

ART 12B: STEAM TO STEAMPUNK

Summer 2018, Summer 2019

In-person, 1.5-hour lecture, twice weekly

University of California, Irvine

Instructor: Kelly Donahey

Course Description:

Steam to Steampunk is a survey of the intersections between culture, nature, technology, and art since the industrial revolutions of the 19th century. Special attention will be paid to 20th century media art practices and the theories and inventions that have led to their development. Critique as a creative practice necessary to scholarship, artistic practice, scientific research, and invention will be emphasized. This course will take a historical perspective on contemporary environmental and social concerns, questioning long-standing assumptions of technological domination and determinism.

What is nature? What is culture? What is technology? What is art? How did we arrive at our contemporary “technoculture”? Are there clear links and reoccurrence of past technology that we can find in our contemporary digital media?

The scope of this course is very broad. Artworks, technology, social concerns, and readings have been selected for their prominence in artistic practice and theory and their linkages to other material. Because of the breadth, the course material has been chosen to form a network and individual classes will relate to past and future coursework. Some of the readings or ideas might not become clear until they are revisited through other material. Rather than emphasize memorization, this course will prioritize critical thinking and the student’s capacity to draw connections and identify patterns between subject matter that spans multiple disciplines and historical periods.

Course material will be covered through lecture, readings, and student discussion. Please come to class having read the assigned readings so that you can fully participate with your classmates.

Student Outcomes:

1. Students will develop their analytic writing skills relative to art
2. Develop an understanding of the interconnections of technology, culture, nature, and art, and the materiality of digital technology
3. Gain familiarity with 20th century media art practices and theory
4. Nurture the ability to approach and work through unfamiliar material

Grading:

Attendance and Participation: 30%

Take home writing assignments: 40%

Midterm and Final: 30%

Readings should be completed in preparation for the class date under which they are written.

There will be eight short writing assignments in response to prompts throughout the quarter. These are due by 9am the day of the next class. Assignments should be submitted online to Canvas and average 350-450 words each. These will be posted in discussion so that your ideas develop in conversation with those of your classmates. Late assignments will lose 10% a day.

The midterm and final are meant to develop your classroom discussions and more informal writing assignments into a polished text. For each exam you will write a short formal analysis of an artwork using at least two class readings in support of your argument. We will practice and develop this style of writing as a class.

Rarely, you will be asked to submit excerpts or questions to online discussion, these posts will count towards participation. You are welcome to post questions or comments to your classmates at any time throughout the quarter.

Week 1 – Industrial Revolution: Modernity and Machines

Mon, 24 June

Introduction and Syllabus

Weds, 26 June

“The Nervous System of Britain’: Space, Time and the Electric Telegraph in the Victorian Age,”
Iwan Rhys Morus

Week 2 - Speed! and Cybernetics

Mon, 1 July

"Manifesto of Futurism," Filippo Tommaso Marinetti
“Vision in Motion,” Laszlo Moholy-Nagy

Weds, 3 July

"Behaviorist Art and Cybernetic Vision," Roy Ascott

Week 3 – Ad Hoc, Hacking, and DIY

Mon, 8 July

"Playboy Interview: Marshall McLuhan," Marshall McLuhan

Weds, 10 July

Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation, Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver
Midterm Assigned in Class

Week 4 – (Post) Human Societies

Mon, 15 July

"Memories of Underdevelopment," Julieta González

Weds, 17 July

“How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics,” N. Katherine Hayles (text begins on page 12)

Week 5 - Interactivity and the Internet

Mon, 22 July

Watch "From this SEED: Enactive - Performative Perspectives on Cognition," Simon Penny

Eddo Stern, *Dark Game 1*

<https://eddostern.com/works/darkgame-1/>

Simon Penny, *Petit Mal* and *Traces*

<http://simonpenny.net/works/petitmal.html>

<http://simonpenny.net/works/traces.html>

Rebecca Allen, *Tracking Hollywood Stars* and *Sleight of Hand*

<http://www.rebeccaallen.com/projects/tracking>

<http://www.rebeccaallen.com/projects/sleight-of-hand>

Adrien M / Clair B and Mourad Merzouki, Pixel

<https://vimeo.com/114767889>

Weds, 24 July

"Introduction to Info-Aesthetics," Lev Manovich

Final Class Meeting - The Anthropocene (Current Human Era)

Mon, 29 July

"Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene," in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Donna J. Haraway

Attendance:

As this is an intensive summer course only one unexcused absence will be allowed without impact. Additional absences will be subtracted from the total grade at half a letter grade each. Please email me in the case of family emergency or illness.

Plagiarism:

Please don't copy someone else's writing (including Wikipedia). You will not receive credit for any assignment that has been copied from someone else's work. If you would like to paraphrase or use other material from outside of lecture, please use citations in any format in order to show where you have gotten the information. <https://guides.lib.uci.edu/citations> The Writing Center is closed over the summer; this is a useful and short writing guide. Resource for Writing & Critical Reasoning: *A Rulebook for Arguments*, Anthony Weston