

MCC-GE 2134 Media Archaeology

Professor Mara Mills

Wednesdays, 2-4:10

East Bldg Room 207

Office Hours By Appointment

This graduate-level course offers an introduction to media archaeology, an interdisciplinary approach to media history that draws on cinema studies, literary theory, philosophy, and media arts. Our syllabus places self-avowed media archaeologists in conversation with scholars of postcolonial studies, the history of technology, and related subfields such as *Kulturtechnik*.

Whether they root new media in older tools and techniques, resuscitate failed and forgotten devices, or identify discursive epochs in the archive, media archaeologists share an aversion to linear and developmentalist histories of technology. Whether they work at the scale of “deep time” or within the paradigm of industrial modernity, they excavate older forms of communication to activate new social worlds in the present.

In addition to historiographic texts, we will discuss archaeologies of modern media alongside primary sources from the history of electronics, anthropometry, and computing.



Fragment of Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*

<http://warburg.library.cornell.edu/>

Book to Purchase:

Grant Wythoff, ed., *The Perversity of Things*

<https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/the-perversity-of-things>

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Seminar Facilitation/~30 minute Presentation <i>Make an appointment to discuss with me the week before your presentation.</i>	30%
Final Paper (~ 15 pp.) <i>topic due March 1</i> <i>paper due via e-mail May 15</i>	50%

Grading Policies

This course follows the standard Steinhardt Policies & Procedures for academic integrity and grading (including incompletes):

<http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/procedures>

http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/registration/standards#grading_policies

*I will occasionally grant extensions if I am given advance notice and adequate reason. Otherwise, late work will be marked down one grade per week (or fraction thereof) and may not receive written comments.

Accessibility and Accommodations

I want this course to be accessible to all interested students. If you need specific accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. I am available to discuss course accessibility in person, on the phone, or via email. To make arrangements for accommodations through NYU, contact the Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

Course Outline:

I. TERMS and HISTORIOGRAPHY

1/25 Introductions

2/1 Archaeology. Technology. Media.

Jussi Parikka, "What is Media Archaeology?" (excerpt)

Giorgio Agamben, "What is an Apparatus?"

Stephen Kline, "What is Technology?"

Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan, “After Kittler: On the Cultural Techniques of Recent German Media Theory”

View projects of the Tentative Collective (Karachi):

<http://tentativecollective.com/>

Optional:

Lisa Gitelman, “Introduction: Media As Historical Subjects”

2/8 Archives

Michel Foucault, “The Historical *a priori* and the Archive”

Henry Lowood, ed., “Before It’s Too Late: A Digital Game Preservation White Paper”

Jeanette Allis Bastian, “A Question of Custody: The Colonial Archives of the United Virgin Islands”

Saidiya Hartman, “Prologue: The Path of Strangers” and “So Many Dungeons,” *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*

E. McClung Fleming, “Artifact Study: A Proposed Model”

Look at CAMP library projects:

<https://aarandaar.net/>

Pad.ma

2/15 Experience and/as Evidence

Joan Scott – Linda Gordon debate:

Scott, “Review of Linda Gordon’s *Heroes of Their Own Lives*” and Gordon, “Reply to Joan Scott”

Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings* (excerpt)

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts”

Samuel Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (excerpt)

2/22 Visit to Lesbian Herstory Archives (Brooklyn)

3/1 “Users”

Nelly Oudshoorn and Trevor Pinch, “How Users and Non-Users Matter”

Andrew Russell and Lee Vinsel, “Hail the Maintainers,”

<https://aeon.co/essays/innovation-is-overvalued-maintenance-often-matters-more>

(on maintenance, repair, re-use, and waste)

Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman, “Introductory Essay: The Social Shaping of Technology”

David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old* (excerpt)

3/8 Scientifiction with author/editor Grant Wythoff

The Perversity of Things

3/15 SPRING BREAK

II. CASES

3/22 Industrialization/Mechanization/Modernity

Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (excerpt)

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (excerpt)

Walter Dignolo, "Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity."

Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (excerpt)

3/29 No Class

4/5 Writing

Cornelia Vismann, *Files: Law and Media Technology* (excerpt)

Rubén Gallo, *Mexican Modernity* (excerpt)

Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900* (excerpt)

Tom Mullaney, "The Moveable Typewriter: How Chinese Typists Developed Predictive Text During the Height of Maoism"

4/12 Image/ Vision

Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (excerpt)

Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (excerpt)

Zahid Chaudhury, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India* (excerpt)

Simon Werrett, "'The finest fireworks in the world': Chinese pyrotechnics in early modern Europe"

4/19 Surveillance

Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive"

Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (excerpt)

Francis Galton: <http://galton.org/fingerprinter.html>

Finger Prints (browse)

"Identification Offices in India and Egypt" (read)

4/26 Computation

Nakamura, Lisa. "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture"

Charles Babbage, *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufacture* (excerpts)

Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (excerpt)

Birgit Schneider on the history of punch card weaving

Lawrence Liang, "The Other Information City"

Optional:

Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think"

5/3 Mobile Phone Archaeology with Matthew Hockenberry

James Smith and Jeffrey Mantz, "Do Cellular Phones Dream of Civil War?: The Mystification of Production and the Consequences of Technology Fetishism in the Eastern Congo," in *Inclusion and Exclusion in the Global Arena* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Lisa Nakamura, "Economies of Digital Production in East Asia iPhone Girls and the Transnational Circuits of Cool," *Media Fields Journal*, no.2 (2011).

Pun Ngai and Jenny Chan, "Suicide as Protest for the New Generation of Chinese Migrant Workers: Foxconn, Global Capital, and the State," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 8, iss. 37, no. 2 (September 13, 2010);

Seth Perlow, "On production for digital culture: iPhone Girl, electronics assembly, and the material forms of aspiration," *Convergence* 17, no. 3 (2011): 245-269.

Browse Discard Studies website: <https://discardstudies.com/>

5/15 Paper due on Monday (finals week), by midnight via e-mail