

EarCo: Surveillance, Technology, and the Poetics of Information

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PETERS HALL ROOM 104



composed of DALL·E images made by the prompt "a surreal deformed big ear as Deleuze's BWO with sensory data flow and surveillance and neo-sentient machine staring into the infinity of nihilism and contemplate".

Course Description

The ownership of one's self and body in the present age is under siege, since our presence, identity, and experiences are narrated by data monitors and intelligent systems. *EarCo* is a seminar-style class that explores the ways technology permeates our lives and how we conceive of ourselves, and opens up questions to redefine our relationship to technology. We will alternate between creative and scholarly investigations into topics such as AI, surveillance, data flows, and algorithms, investigating how these issues influence our identities and agency.

Our goal is to engage students to actively reflect on invisible data flows and enable agencies on information politics. Students need no prior knowledge to

enjoy the course—only a willingness to question everything. Throughout the semester, we will develop creative projects of our choice, sharing them with the group and using them to develop our engagement with the course materials.

Course Purpose, Goals, & Objectives

- Examine spaces around us from the inside-out, with consideration of the information they hold, the reasoning behind getting and holding the information, and the agency they have over the information and thus the people involved.
- Expand our knowledge of contemporary multimedia, installation, and sound art
- Find and hold a space for discussion deeply rooted in empathy and mutual respect.

Class Dynamics

- This class will meet once a week in a seminar-style discussion of a single text. Supplementary information will be provided in presentations and students will have discussion posts due before each class.
- Instructors are learning, you are learning, we are learning together. While instructors will lead and direct discussion, participants are highly encouraged to bring ideas and insights to course facilitation.
- Students are expected to read/listen/watch all materials before class.
- To create a safe space for learning, sharing and collaboratively creating art, we'll create a community policy together.

Schedule of Content

(subject to change based upon student interest)

Please note: We will try to keep the readings manageable, but students are expected to put in at least 1 hour of work per week.

INTRODUCTION

We create an informational ecosystem. Opening manifesto and collaborative “data cache.”

INTEREST MEETING: Jessie Cox's “Transmission...”

CYCLE 1: Artificial Intelligence & Cyborgs

How does technology restructure our sense of self? How does it infiltrate and control who we are, and how does it expand who we are? How does artificial intelligence constitute its own self?

WEEK 1 Critical Reading Donna Haraway, *The Cyborg Manifesto*

WEEK 2 Creative Response DALL-E, ChatGPT, [The Text-Score Dataset](#)

WEEK 3 Project Discussion Cyborg Manifesto 3.0

CYCLE 2: Algorithms, Data, & Noise

How is our thought process determined by algorithms and systems? How can we interrupt these processes to be more aware of our surroundings?

WEEK 4 Critical Reading Code and Clay, Data and Dirt ; Big Data;

WEEK 5 Creative Response Niklaus Luhmann, Hito Steyerl, Ryoji Ikeda

WEEK 6 Project Discussion

CYCLE 3: Surveillance & Broadcasting

How is technology used to construct self-reinforcing narratives? What does "truth" mean in the current day?

WEEK 7 Critical Reading Yan Jun, "The Imperial Absentee"

WEEK 8 Creative Response Ctrl [Space]: *Rhetorics of Surveillance*

WEEK 9 Project Discussion

CYCLE 4: Virtual Realities & Simulation

How do spaces mutate into alternative realities? What are the "'awarenesses' of technology within spaces? How can we include the more-than-human within our concept of space?

WEEK 10 Critical Reading Jean Baudrillard, *Simulation & Simulacra*

WEEK 11 Creative Response Meow Wolf, *OmegaMart*; Janet Cardiff

WEEK 12 Project Discussion

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General Requirements

This class is P/NP, and the majority of this course is dependent upon student's personal reactions and engagement with the texts, artifacts, and each other. Asking questions of literature means also asking questions of oneself and of readers. In this vein, the crux of this course is individual

regular analysis of the texts before class meetings. Additionally, class participation is critical for a heterogeneous discussion. Since this class meets once a week, failure to attend more than 2 classes will result in an NP grade. Since we only meet once a week, we will have an online discussion forum via Slack to communicate between meetings.

- Attendance is mandatory. No more than two classes may be missed in order to Pass.
- Participation in discussion is crucial. However, we are all individuals and therefore must be guided by our own intuitive style of learning and growing. We consider contribution to class discussion, online engagement on Blackboard, and/or active listening. [25%]
- Evaluation I: Students will be required to present a piece of art (either original or someone else's) at one point throughout the semester. Choose something which reflects the themes of the course, and spend 5 minutes describing it, showing an excerpt, and explaining what it means to you. [10%]
- Evaluation II: Students will reflect on the discussion via a collaborative Google Doc of notes, which will be maintained throughout the semester and shared with the class. [10%]
- Evaluation III: Create an artist statement outlining your final project. Describe how it connects to one day from class, and discuss how you will translate this material into what you MIGHT do for your final. ~500 words [25%]
- Evaluation IV: Make a creative piece (poem, art piece, theater, creative nonfiction, multimedia, etc.) which connects to course material. Write a short artist statement explaining your thinking. [30%]