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ENGLISH 434

TECHNOLOGY & PERFORMANCE

Technology is integral to the history of performance.
[...]
Performance is integral to the history of technology.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Performance Studies"

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we'll explore the history (and fantasy) of the performing machine—on stage, screen, and beyond. It's easy to think of technologies as "dead" things that enhance the "live" performances of humans. This course will ask you to do something harder: to find the liveness in a machine and to take its agency seriously. We will watch how new technologies tangle with humans in performance, and we will ask: what happens when human actors begin to accept a new technology as their scene partner–or as a part of their being?

READINGS

Most course materials will be available in the course packet (*) or online (†). You will, however, need the following three items, which are available at Amherst Books:

- ➢ Ruhl, Sarah. *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. TCG, 2008. ISBN: 978-1559363259
- ➢ Čapek, Karel. *R.U.R*. Penguin, 2004. ISBN: 978-0141182087
- ➢ Meriwether, Elizabeth. *Heddatron*. Playscripts, Inc., 2008. ISBN: 978-1623842659.

REQUIREMENTS

- ➢ Active **participation** in class discussion
- ➢ Four short **essays** (no more than 750 words each; due by the end of October) elaborating thoughts that arise from and build on class discussion.
- ➢ One group (end of unit #1) and one solo (during unit #2) **presentation** on a secondary source
- ➢ A **statement of purpose** (due by Friday, November 11th) announcing the topic for your final project and formulating a plan for completing this project. A meeting with me about this statement/plan is required—and, if necessary, a rewrite.
- ➢ A **final project**

CLASS SCHEDULE

AN ASTERISK (*) INDICATES A READING **IN THE COURSE PACKET**
A DAGGER (†) INDICATES A READING (OR OTHER MATERIAL) AVAILABLE **THROUGH MOODLE**

INTRODUCTION

Tuesday, Sept. 6th – First day

Thursday, Sept. 8th – Performance
Schechner, "What Is Performance?" in *Performance Studies: an introduction**
Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Performance Studies" in *The Performance Studies Reader**

PLAYING WITH TECHNOLOGY: THE CASE OF THE TELEPHONE

Tuesday, Sept. 13th
André de Lorde & Charles Foleÿ, *At the Telephone* [*Au telephone*] (theater, 1902)*
The Phone Call (film, 2013; dir. Mat Kirby)†
Berman, "Telephone Sketch" (television, 1964 on *The Judy Garland Show*)†

Thursday, Sept. 15th
Marclay, *Telephones* (video art, 1995)†
Grobe, "Why It's 'Easier to Act with a Telephone than a Man'" in *Theatre Survey**

Tuesday, Sept. 20th
Locke (film, 2013; dir. Steven Knight)†

Thursday, Sept. 22nd
Ruhl, *Dead Man's Cell Phone* (theater, 2007)

Tuesday & Thursday, Sept. 27th & 29th
Read one of the following articles (three students per article, who will work together to present their article to the class):
　　Gunning, "Heard Over the Phone" in *Screen* 32.2 (1991)†
　　Crane, "Projections and Intersections" in *Camera Obscura* 17.3 (2002)†
　　Schantz, "Telephonic Film" in *Film Quarterly* 56.4 (2003)†
　　Balme, "Surrogate Stages" in *Performance Research* 13.2 (2008)†
　　Holzapfel, "Auditory Traces" in *Contemporary Theatre Review* 21.2 (2011)†
For Thursday, add the following:
　　Salter, Introduction to *Entangled* (xxi-xxxvii)*
　　Latour, excerpt from *We Have Never Been Modern* (p. 1-8)*
　　Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (p. 63-86)*

(A)LIVE PERFORMANCE: BOTS

Tuesday, Oct. 4th
Dorsen, *Hello Hi There* (theater, 2010)* [[see video excerpt: https://vimeo.com/49328509†]]
Dorsen, "On Algorithmic Theatre"*
Auslander, "Live from Cyberspace"*

Thursday, Oct. 6th
Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"*
Hayles, Prologue & Chapter 1, *How We Became Posthuman*
Presentation #1: Laurel, *Computers as Theatre* (p. xi-xv, 1-39)†
Presentation #2: Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (p. vii-ix, 1-24)†

NO CLASS ON OCT. 11TH (MID-SEMESTER BREAK)

Thursday, Oct. 13th
Čapek, *R.U.R.* (drama, 1920)
Presentation #1: Case, *Performing Science and the Virtual* (p. 86-114)†
Presentation #2: Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament"†

Tuesday, Oct. 18th
Metropolis (film, 1927; dir. Fritz Lang)†
Presentation #1: Parker-Starbuck, *Cyborg Theatre* (p. 1-37)†
Presentation #2: Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine"†

Thursday, Oct. 20th
Meriwether, *Heddatron* (drama, 2006)
Hirata, *I, Worker* (drama, 2008)†
Presentation #1: Tzung-de Lin, "Theater as a Site for Technology…"†
Presentation #2: Francesca Spedalieri, "Quietly Posthuman"†

Tuesday, Oct. 25th
Machover, et al., *Death and the Powers* (opera, 2010)†
Presentation #1: Peter Eckersall, "Toward a Dramaturgy of Robots…"†
Presentation #2: Heather Knight, "Eight Lessons Learned …"†

Thursday, Oct. 27th
Ex Machina (film, 2015; dir. Alex Garland)†
Film Crit Hulk, "*Ex Machina* and the Art of Character Identification," *B.M.D.*†
Chang, "How *Ex Machina* Abuses Women of Color…," *b2o*†
Presentation #1: Jacobson, "*Ex Machina* in the Garden" in *Film Quarterly*†

[Bring in at least one other article or review about Ex Machina*]*

Tuesday, Nov. 1st
Monáe, selections from *Metropolis*, *ArchAndroid*, & *Electric Lady* (music/video)†
Lordi, "Calling All Stars: Janelle Monáe's Black Feminist Futures"†
"How to Do the Robot (Totally Rad 80's Dances)" (online video, 2009)†
Presentation #1: English & Kim, "Now We Want Our Funk Cut"†

> ***Presentation #2:*** Bragin, [On the "funky robot"]†

Thursday, Nov. 3ʳᵈ
> *Orphan Black*, season 1, eps. 1-3 (television; BBC-America, 2013–)†
> McGeogh, "TechnoDolly and the Art of Authentic Cloning…," *Motherboard*†
> Selected "Making of…" videos from BBC-A†
> > ***Presentation #1:*** Wolf, "The Technological Construction of Performance"†
> > ***Presentation #2:*** Bode, "No Longer Themselves" †

PROSTHESES & AVATARS

Tuesday, Nov. 8ᵗʰ
> Taylor, "The New Uses of Performance" in *Performance* (89-116)*
> Zylinska, " 'The Future . . . Is Monstrous'" in *The Cyborg Experiments* (214-236)*
> Stelarc/Clarke, "Exoskeleton" & "pros + thesis" in *Live* (206-209)*
> Stelarc, "Towards a Compliant Coupling" in *The Cyborg Experiments* (73-78)*

Thursday, Nov. 10ᵗʰ
> Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"*
> Pearlman, "I, Cyborg" in *PAJ* 37.2 (May 2015): 84-90.*
> Orlan, "this is my body … this is my software" in *ORLAN: A Hybrid Body of
> > Artworks*

Tuesday, Nov. 15ᵗʰ
> *Robocop* (film, 1987)†
> Nishime, "The Mulatto Cyborg"*
> Nama, excerpt from *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film**

Thursday, Nov. 17ᵗʰ
> Gómez-Peña & Sifuentes, *BORDERscape 2000* in *The Color of Theater* (345-374)*
> Gómez-Peña, "Ethno-cyborgs and Genetically Engineered Mexicans" in *Dangerous
> > Border Crossings* (45-57)*
> Gómez-Peña, "El Mad Mex" in *Ethno-Techno* (222-3)*

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Tuesday, Nov. 29ᵗʰ
> Anderson, selections from *Home of the Brave*†
> Bokowiec & Wilson-Bokowiec, selections from *The Vox Circuit Trilogy*†
> Bokowiec & Wilson-Bokowiec, "Kinaesonics" in *Contemporary Music Review**
> Salter, "Sound" in *Entangled* (181-219)*

Thursday, Nov. 31ˢᵗ
> Anderson, "Bringing Guantánamo to Park Avenue"*
> Videos relating to Anderson & el Gharani's *Habeus Corpus*†

Tuesday, Dec. 6ᵗʰ
Workshop

Thursday, Dec. 8th
Workshop

Tuesday, Dec. 13th
Conversation with visiting scholars