Calendar and Readings (July 12)

Lecture 1

Most of this "lecture" will be taken up with a showing of the film *Code Rush,* which follows several employees at Netscape in the year that they release Mozilla, up to the point at which they were acquired by AOL. The 55-minute documentary fits nicely into this point in the course for two reasons. First, it contains several clips that offer important insights into the power of the Microsoft monopoly we've been discussing in class. Second, it raises disturbing questions about the nature of work in the high-tech world. There are, of course, many exciting aspects to life in the fast lane of Silicon Valley, but it is worth thinking about what might be lost.

Lecture 2

I want to begin a discussion of cyberspace culture that focuses on the prominence of the "cyberlibertarian" philosophy that Langdon Winner and Paulina Borsook describe in their articles, and that comes through loud and clear in John Perry Barlow's declaration of independence.

Readings: The following articles: "A Declaration of Independence in Cyberspace," "Cyberselfish," and "Cyberlibertarian myths and the prospects for community."

Reaction paper assignment:

If history is any indication, most of you will end up working for computer/technology companies after you graduate (and, even if that is not the direction you hope to follow, you probably know enough people who are heading in that direction to put yourself in their shoes.)

Back on September 30, 2013, the New York Times Sunday Book Review (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/magazine/dave-eggers-fiction.html) contained an excerpt from Dave Egger's book, The Circle, a dystopian view (satire?) of examining working in Silicon Valley for a prominent tech company. If you have not read this book or this except, I encourage you to take a read now. As I read this book, it reminded me of the movie Brazil, with the corporation taking the place of the government.

I'd like you to write about one or more of these questions: To what extent does the expected working of long hours at your tech company, coupled with the seeming loss of the separation between your personal and working/professional life (with its associated loss of individual privacy) a concern? Do the amazing benefits (high salary, stock options, free meals, massages, oil changes, etc.) and interesting projects sufficiently offset these seemingly negative aspects about working in technology? (This book, as well as the movie Code Rush, focuses on Silicon Valley, but I have been told that the technology scene in Beijing is similar.) What excites you about the idea of working in the industry during what seems likely to be another boom time? What fears and concerns do you have? How might you defend or attack this technology work culture from an Act-Utilitarian, or from a Rule-Utilitarian perspective?