Media Archaeology 2020

ENGL 603: Media Archaeology

January-April 2020
1:15-4:30 Tuesdays
3 credits

Darren Wershler (Concordia University)

Concordia Department of English course page

Course Description

What is media archaeology? As Jussi Parikka describes, it is a subfield of media history that scrutinizes contemporary media culture through investigations of past media technologies and creative media practices. Media archaeology takes a special interest in recondite and forgotten apparatuses, practices and inventions. Media Archaeology also encourages opening up and tinkering with the "black boxes" of media technologies, in order to develop a relationship to them that is not based on being a "consumer" or "end user." At an historical moment when our own media technologies become obsolete with increasing rapidity, the study of residual forms and practices provides valuable context for analysis, and perhaps the possibility for the emergence of something new.

This course deals with the theory, current practice, and possible trajectories of media archaeology as a discipline. Our home base will be the research collection of the Residual Media Depot, a project of the Media History Research Centre at the Milieux Institute. Work will consist of a mix of writing, thinking, talking, and hands-on encounters with materials from the collection, according to student skills and interests.

Course Structure

For the first time, beginning in January 2020, this course will run as a full-semester graduate course, in three-hour blocks on Tuesdays (1:15-3:30). We will employ a “flipped” classroom model, conducting the majority of reading and discussion in the first hour of the meeting and online, and using the remaining two hours each week for student-driven research time.

Course work will consist of a brief, “probe”-style seminar presentation; a term project; and a final class colloquium presentation.

Students will deliver one probe each, during the first hour of a course meeting at some point during term. A probe has two components: one written (~1500 words), one oral (10 minutes). The written component will triangulate some aspect of the reading that week with a particular research object and the student’s own research interests. The week before delivering their presentation to the group, students will post the written version on the class website. All other students will be expected to have read it along with the relevant readings for that week. The oral component is an extension of the written work, but will consist of something other than the student reading the text of the report (examples might include a reassessment of a particular argument; any new ideas that have occurred to you since writing the probe; a demonstration; etc.).

In the first weeks of the course, students will identify a particular research project that relates to some aspect of the Depot’s research collection. The overall point is to instil in students a sense of themselves as active researchers as well as consumers of scholarly texts. While working on their projects, students will have access to the Depot collection, some support from Depot Research Assistants, plus any other necessary supplies that the Depot can provide. Projects might

include, but are not limited to, the following:

- visual studies of the collection’s hardware
- readings of boxes, manuals and other textual materials
- platform studies of individual consoles in the collection
- media archaeologies, genealogies or geologies of particular consoles
- software studies of particular programs supported by the Depot’s machines (e.g. ROM hacks)
- modding of a particular console (either supplied by the student or purchased for them to work on while here)
- a forensic examination of a particular machine or machines
- experiments with the Depot’s upscaling and signal processing equipment and displays
- fieldwork (e.g. a trip to the old Coleco factory, which is now an office loft, or trips to local retro stores, or arcades)
- white papers on the use of particular equipment in the Depot (e.g. how to set up RF consoles like the Atari 2600 or 5200 for classroom use)
- work on the database of the Depot collection
- using the collection to test media-archaeological theory against real technology
- building an emulator, like a Retropie
- building an upscaler, a joystick or a Supergun (a home-made console that plays old arcade boards)
- doing some online bibliographic work around retro media collections, archives and labs

Students will have access to a range of Milieux workspaces and equipment during this period.

The final class meeting will consist of a conference-style colloquium, where seminar members present their term research in the form of a 15-20 minute paper.

Course readings will be finalized in early August, and members will be expected to arrive ready to discuss this material. Each student will be responsible for doing all the readings in advance of each meeting. We will make use of the weekly individual "probe"-style blog posts to structure our conversation. In order to provide further context, all seminar members will also spend time locating media examples for in-class screenings in order to provide further contextual information.

Readings

Readings will be circulated before the course begins. All seminar participants will arrive having completed the readings in advance. The readings themselves will consist in part of major texts from media archaeology, material media studies, cultural technique theory and articulation theory, and in part of new work that the instructors are preparing.

Schedule (TENTATIVE)

Jan 7 – Introduction

Jan 14 – Media Archaeology: Surveying the Field 1

Goddard, Michael. "Opening Up The Black Boxes: Media Archaeology, 'Anarchaeology' and Media Materiality." _New Media & Society_ 17.11 (2015): 1761-76

Huhtamo, Erkki. "Dismantling the Fairy Engine: Media Archaeology as Topos Study." *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*. Ed. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. 27-47.

Parikka, Jussi. "Media Theory and New Materialism" and "Archive Dynamics." *What is Media Archaeology?* Malden: Polity Press, 2012. 63-90; 113-35.

Jan 21 – Media Archaeology: Surveying the Field 2

Elsaesser, Thomas. “Media Archaeology as Symptom.” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14:2 (2016): 181-215.

Mattern, Shannon. “Introduction: Ether/Ore.” *Code and Clay, Data and Dirt: Five Thousand Years of Urban Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017. 11-42.

Skågeby, Jörgen, and Lina Rahm. “What is Feminist Media Archaeology?” *communication +1* 7.1 (October 2018): 5-18

Jan 28 – Closer to the Metal: Media-Archaeological Method

Apperley, Tom, and Jussi Parikka. “Platform Studies’ Epistemic Threshold.” *Games and Culture* 1.21 (2015): 1-21.

Emerson, Lori, libi striegl. “Anarchive as Technique | The Media Archaeology Lab’s OLPC Mesh Network Project.” *The International Journal of Digital Humanities* (April 2019): 1-12.

Ernst, Wolfgang. “Media Archaeography: Method and Machine Versus History and Narrative of Media.” *Digital Memory and the Archive*. Ed. Jussi Parikka. Electronic Mediations 39. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 55-80.

Sayers, Jentery. “The Relevance of Remaking.” *Mlab: Maker Lab in the Humanities*. Victoria: University of Victoria, November 12, 2014 http://maker.uvic.ca/remaking/

Feb 4 – Relative Beginnings: Foucault’s Archaeology of Discourse

Foucault, Michel. “The Archeology of Knowledge.” *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1961-1984*, Semiotext(E) Double Agents Series, Ed. Lotringer, Sylvère, New York: Semiotext(e), Columbia U., 1996. 45-56.

Foucault, Michel. “On the Archaeology of the Sciences:

Response to the Epistemology Circle." [1968]. *Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*. [1994]. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 vol. 2. Ed. James D. Faubion. Trans. Robert Hurley and others. New York: The New Press, 1998. Series Ed. Paul Rabinow. 297-333.

Feb 11 – Archaeologies of the Present: Kittler's Discourse Networks

Geoghegan, Bernard. "After Kittler: On the Cultural Techniques of Recent German Media Theory." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30.6 (2013): 66–82.

Kittler, Friedrich. "Afterword to the Second Printing." *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*. Trans. Michael Metteer, with Chris Cullens. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990. 369-72.

–. "Introduction." *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter.* 1986. Trans. Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey and Michael Wutz. Writing Science. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999. 1-19.

Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey. "Siren Recursions." *Kittler Now: Current Perspectives in Kittler Studies*. Ed. Stephen Sale and Laura Sailsbury.Theory Now. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015. 71-94.

Feb 18 – Deep Time, Short Circuits, Residuality: Media Temporalities

Acland, Charles R. "Introduction." *Residual Media*. Ed. Charles Acland. Minneapolis ; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. xiii-xvii.

Ernst, Wolfgang. "History or Resonance?" *Sonic Time Machines: Explicit Sound, Sirenic Voices, and Implicit Sonicity*. Recursions. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016. 85-106.

Krämer, Sybille. “The Cultural Techniques of Time Axis Manipulation: On Friedrich Kittler’s Conception of Media.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 23.7-8 (2006): 93-109.

Zeilinski, Siegfried. “Introduction: The Idea of a Deep Time of the Media.” *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*. Electronic Culture—History, Theory, Practice. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006.

Feb 25 – MIDTERM BREAK (NO CLASS)

Mar 3 – Betrayed by History: Imaginary Media and Dead Media

Brabazon, Tara. “Dead Media: Obsolescence and Redundancy in Media History.” *First Monday* 18.7 (2013). https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/4466/3701

Kluitenberg, Eric. “On the Archaeology of Imaginary Media.” *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*. Ed. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. 48-69.

Zielinski, Siegfried. “Modelling Media for Ignatius Loyola: A Case Study on Athanasius Kircher’s World Apparatus between the Imaginary and the Real.” Trans. Nicholas Grindell. *Book of Imaginary Media: Excavating the Dream of the Ultimate Communication Medium*. Ed. Eric Kluitenberg. Rotterdam/London: NAi/Art Data, 2006. 28-55.

Mar 10 – Zombie Media: Media Archaeology and Art Practice

Hertz, Garnet, and Jussi Parikka. “Zombie Media: Circuit Bending Media Archaeology into an Art Method.” *Leonardo* 45.5 (2012): 424-30.

Parikka, Jussi. “Inventing Pasts and Futures: Speculative

Design and Media Archaeology." *New Media Archaeologies*. Ed. Ben Roberts and Mark Goodall. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. 205-32.

Strauven, Wanda. "Media Archaeology as Laboratory for History Writing and Theory Making." *New Media Archaeologies*. Ed. Ben Roberts and Mark Goodall. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. 23-44.

Mar 17 – Media Infrastructures

Parks, Lisa, and Nicole Starosielski, eds. "Introduction." *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures: The Geopolitics of Information*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015. 1-30.

Peters, John Durham. "Infrastructuralism: Media as Traffic Between Nature and Culture." *Traffic: Media as Infrastructures and Cultural Practice*s. Ed. Marion Näser-Lather and Christoph Neubert. Leiden: Brill/Rodopi, 2015. 31-49.

Star, Susan Leigh. "The Ethnography of Infrastructure." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43 (1999): 377-90.

Mar 24 – Before and After Media: Media Geology and Electronic Waste

Kenny, C., Liboiron, M., Wylie, S. (2019). "Seeing Power with a Flashlight: Making and Doing Politics in Classroom Pedagogy with DIY Open Science Hardware." *Social Studies of Science* 49(1): 3-28. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/03063127188232 82

Lepawsky, Josh. "Conclusion." *Reassembling Rubbish: Worlding Electronic Waste*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018. 159-78.

Liboiron, Max. "Why Discard Studies?" *Discard Studies: Social Studies of Waste, Pollution & Externalities*.

05/07/2014. https://discardstudies.com/2014/05/07/why-discard-studies/

Parikka, Jussi. “An Alternative Deep Time of the Media.” *A Geology of Media*. Electronic Mediations Volume 46. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. 29-58.

Pratt, Suzanne. “Media Archaeology.” *Discard Studies Compendium*. https://discardstudies.com/discard-studies-compendium/#Mediaarcheology

Mar 31 – If You Can’t Fix It You Don’t Own It: Sustainability and Repair

iFixit. “Right to Repair.” https://www.ifixit.com/Right-to-Repair/Intro

Jackson, Steven L. “Rethinking Repair.” Gillespie, Tarleton, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot, eds. *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014. 221-39.

Tanenbaum, Joshua G., Amanda M. Williams, Audrey Desjardins, Karen Tanenbaum. “Democratizing Technology: Pleasure, Utility And Expressiveness In DIY And Maker Practice.” CHI ’13 Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 2013. http://delivery.acm.org/10.1145/2490000/2481360/p2603-tanenbaum.pdf?ip=96.21.242.192&id=2481360&acc=AUTHOR%2DIZED&key=4D4702B0C3E38B35%2E4D4702B0C3E38B35%2E4D4702B0C3E38B35%2E3E5200C94D19B53A&__acm__=1564072997_3dd8d81d82cfcd2c2f1a1a2a4967facc

April 7 – Class Colloquium

presentation of term work in conference form

Evaluation

Students will receive 3 credits for this course. They will be

graded according to the standard Concordia grading scale, based on the quality of their probe (15% written, 15% oral presentation), contributions to discussion (20%), and the term project and colloquium presentation (50%).

Application Process

Interested students should contact Andre Dubois (grad.english@concordia.ca), the Concordia English Department Graduate Program Assistant