Communication 120/220
The Rise of Digital Culture
Spring, 2021
Lectures: T/Th 10:30-11:50, Pacific Time
Sections TBA

Professor Fred Turner
Office: 440 McClatchy Hall
Office Hours: Thursdays, 5-7 PT
E-mail: fturner@stanford.edu

Course Goals:

Since the first digital computers came on the scene in the late 1940s, we have witnessed the arrival of an astonishing array of digital technologies. Personal computers, the Internet, the World Wide Web, cell phones, social media, big data and artificial intelligence – all have appeared within a single lifetime. They have also emerged alongside a series of transformations in the American economy and American culture.

In this course, we'll explore the dynamics of digital media and at the same time, the ways those dynamics shape – and have been shaped by – ongoing processes of social and cultural change. We will pay particular attention to the relationship between technological developments and three other large-scale historical changes: the rise of the postindustrial economy in the 1960s, of postmodern culture in the 1970s, and of the surveillance economy in the 2010s.

By the end of the course, you should have a sense of how these large-scale social and cultural shifts have shaped our uses of digital media and vice versa. You should be able to critique and synthesize the ways others have characterized the social impact of digital technologies. And most important of all, you should have begun to build your own theories of how digital systems and American culture interact.

Readings:

You should buy the following books online, ideally via Bookshop.org:

Benjamin, Ruha. *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity, 2019.

Sennett, Richard. *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Turner, Fred. *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Ullman, Ellen. *Close to the Machine: Technophilia and Its Discontents*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997.

Wiener, Anna. *Uncanny Valley: A Memoir*. New York: MCD, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.

Articles and selections from other books will be available as PDFs on Canvas or via links in this syllabus.

Recommended readings are just that: recommended. I've listed them here as a way for you to dig deeper into topics that interest you.

Assignments:

Please note: Undergraduates (Comm 120) will be required to write only about the required readings. Graduate students (Comm 220) are required to incorporate at least one recommended reading into each of their essays.

Synthetic Essays: You will be asked to write three synthetic essays of 5-7 double-spaced pages (1500-2100 words). In these papers, you will draw on the course readings, class discussions, and where appropriate, your knowledge of digital media, to craft a focused argument in response to an assigned question.

Your essays will be due to your TA (undergraduates) or Professor Turner (graduate students) before the start of class on the following dates:

Essay 1: April 22

Essay 2: May 19

Essay 3: June 3

Tests: You will take two 90-minute exams, one covering the first half of the course and another covering the second half. These are meant to encourage you to keep up with the reading and to help me make sure you're tracking the material.

Test 1: April 29-30

Test 2: June 3-5

Expectations:

Participation:

        While formally a lecture course, our class meetings will in fact be quite interactive – even on Zoom! The course lectures will be synchronous but also recorded, so if you're in another time zone, no problem. If you're there in real time, I'll look for you to come with the reading done and with the ability to participate in a class discussion.
        To participate effectively, you should aim to speak in a way that moves a discussion forward and increases the learning for the whole group. Contributions can

include questions, insights, and responses to other comments. They can also include provocative mistakes. Being "wrong" but intellectually adventurous can often help jump-start everyone's thinking!

I will also call on students by name (e.g., "cold call"). Please be assured this is NOT meant to embarrass you or put you on the spot! Rather, it's a way for me to make sure we get lots of voices in the class discussion. That's especially important in a field like media studies, since so many of us have different experiences with media.

One other thing: Please ask questions! Just raise your hand or use the "Raise Hand" function in Zoom. There is no such thing as a bad question. I guarantee that if you have a question, at least three of your fellow students do too!

Writing:

Your writing needs to come in on time and should represent your best work at every level. Papers that come in late or with errors of fact, grammar or spelling will be penalized. As ever, the Honor Code applies to all your work.

About These Strange Times We're Living In:

As we all know, these are strange and difficult times. We're not only working online together, but we're working with the many repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. All of us on the course team want to acknowledge the challenges you're facing and want to help you learn. We'll need your feedback as we go to help make that happen. Please feel free to reach out to me about how the class is going at any time via email. Or stop by my virtual office hours. And given the stresses we're all under, I want to be sure you know that Stanford offers support through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), available 24 hours a day at 650-723-3785.

Grading:

Participation = 10%

Test 1 = 10%

Test 2 = 20%

Essay 1 = 20%

Essay 2 = 20%

Essay 3 = 20%

Course Schedule:

Part 1: CYBERNETIC AMERICA

Week 1:

Tuesday March 30: Introduction: What *ARE* digital media? And what's culture got to do with them?

Required: NONE

Recommended:

- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006.
- Galloway, Alexander R. *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004, esp. "Physical Media," 28-53.
- Peters, Benjamin, and Amanda Weiss. *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Thursday April 1: Digital Technologies and Digital Culture

Required:

- Lev Manovich, "Principles of New Media," from Manovich, *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001. 27-48. (read manuscript on Canvas, pp.43-66)
- Charlie Warzel, "What Facebook Fed the Baby Boomers," available here: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/24/opinion/facebook-disinformation-boomers.html?referringSource=articleShare

Week 2: Cybernetics and Cold War Politics

Tuesday April 6: Beginnings and How to Think About Them

Required:

- Bush, Vannevar. "As We May Think." *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1945, 101-08. Available: http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1945/07/as-we-may-think/303881/
- Jennifer S. Light. "When Computers Were Women." *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (July, 1999), pp. 455-483
- Winner, Langdon. "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daedalus*, Vol. 109, No. 1, (Winter, 1980), pp. 121-136

Recommended:

- Shannon, Claude. "The Mathematical Theory of Communication." *Bell System Technical Journal* 27.3 and 4 (1948): 379-423 and 623-56.
- Rosenblueth, Arturo, Norbert Wiener, and Julian Bigelow. "Behavior, Purpose and Teleology." *Philosophy of Science*, no. 10 (1943): 18-24.

- Hicks, Marie. *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017.
- Haraway, Donna J. "The High Cost of Information in Post-World War II Evolutionary Biology: Ergonomics, Semiotics, and the Sociobiology of Communication Systems." *The Philosophical Forum* 13, no. 2-3 (1981-82): 244-78.
- Ensmenger, Nathan. *The Computer Boys Take Over: Computers, Programmers, and the Politics of Technical Expertise*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013.

Thursday, April 8: The Military-Industrial Complex & Centralized Control

Required:

- Paul N. Edwards, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America*. Inside Technology. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996, Ch. 1 "We Defend Every Place"

Recommended:

- Ghamari-Tabrizi, Sharon. *The Worlds of Herman Kahn: The Intuitive Science of Thermonuclear War*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Harwood, John. *The Interface: IBM and the Transformation of Corporate Design, 1945-1976*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Martin, Reinhold. *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003.
- Halpern, Orit. *Beautiful Data: A History of Vision and Reason since 1945*. Experimental Futures. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Week 3: Cybernetics and the Counterculture

Tuesday, April 13: Cybernetic Democracy

Required:

- Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings*. Ch's 1-3, 5. (on Canvas)

Recommended:

- Geoghegan, Bernard Dionysius. "The Family as Machine: Film, Infrastructure, and Cybernetic Kinship in Cybernetic America." *Grey Room* 66 (2017): 70-101.
- Heims, Steve J. *Constructing a Social Science for Postwar America: The Cybernetics Group, 1946-1953*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993.
- Kline, Ronald R. *The Cybernetics Moment: Or Why We Call Our Age the Information Age*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015.
- Slava Gerovitch, *From Newspeak to Cyberspeak: A History of Soviet Cybernetics*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.

- Medina, Eden. *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende's Chile*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011.
- Steichen, Edward, and Museum of Modern Art (New York N.Y.). *The Family of Man*. New York: Published for the Museum of Modern Art by Simon and Schuster, 1955.
- Fred Turner. *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia & American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Thursday, April 15: The Cybernetic Counterculture

Required:

- Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, chapters 1-4, 8.

Recommended:

- McIlwain, Charlton D. *Black Software: The Internet and Racial Justice, from the Afronet to Black Lives Matter*. Oxford, UK; New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- O'Mara, Margaret Pugh. *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America*. New York: Penguin Press, 2019.
- Saxenian, AnnaLee. *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994.

PART 2: THE NETWORK SOCIETY

Week 4: Postindustrialism

Tuesday, April 20: Postindustrialism

Required:

- Sennett, Richard. *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. "Introduction" and "Bureaucracy," pp. 1-82.

Recommended:

- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford, England; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989, esp. Part 2.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Bell, Daniel. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. New York: Ace Books, 1984.

Thursday, April 22: Sociality on the Early Internet and Web 1.0

First essay due.

Required:

- Howard Rheingold. "A slice of my life in my virtual community." *High Noon on the Electronic Frontier: Conceptual Issues in Cyberspace*. Ed. Peter Ludlow. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992/1996. 413-436.
- humdog. "Pandora's Vox: On Community in Cyberspace." *High Noon on the Electronic Frontier: Conceptual Issues in Cyberspace*. Ed. Peter Ludlow. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996. 437-444. Available: http://folksonomy.co/?permalink=2299 and in coursework
- John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," Available: http://doc.cat-v.org/political_science/cyberspace-declaration-of-independence (and many other sites)

Recommended:

- Turner, Fred. "Where the Counterculture Met the New Economy: The WELL and the Origins of Virtual Community." *Technology and Culture*, Vol.46, No.3 (July, 2005), pp. 485-512.
- John Coate, "Cyberspace Innkeeping: Building Online Community" (1992-1998) on line at: http://www.cervisa.com/innkeeping.html
- Adam Curtis, Director, *All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace*, Parts 1-3, BBC Television. Available on YouTube.
- Saxenian, AnnaLee. *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994.

Week 5: Commons-based Peer Production

Tuesday, April 27: Peer Production

Required:

- Lessig, *Remix*, Chapters 6 and 7. Available via https://textbookequity.org/Textbooks/Remix.pdf
- O'Reilly, Tim. "What is Web 2.0" Available: https://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html?page=2

Recommended:

- Terranova, Tiziana. "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy." *Social Text* 18, no. 2 (2000): 33-58.
- José van Dijck. "Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content." *Media, Culture & Society,* Vol. 31, No.1, (2009), pp. 41–58.
- Richard Raymond, "The Cathedral and the Bazaar," version 3.0. Available: http://www.catb.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar/

- Benkler, Yochai. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Kelty, Christopher M. *Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software*, *Experimental Futures*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Weber, Steve. *The Success of Open Source*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Thursday, April 29: TEST ONE

Required:

Recommended:

- Shirky, Clay. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. New York: Penguin Press, 2008.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Kreiss, Daniel, Megan Finn, and Fred Turner. "The Limits of Peer Production: Some Reminders from Max Weber for the Network Society." *New Media & Society* 13, no. 2 (2011): 243-59.
- Mirko Tobias Schäfer, "Enabling/Repressing Participation," from Schäfer, *Bastard Culture! How User Participation Transforms Cultural Production*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. 55-76

Week 6: Computing and the Body

Tuesday, May 4: Working

Required:

- Ullman, Ellen. *Close to the Machine: Technophilia and Its Discontents*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997.

Recommended:

- Saxenian, AnnaLee. *The New Argonauts: Regional Advantage in a Global Economy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Gershon, Ilana. *Down and Out in the New Economy: How People Find (or Don't Find) Work Today*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Levy, Karen E.C. 2015. "The Contexts of Control: Information, Power, and Truck Driving Work." *The Information Society* 31:160-174.

Thursday, May 6: Self-Branding and Influencers

Required:

- Peters, Thomas J. "The Brand Called You." *Fast Company*, August 31 1997: https://www.fastcompany.com/28905/brand-called-you
- Duffy, Brook Erin. "The Romance of Work: Gender and Aspirational Labor in the Digital Culture Industries." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 19 (4), 2016.

Recommended:

- Marwick, Alice Emily. *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New York University Press, 2013.
- Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007; pp.74-107, 126-129.
- Lair, Daniel J., Katie Sullivan, and George Cheney. "Marketization and the Recasting of the Professional Self: The Rhetoric and Ethics of Personal Branding." *Management Communication Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (February 2005): 307-43.
- Alexander, Julia. "YouTube's top creators are burning out and breaking down en masse," June 1, 2018, https://www.polygon.com/2018/6/1/17413542/burnout-mental-health-awareness-youtube-elle-mills-el-rubius-bobby-burns-pewdiepie

PART 3: SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

Week 7: Surveillance Capitalism

Tuesday, May 11: What is surveillance capitalism?

Second essay due.

Required:

Zuboff, Shoshanna. "Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization." *Journal of Information Technology* 30 (2015): 75-89.

Recommended:

- Turow, Joseph. *The Aisles Have Eyes: How Retailers Track Your Shopping, Strip Your Privacy, and Define Your Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.
- Newitz, Annalee. "Dangerous Terms: A User's Guide to EULAs." February, 2005. San Francisco: Electronic Frontier Foundation. Available: https://www.eff.org/wp/dangerous-terms-users-guide-eulas
- Srnicek, Nick, and Laurent De Sutter. *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2017.
- Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier, *Big Data*, Houghton-Mifflin, 2013.
- Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. 2018.

Thursday, May 13: Platforms and Labor

Required:

- Gillespie, Tarleton. "The Politics of 'Platforms'." *New Media & Society* 12.3 (2010): 347-64.
- Jessa Lingel and Kate Crawford, "Alexa, Tell Me About Your Mother," *Catalyst*, https://catalystjournal.org/index.php/catalyst/article/view/29949/26063

Recommended:

- Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler, "Anatomy of an AI System," 2018. Available: https://anatomyof.ai/
- Newitz, Annalee. "The secret life of Google raters." April 27, 2017. https://arstechnica.com/features/2017/04/the-secret-lives-of-google-raters/
- Dijck, José van, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal. *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 7-48.
- Ross, Irani, et al. "Who are the Crowdworkers?: Shifting Dynamics in Mechanical Turk." CHI EA '10 Proceedings of the 28th of the international conference extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems. Available: http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1753873
- Roberts, Sarah T. *Behind the Screen: Content Moderation in the Shadows of Social Media*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.
- Gillespie, Tarleton. *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.
- Schneider, Nathan. *Everything for Everyone: The Radical Tradition That Is Shaping the Next Economy*. New York: Nation Books, 2018.

Week 8: Rule by Algorithm

Tuesday, May 18: Race after Digital Technology

Required:

- Benjamin, Ruha. *Race After Technology*, Chapters 1-3

Recommended:

- Katz, Yarden. *Artificial Whiteness: Politics and Ideology in Artificial Intelligence*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.
- Nakamura, Lisa. *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Nakamura, Lisa, and Peter Chow-White. *Race after the Internet*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

- Broussard, Meredith. *Artificial Unintelligence: How Computers Misunderstand the World*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2018.

Thursday, May 20: Algorithmic justice?

Required:

- Benjamin, Ruha. *Race After Technology*, Chapter 5.
- Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa, "#Ferguson: Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States," *American Ethnologist*, January 15, 2015, available: https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12112

Recommended:

- Brayne, Sarah. "Big Data Surveillance: The Case of Policing." *American Sociological Review* 82.5 (2017): 977-1008. Print.
- Tufekci, Zeynep. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.
- O'Neil, Cathy. Introduction and chapter 1 in O'Neil, Cathy. *Weapons of Math Destruction*. New York: Crown, 2016.
- Gillespie, Tarleton. "The Relevance of Algorithms" in Gillespie, Tarleton, Pablo Boczowski and Kirsten Foot, eds., *Media Technologies*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016, ch. 9.
- Kate Crawford, 2016 'Can an Algorithm be Agonistic? Ten Scenes from Life in Calculated Publics', *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 41(1), 77-92

Week 9: The Self, Performing and Surveilled

Tuesday, May 25: The Politicized Self

Required:

- Massanari, Adrienne. "#gamergate and the Fappening: How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures." *New Media & Society,* (2017) Vol. 19(3) 329–346
- Lewis, Rebecca. *Alternative Influence: Broadcasting the Reactionary Right on YouTube*. New York: Data & Society, 2018.

Recommended:

- *This American Life*. January 23, 2015."If You Don't Have Anything Nice to Say, SAY IT IN ALL CAPS." https://www.thisamericanlife.org/545/if-you-dont-have-anything-nice-to-say-say-it-in-all-caps
- Marwick, Alice Emily, and Rebecca Lewis. *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online*. New York: Data & Society Research Institute, 2017.

- Julian Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyberspace," *The Village Voice*, 1993; available: http://www.juliandibbell.com/texts/bungle_vv.html
- Philips, Whitney. *The Oxygen of Amplification: Better Practices for Reporting on Extremists, Antagonists, and Manipulators Online*. New York: Data & Society, 2018.

Thursday, May 27: Who are we now? And what are we becoming?

Required: Watch the film "Eighth Grade"

Recommended:

- Ouellette, Laurie and Jacquelyn Arcy. "'Live Through This': Feminist Care of the Self 2.0." *Frame* (2015) 28.1: 95-114
- Ito et al., Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Project (MacArthur Foundation White Paper), 2008. Available: http://digitalyouth.ischool.berkeley.edu/report
- Marwick, Alice Emily, and danah boyd. "Networked Privacy: How Teenagers Negotiate Context in Social Media." *New Media & Society* 16.7 (2014): 1051-67.
- Twenge, Jean M. *Igen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy-- and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood (and What This Means for the Rest of Us)*. New York, NY: Atria Books, 2017.
- danah boyd, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life." *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning – Youth, Identity, and Digital Media Volume* (ed. David Buckingham). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.
- boyd, danah. *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Week 10: Where to next?

Tuesday, June 1:

Required:

- Wiener, Anna. *Uncanny Valley: A Memoir*. New York: MCD, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.

Recommended:

- Eggers, Dave. *The Circle*. New York & San Francisco: Alfred A. Knopf; McSweeney's Books, 2013.
- Carr, Nicholas G. *The Glass Cage: Automation and Us*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.
- Carruth, Allison. "The Digital Cloud and the Micropolitics of Energy." *Public Culture* 26, no. 2 (2014): 339-64.

- Weigel, Moira. "Code workers of the world unite: can Silicon Valley workers curb the power of big tech?" *The Guardian.* October 31, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/oct/31/coders-of-the-world-unite-can-silicon-valley-workers-curb-the-power-of-big-tech

Thursday, June 3: TEST TWO.

Third essay due.