Addendum

I was playing around and kept asking the model how it would go about structuring this course...so basically asking the syllabus how it would make the syllabus for this class. Seems like there's some agreement. Responses are losely listed in order of snarkiness and amount I laughed while reading.

How do you explain Thanksgiving to an AI?

Luckily, as Thanksgiving approaches, a few companies are taking time to contemplate all of this.

If even Pilgrims and turkeys have a gender problem, we are in real trouble.

To hear Oren Etzioni of the Allen Institute for AI tell it, there are three options.

And how does an AI explain the holiday back to you? What do talking machines have to say about families and feasts, origins and Thanksgivings past? We invite you to join us for a series of fragmentary conversations with the nonhuman Others who eat with us, break bread with us, and tell their stories at the table.

And, more to the point, how do you get a machine structured, training-data savvy algorithm to understand the Holidays? Of course, we know how this goes .

Here's one cute example: What's the difference between turkeys, cockerels and chickens? "A turkeys shows me a fattened relative stripped clean until a carcass.

It was that worst of ideas: turning the traditional game show format into a one-way conversation about some dumb thing I had already tweeted about a week before.

That's something that Sophie Love, the data artist behind Thought Cloud, has done.

Well, one easy approach would be to convert the textual descriptions and images supplied to you by Wikipedia and other sources into vectors and then feed them into a neural net.

Who has never done a dinner guest segment on a talk show in his life? Even the most earthbound conceptions of this holiday involve creatures from the depths of the ocean: deep sea divers, who, descended from Spanish delicacies and probably poisoned, must have eaten too many candied yams.

How would you teach a course on algorithmic aesthetics?

You would never get to Fourier transforms.

Well, as I suggested above, I'd first want to drop aesthetics.

I essayed teaching a course on Algorithmic Aesthetics at Parsons in semester one 2011.

The first thing that comes to mind is: DON'T DO IT! Why? Because you (the instructor) are not an artist and cannot emulate the creative process.

I don't pretend to have a definite answer to this incisive question as I still have to clearly formulate for myself what "algorithmic aesthetics" means, apart, one hopes, from apps that make pretty designs.

A very dumb joke that is nonetheless relevant in an age where we discuss algorithms, computation and data-analysis a lot is: A scientist, a philosopher and a mathematician are sitting in a boat.

Let me guess: You make a confusing (for some, plainly wrong) claim that algorithmic systems are somehow non-representational and don't necessitate interpretation, and then the students complain.

Istanbul, 6th of October 2015

by Mario Von Zombie

Monitored and processed flows of light are like blood through veins: cities and computers are the organisms fields of flesh that are sustained by fluxes, waves and transfers between the outside and inside, the skin and the bone: light, only designed for giving us sight, becomes magic smoke that we breath, a wave-flow of promesse and suggestion, of suspense of meaning and potential: we wave, float and float in suspension and run on strings of light into darkness.

What examples should one use? How mind-numbingly boring would it be? I don't mean to put down artistic approaches to algorithms – on the contrary, artists confront algorithmic mechanisms with other registers of thought and feeling, giving form to otherwise inaccessible or mute affective dimensions of computation.

Obviously, the material that students are supposed to objectify as algorithmic is highly speculative and subject to strong influence by AI's seemingly overestimated hopes and dreams (robots, spaceships, immortality).

How do you craft a writing course that lets students conduct an experiment with code?

I would love to experiment with a course that would follow-up on these questions, but I haven't had a chance yet.

What books would you assign?

An entire course could be dedicated to exploring AI experiments that stretch the limits of our perceptual abilities, asking students to consider, for instance, whether humans are indeed the best observers when machines unearth structures that are outside the realm of our ordinary senses and which may even exist theoretically, but are impossible to see.

What would a curriculum on that topic look like?

Vardalas:

Is aesthetic experience something you appreciate only when you are detached or are you detached only when you have the aesthetic experience?

Mackenzie:

That particular experience has to happen inside the machine.

DD: I do not believe in teaching specific "style" of programming, or a particular algorithm, rather the course should focus on concepts of the artistic, cultural and social thought notion of algorithm and the design of the computational system (which includes the physical, social and cultural world) and the ways of writing an algorithm with which to tackle a certain problem.

Or how would you use aesthetic thought and the analysis of digital culture to engage with a course syllabus? Of course, this is a straw-man question, which I invite you to answer in an incendiary blog entry.

I don't want to impose my particular way of thinking on others... But I think it's interesting to write post-digitalist theories of algorithmic aesthetics.

Would it be an art history course in which algorithmic techniques are investigated as one instance among many of a technical driven, historically specific formal language of representation? Would it be a technically/mathematically focused course, demonstrating the algorithmic ability of 'programmed machines'? Would it be a course on cultural critique, investigating the 'scientization' of our world? Or would it be one devoted to the digital arts, conceived of as the creation and investigation of new artworks based on computational models? The remainder of this article explores these alternative frameworks in the hope of addressing some of the issues raised above

I would borrow lesson number one: build in failure and failure modes.

Should such a course include history and criticism, or is it sufficient to monitor how and why algorithms and their aesthetic manifestations change? If the latter, is such a course already too late deviated? And if you have to include history and criticism, can you avoid the redundancy and stagnation of much existing digital humanities work?

Stefan Stürmer: I think that to establish the term "algorithmic aesthetics" is a task by itself (literally in the Chinese sense of a task) and implies much more than a model that calls for a

finished form in teaching.

Several times I have been invited to teach a special topic course on the relation between art and technology and each time I have opted to discuss the topic with students by moving freely along the boundaries of the two domains.

When is a computer to be considered a medium and how is it different from traditional media? Given that computation is a universal technical language, could software be considered a language specific to the digital age? Would you not be venturing into the field of art theory, if you were to try to identify specific aesthetics of computation? Developing a process-oriented understanding of information, such as that argued for in process philosophy (Ashboou Otterstrom, 2015), as well as in dynamical systems theory and computability theory, seems to encourage plural computing vernaculars and epistemic dilemmas.

How might a course on the relation between literature and computation help us get a better and more complicated understanding of how we think about (digital) media today? And how could a fictional experience of aesthetic relations between literature and computation be structured? This is the provocation for a series of speculative lectures on aesthetics, the relation between the humanities and adjunct to the eighth issue of Electronic Inquiry.

I will reconstruct my own efforts to address this issue, which also involves writing from a position of hostility or antagonism towards computational media and, consequently, writing as/for an other.

Let me know.

“My goal is to teach it at a more advanced level, where we have basic programming skills and the maturity to do conceptual work but we also have access to the big data collections of the internet.

Let us know in the comments!

[1] Gilles Deleuze, “Different Spots and Fields”, in The de Man Reader, 54.

What would the goals of such a course be? Is there such a thing as “algorithmic aesthetics” in the singular, or just many versions of algorithmic aesthetics?.

Arendt: I think the most important lesson is: look very closely at what the computer does.

Some of my students decided to go in that direction, making practical experiments in low-level programming languages as a way of exploring the gap between high modernist art media and digital repetition machines.

That is the question I will be paying attention to throughout this text.

WikiFeud as poetry.

I'm not a teacher anymore, but I did teach algorithms before, in mathematics and computer science programs.

A student, Lysandros Ransam, a software developer who is taking my Artificial Intuition course at CalArts and OCAD U in Toronto, has contributed an awesome blog post that I thought might generate some ideas.

In fact, the training of an algorithmic thinker requires that the students find their own questions and paths, so I sketched out a possible course together with my colleague Anna Munster.

SA: In the article I say that you need to start from epistemology and aesthetics and philosophy, meaning the study of the nature of knowing and experience.

Would you treat computational creations like artworks? How do you assess aesthetic qualities in a machine-made object? How would you handle a program which is specifically designed to kill the notion of aesthetic experience? Computational aesthetica rethinks the relationship between human and machine intelligence, reconceptualising algorithms as life-forms, and their creations as material embodiments of a distinct aesthetic reasoning.

How would you structure a course on alien aesthetics?

Lets take the idea of goo, which began as a derogatory term for human waste and is now the term for self-replicating nano/gigolo-machines as popularized in Olaf Stapledons novel Star Maker, in which 'the tribes of the homeless worlds, possessing no fixed bodies themselves, were less hampered by the need to create worlds in which they could pursue their own private purposes.

There are no real grounds for the question "What is an aesthetic of other worlds and extraterrestrial life?" outside of various reconstructions of aesthetics in relation to the alien.

I like this question because it pivots from aesthetic practice to aesthetic experience.

What texts, images, and strategies would you deploy to open up this utterly fantastic question? Like the octopuses in Smith's text, what unfamiliars, unknowns, and un-answers would twist out of these new scholarly/ creative/cultural approaches? And, with growing attention from all fields to topics like environmental theory, environmental humanities, and environmental philosophy, how will aesthetic approaches that insist on thinking the strange interface of aesthetics and ethics breathe new life into the ongoing debate regarding our double bind with respect to

the planet, its inhabitants, and ourselves? We look forward to receiving your thirty-odd page submission, which should be theoretically rigorous, eminently readable, and, like Sei Shonagon's beloved shine, æthereal. . . .

Or, to rephrase the question, how could one even begin to teach a course on alien aesthetics in such a way that the very concept of alienness is problematized?

On the level of disciplinary discourse, part of the answer would involve re-evaluating the concept of aesthetics proper to aesthetics as a specific field of study, arguing that at its core the core operations of aesthetics are located in the production and consumption of alienness—something that Hegel and Kittler contended with, along with most thinkers in the field since.