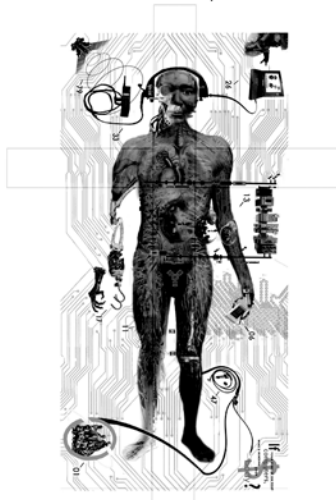# Techno-Mythologia:

The Webopticon, Corporate Shamanism and the Global War Machine

Instructor: John Jota Leaños
Spring 2003 / Thursdays 6:30-9:00
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In a time of faith, skepticism in the most intolerable of all insults

-Randolph Bourne
"The War and the Intellectuals"

Course Description

This course will examine the unpopular view that the Internet and Information Technologies are the advancing armies of global capitalism in a war to promulgate an American-dominated monoculture. On the whole, this course will consider how mythologies that accompany emergent technologies are manifest in the larger social realm and how the implementation and acceptance of these technologies affect issues of struggle and power with a particular emphasis on the underclasses, the militarization of the southern border and Latino culture. We will engage concerns of surveillance and panoptic vision within the emerging Global Information Infrastructure, analyze the links between technologies of war and globalization, question the philosophy of post-humanism and the development of robotics, study Carnegie Mellon University as a paramilitary institution and explore the corporate myth of the so-called "Digital Divide." All of these perspectives will be viewed through the lens of art making. We will pair theory with the practice of art, examining creative ways of confronting these questions and communicating them to a larger audience.

Approach

Throughout this semester we will be investigative partners and collaborators. Our research model will be based on a roving hierarchy in which each one of you and groups of you will lead discussions and modes of inquiry. All students will be placed into a CELL. Each cell will be responsible for making presentations based on the readings (see below for schedule). Cells will be required to meet outside of class and to incite a stimulating discussion of the readings for that week.

The course will look into a variety of themes from many different perspectives. The classes will generally begin with a lecture or lecture performance and then shift into a discussion of the readings. The challenge for the cell presentations will be to clearly draw links between the readings, the lectures and personal experiences.

Course Work & Evaluation

Books
Upside Down, Eduardo Galeano
The Information Bomb, Paul Virilio
Ctrl [SPACE] Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother, Thomas Y. Levin (ed.)

There will be twelve written assignments, two cell presentations and one final project for each student. Students will be evaluated based on the completion and quality of these assignments and will be graded on their in-class participation.

Notes and Participation
Most of the written assignments will consist of notes on the week's readings. Each student will turn in **2-page minimum of notes** on the readings each week. (Please refer to the schedule below for the note and reading assignments.) Each student is free to structure the notes the way s/he wants. The notes can be handwritten or typed, but must be legible. Notes must be turned in the week the readings are due. NOTES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED LATE. The notes are a way of organizing the ideas of the readings on paper. They will be a springboard for participation and contribution to the discussions. (Students doing their cell presentations do not have to turn in notes for that week.).

Assignment 5 (due February 20) and Assignment 13 (due April 24) will be reviews of audio tapes (1000-1500 words) in the library and a of performance (500-1000 words) on campus. *The notes, written assignments and participation will count for 40% of the final grade.*

Cell Presentations
The cell presentations will be graded for their creativity and focus. It is important that all cell participants contribute to the planning and development of the presentation. Cell presentations should include supplementary materials to the readings. Preferably, these materials will include artistic interpretations of some of the ideas (via websites or books) and/or alternative points of view. *The cell presentations will count for 30% of the final grade.*

Final Project

The final project will be an interpretive study of Carnegie Mellon University in the context of technological development, military participation and/or corporate investment. The final form of the project is open to the following options: a multi-media performance, the creation of a website or a 15-page written report. Regardless of the form chosen to document the final project, the study must include interviews and investigative strategies. Students will be given a series of topics to choose from and a set of guidelines. The final projects will be turned in and presented during the final week of exams. *The final project will count for 30% of the final grade.*

Attendance

If a student misses one class, s/he has essentially missed an entire week. Students will be downgraded one full grade if s/he is absent. Two absences will result in being dropped from the class.

I. TECHNOLOGICAL MYTHOLOGIES

Session://1.01_January 16 ~

Techno-Mythologia: the Information Subject

Session://1.02_January 23 ~

Magic, Metaphysics and the Messiah of the Digital Universe

Reading: Jerry Mander–"Technologies of Globalization"

Video: "Road Stories for a Flesh Eating Future"

ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE: NOTES ON MANDER ARTICLE

II. GLOBALIZATION AND THE LOOKING-GLASS WORLD

Session://1.03_January 30 ~

The United States Global Empire

CELL PRESENTATION 01

Readings: Eduardo Galeano *Upside Down,* pages 1 – 131

ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE: NOTES ON GALEANO READING

Session://1.04_February 6 ~

Digital Capitalism and the Engines of Globalization

CELL PRESENTATION 02

Reading: Eduardo Galeano *Upside Down, pages 131 - 243*

ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE: NOTES ON GALEANO READING

Session://1.05_February 13 ~

The Global Economic Infrastructure: IMF, World Bank & WTO

CELL PRESENTATION 03

Reading: Eduardo Galeano *Upside Down, pages 245-337*

ASSIGNMENT 4 DUE: NOTES ON GALEANO READING

Session://1.06_February 20 ~

9-11

Video: CORNEL WEST

ASSIGNMENT 5 DUE: AUDIO TAPE REVIEW (1000-1500 word review of selected

tapes on reserve at the library)

Session://1.07_February 27 ~

The Post-Industrial Myth, Global Labor and the Environment

CELL PRESENTATION 04

Reading: Download report "Exporting Harm" from:

http://www.svtc.org/cleancc/pubs/technotrash.htm

Coco Fusco, "At Your Service: Latin American Women in the Global Information

Network"

Video: Exporting Harm

Video: "Toxic Sludge is Good for You"

ASSIGNMENT 6 DUE: NOTES ON COCO FUSCO READING

III. THE WEBOPTICON: SYSTEMS OF SURVEILLANCE AND THE UNDERCLASSES

Session://1.08_March 6 ~

The Webopticon Middle-Class Privacy and the Policing of the Poor

CELL PRESENTATION 01

Readings: In *Ctrl [SPACE]*: Michael Foucault _ "The Eye of Power: A Conversation with Jean-Pierre Barrou" pgs. 94-101

In *Ctrl [SPACE]*: Duncan Cambell _ "Inside Echelon" pgs. 158-169

ASSIGNMENT 7 DUE: NOTES ON MICHAEL FOUCAULT READING

Session://1.09_ March 13 ~

Terrorism, the Myth of Security and the Nation State

CELL PRESENTATION 02

Readings: In *Ctrl [SPACE]*: Harun Farocki _ "Controlling Observation" pgs. 102-107

In *Ctrl [SPACE]*: Thomas Keenan _ "Publicity and Indifference: Media, Surveillance, 'Humanitarian Intervention'" pgs. 545-561

In *Ctrl [SPACE]*: New York City Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) _ "Surveillance Camera Project" pgs. 368-371

In *Ctrl [SPACE]*: Institute for Applied Autonomy _ "iSee" pgs. 606-607

In *Ctrl [SPACE]*: Surveillance Camera Players _ George Orwell's 1984" pgs. 616-619

Video: Harun Farocki

ASSIGNMENT 8 DUE: NOTES ON THOMAS KEENAN READING

Session://1.10_March 20 ~

Prison-Industrial-Surveillance Complex and the War on Drugs

CELL PRESENTATION 03

Readings: Paul Virilio *The Information Bomb* pgs 1-35

Angela Davis "Prison industry and military serve similar purposes"

Eve Goldberg and Linda Evans "The Prison Industrial Complex and the Global Economy"

Video: "CRITICAL RESISTANCE: To the Prison Industrial Complex"

ASSIGNMENT 9 DUE: NOTES ON PAUL VIRILIO AND ANGELA DAVIS READINGS

IV. THE GLOBAL WAR MACHINE

Session://1.11_March 27 ~

Global Policing, the Rogue State and Carnegie Mellon University (the Corporate-Paramilitary Institution)

CELL PRESENTATION 04

<u>Video:</u> "Marketing Tomorrow's Weapons"

<u>Readings:</u> Paul Virilio *The Information Bomb* pgs 36-92

Sara Henneberger, "CMU Blurs the Line on Weapons Research"

In *Ctrl [SPACE]*: Paul N. Edwards _ "Military Command-Control Systems and Closed World Politics" pgs. 338-345

<u>ASSIGNMENT 10 DUE:</u> NOTES ON PAUL VIRILIO <u>AND</u> P. EDWARDS READINGS

Session://1.12_April 3 ~

Post-Humanism, the Culture of Robotics and the Politics of Gaming

Guest Speaker: Zi-Activism

<u>Readings</u>: Paul Virilio *The Information Bomb* pgs 93-145

Francis Fukuyama, "Our Post Human Future"

<u>Video:</u> "Beyond Human"

<u>ASSIGNMENT 11 DUE:</u> NOTES ON PAUL VIRILIO READING

Session://1.13_April 10 ~

Militarization of the Southern Border

<u>Readings:</u> Jose Palafox

<u>Video:</u> "The New World Border"

<u>Video:</u> "Death on a Friendly Border"

<u>ASSIGNMENT 12 DUE:</u> NOTES ON JOSE PALAFOX READING

Session://1.14_April 17 ~

Los Cybrids Performance at the Miller Gallery

"El World Brain Disorder: surveillance.control.pendejismo"

Session://1.15_April 24 ~

Chicano Me, Chicano YOU!
<u>Readings</u>: TBA

<u>ASSIGNMENT 13 DUE:</u> REVIEW OF LOS CYBRIDS PERFORMANCE

(500-1000 words)

Session://1.16_May 1 ~

Techno-Edutainment and the Digital Divide
<u>Readings</u>: TBA

<u>ASSIGNMENT 14 DUE:</u> NOTES ON TECHNO-EDU READING

Final Presentations://Date to be announced

<u>DUE: FINAL PROJECTS AND PRESENTATIONS</u>