**HACKER CULTURE & POLITICS**

COMS 541 (CRN 15368) 1435-1725

Department of Art History and Communication Studies

McGill University

Professor Gabriella Coleman

Fall 2012

Arts W-220/ 14:35-17:25



Professor: Dr. Gabriella Coleman

Office: Arts W-110

Office hours: Sign up sheet Tuesday 2:30-3:30 PM

Phone: xxxxx

E-mail: gabriella.coleman@mcgill.ca

**OVERVIEW**

This course examines computer hackers to interrogate not only the ethics and technical practices of hacking, but to examine more broadly how hackers and hacking have transformed the politics of computing and the Internet more generally. We will examine how hacker values are realized and constituted by different legal, technical, and ethical activities of computer hacking—for example, free software production, cyberactivism and hactivism, cryptography, and the prankish games of hacker underground. We will pay close attention to how ethical principles are variably represented and thought of by hackers, journalists, and academics and we will use the example of hacking to address various topics on law, order, and politics on the Internet such as: free speech and censorship, privacy, security, surveillance, and intellectual property. We finish with an in-depth look at two sites of hacker and activist action: Wikileaks and Anonymous.

**LEARNER OBJECTIVES**

This will allow us to 1) demonstrate familiarity with variants of hacking 2) critically examine the multiple ways hackers draw on and reconfigure dominant ideas of property, freedom, and privacy through their diverse moral codes and technical activities 3) broaden our understanding of politics of the Internet by evaluating the various political effects and ramifications of hacking. Students will be responsible for leading discussions on the readings and critically engaging the readings and class conversations.

**READINGS**

The following texts are available at Paragraph Books and the rest of the readings will be on our course website. Many of the readings are excerpts of much longer readings or blog posts. The week before the next class I will often highlight which pages to focus your attention on.

Levy, Steven.1984 [1994] *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution*. Doubleday

Doctorow, Cory. 2009 *Makers.* Harper Voyager

**BLOGS/SITES YOU MIGHT WANT TO FOLLOW**

[**http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/**](http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/)

[**http://news.ycombinator.com/**](http://news.ycombinator.com/)

[**http://lwn.net/**](http://lwn.net/)

[**http://slashdot.org/**](http://slashdot.org/)

**MOVIES**

I have booked our room after class to watch four movies throughout the semester. Although not required, I highly encourage students to come watch the films.

**REQUIRMENTS, METHOD OF EVALUATION, AND ASSINGMENTS**

Class will be conducted as a seminar and I have structured the assignments to encourage active and engaged class discussions focused on the readings. Students will be responsible for leading discussions on the readings and should critically engage the readings and class conversations. Because this is a seminar course, regular class attendance is required. You are allowed one unexcused absence. After this, your grade will drop by one half letter for each missed class

Reading Responses 30% (6 total and see separate sheet for grading rubric)

Class Presentation 20% (see separate sheet for grading rubric)

Questions/participation 20% (see separate sheet for grading rubric)

Final Research Project 30% (details will be provided later in the semester)

*Grade Breakdown:*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | Grade point | Percentages |
| A | 4.0 | 85 -100 |
| A- | 3.7 | 80 – 84 |
| B+ | 3.3 | 75 – 79 |
| B | 3.0 | 70 – 74 |
| B- | 2.7 | 65 – 69 |
| C+ | 2.3 | 60 – 64 |
| C | 2.0 | 55 – 59 |
| D (Conditional Pass) | 1.0 | 50 – 54 |
| F (Fail) | 0 | 0 - 49 |

**EMAIL POLICY**

During the academic year, I receive a considerable amount of email. In order for me to respond to my e-mail efficiently, please follow the following guidelines:

1. If you cannot see me during my office hours, e-mail me to set up an appointment; I will try to respond as soon as possible but I usually cannot accommodate a meeting in 24 or even 48 hours.

2. I read and reply to e-mail once a day and usually do not read or reply to e-mail after 5 PM or weekends.

3. Follow instructions for turning in assignments. For this class you are expected to turn in the reading responses via e-mail by 10 a.m. and in class. No other assignments submitted by e-mail will be accepted.

4. Grade inquiries and disputes will not be considered or discussed via e-mail. For all grade inquiries and questions about assignments, please set up an appointment with me.

5. I will not reply to e-mail inquiries regarding course matters (assignment requirements, due dates, exam structure, readings, etc.) that arise from missing class or inattention to the course syllabus. Inquiries requesting clarification will receive replies, though I would strongly prefer these inquiries to be made in class or during office hours.

**OTHER INFORMATION AND MCGILL POLICIES**

*Language*: In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded

*Accommodations:* Students requiring special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications should notify Prof. Coleman and the Office for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible. The OSD is located in Suite 3100, Brown Student Services Building, ph: 398-6009 (voice), 398-8198 (TDD), www.mcgill.ca/osd/.

*Academic Integrity:* McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). L’université McGill attaché une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par consequent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les consequences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procedures disciplinaires (pour les plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

**SCHEDULE**

The following is a “working schedule.” Class materials are subject to change based on the interests, understanding, and general pace of the class. It is your responsibility to keep on top of any schedule changes, whether you are in class or not. If you have a concern about any of the materials, please speak to me.

|  |
| --- |
| Week 1 |

**September 5: In class introductions**

Hitt, Jack and Paul Tough

1990 “Is Computer Hacking a Crime?” *Harpers Magazine*

Coleman, Gabriella

2013 “Hackers.” *John Hopkins Dictionary of Digital Media*

Robert Graham, David

2012 “No, "hacker" really does mean "hacker"”

http://erratasec.blogspot.ca/2012/08/no-hacker-really-does-mean-hacker.html

|  |
| --- |
| Week 2 |

**September 12: Introductions**

Levy, Steven

1984 *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution* [part one]

Rosenbaum, Ron

1971 “Secrets of the Little Blue Box.” *Esquire Magazine*

<http://www.webcrunchers.com/crunch/stories/esq-art.html>

Maines, Rachel

2009 “What is a Hedonizing Technology?” *Hedonizing Technologies*

**Listen to before class:**

http://www.radiolab.org/2012/feb/20/long-distance/

|  |
| --- |
| Week 3 |

**September 19: Free and Open Source Software**

Levy, Steven

1984 “Epilogue.” *Hackers*

Stallman, Richard

1985 “The GNU Manifesto”

http://www.gnu.org/gnu/manifesto.html

Kelty, Chris

2008 *Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software* [Introduction, Chapter 6, and Chapter 3 and in that order]

Coleman, Gabriella

2013 *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking* [Introduction, Chapter 2,

5, Epilogue]

Benjamin, Walter

1986 “Author as Producer.” *Cultural Resistance Reader*

**Recommended:**

Hesse, Carla

2002 "The Rise of Intellectual Property, 700 B.C - A.D. 2000: an Idea in Balance*.” Dædalus*

Hall, Stuart

1987 “Variants of Liberalism.” *Politics and Ideology*

|  |
| --- |
| Week 4 |

**September 26: Contexts and Places of Making// Making Stuff, Ethical Making**

Doctorow, Cory

2009 *Makers* [read ½ of the book]

Polleta, Francesa,

1999 “‘Free spaces’ in Collective Action.” *Theory and Society*

Pfaffenberger, Bryan

1996 “If I Want It, It’s OK: Usenet and the (Outer) Limits of Free Speech.” *The Information Society*

Coleman, Gabriella

2013 “Two Ethical Moments in Debian*.” Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking*

MaxiGas

2012 “HackLabs and HackerSpaces: Tracing Two Genealogies.” *Journal of Peer Production*

http://peerproduction.net/issues/issue-2/peer-reviewed-papers/hacklabs-and-hackerspaces/

**Recommended:**

Pettis, Bree

2011 *HackerSpaces: The Beginning*!

http://www.brepettis.com/blog/2011/8/31/hackerspaces-the-beginning-the-book.html

|  |
| --- |
| Week 5 |

**October 3: Craft and Craftiness**

Doctorow, Cory

2009 *Makers* [Finish]

Sennet, Richard

2008 *The Craftsman* [pp. 8-11 50-52, 240-252, 262-265; optional but recommended and included 37-45]

Coleman, Gabriella

2013 “Craft and Craftiness.” *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking*

Seibel, Peter

2009 *Coders at Work: Reflections on the Craft of Programing* [selections]

Borgmann, Albert

1984 “Device Paradigm” *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*

Detienne, Marcel and Jean-Pierre Vernant,

1991 “Antilochus’ Race.” *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*

Hyde, Lewis

1998 *Trickster Makes the World* [Introduction and selections]

**Listen to the NPR podcast before class:**

*The 'Wild And Woolly' World Of Bulletin Boards*

http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120649723

**After Hours Movie:**

BBS: The Documentary (2005, Jason Scott)

[2 DVDs otherwise, we will be pulling an all nighter]

**Recommended:**

Fuller, Mathew

2008 “Elegance.” *Software Studies: A Lexicon*

Monfort, Nick

2008 “Obfuscated Code.” *Software Studies: A Lexicon*

|  |
| --- |
| Week 6 |

**October 10: The Underground**

Sterling Bruce

1992 “The Digital Underground.” *The Hacker Crackdown*

http://www.dina.kvl.dk/~abraham/crackdown/crackdown\_5.html#SEC5

Thomas, Douglass

2003 *Hacker Culture* [chapter 2, 4, 6]

Poulsen, Kevin

2008 “Teenage Hacker Is Blind, Brash and in the Crosshairs of the FBI.” *Wired*

http://www.wired.com/politics/law/news/2008/02/blind\_hacker?currentPage=1

**Zines:**

http://www.phrack.org/issues.html?issue=65&id=13#article

http://web.textfiles.com/ezines/EL8/ [selections TBD]

http://gonullyourself.org/ezines/ZF0/zf0%204.txt

**Listen to before class, Kevin Mitnick keynote HOPE:**

http://www.the-fifth-hope.org/mp3/mitnick-1.mp3

http://www.the-fifth-hope.org/mp3/mitnick-2.mp3

**After Hours Movie**:

War Games (1983)

|  |
| --- |
| Week 7 |

**October 17: The Industry and “the Man”**

Editorial/2600

The Victor Spoiled

Johnston, Jessica

2009 *Technological Turf Wars: A Case Study of the Computer Antivirus Industry*

[Introduction, chapter 1, chapter 2]

http://site.ebrary.com/lib/mcgill/docDetail.action?docID=10279967

Ensmenger, Nathan

2010 “The Black Art of Programming.” *The Computer Boys Take Over*

Altman, Mitch

2012 “Hacking at the crossroad: US military funding of hackerspaces.” *Journal of Peer Production*

http://peerproduction.net/issues/issue-2/invited-comments/hacking-at-the-crossroad/

The Rise of Antisec Movement [URLS, provided separately]

Guido, Dan

2008 “Is the security industry like a lemon market?”

http://seclists.org/fulldisclosure/2008/Jul/399

Greenberg, Andy

2012 “Shopping For Zero-Days: A Price List For Hackers' Secret Software Exploits” *Forbes*

http://www.forbes.com/sites/andygreenberg/2012/03/23/shopping-for-zero-days-an-price-list-for-hackers-secret-software-exploits/

**In class video:**

Mikko Hypponen: Fighting viruses, defending the net //TED Talk

http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/mikko\_hypponen\_fighting\_viruses\_defending\_the\_net.html

**Watch Before Class:**

Hackers Testifying at the United States Senate, May 19, 1998 (L0pht Heavy Industries)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVJldn\_MmMY

|  |
| --- |
| Week 8 |

**October 24: Piracy**

Anonymous

1994 “The Lamahs-Guide to Pirating Software on the Internet” http://www.textfiles.com/piracy/warez.txt

Editorial

1999 “So You Want to be a Pirate?” *High Noon on the Electronic Frontier*

Liang, Lawrence

2011 “Beyond Representation: The Figure of the Pirate.” *Access to Knowledge in the Age of Intellectual Property*

http://mitpress.mit.edu/books/chapters/189095196Xchap15.pdf

Biggs, John

2012 “Avast, Me Hearties: How The Pirate Bay Changed The Way We Steal”

http://techcrunch.com/2012/02/09/avast-me-hearties-how-the-pirate-bay-changed-the-way-we-steal/

Andersson, Jonas

2012 “The origins and impacts of Swedish filesharing: a case study, JoPP”

<http://peerproduction.net/issues/issue-0/peer-reviewed-papers/the-origins-and-impacts-of-swedish-filesharing/>

Fleischer, Rasmus

2006 Pirate Party Speech

https://torrentfreak.com/piratbyran-speech/

gmaxwell

2011 “Papers from Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society”

https://thepiratebay.se/torrent/6554331

**In class movie:**

Steal this Film (Alan Toner, Jaime King 2006)

|  |
| --- |
| Week 9 |

**IN DEPTH: THE POLITICS OF SECRECY, ANONYMITY, AND TRANSPARENCY (or how to Understand Anonymous and Wikileaks)**

**October 31: Crypto, Anonymity, and Dissent**

Zimmerman, Phil

1999 “How PGP Works/Why Do You Need PGP?” *High Noon on the Electronic Frontier*

Greendberg, Andy

2012 *This Machine Kills Secrets: How WikiLeakers, Cypherpunks, and Hacktivists Aim to Free the World's Information* [chapters TBD]

Sunstein, Cass

2003 *Why Societies Need Dissent* [Introduction and chapter 5]

Thoreau, Henry David

1848 “On Civil Disobedience”

http://art-bin.com/art/odisob.html

Assange, Julian

1996 “State and Terrorist Conspiracies”

http://cryptome.org/0002/ja-conspiracies.pdf

|  |
| --- |
| Week 10 |

**November 7: Roots**

Greenberg, Andy

2012 *This Machine Kills Secrets: How WikiLeakers, Cypherpunks, and Hacktivists Aim to Free the World's Information* [chapters TBD]

Knuttila, Lee

2011 “User unknown: 4chan, Anonymity and Contingency.” *First Monday*

http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/3665/3055

Auerbach, David

2012 “Anonymity as Culture: Treatise.” *Triple Canopy*

http://canopycanopycanopy.com/15/anonymity\_as\_culture\_\_treatise

Hyde, Lewis

1998 “Speechless Shame and Shameless Speech.” *Trickster Makes this World*

Domingez, Ricardo

2002 “Electronic Disturbance: An Interview.” *Cultural Resistance Reader*

Epstein, Barbara

1988 “The Politics of Pregifurative Politics.” *Cultural Resistance Reader*

|  |
| --- |
| Week 11 |

**November 14: Understanding Anonymous**

Coleman, Gabriella

2012 “Our Weirdness Is Free. The logic of Anonymous—online army, agent of chaos, and seeker of justice” *Triple Canopy*

http://canopycanopycanopy.com/15/our\_weirdness\_is\_free

Coleman, Gabriella

2012 Am I Anonymous? *Limn*

http://limn.it/am-i-anonymous/

Deseriis, Marco

2012 Is Anonymous a New Form of Luddism?

<http://www.thething.it/snafu/?p=711>

Norton, Quinn

2012 How Anonymous Picks Targets, Launches Attacks, and Takes Powerful Organizations Down

http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2012/07/ff\_anonymous/

Bakhtin, Mikhail

1988 “Rabelais and his World.” *Cultural Resistance Reader.*

Galloway, Alex

20 10 “Networks.” *Critical Terms for Media Studies*.

Kenneth Cmiel

1994 “The Politics of Civility.” *Sixties: From Memory to History*

Corman, Josh and Brian Martin

2011/2012 “Building a Better Anonymous” [we will split the class up to read different sections to this 8 part series and we will have mini-presentations of the main arguments]

http://blog.cognitivedissidents.com/2011/12/20/building-a-better-anonymous-series-part-0/

Anonymous 2012

2012 Anonymous Does Not Need Fixing

<http://www.xspeaks.tk/>

Anonymous

2012 Digital Sit-ins: DDOS is legitimate civil disobedience.

<http://anonyops.org/post/16585162289/digital-sit-ins-ddos-is-legitimate-civil-disobedience>

**Listen to before class:**

The Hacker Law/On the Media: http://www.onthemedia.org/2011/sep/23/the-hacker-law/

**After Hours Movie:**

We are Legion: The Story of the Hacktivists (Brian Knappenberger, 2011)

**Recommended:**

Bogad, Lawrence

2006 “Tactical Carnival: Social movements, Demonstrations, and

Dialogical Performance*.” A Boal Companion*

Olson, Parmy

2012 *We are Anonymous*. Little and Brown: NY

|  |
| --- |
| Week 12 |

**November 21: The Broader and Historical Context**

McCurdy, Patrick

2013 “From the Pentagon Papers to Cablegate: How the Network Society Has Changed Leaking.” *Beyond WikiLeaks*

Coleman, Gabriella

2013 “Anonymous and the Politics of Leaking.” *Beyond Wikileaks*

Chomsky, Noam

1999 “Domestic Terrorism: Notes on the State System of Oppression” *New Political Science*

http://www.chomsky.info/articles/199909--.htm

Shorrock, Tim

2005 “The Spy Who Billed Me.” *Mother Jones*.

http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2005/01/spy-who-billed-me

Mueller, Robert

2012 “Combating Threats in the Cyber World: Outsmarting Terrorists, Hackers, and Spies.” RSA Speech

http://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/combating-threats-in-the-cyber-world-outsmarting-terrorists-hackers-and-spies

Libick, Martin

2012 Cyberdeterrence and Cyberwar. *Rand*.

http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG877.html [summary only]

Kravets, David

2012 “We Don’t Need No Stinking Warrant: The Disturbing, Unchecked Rise of the Administrative Subpoena**.”** *Wired Threat Level*

http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2012/08/administrative-subpoenas/

**After Hours Movie:**

*Secrecy* (Peter Galison, Rob Moss 2008)

|  |
| --- |
| Week 13 |

**November 28: Media and Spectacle**

Lynch, Lisa

2013 “The Leak Heard Round the World? Cablegate in the Evolving Global Mediascape.” *Beyond WikiLeaks*

Deabord, Guy

1994 “Separation Perfected.” *The Society of the Spectacle*

Philip, Whitney

Forthcoming “The House That Fox Built: Anonymous, Spectacle and Cycles of Amplification.” *Television and New Media*

https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/12204

Gitlin, Todd

2009 “The Media in the Unmaking of the New Left.” *The Social Movements Reader*

Couldry, Nick

2003 “Rethinking Media Events.” *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*

**Listen to Before Class:**

“Guy Debord predicted our distracted society”

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/mar/30/guy-debord-society-spectacle>