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Spring 2008  
Tuesday & Thursday, 11-12:15  
Office: 418 Broadway, Room 750  
Hours: T&Th: 2-3:15, Fri: 10-5, by appt.

## Digital Revolution

K20.1042

*Description:* We are in the midst of a revolution: the Digital Revolution. Computers permeate nearly every aspect of our life, yet we understand relatively little about how they work, their historical development, and their impact on our ourselves, society and politics. In this course we will explore this ever changing and rapidly expanding terrain, paying special attention to how computers and the Internet are transforming how we experience and understand identity and community, control and liberation, and simulation and authenticity. We will also consider the tension between free and open communication and information commerce, and ask ourselves what political transformations and new formations this digital revolution may be engendering.

### *Requirements:*

- 1) Attendance, diligent reading, and active participation in all class discussions.
  - 2) Three short essays--approximately 6-8 pages--over the course of the semester.
  - 3) Active participation in the on-line forum on Blackboard
- I'm always open to suggestions on assignments. A video, poem, performance, web page, etc. in place of one of the written assignments is possible and could be very exciting. Just talk to me first.
  - Any paper assignment may be re-written for a new grade, but the re-write must be handed in within two weeks of first receiving back the corrected paper.

### *Books:*

- Critical Art Ensemble, *Electronic Civil Disobedience & Other Unpopular Ideas*
- Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*
- Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture*
- Steven Levy, *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution*
- Neil Stephenson, *Snow Crash*

### *Articles:*

- Bible, "The Tower of Babel"
- Lewis Mumford, "Cultural Preparation"
- Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think"
- Ellen Ullman, "Out of Time: Reflections on the Programming Life"
- Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"
- Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"
- Sherry Turkle, "Constructions and Reconstructions of the Self in Virtual Reality"
- Robert Hof, "My Virtual Life"

- dana boyd, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites"
- dana boyd, "Sociable Technology and Democracy"
- McKenzie Wark, "GAM3R 7H3ORY"
- Walter Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
- Bill Gates, "An Open Letter to Hobbyists"
- Pirate Editorial, "So You Want to be a Pirate?"
- Bruce Lehman (IITF), "Intellectual Property and the National Information Infrastructure"
- John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Cyberwar is Coming!"

All books can be bought at Bluestockings Books, 172 Allen Street (a block and a half below Houston in the Lower East Side). Articles are available as pdf files under "Course Documents" on Blackboard.

*Semester Schedule:*

- Jan 22 T**      **Course Introduction**  
 READ: "Tower of Babel" (in class)
- Jan 24 Th**      **Cyber Culture**  
 READ: Neil Stephenson, *Snow Crash*
- Jan 29 T**      **Our Future?**  
 READ: finish Neil Stephenson, *Snow Crash*
- Jan 31 Th**      **Technological Thinking**  
 READ: Lewis Mumford, "Cultural Preparation"
- Feb 5 T**      **Conceiving the Computer**  
 READ: Lewis Mumford, "Cultural Preparation" and skim Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think."
- Feb 7 Th**      **NO CLASS**
- Feb 12 T**      **Hacker Ethic**  
 READ: Steven Levy, *Hackers*, chapters 1-6  
 First Assignment handed out
- Feb 14 Th**      **Social Activists and Entrepreneurs**  
 READ: Steven Levy, *Hackers*, chapters 6-12
- Feb 19 T**      **End of an Era**  
 READ: Steven Levy, *Hackers*, chapters 14,18 &20
- Feb 21 Th**      **Cyborgs!**

READ: Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" and Ellen Ullman, "Out of Time"

**Feb 26 T      **Inventing the Internet****

BROWSE: *Computer History Museum*:

[http://www.computerhistory.org/exhibits/internet\\_history/](http://www.computerhistory.org/exhibits/internet_history/)

*Hobbes' Internet Timeline*:

<http://www.zakon.org/robert/internet/timeline/>

**Feb 28 Th      **Real Friends?****

READ: dana boyd, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites"

**Mar 4 T      **Digital Community****

READ: dana boyd, *Sociable Technology and Democracy*

DUE: First Assignment

Second Assignment handed out

**Mar 6 Th      **Second Life****

READ: Sherry Turkle, "Constructions and Reconstructions of the Self in Virtual Reality" and Robert Hof, "My Virtual Life"

**Mar 11 T      **Life, the Game****

READ: McKenzie Wark, "GAM3R 7H3ORY"

**Mar 13 Th      **End of Authenticity****

READ: Walter Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

**Mar 18 & 20      **SPRING BREAK -- NO CLASS****

**Mar 25 T      **Ephemeral Material****

READ: Begin Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture*, and read:

Bill Gates, "An Open Letter to Hobbyists"; Bruce Lehman, "Intellectual Property and the National Information Infrastructure"; Pirate Editorial, "So You Want to be a Pirate?"

DUE: Second Assignment

Third Assignment handed out

**Mar 27 Th      **The Problem of Private Property****

READ: Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture*

**April 1 T      **New Model for an Informational Economy****

READ: Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture*

- April 3 Th**    **Old and New Collide**  
READ: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*
- April 8 T**     **New Synthesis**  
READ: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*  
Guest Lecture: Ivan Askwith
- April 10 Th**   **Lost**  
READ: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*  
Guest Lecture: Ivan Askwith  
DUE: Third Assignment  
Fourth Assignment handed out
- April 15 T**    **New Politics I: Democratic Culture**  
READ: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*
- April 17 Th**   **New Politics II: NetWar**  
READ: John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Cyberwar is Coming!"
- April 22 T**    **New Politics III: Electronic Civil Disobedience**  
READ: Critical Art Ensemble, "Electronic Civil Disobedience"
- April 24 Th**   **New Politics IV: Democracy or Dewmocracy?**  
BROWSE: <http://www.dewmocracy.com/>
- April 29 T**    **Catch-up**
- May 1 Th**     **What Sort of Revolution? -- Last Day of Class**

**All Assignments are Due in Class, May 1**