www.kanopy.com/en/vsc/video/12574153>) actively take notes on the following areas.

1. Themes and imagery related to technology, computing, and hacking that stood out to you

Lines of "code" running over people, horrible anxiety producing actually triggering computer noise all the time!!!!!! Keyboard clothing, aliases related to hacking, numbers and some formuals on screen. Also the rebellious ness is very psuedo anrachist and vibes with hacking.

2. Representation of computing labor and the coltan mining industry as it relates to global electronics and electronic vehicle production pipelines

I didn't notice much about computing labor but the coltan and how the miner were treated like shit as well as them eventually being ganeged up on by ball the powers in the world totally felt like how people in those vulnerable positions are.

3. Afrofuturist visions and reimagining of technology present in the film

The awesome outfit design and the musicality of it all totally slayed! The phones reimagined as hexes was kinda intersitng and the way the hacking was closer to magic than what is possible today.

IV. Critical Reflection

Responses must be at least 125 words for each question and should not exceed 250 words.

1. Reflect on depictions of "anti-colonial hacker collectives" - innovative computing roles? There was nothing about computing accurately in this entire movie. It was definely used as more of a vibe than a hard thing. If it was there I could not understand it. Otherwise the way the anti-establishment hacker collctive was depicted was quite humanising of a profession often hated. And tha camadrie was quite wonderful and Positive.

2. Discuss ethical implications of technology labor extraction (coltan mining)

There are many ethical problems with most forms of exploitation. I have not taken an ethics class but it seems unfair that they should be allowed to be harmed unto death with little to no reprecusions for just working a job. There are likely no other options and not being able to have choice of where to work is harmful and bad. It leads to a lack of progress and a greater decline in society and the ability to improve and be happy.

3. Analyze ethical stances taken by characters towards authority and Status Quo

It appears as though the main caste is oppositional to authority and the status quo. In Neptune and Innocents first interaction there is a relatively conservative veiw point from Innocent when he is disgusted and attmpts assult on neptune after fing out she has different gentals than he was expecting. This is actively touched upon later in the movie by his sister Memory.

4. How do characters communicate technological resistance? Effectiveness of methods?

I do not understand what the hell this means. This was not described as a concept. And therfore I cannot answer properly.

5. What social/political forces drive the narrative of technological upheaval?

There is no technological upheaval. The driving social-politacl forces in the movie are an oppressive goverment and a culture of apathy ignorance and lack of individualism. These are all mentioned rather explicitly in the songs around 70-85 minutes into the movie. Another motivating force is dissatisfaction with being effectively a slave.

6. How does the film depict past, present and future of computing/IT in Africa?

I Honestly did not notice depictions of IT or computing past, present or future in this movie.

V. Discuss

Summarize your major insights from film and materials you reviewed for this assignment. Your initial submission must be 250-300 words and posted by Monday April 8th, 2024 by 11:59 pm. You must also provide two response posts that are 75-150 words to your classmates by Wednesday, April 10th, 2024 by 11:59pm.

Topic: [Neptune Frost: Discuss](https://vsc.instructure.com/courses/47424/discussion_topics/672794?module_item_id=3472357)