

*1: Why are you interested in pursuing graduate study within the MAAPS program? (Please explain your choice of this particular program rather than a traditional course-based program.)*

I have always loved the academy and the resources and structure it provides. At the same time, however, that structure can often suffocate non-traditional students working across fields at the edges of traditional academia. Not me. In spite of my professed love for the academy, from the beginning of my academic career, I have viewed it less as a pathway to an end and rather as a tool I could harness to assist with whatever educational journey I was currently partaking. My undergraduate degree consisted of credits from no less than 7 different schools with coursework completed in 13 different countries around the world (including international waters!)

Thus, my academic career so far has been innovative, to say the least -- and, alongside my academic pursuits, I have always participated in building out a professional practice in parallel to the work I was doing in the classroom. When deciding whether or not to apply to graduate school, I grappled with questions of structure versus innovation, practice versus theory... would I be able to forge my own path, blending the resources available through the academy with the ability to focus on both theory and practice? Would I be able to leverage my own personal circumstances -- the fact that I live in a foreign megapolis, Mexico City, Mexico, for instance, with my desire to continue advancing my personal pursuit of knowledge? With the MAAPS program, I think the answer is yes.

*2: What particular area of study would you like to build into a MAAPS Focus Area? (Please briefly explain what the area is.)*

I'm interested in studying what I'm calling "Applied Global Cybernetics" -- in short, how machines regulate humans and how humans regulate machines: where does the machine end and "human," "animal," or "nature" begin? How do developments in information technologies shape our definition of self and other? How does that influence our political and social structures? These are all questions well within the wheelhouse of "cybernetics."

Naturally, cybernetics isn't confined to one discrete academic field of study: philosophers such as Michel Foucault plays as much a role here as do Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as do electrical engineers such as Norbert Wiener or Claude Shannon and communication scholars such as Marshall McLuhan. This inherently trans-disciplinary makes it a great match for a MAAPS focus area.

While I do have a soft spot for critical theory and hope to embark on a great deal of it in my graduate career, I am most interested in the application of my studies. Thus, the focus of my masters will incorporate critical theory, aesthetic practice, and the applied work of building structures that provide an alternative paradigm through which we can interact with machines, and thus, each other. In particular, I aim to leverage my position as a global citizen to study how a changing information technology ecosystem is influencing our understanding of issues such as immigration, borders and the nation state itself -- and produce alternative paradigms better suited for today's political reality; not just in theory, but through practice.

*3: What experience do you bring to this area of study? (Please describe your background in relation to the area you are proposing to study.)*

Over the past 8 years of part-time undergraduate study, I have focused on building a base on which to develop a deeper investigation into the field of cybernetics, on both a theoretical and an applied level.

My course choices and major selection were motivated by a desire to develop a basic cross-disciplinary theoretical background and approach to this subject: I studied Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, and Donna Haraway (author of "A Cyborg Manifesto") at DePaul; but I also studied economics and communication at Hong Kong Baptist University; social entrepreneurship during Semester at Sea in Europe; and technology and social change at Iowa State University. In doing so, I gained the basic theoretical structures I hope to expand upon in my graduate study.

In the meantime, however, I was also building out a career as a practicing technologist -- not only learning how to code, but also learning how to build a business and a social enterprise. My main source of income is now through supporting an application I helped build that helps engineers build out physical networks of power, fiber, and other infrastructure. I'm in charge of building systems

that detect downtime and auto-remediate any issues with the underlying systems; I have also recently founded a small consulting firm to do more of this kind of work. Before this, I was an executive at a nonprofit that helped underprivileged young people across the country get excited about code. This intense experience as a practicing technologist, freelancer and social entrepreneur gives me the tools to apply theoretical engagement with applied practice: both through building aesthetic representations of the theory but also through building social movements that provide alternative, perhaps more humanist, ways to engage with machines, technological development, and each other.

*4: What new areas of learning are you hoping to explore in your graduate study?*

While cybernetics is a relatively older, albeit somewhat neglected, discipline, I see an opportunity to join in its present-day revival and dramatically expand its footprint throughout my graduate career. In particular, I'm interested in *applied cybernetics* -- the *aestheticization* of cybernetic principles through both art and social action. Through art, I hope to use my graduate study to hone a practice of transforming cybernetic philosophy into a visceral experience through the creation of aesthetic representations of the theory. That doesn't mean I want to disregard theory: for instance, I'm particularly interested in exploring queer theory in relation to cybernetics -- it just means that the *focus* of my research will be how to transform theory into practice.

For instance, I aim to participate in social action through forming some kind of a social good organization dedicated to applying cybernetics towards humanist projects. I hope to leverage my position as an expat in Mexico City in a manner that allows me to connect fellow technologists to social justice issues that intersect with cybernetic theories; in particular, immigration and citizenship -- modern communication technologies are redefining the very grounds on which the nation-state is built, and I believe this tenuous relationship is at the core of our present-day political reality -- not only to do a I want to explore this tension, but I want transform theory into collective action.

This intersection -- social justice, aesthetic practice and cybernetics -- is, as far as I'm aware, an entirely new and novel approach to issues within cybernetics, and a highly prescient one at that, as the broader popular culture begins to seriously

discuss, for instance, the role corporations such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter should play in shaping our political discourse.

*5: What work or volunteer site do you propose to use to apply learning from the Program while you are enrolled?*

During my graduate study, I'm intending to continue to develop my consulting practice, and use it as the basis for expanding my work into more projects in which cybernetics is directly relevant -- already, however, my work focuses on building digital systems which self-organize and self-heal, and just doing more of the same would be an excellent complement to my graduate study. That being said, there is also an expanding need in the media space for practitioners to create digital experiences, and driving my practice deeper into that space would allow me to engage with the theory in a truly practiced way -- for instance, [the Knight Foundation recently released a call for proposals looking for projects that apply immersive technology to the arts](#) -- embarking on a project under this CFP would be very well-aligned to my academic goals.

In addition, I want to form my own collective action organization that leverages my position as a global citizen to connect fellow technologists with issues that intersect with cybernetics -- in particular, immigration and citizenship, as digital technologies are transforming our relationship to each other and the nation-state, an issue at the core of our current political chaos. This means that although I already have quite a bit experience in this sector -- including serving as a partnerships director for a 501(c)3 with operations across the US, my graduate study will necessarily also include research in nonprofit management and entrepreneurship -- as I work to found and grow my collective action organization, I will be able to immediately apply learning from these studies.