

POLS 4071 3  
GS/POLS 5071 3

# Politics of Cyberspace

2011

Class Time: T 11:30-14:30

Class Location: MC 113

Professor: Shannon Bell

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Office Hours: T 15:00-16:30  
W 15:00-16:30  
Th 15:00-16:30

Course Website: <https://moodle10.yorku.ca/moodle/course/view.php?id=19628>

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## ***Course Description***

As a component of the information revolution and globalization, cyber, in all of its manifesting forms - digital technology, internet, cyborg (cybernetic organism), social networks, artificial life (AL), artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality, prosthetics, robotics - has since 1989 rapidly emerged as a feature of contemporary politics. The cyber is subject to competing claims regarding its positive and negative impact on power relations and individual identities.

This course focuses on a variety of interpretive approaches that are applied to cyber and cyberspace – communication theory, Marxism, feminism, postmodernism, posthumanism, international relations, identity theory, information theory, technological determinism, political economy.

The characterization of cyber and cyberspace as a new medium and its political significance will be emphasized. The course will examine the influence of “non-place” on democratic development, social power and interaction, as well as new identity formation.

## **Grade Assignment**

Seminar Presentation Questions	15%
One Presentation for Hons; Two Presentations for MA	
Discussion Forum: (Moodle course website)	12.5% weekly postings
Weekly Seminar Participation:	12.5%
Paper & Film abstract:	5% <b>Due March 17</b>
Essay (20 pages, 5000 words)	40% <b>Due April 28</b>
2 minute film	15% <b>Due April 28</b>

**Seminar Presentation** consists of a one paragraph summary of the selected reading and two discussion questions derived from reading. Master's students do two presentations. The seminar discussion questions should be posted on the Moodle Course Discussion Board by Wednesday @ 20:00 and presented in seminar.

Moodle Discussion Forum – post :

- 1) seminar questions;
  - 2) observations/comments/musing (written, images, audio files) regarding issues relating to cyborgology.
- Discussion Board posting can be done daily, weekly.  
The aim is to have an interactive discussion as well as posting your own observations

**Paper and Film Abstract:** A one page abstract outlining the subject of the paper and film and the course material to be used.

**Essay Assignment.** The aim of the essay is to engage course material on the topic of your choice relating to the politics of cyberspace, digital life and/or posthuman identity. A minimum of six texts on the course must be integrated into your essay.

Film

A 2-minute film which accompanies the essay. The film can be shot on a phone camera, digital still camera, video camera, or computer web cam and it can use found footage as long as the footage is altered by you.

If you are using a pc the Windows Movie Maker can be downloaded free from [http://www.soft82.com/download/Windows/Windows\\_Movie\\_Maker](http://www.soft82.com/download/Windows/Windows_Movie_Maker)

If you are using an Apple then use iMovie or Final Cut Express.

The film is to be processed as a QuickTime DVD quality.

The film is to be posted on <http://www.youtube.com/> or <http://www.vimeo.com/> with a link on the course Moodle Discussion Forum.

## **Books**

Judy Wajcman, 2004. *TechnoFeminism* (Polity)

Peter Singer, 2009. *Wired for War* (Penguin Press)

Bernard Steigler, 2010. *For A New Critique of Political Economy* (Polity)

## **eBooks** (on Moodle 4071/5071 site)

Arthur Kroker & Michael Weinstein. *Data Trash. The Theory of the Virtual Class*

Lev Manovich, *Software Takes Command*

also available on <http://lab.softwarestudies.com/2009/06/publications.html>

Matt Mason, *The Pirate's Dilemma*

Andre Nusselder, *Interface Fantasy: A Lacanian Cyborg Ontology*

Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb*

McKenzie Wark. *A Hacker Manifesto*

## **eArticles**

Rachel Armstrong, 'Systems Evolution & Bio Feminism: Move Over Darwin,'  
<http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=621>

Michael Betancourt, 'Immaterial Value and Scarcity in Digital Capitalism,'  
<http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=652>

Nick Dyer-Witford and Greig de Peuter  
'Empire@Play: Virtual Games and Global Capitalism,'  
<http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=608>

Christopher Parsons, 'Moving Across the Internet: Code-Bodies, Code-Corpses,  
and Network Architecture,' <http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=642>

Leon Tan, 'The Pirates Bay – Countervailing power and the problem of state  
organized crime,' [www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=672](http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=672)

Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto* (moodle course site)

## **Seminar & Reading Schedule**

**Jan. 6** Introduction and Presentation Selection

**Jan. 13** Mason, *The Pirate's Dilemma* (ebook on Moodle 4071/5071 site)  
\_\_\_\_\_ all

**Jan. 20** Manovich, **Software Takes Command** (ebook on Moodle 4071/5071 site)

Introduction: Software Studies for Beginners \_\_\_\_\_ 1  
Part 1: Inventing Cultural Software, Ch.1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2  
Ch. 2 Understanding Metamedia \_\_\_\_\_ 3  
Part 2: Software Takes Command, Ch.3 \_\_\_\_\_ all  
Ch.4 Universal Capture \_\_\_\_\_ 4  
Part 3: Webware, Ch.5 \_\_\_\_\_ all  
Ch.6 Social Media: Tactics as Strategies \_\_\_\_\_ 5

**Jan. 27** Kroker & Weinstein, **Data Trash** (ebook on Moodle 4071/5071 site)

Ch.s 1&2, \_\_\_\_\_ 6  
Ch.s 3&4, \_\_\_\_\_ 7

Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter  
Empire@Play: Virtual Games and Global Capitalism  
<http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=608> \_\_\_\_\_ 8

Christopher Parsons, 'Moving Across the Internet: Code-Bodies, Code-Corpses, and Network Architecture,' <http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=642> \_\_\_\_\_ 9

**Feb. 3** Virilio, **The Information Bomb** (ebook on Moodle 4071/5071 site)

Chs. 1-3 \_\_\_\_\_ 10  
Chs. 4-6 \_\_\_\_\_ 11  
Chs. 7-9 \_\_\_\_\_  
Chs. 10-14 \_\_\_\_\_ 12

Leon Tan, 'The Pirates Bay – Countervailing power and the problem of state organized crime' [www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=672](http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=672) \_\_\_\_\_ 13

**Feb. 10** Steigler, **For A New Critique of Political Economy** (print book) (pp.3-70)

1. A warning &  
2. Introduction \_\_\_\_\_ 14  
3. Pharmacology of the Proletariat \_\_\_\_\_ 15  
4. To Work \_\_\_\_\_ 16

Michael Betancourt, 'Immaterial Value and Scarcity in Digital Capitalism'  
<http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=652> \_\_\_\_\_ 17

**Feb. 17** Singer, *Wired for War* (print book)

Chs. 1&2	18
Chs. 3&4	all
Chs. 5&6	19
Chs. 7&8	all
Chs. 9&10	20
Chs. 11&12	21

**Mar. 3** Singer, *Wired for War* (print book)

Chs. 13&14	22
Chs. 15&16	23
Chs. 17&18	all
Chs. 19&20	24
Chs. 21&22	25

**Mar. 10** Wajcman, **TechnoFeminism** (print book)

Ch. 1, Male Designs on Technology &	
Ch. 2, Techno Science Redefined	26
Ch. 3, Virtual Gender	all
Ch. 4, The Cyborg Solution	27
Ch. 5, Metaphor and Materiality	28

Rachel Armstrong, *Systems Evolution & Bio Feminism: Move Over Darwin*

<a href="http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=621">http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=621</a>	29
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Donna Haraway, <i>A Cyborg Manifesto</i>	30
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**Mar. 17** Nusselder, **Interface Fantasy: A Lacanian Cyborg Ontology**

(ebook on Moodle 4071/5071 site)

Ch. 1, Question Concerning Technology & Desire &	
Ch. 2, Technologization of Human Virtuality	31
Ch. 3, Fantasy and the Virtual Mind &	
Ch. 4, Cyborg Space	32

**Mar.24** Nusselder, **Interface Fantasy: A Lacanian Cyborg Ontology**

Ch. 5, Displays of the Real &	
Ch. 6, Mediate Enjoyment, Enjoyed Media	33

**Feminism 3.0**

<http://feminism3point0.blogspot.com/> and links

Wark, ***A Hacker Manifesto*** (ebook on Moodle 4071/5071 site)  
Abstraction, Class, Education &  
Hacking, History, Information \_\_\_\_\_ 34  
Nature, Production, Property \_\_\_\_\_ 35

**Mar. 30** Wark, ***A Hacker Manifesto*** (ebook on Moodle 4071/5071 site)  
Abstraction, Class, Education &  
Representation, Revolt, State \_\_\_\_\_ 36  
Subject, Surplus, Vector &  
World, Writings \_\_\_\_\_ 37

**Plus**

Presentation of abstracts.