On Speed

Situated Technologies Research Group Seminar / Fall 2014
Credit Hours: 3 Credits
Class Hours: Thursday, 10:00 am – 12:40 pm
Instructor: Jordan Geiger

Space, Time & Information:
This seminar focuses on relations between architecture, information and computing technologies, and society as they are conditioned by speed: rates of transfer, response, exchange, movement, cognition, and more. Development in the last century has been marked nearly always by new velocities, at times testing or altering human tolerances for construction, for perception, for adaptation, for reliance on shelter and on computational systems. These roles of speed reveal ways that architecture and information systems embody shifts in culture, in technology, and in society - but also shifts in less obvious things like the emergence of global finance and geopolitics. Since late capitalism and the rise of post/industrial economies, these shifts continue as indicators for unprecedented ecological and economic phenomena. Speed, in short, is not neutral or relative but always a function of its circumstance.

In readings and class discussions, we will consider roles of speed in things like modular construction and shifts to rapid prototyping and fabrication; in the dissemination of cybernetic thought; in evolving forms of public space with new telecommunications technologies; and in ecologies of material use. Readings in architecture, in media theory, in philosophy and more will explore ways that time is understood, is constructed in different ways, and to different ends. The seminar culminates with the current movements toward “accelerationism” - rushing modernism and capitalism to some logical conclusions - and an interest in experiences beyond human perception in slowness.

Semester Schedule:

The following is subject to change during the course of the semester.

28 August / Intro
4 September / Relativity & Technology (Giedion, Einstein, Markos Novak)
11 September / Media (Marshall McLuhan, Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Kittler)
18 September / Consciousness (Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Sanford Kwinter)
25 September / Cybernetics, adaptation and feedback (Weiner, Pask, Beer)
2 October / Lifecycles: materials and aging of digital technologies (Toffler, Kieran, Easterling)
9 October / Popular masses, shelter and flash mobs (Fuller, Rheingold) + First Paper Due
16 October / Interactivity (JCR Licklider, Myron Krueger, Nicholas Negroponte)
23 October / Situations (Guy Debord, Lucy Suchman, Malcolm McCullough)
30 October / Networks (Mark Wigley, Kazys Varnelis)
6 November / Ubiquitous Computing (Mark Weiser, Anthony Dunne, William Mitchell)
13 November / Dromology, Speed, Critical Space: Focus on Paul Virilio + Second Paper Due
20 November / Accelerationism (After Capital) and Slowness (Stewart Brand, Richard Sennett)
27 November / Thanksgiving
4 December / Reading Days
11 December / Final Paper Due

Course Work:

Reading Responses:

Each week, you are to write and post to the course website a short response to the assigned readings, very briefly summarizing your understanding of the main arguments and more importantly offering your own personal response to the ideas therein; how the various voices in the week's readings respond to one another; or other issues that you deem noteworthy and may be the foundation for in-class discussions that week.

Papers:

Our principle work output for the semester will be three short papers, the focus of which is synthetic and interpretive of the reading content. Each paper will be approximately 2000 words in length (double spaced) plus footnotes and bibliography, correctly formatted and due two weeks after the completion of the respective month-long module. See schedule for details and refer to each instructor's particular requirements for each paper, to be announced or distributed in class during the semester.

General Requirements

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Students are required to attend the full length of all classes, turn in all assignments, and participate in weekly discussions. Students are responsible for obtaining all hand-outs, information, and notes provided in class. Three tardy arrivals (5 minutes after class begins) will equal one absence. Students who are habitually late or absent from three or more classes will receive a failing grade. If more than one class is missed due to illness you must submit written verification from a physician and notify professor via e-mail or in writing immediately. Written medical documents must be submitted within two weeks of an absence. During class, turn off cell phones, etc. Computers may only be used for in-class presentations. Web surfing or emailing during class is unacceptable.

Grading:

The final grade for the course will be determined by evaluation in the following areas:

In-Class Participation 20%
Reading Responses 5%
Paper 1: 15%
Paper 2: 15%
Paper 3: 45%

Students are expected to read all assigned texts and be prepared to discuss them in class. All papers, assignments, and presentations must be completed on time and in full. Written assignments must be handed in typed, double-spaced, and spell-checked with complete references (footnotes, bibliography, illustrations) formatted according to a writing manual of style. There will be no make-up presentations. There will be a penalty that is equivalent to one-half letter grade per day for any work submitted late.

Measurement of Student Performance:

A 93-100 A Clearly stands out as excellent performance
A- 90-92
B+ 87-89
B 83-86 B Grasps subject matter at a level considered to be good to very good
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79
C 73-76 C Demonstrates a satisfactory comprehension of the subject matter
C- 70-72
D+ 67-69
D 60-66 D Quality and quantity of work is below average, marginally acceptable
Failing 59- F Quality and quantity of work is below average and not acceptable

Academic Integrity:

Students are reminded of University Policy regarding Academic Integrity, as stated in the University at Buffalo Undergraduate Catalog 2005-2006:

"The University has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect for others' academic endeavors. By placing their name on academic work,

students certify originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments." This policy includes, but is not limited to, the following: Students should not cheat on exams. Students should not submit previously completed work as original work. Students should not submit work done for one class to fulfill the requirements of another course without the permission of the instructor.