

# **FILM 190: Senior Seminar Against Innovation**

## **CLASS INFO**

Prof. Jacob Gaboury  
Tues 2:00-5:00, Moffitt 340

Office Location: 6223 Dwinelle  
<https://calendly.com/gaboury>

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Nearly all technologies we use today are the product of critical innovations that disrupted traditional industries to transform the world we live in. This is the story we tell ourselves about the history of technology, and the justification for our culture of innovation that views science and technology as the solution to nearly all problems. And yet this ideology ignores the complex role that maintenance, labor, politics, and culture play in the development of technical systems, and the many harms caused by a culture that focuses exclusively on disruption. This research-driven senior capstone seminar explores the history of technology through the lens of innovation, pushing back against the assumption that technical problems require technical solutions. How do we study the history of technology outside of the frameworks of invention and innovation? How are politics embedded into the design and function of technology itself? When is innovation useful, and when does it harm rather than help? This capstone course offers undergraduates with senior standing (or consent of instructor) an opportunity to experience seminar learning. Creative work is encouraged but the emphasis will be on the completion of a substantial research project.

## **STRUCTURE**

The central focus of this course will be the exploration of discourses in science and technology around the concept of innovation: what it means, what it excludes, how we study it. The goal of this work is the production of three research dossiers that examine one case study for each of the course units. Each topic is pursued over a three-week period. Upon completion of one topic a new topic is selected and the cycle repeats itself. The dossiers are published online via bCourses. Classroom time consists of student groups presenting their research findings for the week, followed by criticism and feedback from the instructors and other students. The final project for the class is a research proposal for a longer project of the student's choosing, which may be used as the basis for a senior thesis or capstone project.

## SCHEDULE

### 1\_Introduction

**08/25**

LECTURE:

Introduction and Syllabus Presentation

### 2\_Method

**09/01**

DISCUSSION:

Research Methods, Multimedia Presentation, Archives and Sources

READING:

Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Dumit, Joseph. "Writing the implosion: teaching the world one thing at a time." *Cultural Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (2014): 344-362.

<https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/article/view/ca29.2.09/301E>.

ACTIVITY:

Discussion Lead Sign Up, Library Website Walkthrough, Review Dossier Models, Object Lessons

Roundable: Cuboniks, Laboria. "Xenofeminism: A politics for alienation." *laboriacuboniks.net*. (2015).

Writing the Implosion

## UNIT 1: TECHNOLOGY / DATA

### 3\_Technological Development

**09/08**

DISCUSSION:

Scientific Methods and Science Communication, Truth Claims, Interpretation, Politicizing Science and Science as Politics

READING:

Pinch, Trevor J., and Wiebe E. Bijker. "The social construction of facts and artefacts: Or how the sociology of science and the sociology of technology might benefit each other." *Social studies of science* 14, no. 3 (1984): 399-441.

Latour, Bruno. "Technology is society made durable." *The sociological review* 38, no. 1\_suppl (1990): 103-131.

Star, Susan Leigh. "Power, technology and the phenomenology of conventions: on being allergic to onions." *The Sociological Review* 38, no. 1\_suppl (1990): 26-56.

Fouché, Rayvon. "The wretched of the Gulf: racism, technological dramas, and Black politics of technology." *The Black Scholar* 36, no. 4 (2006): 7-12.

ACTIVITY:

Science and Technology Under COVID

## 4\_Raw Data

**09/15**

DISCUSSION:

Data Epistemologies, Google Adwords, Measurable Types, Raw Data

READING:

D'ignazio, Catherine, and Lauren F. Klein. "What Gets Counted Counts" and "The Numbers Don't Speak for Themselves" in *Data Feminism*. MIT press, 2020, 97-124 and 149-173.

Cheney-Lippold, John. "A New Algorithmic Identity: Soft Biopolitics and the Modulation of Control." *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 6 (2011): 164-181.

Keyes, Os. "Counting the Countless: Why Data Science is a Profound Threat for Queer People." *Real Life Mag*. April 8, 2019.

Sadowski, Jathan. "When Data is Capital: Datafication, Accumulation, and Extraction." *Big Data & Society* 6, no. 1 (2019): 2053951718820549.

## 5\_Case Study 1

**09/22**

ACTIVITY:

Presentation of First Research Dossier

**09/29**

## 6\_NO CLASS

## UNIT 2: INNOVATION / DISRUPTION

### 7\_ Innovation Speak

10/06

DISCUSSION:

Data Epistemologies, Google Adwords, Measurable Types, Raw Data

READING:

Vinsel, Lee, and Andrew L. Russell. "Part One" in *The innovation delusion: How our obsession with the new has disrupted the work that matters most*. Currency, 2020, 8-58.

Latzko-Toth, Guillaume, Johan Söderberg, Florence Millerand, and Steve Jones. "Misuser innovations: the role of "misuses" and "misusers" in digital communication technologies." In *digitalSTS*, pp. 393-411. Princeton University Press, 2019.

Winner, Langdon. "Mythinformation" in *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.

### 8\_ Move Fast and Break Things

10/13

DISCUSSION:

Disruption, Failure, Genius, Thought

READING:

Meehan, Mary Beth, and Fred Turner. *Seeing Silicon Valley: Life inside a Fraying America*. University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Daub, Adrian. *What Tech Calls Thinking: An Inquiry into the Intellectual Bedrock of Silicon*. 2020.

Lepore, Jill. "The disruption machine." *The New Yorker* 23 (2014): 30-36.

Lovink, G. W., and Ben Grosser. "Ben Grosser-Geert Lovink Dialogue on Media Art in the Age of Platform Capitalism." (2020).

VIEW:

"Order of Magnitude" (Ben Grosser, 2019)

<https://bengrosser.com/projects/order-of-magnitude/>

### 9\_ Case Study 2

10/20

ACTIVITY:

Presentation of Second Research Dossier

## UNIT 3: MAINTENANCE / CARE

### 10\_Labor of Maintenance

10/27

VISIT:

Andrew Russell and Lee Vinsel

READING:

Russell, Andrew, and Lee Vinsel. "Hail the Maintainers." *Aeon Essays* (2016).

The Information Maintainers. Olson, D., Meyerson, J., Parsons, M., Castro, J., Lassere, M., Wright, D., ... Acker, A. (2019) *Information Maintenance as a Practice of Care*.

Roberts, Sarah T. "Your AI is a Human" in *Your Computer is on Fire*. Mullaney, Thomas S., Benjamin Peters, Mar Hicks, and Kavita Philip, eds. MIT Press, 2021.

Jackson, Steven J. "Rethinking Repair" in *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society*. Gillespie, Tarleton, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot, eds. MIT Press, 2014. 221-239.

VISIT:

<https://themaintainers.org/>

### 11\_Practices of Care

11/03

VISIT:

Tamara Kneese (UCSF, Intel Research)

READING:

Hobart, Hi 'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani, and Tamara Kneese. "Radical care: Survival strategies for uncertain times." *Social Text* 38, no. 1 (2020): 1-16.

Mattern, Shannon. "Maintenance and Care." *Places Journal* (November 2018).

Atkinson-Graham, Melissa, Martha Kenney, Kelly Ladd, Cameron Michael Murray, and Emily Astra-Jean Simmonds. "Care in context: Becoming an STS researcher." *Social Studies of Science* 45, no. 5 (2015): 738-748.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid reading and reparative reading; or, you're so paranoid, you probably think this introduction is about you." In *Novel Gazing*, pp. 1-38. Duke University Press, 1997.

VIEW:

“Technologies of Care” (Elisa Giardina Papa, 2016)

<https://rhizome.org/editorial/2016/oct/04/the-download-technologies-of-care/>

**11/10**

**12\_NO CLASS**

**13\_ Case Study 3**

**11/17**

ACTIVITY:

Presentation of Third Research Dossier

**11/24**

**14\_NO CLASS**

**15\_1-on-1 Meetings**

**12/01**

ACTIVITY:

Sign up at <https://calendly.com/gaboury>

## **ASSESSMENT**

20% Dossier #1

20% Dossier #2

20% Dossier #3

30% Research Proposal

10% Engagement

## **READING**

This course will require you to read between 50-100 pages of academic and popular writing per week. These writings are designed to introduce you to new concepts and methods that will drive our class discussion. For this reason, it is essential that you give yourself plenty of time to complete the reading before each class so that you can fully participate in our discussions in class. Depending on your experience with courses in the humanities, this may seem challenging or overwhelming, but it is essential. Stick with the readings and it will get easier over time, and if you are struggling feel free and set up a meeting with me during office hours to discuss strategies to help you succeed.

All readings are available via bCourses.

## **DOSSIERS**

Three different dossiers on a specific object, technology, or practice are required over the course of the semester. Each dossier will be presented orally to the class and will receive criticism from the instructors and from other students. Each dossier must be approximately 1000 words in length. They must be historical and/or critical in nature, and may include textual, sonic, or visual material. Each dossier must be composed on the course website and will be accessible to the rest of the class.

### **Models**

Shannon Mattern, ["Things That Beep: A Brief History of Product Sound Design"](#)

Shannon Mattern, ["Closet Archive"](#)

Mara Mills, ["Evocative Object: Auditory Inkblot"](#)

Jacob Gaboury, ["Sounding Silence"](#)

Sandy Isenstadt, ["At the Flip of a Switch"](#)

Finn Brunton and Lori Emerson, ["The Canon Cat: Processing Advanced Work"](#)

## **CLASS STRUCTURE**

Each week 2-3 students will be tasked with initiating our discussion of the readings, which will require the preparation of 3-5 questions to be presented to the class. Discussion will then proceed around a “Think, Pair, Share” model before moving to more general discussion. We will then transition to research updates from each student or group before moving to the designated activity for that week.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

I expect you to attend and actively engage in class. You will notice that you are being graded not simply on your attendance, but on your engagement with the class. Engagement can mean any number of things, from asking questions in class to engaging course material both in and out of class. I recognize that different students have different learning styles, and may find it challenging to speak up every day in discussion. The important thing is that you find ways to make your engagement legible to me. If you think you are struggling with this, please meet with me during office hours to discuss.

## **ATTENDANCE**

If for whatever reason you cannot make class, you will be allowed one class absence per semester. Beyond this, any absences will impact your grade by 5% per missed class.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity>.

## **DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

If you have a documented physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Berkeley Disabled Students Program, 260 César E. Chávez Student Center, #4250, (510) 643-0518. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.