E38.2036, Evolution of Technology: Histories, Bodies and the Senses

Allen Feldman
Wednesdays: 4:55-7:05.

In formulating histories of technology, the problematic term has been "technology" and not "history" which has been taken for granted as a uni-directional and progressive temporal trajectory measured by technological events and the idea of progress. Temporal structure and direction is often posited as a built into technological and artifactual progression itself so that technological time remains divorced and autonomous from socio-cultural time while inflicting abrupt and violent changes on the latter. However, this course will ask the question how does technological succession and sequencing challenge evolutionary history and how do alternative notions of history and social memory affect our understanding of technology? What happens to history itself when memory is prostheticized? Recent cultural studies approaches have countered the "evolution" of technological mediation with a counter history of the body and the senses. In this framework, the social history of the body and the senses has been advanced as a political anthropology of the mediatization of everyday life and the perceptual history of modernity. Thus, the perception of technological history itself, requires an understanding of the history of perception,

This course will center on comparative readings of key theorists concerned with the political nexus of sensorial embodiment, time, technology, mediatization and modernity. Further, the lectures and discussion will address the methodological strategies of key theorists and thinkers who have challenged conventional notions of modernity, history and technology.

Seminar Requirements and Grading:
- Consistent attendance and participation in class discussion: 25%
- Mid-Term: 25%
- Term Paper based on 10 seminar readings and related class discussions: 20 double spaced pages not including footnotes and bibliography: 50%

Course Resource Materials:

Evolution of Technology Course Reader at New University Copiers, 11 Waverly Place between Greene and Mercer. Tel: 212 473 7369.

Course Documents in Blackboard Website: Evolution of Technology SP05.

Learning Outcomes:
Students who successfully complete the course will be able to demonstrate:
• advanced understanding of research methodologies, vocabularies and procedures appropriate to M.A. level work in Media Ecology

• advanced skills in the application of critical and interpretive vocabularies

• developed research, writing and communication skills

• self-reflexivity as a research practitioner

• developed ability in identifying and addressing research objectives

• knowledge of a range of specific critical vocabularies, debates and concerns focused media, technology, and cultural studies.

**Weeks One- Four: History of Technology and Technologies of History and Memory**

**In the Course Reader**


**On the Blackboard Site: to be downloaded**


Wolfgang Ernst 1994 Arsenals of Memory; the Archi(ve) texture of the Museum

**Week Five- Eight Technologies of the Body and the Senses:**

**In the Course Reader**

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, 1986  Railroad Space and Railroad Time ( pp33-44); Panoramic Travel ( pp 52- 69); The Compartment ( pp70-82). In The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century,. University of California Press.


Michel Foucault. 1978 “The Eye of Power.” Semio-Text. 3.2 6-19.


**On the Blackboard Site: to be downloaded**


**Midterm Exam**

**Week Nine: Objects and Interfaces**

**On the Blackboard Site: to be downloaded**

Boris Aratov 1997 Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing (Toward the Formulation of the Question) October Vol. 81 (Summer pp 119-128.

In Course Reader

**Week Ten: Perpetual Motion and Technological Exhaustion**

In Course Reader


**Week Eleven-Thirteen: A Short History of Shock and the Accident**

In Course Reader


Brigid Doherty1997 We are All Neurasthenics” or, The Trauma of Dada Montage. Critical Inquiry 24 (Autumn). pp. 82-132.


On the Blackboard Site: to be downloaded


Session Fourteen: Discussion and Review.