

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN CULTURE & MEDIA

THE POLITICS OF TECHNOCULTURE

Summer Session 1999

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This course is located at the intersection of technology and politics. Its aim is to engage critically with the experience of technology over in the 20thC, and most especially the "Third Wave" revolution of information. Beginning with the early-modern imaginary and concluding with the possibility of the 'generalized accident' of global interactivity, we will trace the impact of a "technical world view" upon bodies, upon culture, and populations more broadly. From utopias to dystopias, from war to surveillance, from ecology to the cyborg, we will step back from the ideology and mythology of contemporary hype, and push toward a more reflective understanding of the major political issues we face now, and will in the new millennium.



TEXTS

There is no single text for this unit, nor should we seek one. We will be approaching some of the most important, urgent, and curious problematics currently facing us all in the modern world. Our archive is everything you see before you in your daily existence. But we need new eyes to see it. It's not apparent; it's hidden, it's inscripted. For our purposes I have selected a diverse group of thinkers and writers that will act something like markers on a landscape; by which--in our investigations--we will set our compass.

The thinkers that fascinate me--those who will be our eyes and ears here--try not only to understand surfaces, but precisely the very geology of politics; the dark web of tunnels and passages that lie beneath the landscape upon which we find ourselves; the political functioning of the societies into which we're born.



SEMINAR FORMAT & TOPICS

Each session will be a mix of tutor- and student-led discussion.

Seminars will be 4 hours, twice weekly.

I propose to run things as follows:

Each session will begin with opening comments by myself. We will then go to discuss specific texts and readings. In addition to our collective efforts, for each session one or more students will be given special responsibility for guiding/leading the discussion, and teasing out the key questions of the seminar as a whole. This is an important task, and will be reflected in the assessment structure of the course. As tutor I will be involved at every turn. The aim, however, is to have you all, as participants, begin to able to stand on your own two feet--intellectually--and develop the capacity for critical and responsive thought. As the course progresses our aim will aim to become less 'class-like', and more akin to a cohesive research group, brought together around a particular problematic (surveillance, simulation, cybernetics, technoscience, etc.). Everyone will be encouraged to participate as equals.

In addition to this syllabus/outline, handouts will be circulated, when and where appropriate. These may take the form of relevant questions for further thought/suggestions for the assessed written paper, a narrative guideline of the themes of the course/session, or just my favourite quote of the moment.¹ Each session will be accompanied--where appropriate--with a film screening. This is an integral and important part of our learning, and not simply for entertainment.

¹ These will - when appropriate - be given out during the relevant session and not distributed in advance. I want you to think for yourself, rather than mirror whatever I might think or say.

The topics are as follows:

week one

- 1) Introduction “The politics of technology in the 20thC”
 - philosophical confrontations with modernity
- 2) Techno-Rationality
 - human self-assertion in historical perspective

week two

- 3) Techno-Utopias
 - techno-optimism for the perfectibility of man
- 4) Techno-Dystopias
 - technology’s bad conscience: the Faustian pact

week three

- 5) “Cybernetics”
 - on the human use of human beings
- 6) Pure War
 - techno-science and military intelligence

week four

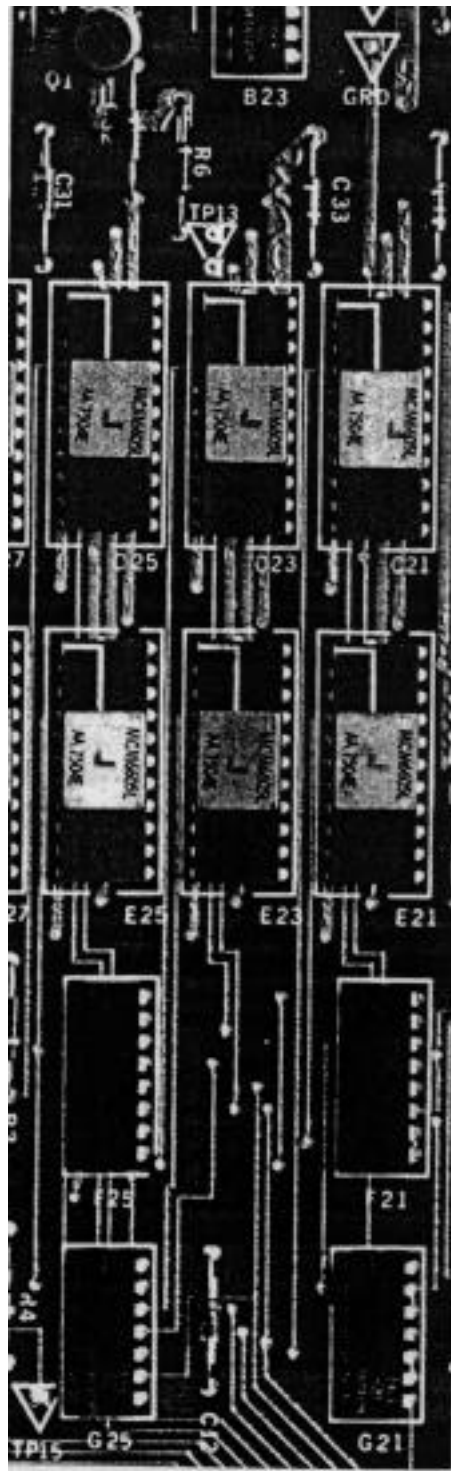
- 7) Gender Trouble
 - critical feminism in cyberspace, hyperspace and outer space
- 8) Cyberecology & Cyber-resistance
 - displacing yet protecting the earth

week five

- 9) Simulation
 - the slow irradiation of presence
- 10) Surveillance
 - “visibility is a trap”

week six

- 11) Substitution
 - nanotechnology, genetics, and the (re)colonization of the human body
- 12) The Accident
 - objects take command



SEMINAR LEADERS

1. Topics will be allocated at the end of the first week’s session. Please take a little time beforehand to think about which topic interests, puzzles, excites, or confuses you. If possible we will try to ensure that people’s preferences are met. In thinking about which session you might like to help guide, please remember that oftentimes it is both more interesting and challenging to tackle a topic that you find at first to be unusual/daunting. The very best discussions emerge when we are all pushed beyond the realms of our usual experiences.

2. Though our main objective will be to get somewhere in our intellectual thinking, the role of the seminar leader is also to think about how best to technically achieve this. We will have access to overhead projectors, chalkboards, audio-visuals, etc. If, as leader, you would like the discussion to focus on a particular quotation/image/document (film even), contact me beforehand and we can think together about how best to do whatever you propose.

SEMINAR READINGS

For each session there will usually be one or two 'main texts'. These are essential. I have tried to make them as direct and as short as possible.

For each session, additional key historical and supplementary texts are also listed. It isn't expected that you read each of these, but it will aid your understanding if you dip into them.

If you run into problems email me. Alternatively, leave a message at my office (Rm 105) at 130 Hope Street (Box 1831, extn: 2420).

Read as widely and as deeply as possible. There are several great libraries in walking distance (e.g., the Rhode Island Historical Society, the John Hay Library, the John Carter Brown Library, the Science Library etc.)

The best students (and scholars) are always great detectives; rediscovering lost thinkers, silenced voices; old ghosts and forgotten graves.

ASSESSMENT

See page 18 of this handout.

OTHER SOURCES

You should be aware of world events passing around you. Look out for subplots and fragments of knowledges in films, on TV, passing conversations in the street, throughout your daily lives.

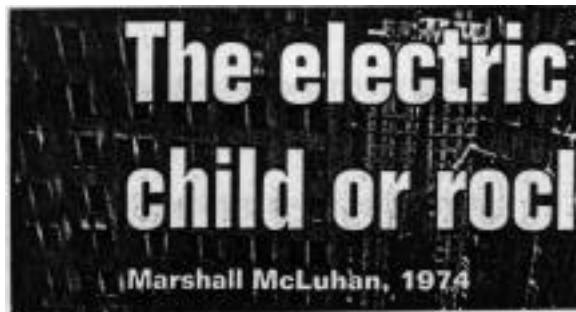
Try to read more widely than 'academic texts'. Literature, science, pop music, channel surfing, the underground; it is all your domain of study.

Time is always limited of course, but do what you can.

Of journals, I find the following to be the best:



- Radical Philosophy
- Semiotext(e)
- Theory, Culture and Society
- Media, Culture and Society
- Economy and Society



INTELLECTUAL GENEALOGY OF THE COURSE

This unit has been inspired first and foremost by the critical thought of French urbanist, military historian and Paul Virilio (b1932). By the way of an introduction to the broader intellectual framework within which the sets of concerns that we will discuss are located, I would recommend reading the following. Virilio is part of a vibrant and diverse group of thinkers that emerges in France around the time of the May 1968 student and civil protests. His contemporaries and interlocutors include Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard and Sylvère Lotringer. Understanding the context of these thinkers will help you understand what is at stake in the issues at hand.

Der Derian, James (1998) *The Virilio Reader* Blackwell
 Douglas, Ian R. (1998) 'The new seclusion', *New Formations* Autumn
 Foucault, Michel and Deleuze, Gilles (1996) 'Intellectuals and Power' in *Foucault Live*, (ed. Sylvère Lotringer) Semiotext(e)
 Parent, Claude and Virilio, Paul (1996) *The Function of the Oblique: The architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963-1969* AA Publications
 Benedetti, Paul and DeHart, Nancy (1997) *Reflections on and by Marshall McLuhan: Forward through the rearview mirror* MIT

1) INTRODUCTION : "THE POLITICS OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE 20THC "

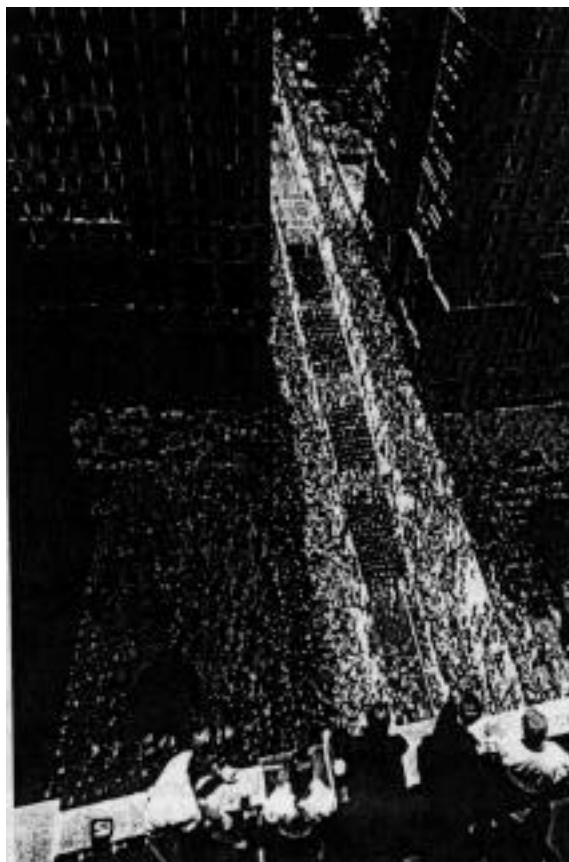
Main Texts

Heidegger, Martin (1977) 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* Harper

Heidegger, Martin (1977) 'The Age of the World Picture', *The Question Concerning technology and Other Essays* Harper

Summary

We begin with the agonistic assessment of technology that emerges as the 20th century begins. On the back of Nietzsche (also Spencer and Darwin, and Marx) the question of 'technics' emerges, in the writings of the likes of Oswald Spengler, (and later) Martin Heidegger, Lewis Mumford and Karl Jaspers. In this session--in order to provide a proper



grounding for an understanding of the politics of technology--we engage with this question of technics; the human organization of 'men and things'.

What is the power of technology? What is its nature? What effects has the "technical world-view" had on civilization in general? We will engage these questions through the lens of several cultural critics of technology (in particular Martin Heidegger) who opened the route to a new form of cultural criticism of the 20th century as a whole: the critique of science, rationality, power and modernity.

Film

My 20th Century

Historical Text

Jaspers, Karl (1951) *Man in the Modern Age* NY

Supplimentary Readings

- Aronowitz, Stanley (1988) *Science as Power: Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society* Macmillan
- Benjamin, Walter (1968) 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations* NY
- Berman, Marshall (1982) *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* Vintage
- Dreyfus, Hubert L. (1984) 'Between Techne and Technology: The Ambiguous Place of Equipment in Being and Time' (copies available from me)
- Fandozzi, Philip R. (1982) *Nihilism and Technology: A Heideggerean Investigation* University Press of America
- Gehlen, Arnold (1978) *Man in the Age of Technology* Columbia University Press
- Guattari, Félix (1993) 'Machinic Heterogenesis' in Conley, Verena Andermatt (ed) *Rethinking Technologies* University of Minnesota
- Habermas, Jürgen (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* MIT
- Hurf, Jeffrey (1984) *Reactionary Modernism: technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* Cambridge University Press
- Jünger, Ernst (1991) 'Total Mobilization' in Wolin, Richard, *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* Columbia University Press
- Marcuse, Herbert (1964) *One Dimensional Man* Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Mitcham, Carl (1985) 'What is the Philosophy of Technology?', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, XXV, No. 1, pp. 73-88
- Monaco, Paul (1983) *Modern European Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1970* SUNY
- Spengler, Oswald, (c1973) *The decline of the West* New York, Knopf
- ____ (1932) *Man and technics; a contribution to a philosophy of life* New York, Knopf
- Virilio, Paul (1993) 'The Third Interval: A Critical Transition' in Conley, Verena Andermatt (ed) *Rethinking Technologies* University of Minnesota
- Wolin, Richard (1990) *The politics of being: the political thought of Martin Heidegger* Columbia University Press
- Zimmerman, Michael E. (1977) 'Heidegger and Marcuse: Technology and Ideology', *Research in Philosophy and Technology*, II, pp. 245-261
- ____ (1990) *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art* Indiana University Press





2) TECHNO-RATIONALITY

Main Text

Mumford, Lewis (1970) *The Pentagon of Power* Harcourt

Summary

In this session we focus on technical rationality, and its historical emergence. From where does the “technical world-view” emerge? What is its history, its key turning points and mutations? How does the history of *techno-rationality* correspond to the history of the State, of power in general? This session is devoted to an overview of the genealogy of the Western imaginary.

Historical Text

Mumford, Lewis (1967) *Technics and Human Development* Harcourt

Film

Machine Dreams

Supplementary Readings

- Aronowitz, Stanley (1988) *Science as Power: Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society* Macmillan
- Aspray, William (ed) (1990) *Computing before computers* Iowa State University Press
- Blumenberg, Hans (1985) *Legitimacy of the Modern Age* MIT
- Crosby, Alfred W. (1997) *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250-1600* Cambridge University Press
- Ellul, Jacques (1965) *The Technological Society* New York: Alfred A. Knopf
- Hacking, Ian (1990) *The Taming of Chance* Cambridge University Press
- Hindess, Barry (1987) 'Rationality and the Characterization of Modern Society' in Whimster, Sam and Lash, Scott *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity* Allen and Unwin
- Fox, Christopher, Porter, Roy S. Porter, and Wokler, Robert (1995) (eds) *Inventing human science: eighteenth-century domains* Berkeley: University of California Press
- Hillman, David and Mazzio, Carla (eds) (1997) *The body in parts: fantasies of corporeality in early modern Europe* Routledge
- Hultén, Karl Gunnar Pontus, (1968) *The machine, as seen at the end of mechanical age* New York, Museum of Modern Art; distributed by New York Graphic Society
- Kern, Stephen (1975) *Anatomy and destiny: a cultural history of the human body* Indianapolis : Bobbs-Merrill
- Peltonen, Markku (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon* Cambridge University Press
- Sawday, Jonathan (1995) *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* London: Routledge
- Smith, Merritt Roe and Marx, Leo (1994) *Does technology drive history?: the dilemma of technological determinism* MIT Press
- Turner, Brian (1987) 'The Rationalization of the Body: Reflections on Modernity and Discipline' in Whimster, Sam and Lash, Scott *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity* Allen and Unwin
- Veblen, Thorstein (c1961) 'The Evolution of the Scientific Point of View' in *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization: And Other Essays* New York



3) TECHNO-UTOPIAS

Main Texts

Bacon, Francis (c1924) *New Atlantis* Oxford

Wiener, Norbert (1950) *The Human Use of Human Beings* Houghton

Summary

If, as Nietzsche saw it, the discourse of philosophy was to make real the unthinkable, the discourse of technology is to make *actual* the possible. From the roots of scientific reason in the emergence of the modern world, Western minds have dreamt of perfectibility. In this session we will consider the world of perfection that for many became reachable through technology. In particular we will consider how that dream was bolstered following World War II, and the emergence of new 'cybernetic' sciences.

Historical Text

D'Alembert, Jean Le Rond (1760) 'The Human Mind Emerged From Barbarism' in Kramnick, Isaac (1995) (ed) *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* Penguin

Supplementary Readings

Aronowitz, Stanley (1988) *Science as Power: Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society* Macmillan

Aspray, William (1990) *John von Neumann and the origins of modern computing* MIT

Bacon, Francis (1620) 'The New Science' in Kramnick, Isaac (1995) (ed) *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* Penguin

_____ (c1924) *New Atlantis* Oxford

_____ (c1952) *The Advancement of Learning* London

Bredvold, Louis I. (c1961) *The brave new world of the enlightenment* University of Michigan Press

Chalmers, Alan D. (1995) *Jonathan Swift and the burden of the future* Associated University Press

Eliav-Feldon, Miriam (1982) *Realistic utopias: the ideal imaginary societies of the Renaissance, 1516-1630* Oxford University Press

Eurich, Nell (1967) *Science in utopia; a mighty design* Harvard University Press

Gerber, Richard (1955) *Utopian fantasy; a study of English utopian fiction since the end of the nineteenth century* Routledge & Paul

Hansot, Elisabeth (1974) *Perfection and progress: two modes of Utopian thought* MIT

Hillman, David and Mazzio, Carla (eds) (1997) *The body in parts: fantasies of corporeality in early modern Europe* Routledge

Kumar, Krishan (1987) *Utopia and anti-utopia in modern times* Blackwell

Manuel, Frank Edward (1979) *Utopian thought in the Western World* Belknap Press

Moylan, Tom (1986) *Demand the impossible: science fiction and the utopian imagination* Methuen

Mumford, Lewis (1967) *Technics and Human Development* Harcourt
 Peltonen, Markku (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon* Cambridge University Press
 Pfohl, Stephen (1997) 'The Cybernetic Delirium of Norbert Wiener' in Kroker, Arthur & Marilouise, *Digital Delirium* St. Martin's Press
 Rees, Christine (1996) *Utopian imagination and eighteenth-century fiction* Longman

4) TECHNO-DYSTOPIAS



Main Text

Huxley, Aldous (1946) *Brave New World* Harper & Row

Summary

Every dream is matched by its own nightmare. Interestingly, often the realisation of the dream is the nightmare. In this session we deal with technology's own dystopia: the Faustian bargain in which in order to gain the whole world, man loses everything; perhaps even his soul.

Film

Dr. Strangelove

Historical Text

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von (c1775) *Faust* (in 2 volumes) University of Wisconsin

Supplementary Readings

Aldridge, Alexandra (1984) *The scientific world view in dystopia* UMI Research Press
 Canguilhem, Georges (c1991) *The Normal and the Pathological Zone* Books
 Baker, Robert S. (1990) *Brave new world: history, science, and dystopia* Twayne Publishers
 Booker, M. Keith (1994) *The dystopian impulse in modern literature: fiction as social criticism* Greenwood Press
 Brown, Edward James (1976) *Brave new world, 1984, and We: an essay on anti-utopia: Zamyatin and English literature* Ann Arbor
 Donley, Carol and Buckley, Sheryl (1996) (eds) *The tyranny of the normal: an anthology* Kent State University Press
 Edwards, T. R. N (1982) *Three Russian writers and the irrational: Zamyatin, Pilnyak, and Bulgakov* Cambridge University Press
 Erlich, Richard D. and Dunn, Thomas P. (eds) (1983) *Clockwork worlds: mechanized environments in SF* Greenwood Press
 Firchow, Peter Edgerly (1984) *The end of Utopia: a study of Aldous Huxley's Brave new world* Associated University Press
 Freund, Peter E.S. (1982) *The Civilized Body: Social Domination, Control, and Health* Temple University Press
 Hillegas, Mark Robert (1967) *The future as nightmare; H. G. Wells and the anti-utopians* Oxford University Press
 Huxley, Aldous (c1958) *Brave new world revisited* Harper & Row
 Jaspers, Karl (1958) *The Future of Mankind* University of Chicago
 Kern, Gary (ed) (1988) *Zamyatin's We: a collection of critical essays* Ann Arbor: Ardis

Orwell, George (1950) *1984: a novel* New York
 Rabkin, Eric S., Greenberg, Martin H., Olander, Joseph D. (eds) (1983) *No place else: explorations in utopian and dystopian fiction* Southern Illinois University Press
 Walsh, Chad (1962) *From Utopia to nightmare* Harper & Row
 Zamiatin, Evgenii Ivanovich (c1924) *We* New York: Dutton



5) “CYBERNETICS”

Main Texts

Scientific and Technological Options Assessment (working document), PE 166 499, *An Appraisal of Technologies of Political Control*, January 6, 1998.
<http://jya.com/stoa-atpc.htm>

Deleuze, Gilles (1995) 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *Negotiations* Columbia

Summary

Literally translated, “cybernetics” means the ‘art of government’. There is--as we saw in the work of Norbert Wiener--a very intimate connection between the emergence of sophisticated information systems (especially computing) and the rather old question of social control. It is this interconnection that drives many of the dystopic visions of technology. How specifically can technology (and especially information technology) be used as means of social control?

Film

THX-1138

Historical Text

Foucault, Michel (1977) *Discipline and Punish, the Birth of the Prison* New York

Supplementary Readings

Aspray, William (1990) *John von Neumann and the origins of modern computing* MIT
 Der Derian, James (ed) (1998) *The Virilio Reader* Blackwell
 Dery, Mark (1996) *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture and the End of the Century* Hodder and Stoughton
 Ellul, Jacques (1965) *The Technological Society* New York: Alfred A. Knopf
 Foucault, Michel (1980) 'The Eye of Power' in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (ed) Colin Gordon Harvester Wheatsheaf
 _____ (1997) 'The Punitive Society' in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* The New Press
 _____ (1997) 'Society Must be Defended' in Rabinow, Paul (ed) *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* The New Press

- Hultén, Karl Gunnar Pontus, (1968) *The machine, as seen at the end of mechanical age* New York, Museum of Modern Art; distributed by New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, Conn.
- Pfohl, Stephen (1997) 'The Cybernetic Delirium of Norbert Wiener' in Kroker, Arthur & Marilouise, *Digital Delirium* St. Martin's Press
- Turner, Bryan S (1992) *Regulating bodies: essays in medical sociology* Routledge
- Virilio, Paul (1995) *The Art of the Motor* University of Minnesota
- Wiener, Norbert (1961) *Cybernetics; or, Control and communication in the animal and the machine* MIT
- _____ (1964) *God and Golem, inc.; a comment on certain points where cybernetics impinges on religion* MIT



6) PURE WAR

Main Texts

DeLanda, Manuel (1991) *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* Zone Books

Summary

'War', it has been said, 'is the mother of all things'. What is the connection between information, technology and warfare? In this session we consider not only the interconnection of each, but also the ways in which each *drives* the others. Is it possible that in the near future man himself will be completely superfluous to warfare?

Film

Life Begins Tomorrow

Historical Text

Virilio, Paul and Lotringer, Sylvère (1983) *Pure War* Semiotext(e)

Supplementary Readings

- Der Derian, James (1992) *Antidiplomacy: spies, terror, speed, and war* Blackwell
- _____ (ed) (1998) *The Virilio Reader* Blackwell
- Ellul, Jacques (1965) *The Technological Society* New York: Alfred A. Knopf
- Jaspers, Karl (1958) *The Future of Mankind* University of Chicago
- McNeill, William (1982) *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force and Society since AD 1000* University of Chicago Press
- Parker, Geoffrey (1996) *The military revolution: military innovation and the rise of the West, 1500-1800* Cambridge University Press
- Stocker, Gerfried and Schopf, Christine (1998) *Infowar* NY: Springer
- Toffler, Alvin and Toffler, Heidi (1992) *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* Warner Books
- Virilio, Paul (1985) 'The Spirit of Defence' *Impulse* Vol 11 No 4
- _____ (1986) *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* Semiotext(e)
- _____ (1989) *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* Verso
- _____ (1990) *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles* Semiotext(e)

_____ (1996) 'A century of hyper-violence' Paul Virilio: an interview *Economy and Society*
Vol 25 No. 1 February



7) GENDER TROUBLE

Main Texts

Haraway, Donna J. (1997) *Modest-Witness@Second-Millennium.FemaleMan-Meets-OncoMouse: feminism and technoscience* Routledge, 1997

_____ (1991) *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* Routledge

Virilio, Paul (1997) 'From Sexual Perversion to Sexual Diversion', *Open Sky* Verso

Summary

'I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess' (Donna Haraway). Where is the place of women in the new information environment? Where is the place of men? Does technology have a gender, and if so, which is it? What does technology do to human--to sexual--relations?

Film

Tank Girl

Historical Texts

Wilson, Deborah S. and Laennec, Christine Moneera (eds) (1997) *Bodily discursions: genders, representations, technologies* SUNY

Supplementary Readings

Butler, Judith P (1990) *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* Routledge

Case, Sue-Ellen (1996) *The domain-matrix: performing lesbian at the end of print culture* Indiana University Press

Conley, Katharine (1996) *Automatic woman: the representation of woman in surrealism* University of Nebraska Press

Dery, Mark (1996) *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture and the End of the Century* Hodder and Stoughton

Gibson, William (1994) *Neuromancer* Ace Books

Gray, Chris Habels (ed) (1995) *The cyborg handbook* Routledge

Grosz, Elizabeth A. (1995) *Space, time, and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies* Routledge

Keller, Evelyn Fox (1995) *Refiguring life: metaphors of twentieth-century biology* Columbia University Press

Peppers, Cathy (1997) "'I've got you under my skin": cyber(sexed) bodies in cyberpunk fictions' in Wilson, Deborah S. and Laennec, Christine Moneera (eds) *Bodily discursions: genders, representations, technologies* SUNY

Matus, Jill L. (1995) *Unstable bodies: Victorian representations of sexuality and maternity*
 St. Martin's Press
 Wajcman, Judy (1991) *Feminism confronts technology* Pennsylvania State University Press



8) CYBERECOLOGY & CYBER-RESISTANCE

Main Texts

Virilio, Paul (1991) *The Lost Dimension*
 Semiotext(e)

Critical Art Ensemble (1992) *Electronic Civil
 Disobedience* Autonomedia
 _____ (1994) *The Electronic Disturbance*
 Autonomedia

Summary

Two themes are coming to dominate radical politics; ecological struggle, and the critique of the State. Major battles are being waged for the control of the "world-view". In this session we engage with the question of ecology *after* information technology, and the question of resistance after cybernetics.

Film

Hackers

Historical Texts

Heidegger, Martin (1977) 'The Age of the World Picture', *The Question Concerning
 Technology and Other Essays* Harper

Supplementary Readings

Brook, James and Boal, Iain A. (eds) (1995) *Resisting the virtual life: the culture and politics of
 information* City Lights Books
 Conley, Verena Andermatt (1997) *Ecopolitics: the environment in poststructuralist thought*
 Routledge
 Der Derian, James (ed) (1998) *The Virilio Reader* Blackwell
 Dery, Mark (1996) *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture and the End of the Century* Hodder and
 Stoughton
 Virilio, Paul (1995) 'Red alert in cyberspace!' *Radical Philosophy*
 _____ (1997) *Open Sky* Verso
 Zimmerman, Michael E. (1994) *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity*
 University of California Press

9) SIMULATION

Main Texts

Baudrillard, Jean (1983) *Simulations* Semiotext(e)

Summary

"Disappearance is our future", writes Paul Virilio. What can we understand by the slow irradiation of *presence* (the being here-and-now-in-the-world) and *permanence* (the location of the here-and-now in history)? How does information--the translation of the world into flows, 1s and 0s--perhaps more even, the *speed of information*, affect both our experience of and perception of the world? When reality thus far in human history has been measured according to the universal value of gravitation (by which we gain knowledge of the far and near, the heavy and the light), what happens when the speed of information outstrips the velocity necessary to escape the gravitational field? Is reality itself stripped of weight?

Film

The Quiet Earth

Historical Text

Shakespeare, William (c1998) *The Tempest* Oxford University Press

Supplementary Readings

Barthes, Roland (1972) *Mythologies* Verso

Baudrillard, Jean (1987) *The Ecstasy of Communication* Semiotext(e)

_____ (1988) *America* Verso

_____ (1990) *Seduction* St. Martin's Press

_____ (1994) *Simulacra and Simulation* Michigan

_____ (1994) *The Illusion of the End* Polity Press

_____ (1995) *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* Power

_____ (1995) 'The Virtual Illusion: Or the Automatic Writing of the World' *Theory, Culture and Society* Vol 12 p. 97-107

_____ (1996) *The System of Objects* Verso

Debord, Guy (1992) *Society of the Spectacle* Zone Books

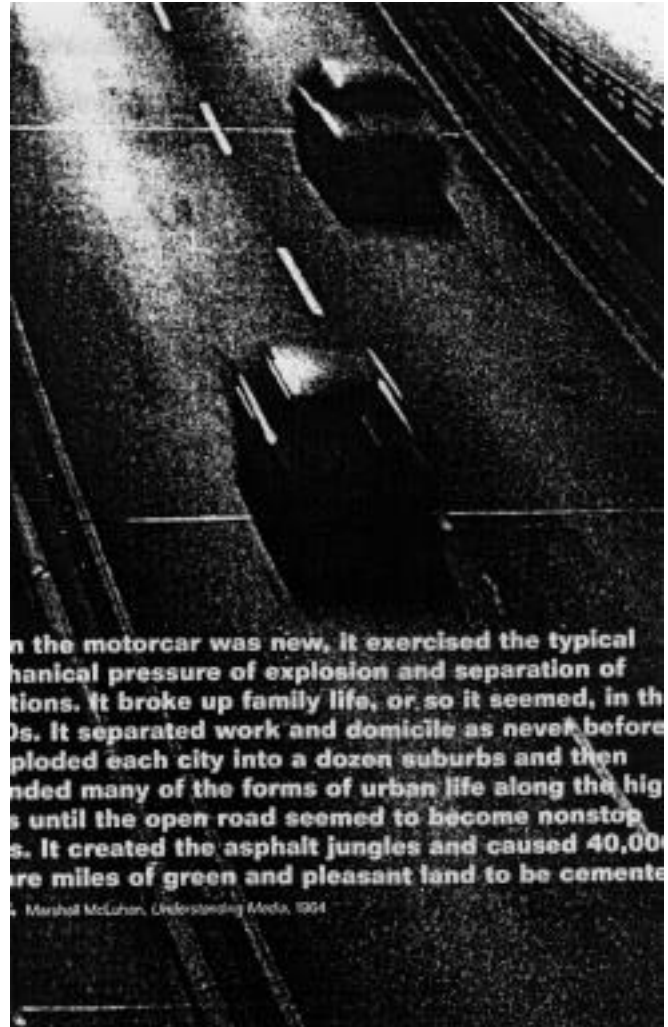
<http://www.nothingness.org/SI/debord/SOTS/sotscontents.html>

Der Derian, James (ed) (1998) *The Virilio Reader* Blackwell

Kroker, Arthur (1992) *The Possessed Individual: Technology and the French Postmodern* St. Martin's Press

McLuhan, Marshall (1964) *Understanding Media* Abacus

Rodaway, Paul (1995) 'Exploring the Subject in Hyper-reality' in Pile, Steve and Thrift, Nigel (eds) *Mapping the Subject: geographies of cultural transformation* Routledge



- Sutin, Lawrence (ed) (1995) *The shifting realities of Philip K. Dick: selected literary and philosophical writings* Pantheon Books
- Toffler, Alvin (1970) *Future Shock* London
- Virilio, Paul (1991) *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* Semiotext(e)
- _____ (c1994) 'Cyberwar, God and Television' *CTheory*
<http://www.freedonia.com/ctheory/>
- Zimmerman, Michael E. (1981) *The Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity* Ohio University Press



10) SURVEILLANCE

Main Texts

Foucault, Michel (1977) *Discipline and Punish, the Birth of the Prison* New York ('Panopticism')

Staples, William (1997) *The culture of surveillance: discipline and social control in the United States* St. Martin's Press

Summary

"Now objects perceive me", wrote Paul Klee. In this session we discuss surveillance; it's history, it's forms, its subjects and victims. What does it mean when the inanimate world evolves optical perception? What does it mean when our societies are traversed by visuality?

Film

Enemy of the State

Historical Text

Bentham, Jeremy (c1995) *The Panopticon Writings* Verso

Colquhoun, Patrick (1800) *A treatise on the police of the metropolis; containing a detail of the various crimes and misdemeanors by which public and private property and security are, at present, injured and endangered: and suggesting remedies for their prevention* London, H. Baldwin and Son

Supplementary Readings

- Ariès, Philippe and Duby, Georges (general editors) (1987-1991) *A History of private life* Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press
- Blum, Richard H. (1972) *Surveillance and espionage in a free society; a report by the planning group on intelligence and security to the Policy Council of the Democratic National Committee* Praeger Publishers
- Bogard, William (1996) *The Simulation of Surveillance: Hypercontrol in Telematic Societies* Cambridge
- Der Derian, James (ed) (1998) *The Virilio Reader* Blackwell
- Donner, Frank (1980) *The age of surveillance: the aims and methods of Americas political intelligence system* Random House

- Kahin, Brian and Nesson, Charles (eds) (1997) *Borders in cyberspace: information policy and the global information infrastructure* MIT
- Rule, James B. (1973) *Private Lives and Public Surveillance* Allen Lane
- Schneier, Bruce and Banisar, David (1997) *The electronic privacy papers: documents on the battle for privacy in the age of surveillance* NY: J. Wiley
- Virilio, Paul (1994) *The Vision Machine* Indiana University Press and British Film Institute



11) SUBSTITUTION

Main Texts

Virilio, Paul (1997) *Open Sky* Verso

Summary

In this session we return to the carceral dream of the Classical age--the automata--and ask whether nanotechnology is lining up to achieve the disqualification of man by replacing him altogether. Is there a risk in new bio- and nanotechnology? For Paul Virilio the "substitution revolution" is that which follows those of transportation and transmission. Is the physical displacement of the human in favour of the machine a "natural" consequence of the evolution of technology?

Film

Gattaca

Historical Texts

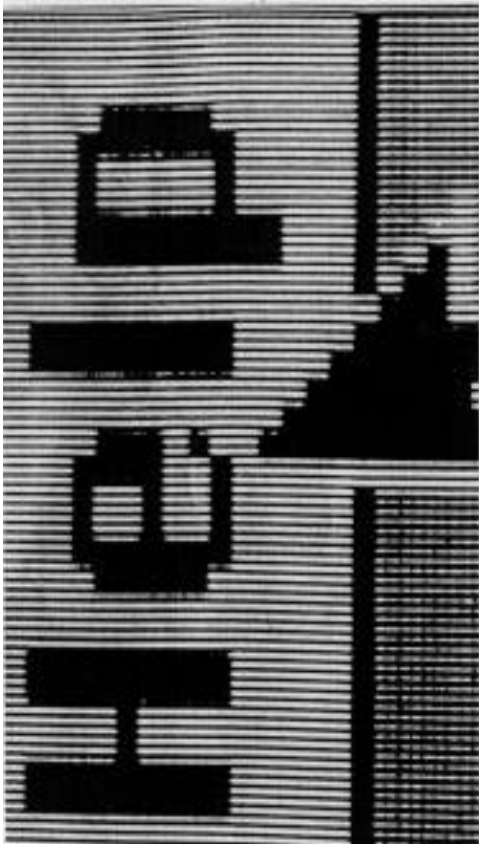
Mayr, Otto (1986) *Authority, Liberty & Automatic Machinery in Early Modern Europe* Johns Hopkins

Supplementary Readings

- Der Derian, James (ed) (1998) *The Virilio Reader* Blackwell
- Negroponste, Nicholas (1995) *Being Digital* Coronet
- Baudrillard, Jean (1990) *Seduction* St. Martin's Press
- Bukatman, Scott (1993) *Terminal identity: the virtual subject in postmodern science fiction* Duke University Press
- Crandall, BC (1997) 'The Nanotech Future' in Kroker, Arthur & Marilouise, *Digital Delirium* St. Martin's Press
- Keller, Evelyn Fox (1995) *Refiguring life: metaphors of twentieth-century biology* Columbia University Press
- Stelarc (1997) 'The Extended Body' in Kroker, Arthur & Marilouise, *Digital Delirium* St. Martin's Press
- Virilio, Paul (1993) 'The Third Interval: A Critical Transition' in Conley, Verena Andermatt (ed) *Rethinking Technologies* University of Minnesota
- _____ (1993) 'The Third Interval: A Critical Transition' in Conley, Verena Andermatt (ed) *Rethinking Technologies* University of Minnesota
- _____ (1995) 'Interview' in Rötzer, Florian (ed) *Conversations with French Philosophers* Humanities Press

- _____ (1995) *The Art of the Motor* University of Minnesota Press
 _____ (1995) 'Red alert in cyberspace!' *Radical Philosophy*
 Warrick, Patricia S. and Greenberg, Martin H. (ed) (1994) *Robots, androids, and mechanical oddities: the science fiction of Philip K. Dick* Southern Illinois University Press,

12) THE ACCIDENT



Main Texts

Baudrillard, Jean (1996) *The Perfect Crime* Verso

Tenner, Edward (1996) *Why Things Bite Back: technology and the revenge of unintended consequences* NY: Knopf

Summary

Can we any longer deny the reality of the accident? Paul Virilio has long argued that we need to recognise the *negative-sign* (the accident) that coexists with the *positive-sign* (substance). Every technological advance creates its own accident (the car wreck that follows the invention of the automobile, the derailment that follows the invention of the locomotive). But now, with the global information society, we face the possibility of a "generalized accident" of global interactivity. We begin to see this already as recession in one area of the world economy passes into all others; like the transmission of a virus. Has modern technology given a pathological edge to the world?

Film

[Safe]

Historical Text

Giedion, Sigfried (1948) *Mechanization Takes Command: a contribution to anonymous history* Oxford University Press

Supplementary Readings

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. (1987) 'The Dialectic of Individuation and Domination: Weber's Rationalization Theory and Beyond' in Whimster, Sam and Lash, Scott *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity* Allen and Unwin
 Barthes, Roland (1972) *Mythologies* Verso
 Baudrillard, Jean (1987) *The Ecstasy of Communication* Semiotext(e)
 _____ (1990) *Seduction* St. Martin's Press
 _____ (1994) *Simulacra and Simulation* Michigan
 _____ (1994) *The Illusion of the End* Polity Press
 _____ (1995) 'The Virtual Illusion: Or the Automatic Writing of the World' *Theory, Culture and Society* Vol 12 p. 97-107
 _____ (1996) *The System of Objects* Verso

- Debord, Guy (1992) *Society of the Spectacle* Zone Books
<http://www.nothingness.org/SI/debord/SOTS/sotscontents.html>
 Der Derian, James (ed) (1998) *The Virilio Reader* Blackwell
 Kelly, Kevin (1994) *Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-Biological Civilization* NY
 Simons, Geoff (1985) *Silicon Shock: The Menace of the Computer* Blackwell
 Toffler, Alvin (1970) *Future Shock* London
 Virilio, Paul (1991) *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* Semiotext(e)
 _____ (c1994) 'Cyberwar, God and Television' *CTheory*
<http://www.freedonia.com/ctheory/>

ASSESSMENT

There will be no examination for this unit. The unit will be assessed in the following way:

- 20% - seminar/discussion participation overall
- 30% - special assignment
- 50% - assessed essay

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION

1. A general assessment will be made of your engagement with the seminar overall. General insight, enthusiasm and specific research contributions will be assessed. As stated earlier, the aim of the course is to be less and less like a 'class', and more like an advanced research group. Hence there will be a heavy emphasis on self-organization and innovation.

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

1. The special assignment is to write an "open letter", to one of the historians, philosophers, or technicians we deal with on the course. What would you say if you had the opportunity to hold attention of someone like Virilio, von Neumann, Haraway, or Jaspers? What would you say if you had the opportunity to write to Martin Heidegger? What would you ask him about the world you live in?

Consider this excerpt from a letter written by Niccolò Machiavelli to Francesco Vettori in 1513,

'When evening has come, I return to my house and go into my study. At the door I take off my clothes of the day, covered with mud and mire, and I put on my regal and courtly garments; and decently reclothed, I enter the ancient courts of ancient men, where, received by them lovingly, I feed on the food that alone is mine and that I was born for. There I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask them the reason for their actions; and they in their humanity reply to me. And for the space of four hours I feel no boredom, I forget every pain, I do not fear poverty, death does not frighten me. I deliver myself entirely to them.'

What would you ask? How would you open a dialogue?

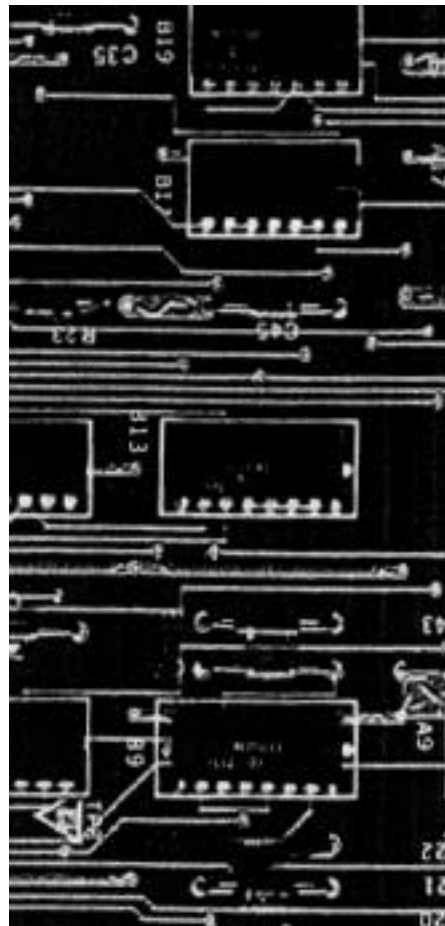
Now you have a chance.
Guidance and suggestions will be provided.²

THE ASSESSED ESSAY

1. The assessed essay should be at least 20 pages (excluding footnotes and bibliography). The essay will normally address one of the questions listed below. Feel free, however, to reject this list and formulate your own concerns. If you do so, you are required to discuss this with me.³
2. The essay should not be on the same topic as the seminar for which you assume responsibility. There is always a trade-off between breadth and depth, but we are here to attack a range of issues. Your knowledge of one issue will only be supplemented by wider reading within the range of sources listed here. Cast your net widely.
3. All essays must be word-processed, and properly formatted (i.e., footnote style, bibliography, quotations and so on). I will distribute a general handout on essay writing/formatting. You can ask me about this - or anything else - at any time.

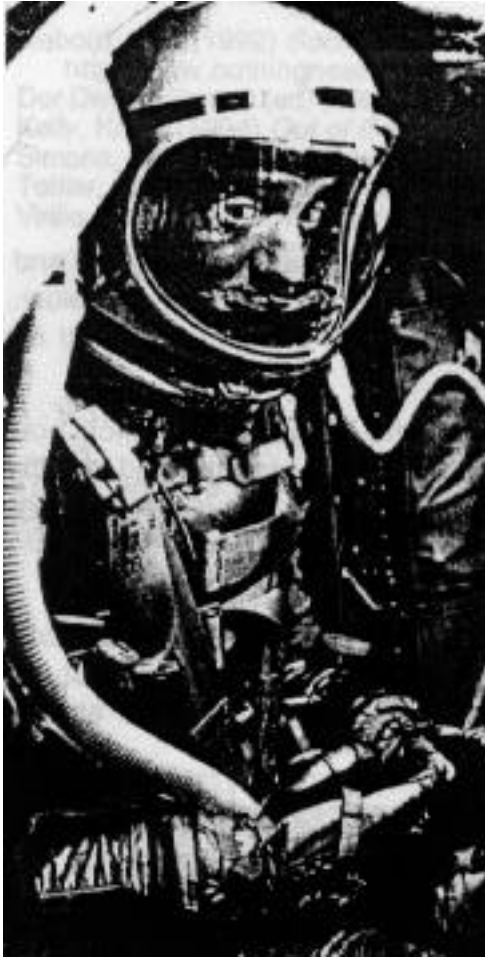
ESSAY QUESTION SUGGESTIONS

1. Would you rather be a cyborg or a goddess?
2. Is freedom possible in a surveillance society?
3. Is it ever possible to escape the State? How do we escape the State when increasingly we can't even escape our own homes?
4. Are objects in command?
5. When everything arrives one no longer has even to leave. Is the endpoint of modernity's fascination with control and with penetration (that long history of colonizing the world) not lead to a very radical recasting of the "ideal man"--no longer able bodied (the overman dreamt of by Nietzsche), but decked out to the eyeballs with all kinds of prosthetics based more on the model of the disabled and the immobile?



² Should be at least 10 pages. Details to follow. This assignment will be due at the end of week 4

³ This assignment will be due at the end of week 6



6. For Baudrillard the only way to defeat a coercive technology is to multiply its effects. Surveillance presupposes a private, unmediated space to be watched. If all of our lives were constantly open--if surveillance were total--would the value of surveillance, like the value of the information in a free and open society, not collapse in on itself, becoming worthless? In other words, might we "defend" ourselves from the surveillance society not by arguing for the right to 'private space', but by opening our whole lives to total mediatization? If there are too many channels for the governors to watch, how are they going to watch them all?

7. "As soon as it takes power, the Nazi government offers the German proletariat sport and transport. No more riots, no need for much repression; to empty the streets, it's enough to promise everyone the highway. This is the 'political' aim of the Volkswagen, a veritable plebiscite, since Hitler convinced 170,000 citizens to buy a VW when there still wasn't a single one available." (Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 25) In the light of this statement, what on earth can we think of the hysteria that surrounds the birth of the information superhighway?

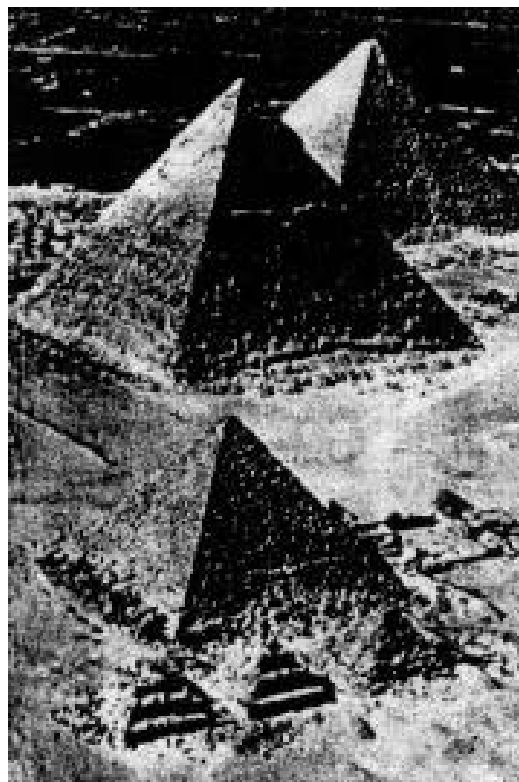
8. Is there a middle ground between technophilism and technopessimism?

9. "Gates's vision of the future is looming up so fast that, for many people, there may not be time to react when it actually arrives. That old phrase about there only being two kinds of pedestrian, the quick and the dead, may never have been truer." (*Business Age*, 1996, p. 107) Is the information revolution truly setting us free?

10. "Is anything real anymore?" Can we see the blurring of the distinction between reality and virtuality as a final threshold in the technical specialization of the 'art of government'?

11. Is there a correspondance between the dreams of automata in the Classical age and von Neumann's 'self-reproducing automata' at the birth of the age of computing?

12. Is the "intelligent home" of the 21st century a indication of the coming fate of human perception, just as the car brought obsolescence on the muscles and fibres?



13. Would you rather have sex with a robot?

14. Write a report based upon primary experience of "internet relationships"

15. "The State's political power ... is only secondarily 'power organised by one class to oppress another'. More materially, it is the polis, the police, in other words highway surveillance, insofar as, since the dawn of the bourgeois revolution, the political discourse has been no more than a series of more or less conscious repetitions of the old communal poliorcetics, confusing social order with the control of traffic (of people, of goods), and revolution, revolt, with traffic jams, illegal parking, multiple crashes, collisions." (Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 14) The modern epoch has been dominated by two political imperatives: the control of circulation, and the control of happiness. In what ways does each imperative depend on the other?

16. Are we doomed to perennially retell the story of Faust? Are we guilty about our instincts? Is self-assertion not necessary and justifiable?

Discuss in your response the work of Hans Blumenberg, Friedrich Nietzsche and Aldous Huxley.



17. How is it that 'techno-rationality' came to dominate the planet?

18. "In less than half a century, geographical spaces have kept shrinking as speed has increased. And if at the beginning of the 1940s we still had to count the speed of naval 'strike power' - the major destructive power of the time - in knots, by the beginning of the 1960s this rapidity was measured in machs, in other words in thousands of kilometres per hour." (Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 134) Assess the military significance of the speed of light.

19. Is there something fundamentally wrong with modernity?

20. In the words of Paul Virilio: "To govern is more than ever to fore-see, in other words to go faster, to see before." (Paul Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*: 87) Discuss the importance of surveillance to the maintenance of contemporary social order.

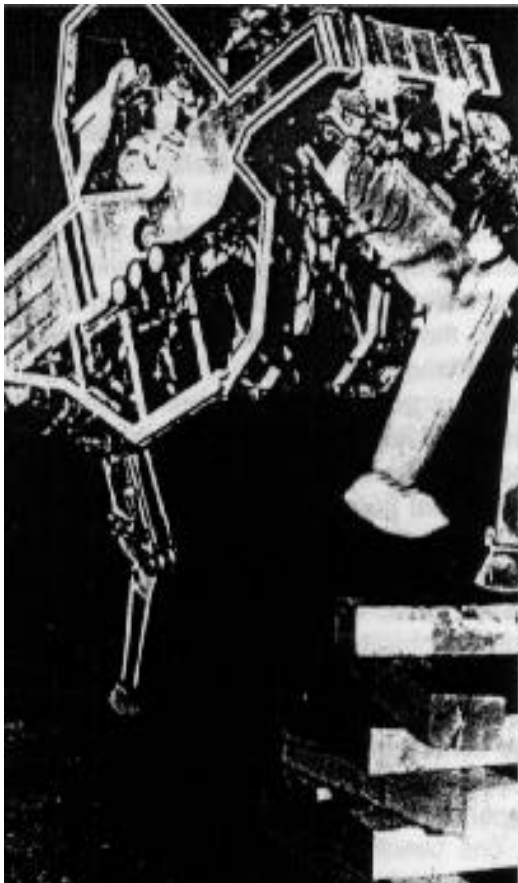
21. " .. each vehicular advance erases a distinction between the army and civilisation." (Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 106) Are contemporary societies merely 'armies of speed'?

22. Would you rather be a cyborg or a goddess?

23. Who is the Napoleon of the late 20th century?

24. Is information dangerous?

25. "Let's make no mistake: whether it's the drop-outs, the beat generation, automobile drivers, migrant workers, tourists, Olympic champions or travel agents, the military-industrial democracies have made every social category, without distinction, into unknown soldiers of the order of speeds - speeds whose hierarchy is controlled more and more each day by the State (headquarters), from the pedestrian to the rocket, from the metabolic to the technological." (Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 119-120) Discuss.



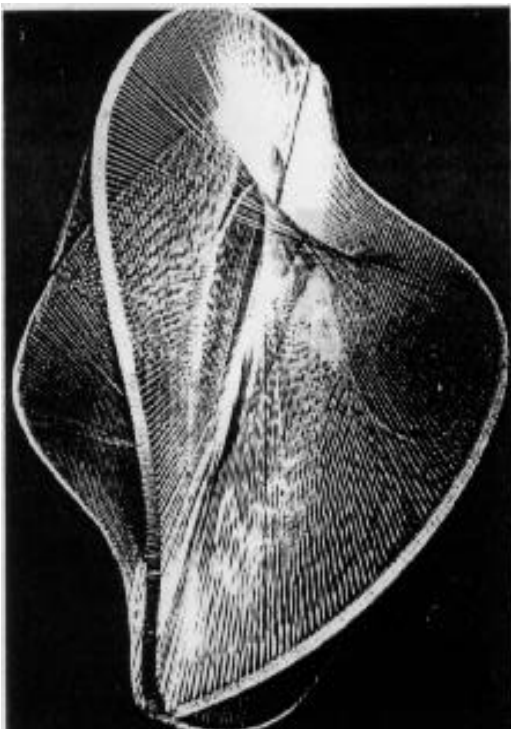
26. If something 'disappears', does that always mean that it has been superseded, or is no longer effective and functional? How does Paul Virilio conceive 'disappearance'?

27. "At a certain speed, the speed of light, you lose even your shadow." (Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War did not take place*, p. 49) Should we fear fibre-optics and the immanent 'transparency' of the world made possible by the information revolution?

28. "In vulgar usage, Progress has come to mean limitless movement in space and time, accompanied, necessarily, by an equally limitless command of energy: culminating in limitless destruction." (Lewis Mumford, *The Pentagon of Power*, p. 204) How might the works of Mumford, Heidegger and Virilio be used to (re)construct an ethical relation to the Earth and its inhabitants?

29. "We need distance." (Paul Virilio). Discuss.

30. "In less than half a century, geographical spaces have kept shrinking as speed has increased. And if at the beginning of the 1940s we still had to count the speed of naval 'strike power' - the maior destructive power of the



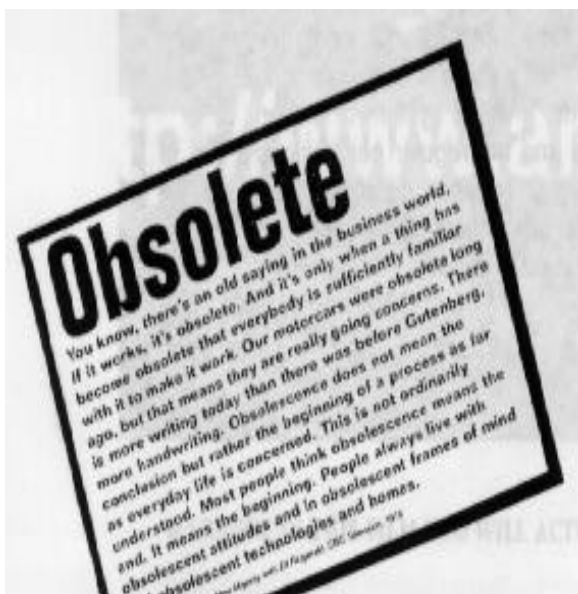
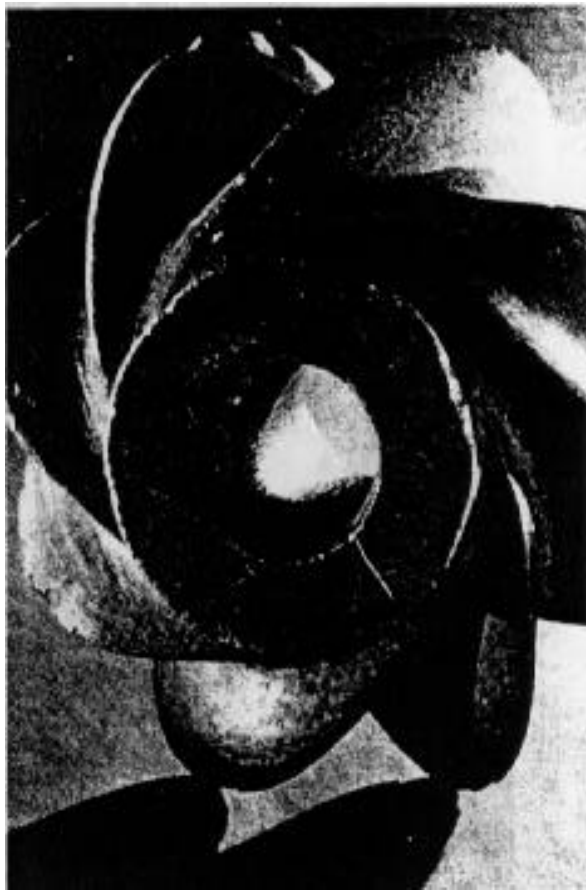
time - in knots, by the beginning of the 1960s this rapidity was measured in machs, in other words in thousands of kilometres per hour." (Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 134)
Assess the military significance of the speed of light.

31. " .. in order to govern, one must first penetrate and then communicate." (Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 107) Napoleon often talked of the importance of controlling the imagination. In the sea of difference and similarity that is the 'global media complex', is it possible to identify such a project of governance?

32. "This Gulf War is such a sham, so paltry .. The scandal today is no longer in the assault on moral values but in the assault on the reality principle." (Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War did not take place*, p. 76) Has war finally become simulation?

33. " .. tomorrow there will be nothing but the virtual violence of consensus, the simultaneity in real time of the global consensus: this will happen tomorrow and it will be the beginning of a world with no tomorrow." (Jean Baudrillard) Has the information revolution--which thrusts us all into an aseptic world of images and like-messages--stripped difference and made us all the same?

34. We hear a lot about chemical pollution, should be also be concerned about 'speed-pollution'?





" .. what blindness, what deafness, what density of ideology would have to weigh me down to prevent me from being interested in what is probably the most crucial subject to our existence, that is to say the society in which we live, the economic relations within which it functions, and the system of power which defines the regular forms and the regular permissions and prohibitions of our conduct. The essence of our life consists, after all, of the political functioning of the society in which we find ourselves."

-- Michel Foucault