

# Syllabus: Media Archaeology 2016

## ENGL 603: Media Archeology

August 1-5, 2016

3 credits

Darren Wershler (Concordia University)

Stephanie Boluk (UC Davis)

Patrick LeMieux (UC Davis)

### 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. 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 object of study will be the research collection of the new Residual Media Depot 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 preferences.

### Structure

This intensive one-week graduate course (5 days, Monday – Friday 9 am – 5 pm) will run for the first time in August

2016. It will consist of approximately 14 graduate students (PhD level preferred), 7 from Concordia and 7 from the EU and the USA. Dr. Darren Wershler (CURC in Media & Contemporary Literature), Dr. Stephanie Boluk (UC Davis) and Dr. Patrick LeMieux (UC Davis) will lead the course.

During the actual course, mornings will follow a seminar model. Course members will receive their reading packages digitally in July, and they will be expected to arrive ready to discuss this material. We will make frequent use of breakout groups of various kinds, concept mapping and daily individual 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.

Afternoons will consist of work time for a collective project in applied media archaeology. This project will take the form of a “book sprint”; our goal will be to produce a working first draft by the final afternoon of the week. Our theoretical touchstones will come from the morning readings. We will decide collectively how to structure the form and content of the draft, and what its eventual publication venue will be. Students will have access to a full range of Milieux workspaces and equipment during this period.

## **Students**

Interested students will be invited to submit a short (500-750 word) statement outlining their field of study, their projected doctoral project, and a description of how this course fits into their intellectual program. Please send all queries to [d.wershler@concordia.ca](mailto:d.wershler@concordia.ca) ASAP.

## **Evaluation**

Eligible 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 contributions to the

morning seminar (50%) and their research and writing for the book sprint (50%). This will take the form of daily working notes (blog entries) of 750-1000 words per day.

## **Readings**

Readings consist of major texts from media archaeology, material media studies, cultural technique theory, video game studies and articulation theory. All seminar participants will arrive having completed the primary readings in advance. We have made some secondary readings available as well, and will add more over the duration of the course.

### **00: Media History and Media Archaeology**

Gitelman, Lisa. "Introduction: Media As Historical Subjects." *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006. 1-22.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. "A Farewell to Interpretation." Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich, and Karl Ludwig Pfeiffer, eds. *Materialities of Communication. Writing Science*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994. 389-402.

Parikka, Jussi. "Introduction: Cartographies of the Old and the New." *What Is Media Archaeology?* Cambridge/Malden: Polity Press, 2012. 1-18.

Sterne, Jonathan. "Rearranging the files: On Interpretation in Media History." *The Communication Review* 13.1 (2010): 75-87.

### **01: Working with Collections**

Baudrillard, Jean. "The Non-Functional System, or Subjective Discourse. A Marginal System: Collecting." *The System of Objects*. Trans. James Benedict. London/New York: Verso, 1996. 85-106.

Brennan, Sheila. "Making Room by Letting Go: A Look at the Ephemerality of Collections – A Program of the National

Trust for Historic Preservation." National Trust for Historic Places. August 12, 2014. <http://forum.savingplaces.org/connect/blogs/blogviewer?BlogKey=2b1583-662f-4ae3-8b85-643152d959f1&tab=recentcommunityblogsdashboard>

Lowood, Henry, ed. *Before It's Too Late: A Digital Game Preservation White Paper*. *American Journal of Play* (Fall 2009): 139-66.

Prown, Jules David. "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method." *Winterthur Portfolio* 17.1 (Spring 1982): 1-19.

## SECONDARY

Fleming, E. McClung. "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model." *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1974): 153-73.

Guins, Raiford. "Museified." *Game After: A Cultural Study of Video Game Afterlife*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014. 31-73.

Latour, Bruno. "A New Separation of Powers." *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. 91-127.

Pearce, Susan M., ed. *Interpreting Objects and Collections*. London/New York: Routledge, 1994.

## 02: Gaming Platforms

Hertz, Garnet and Jussi Parikka. "Zombie Media: Circuit Bending Media Archaeology into an Art." *Leonardo* 45.5 (2012): 424-430.

Galloway, Alexander. "Countergaming." *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Altice, Nathan. "Platforming." *I Am Error: The Nintendo*

*Family Computer/entertainment System Platform*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015.

## SECONDARY

Dyer-Witheford, Nick and Greig de Peuter. "Games of Multitude." *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Flanagan, Mary. "Designing for Critical Play." *Critical Play: Radical Game Design*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009. Print.

Kirschenbaum, Matthew. "'Every Contact Leaves a Trace': Storage, Inscription, and Computer Forensics." *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

Montfort, Nick and Ian Bogost. "Afterword on Platform Studies." *Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.

## 03: Media Infrastructures

Parikka, Jussi. "Preface," "Materiality: Grounds of Media and Culture," "An Alternative Deep Time of the Media," "Dust and the Exhausted Life," "Fossil Futures," "Afterword: So-Called Nature." *A Geology of Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015. vii-xi, 1-28, 29-58, 83-108, 109-137, 138-141.

Nakamura, Lisa. "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture." *American Quarterly* 66.4 (2014): 919-941.

Starosielski, Nicole. "Against Flow." *The Undersea Network*. Durham: Duke UP. 2015. 1-30.

Pasquinelli, Matteo. "Google's PageRank Algorithm: A Diagram of Cognitive Capitalism and the Rentier of the Common

Intellect.” Konrad Becker, Felix Stalder, eds. *Deep Search*. London: Transaction Publishers, 2009. <http://matteopasquinelli.com/google-pagerank-algorithm/>

#### **04: The Cultural Life of Signal Processing**

Carey, James W. “A Cultural Approach to Communication.” *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. Revised Edition. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2009. 11–28.

Ernst, Wolfgang. “Discontinuities” and “Toward A Media Archive of Sonic Articulations.” *Cultural Memory and the Archive*. Ed. Jussi Parikka. *Electronic Mediations* 39. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 113-40 and 172-83.

Marvin, Carolyn. “Introduction” and “Inventing the Expert.” *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988. 3-62.

Retro RGB.

#### **SECONDARY**

Grossberg, Lawrence. “On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall.” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10.2 (1986): 45-60.

Kittler, Friedrich. “The History of Communication Media.” *ctheory* (1996): 7-30.

Shannon, Claude E., and Warren Weaver. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964.

Marvin, Carolyn. “Experts, Black Boxes and Artifacts: New Categories in the Social History of Electric Media.” *\_Annenberg School of Communication Departmental Papers\_*. *\_REthinking Communication. v2: Paradigm Exemplars\_*. Ed.

Brenda Dervin, Lawrence Grossberg, Barbara J. O'Keefe, Ellen Wartella. Sage: Newbury Park/London/New Delhi, 1989. 188-98.  
<[http://repository.upenn.edu/asc\\_papers/191](http://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/191)>

Parikka, Jussi. "Archival Media Theory: An Introduction to Wolfgang Ernst's Media Archaeology." Ernst, Wolfgang. *Digital Memory and the Archive*. Electronic Mediations 39. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 1-22.