GRAD-103G-01 Participatory Networks: Emergencies, Tactics, Breakdown

Thursdays 9:00am – 12:00pm

Instructor
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The objective of this course is to introduce an overview of web-based platforms as means through which to explore the cultural, social, political, and economic impact of mediated communication. Hands-on design exercises and experiments are continually framed and examined by critical reflection and discussions. An overview of historical "art for all" and participatory art practices of early net-art and public art practices will show how digital communication and culture have altered the way in which collaboration occurs, changing conventional notions of authorship and giving rise to the collective elaboration of meaning.

The course is the sister course to "4.381/4.366 Introduction to Online Participatory Media: Zones of Emergency – Networks, Tactics, Breakdown" that I am teaching in the MIT Visual Arts Program this Spring 2008. Both courses will be taught with the specific focus on zones of emergency as they pertain to web culture and other related networks. Students will have the opportunity to participate in a public lecture series at MIT entitled *Zones of Emergency*, co-organized with VAP Director Ute Meta Bauer and Lecturer Jae Rhim Lee, through the discussion-based video blog and/or in person, as the schedule permits. Lectures will range from philosophical and cultural understandings of emergency to practical "on the ground" operating organizations to current use of networked technology examining its own breakdown.

Class meetings on Thursdays will be broken into two parts 1) lectures/screenings and 2) debate and short presentation by individual students or groups. Class attendance and participation is mandatory.

We will address three major themes: 1) web as wild archive, 2) agents, users, creators, and 3) tactical opposition and breakdown. A brief description of each theme is described below. These themes will be integrated with the exercises to explore the ways in which participatory practices on the web can promote social critique and change while providing a site for artistic practice.

Course Requirements
This course is multidisciplinary in nature, combining aspects of theory, art, and technology. Students from various disciplines and backgrounds including but not limited to art practice, media studies, computer science, design, architecture, and engineering are encouraged to enroll. While students are not required to have any specialized technical experience, students will be expected to conceptualize, design and test their projects in real-world or virtual scenarios. It is understood that students will produce a range of projects from simple small

scale experiments to large scale participatory projects depending on their skills and interests. Collaboration and group work will be encourages so students can benefit from a cross-disciplinary skill set. In addition to projects, students will be required to do periodic readings and participate in online forums and documentation. Course requirements include: mandatory attendance, completion of the weekly assignments, mid-term and final projects, presentations, and documentation of work completed for the course.

Grading
Total Grade = 15% attendance & class participation + 25% online forums and documentation + 25% midterm + 35% final project.

Reviews
Work in progress reviews will be conducted periodically to allow for peer input and collaborative learning. Final reviews will consist of formal presentations of work, followed by instructor-led critiques and feedback.

Unit 1: Web as Wild Archive
This unit will introduce the decentralized way in which data is structured, stored, distributed and accessed on the internet. Exercises will focus on researching, mining, compiling and representing existing online data with the purpose of examining issues raised by a specific cultural phenomenon, societal condition, or zone of emergency accessible on the web. This unit will include an overview of "art for all" and participatory practices of participation and performance art of the 1960s, early net art, and the history and development of network communication.

Unit 2: Agents, Users, Creators
The second unit will investigate the preconditions, motivations and typologies of participation. Exercises will focus on the distribution of an invitation and the resulting feedback loop generated between artist and respondents in order to gain practical experience of how dialogue and collaboration over the web differs from analog venues. We will look at platform design, affordances, constraints, and the cultural and political effects that they produce. How do synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication differ? What are the necessary conditions for sustained and meaningful online discourse? How can polyglot contributions from many sources form a coherent statement of intent? Exercises will be framed by critical perspectives on the democratization of media, free labor and collectivity.

Unit 3: Tactical Opposition and Breakdown
This final unit will explore how artists and activists have used the web and other networked technology to disrupt systems of government and corporate control, and respond to states of emergency. We will define a set of design principles to rethink how network technology may be used by individuals and ad hoc groups to communicate, deliver content, and propagate messages. How have online social spaces been designed as sites for political rallying and dissent? We will look at the way mobile communication transforms communities where internet access is limited and will explore uses of alternate networks – mesh networks, p2p distribution and SMS. The final project will be designed and implemented alongside this unit.

Schedule

Week 1 **Web as wild archive (in context)**
Feb 21   Course philosophy and expectations with overview of three units, introductions with backgrounds and interests
Slide lecture on history of participation in art and performance, net art and early network communication
In class exercise: collaborative profile
Assign exercise #1: Understanding complexity, scope and scale. Define research direction.
Readings:
> Bruce Sterling, The Hacker Crackdown, Part 1: Crashing the System, 1994
> Bertolt Brecht – The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication, 1926

Week 2 **Networks and the social sphere**
Feb 28   Slide presentation and discussion on web as the social sphere, democratization of media, collectivity, and current practices
Please come to class with **exercise #1: part one – zone of emergency write-up** expressing what you would like to focus on.
Readings:
> Joseph Beuys – I am looking for field character, 1973
> Bettina Funcke – Urgency, 2004
> Claire Bishop – Participation, p 10-13, 2006

Week 3 **Authorship, authority, and anonymity**
Mar 6   Students present **exercise #1: part two – composition** followed by critique and discussion of readings.
In class video creening of Zone of Emergency lecture by Mark Tribe
Readings:
> Roland Barthes – The Death of the Author, 1968
> Jaron Lanier – Digital Maoism: The Hazards of the New Online Collectivism, 2006
> Many-to-Many – Reactions to Digital Maoism: Many-to-many, 2006

Week 4 **Concepts in collective circuits**
Mar 13   Slide presentation and discussion on web as the social sphere, democratization of media, collectivity, and current practices
Workshop on web technology, platforms (html, php, ror, databases)
Readings:
> André Breton – Excerpts from What is Surrealism?, 1978
> Jürgen Habermas – "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," 1997
> Kevin Kelly – Out of Control, Chapter 2: Hive Mind, 1994

Week 5 **Labor and economics on the web**
Mar 20   Workshop with Burak Arikan on creative networks
Students present **first round prototypes** for review.
Readings:
> Tiziana Terranova – "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," 2003
> Yochai Benkler – The Wealth of Networks, Ch. 6., 2006
> Georges Bataille – The Accursed Share, Volume 1: Consumption, 1949

* This syllabus may change as the course evolves according to the interest of the students. An updated version will be distributed. People with a * by their name need to be confirmed.

Week 6
Mar 27

Spring Break

Week 7
Apr 3

Gamers, hactivists

Discussion of readings. In class planning and work session.
Assign exercise #2: design a transaction between two or more people related to your zone of emergency, document the transaction
Readings:

> Manuel Castells – Excerpt from The Rise of the Network Society, 2000
> MIchel de Certeau – The Practice of Everyday Life, 1980

Week 8
Apr 10

Alternative networks, power, mobility

Presentation and workshop by Tad Hirsh* on emergency response using technology (SMS)
Review exercise #2
Readings:

> Peter Bürger – The Negation of the Autonomy of Art, 2002
> Henry Jenkins – Excerpt from Convergence Culture, 2006
> Charles Perrow – Normal Accidents, p.15-32, 1999

Week 9
Apr 17

Individual meetings to **review progress**
Readings:

> Mel Chin – "My Relation to Joseph Beuys Is Overrated," 2001
> John Maeda – Laws of Simplicity: #6 Context, #8 Trust, #9 Failure, 2006

Week 10
Apr 24

Networks, tactics, breakdown

Screening of Marjetica Potrc – Urgent architecture
Discussion of lecture and reading. Strategize for launching final projects
Readings:

> Daniel Kimmage – Iraqi Insurgent Media, 2007
> CAE – Excerpt from The Electronic Disturbance, 1994

Week 11
May 1

Tactical media

Discussion of lecture and readings
Group work
Readings:

> Donna Haraway – Cyborg Manifesto, 1985
> Julian Dibbell – Rape in Cyberspace, 1993

Week 12
May 8

Embodied networks

Workshop with Kelly Dobson* on embodied networks
production/individual meetings
Student presentations of final project progress

Week 13
May 15

Final Review – opportunity to join MIT students for show / party

Reading List – Extended

Benkler, Yochai. The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Bishop, Claire, ed. Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006.

Georges Bataille, The Accursed Share, Volume 1: Consumption, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 25–6

Jenkins, Henry. Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Scholz, T., Lovink, G., The Art of Free Cooperation, MIT Press publication forthcoming, 2008.

Russell, Adrienne, Mimi lto, et al. Networked Public Culture. http://networkedpublics.org/

Lessig, Lawrence, Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity. New York: The Penguin Press, 2004.

Ruscha, Edward. Leave Any Information At the Signal: Writings, Interviews, Bits, Pages. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

Lovink, Geert. My first recession. Rotterdam : V2/NAi Publishers, c2003.

Oldenburg, R. The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community. New York: Marlowe & Company, 1999.

Goldberg, Roselee. Performance: Live Art Since 1960. London: Thames and Hudson, 1998.

Suriewicki, James. Wisdom of the Crowds. New York: Random House, 2004.

Habermas, J., 1997. "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere." In: Calhoun, C. (ed.) Habermas and the Public Sphere. Cambridge, London: MIT.

Levy, Pierre. Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emergening World in Cyberspace. New York: Plenum Publishing Corporation, 1999.

Maeda, John. Laws of Simplicity. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.

Anderson, Chris. The Long Tail. New York: Hyperion, 2006.

Cox, Christoph, Daniel Warner, ed. Audio Culture. New York: Continuum, 2004.

Castells, Manuel, Mireia Fernandez-Ardévol, Jack Linchuan Qiu, Araba Sey. Mobile Communication and Society: A Global Perspective. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007.

Castells, M. The Rise of the Network Society. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, pp. 1-76.

McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding Media. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964.

Laurel, Brenda. Computers As Theater. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1991.

Breton, André. What is Surrealism? New York: Pathfinder, 1978.

Popper, Frank. The Art of the Electronic Age. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993.

Lévy, Pierre. Collective Intelligence. New York: Plenum Publishing, 1997.

Dune, Anthony, Fiona Raby. Design Noir: The Secret Life of Electronic Objects. Switzerland: Birkhauser, 2001.

Granovetter, Mark. "The Strength of Weak Ties." The American Journal of Sociology, 1973

Kelly, Kevin. Out of Control. New York: Addison-Wesley, 1994.

Terranova, Tiziana. Network Culture: Politics of the Information Age. London: Pluto Press, 2004.

Tiziana Terranova, Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy, http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/technocapitalism/voluntary

Weiser, Mark. "The Computer for the 21st Century." Scientific American, pages 94-110, Sept. 1991.

Winograd, Terry. Interaction Spaces for the 21st Century Computing, pages 259-276. New York: Addison-Wesley, 2000.

McGonigal, Jane. "This Might Be A Game." Diss. U of California, Berkeley, 2006.

Rustema, Reinder. "The Rise and Fall of DDS." Diss. U of Amsterdam, 2001

Goriunova, O., Shulgin, A., From Art on Networks to Art on Platforms (Casestudies: Runme.org, Micromusic.net and Udaff.com) http://molodiez.org/From%20Arton%20NetworkstoArt%20on%20Platforms-1.pdf

Harvey, David. The New Imperialism. Oxford University Press, 2005.

More suggested readings:

Reload: Rethinking Women + Cyberculture (Hardcover) by Mary Flanagan (Editor), Austin Booth (Editor)

History of ARPANET Behind the Net - The untold history of the ARPANET Or - The "Open" History of the ARPANET/ Internet By Michael Hauben http://www.dei.isep.ipp.pt/~acc/docs/arpa.html

On Habermas and the Social Sphere, http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/habermas.htm

Lovink, Geert, Uncanny Networks

Galloway, Alex the exploit, 25-46, 97-101

Kelly, Kevin, Out of Control, Chapter 2: Hive Mind, http://kk.org/outofcontrol/contents.php http://www.kk.org/writings/ online_harpers.pdf

Andrew Whelan, "Do U Produce? Subcultural Capital and Amateur Musicianship in Peer-to-Peer Networks," Cyber- sounds, ed. Michael D. Ayers (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 57-81.

"History of the Internet." the history of computing project. 19 Mar 2001. 17 Jul 2007 <http://www.thocp.net/refer- ence/internet/internet1.htm>.

Kelly, Kevin. "Wired 13.08: We Are the Web." Wired News. 1 Jan 2005. 26 Aug 2007 http://www.wired.com/wired/ archive/13.08/tech_pr.html

http://www.kk.org/writings/online_harpers.pdf

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/817415_chap4.html

Welcome to cyberspace, steward brand WEC

Rosen, Jay. "PressThink: The People Formerly Known as the Audience." Department of Journalism at New York Uni- versity. 27 Jun 2006. 16 Jul 2007 <http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2006/06/27/ppl_frmr. html>.

Lewitt, Sol, Sentences on Conceptual Art, 1969.

cyberactivism" (McCaughey and Ayers, 2003)

Cybersounds : essays on virtual music culture / Michael D. Ayers, editor. at (lewis music library)

Hauben, Michael, The History of ARPANET, Behind the Net