

**HUAS 7305-001 (27425)**

**Soylent Green: Readings in Media Art and Theory  
Spring 2015**

**Dr. Charissa N. Terranova**

**University of Texas at Dallas**

**Arts & Humanities**

**Tuesday 7:00-9:45**

**Class Location: JO 3.908**

**Office Location: JO 3.920**

**Office Hours: Tuesday 1-3, by appointment**

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## Description:

The relationship between the humanities, science, and technology has been a matter of consternation for some time. C. P. Snow's famous 1959 lecture, "The Two Cultures," epitomizes this anxiety. Snow gave primacy to science and technology, shaming British society and government for not supporting the sciences to the degree it had traditionally supported the humanities. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the confusion continues. While the positions seem simply stirred and jogged by time, there tends to be an overarching consensus that the humanities are useless and out-of-date while technology can do no wrong. This course returns to Snow's essay in order to look for the gray area of indetermination between the humanities, science, and technology. Our goal is to understand the relationship between art, science, and technology by way of questions of sustainability, population, and apocalyptic collapse.

Named for the 1973 dystopian science fiction film, HUAS 7305 *Soylent Green: Readings in Media Art and Theory* focuses on the existential relationship between humans, art, and technology. Students engage the seminal texts in history and in our current moment that explain and describe the opportunities, fantasies, and failures of experiments in art and technology. Themes include embodiment, extensions, prosthetics, consciousness, over-population, decline, failure, states of exception, and *homo sacer*.

## Goals:

- Knowledge of seminal hybrid works – literary, philosophical, and fine arts – of art, science, and technology
- Improvement of critical writing skills
- Improvement of research skills
- Improvement of broad skills of critical interpretation

## Requirements:

Students are required to attend every scheduled seminar meeting, complete the assigned reading prior to class, and participate with verve and gusto in seminar discussions. Students are allowed one unexcused absence after which every unexcused absence will result in a deduction of ½ grade in the computation of the final mark.

## **Readings:**

The following readings are available in hard copy on reserve. You may also purchase them.

1. Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*
2. Donna Haraway, *Crystals, Fabrics, Fields: Metaphors that Shape Embryos*
3. C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures, and a Second Look*
4. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, Vol. 2: Disorientation*
5. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*
6. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*
7. Mark B. N. Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing*

The remaining readings are available through DOCUTEK, at the following website:

<http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=1805>

password: bomb

## **Course Documents and Images/Presentations:**

The slides presentations for each lecture will be posted at [www.charissaterranova.com](http://www.charissaterranova.com) after each class.

## **Grades:**

Class Leadership Exercises (15% x 2) = 30 %

Class Presentation of Final Project = 30 %

Final Written Assignment = 40 %

Total = 100%

## Assignments:

### **Class Leadership Exercises**

Each student is required to lead the seminar in discussion of the readings **twice**. PowerPoint presentations are optional. Students should submit an outline at the end of seminar as evidence of preparation.

### **Class Presentation of Final Project**

Each student will present the thesis statement of and research toward his/her final written assignment in a 30 to 45-minute presentation at the end of the semester. PowerPoint presentations are optional. Students should assign short readings prior to class and submit upon completion of the presentation a five-page written paper, annotated bibliography, or annotated outline as evidence of preparation.

### **Final Written Assignment Due Friday, May 8, 2015**

The final written assignment is a research paper based on a philosopher, critic, artist, film, or work of literary fiction. Your paper should have a thesis statement – an argument – based on your research. I encourage you to meet with me during office hours (or otherwise) to discuss your interests and passions in relation to this topic. The requirements for the research paper are as follows:

- title page, 10-12 pt. font, standard margins
- thesis statement in the body of text on the first or second page
- 20 pages
- pagination
- foot- or endnotes
- bibliography with 8 sources, of which 2 can be websites

Tips: In terms of writing style, please avoid the passive voice, hyperbole and cliché. Simplistic and unfounded descriptions of art, such as “it is beautiful,” “he is a genius,” or “this is an amazing masterpiece,” are banned from this writing assignment. It is the voice and stance of the critic (art, architecture, film and book) that you will assume for this writing. Remember that plagiarism is grounds for expulsion from the university. The written assignments must be submitted in paper: I do not accept late or electronic documents.

**Standard UTD policies regarding classroom behavior, religious holidays, withdrawals, etc.:**

<http://www.utdallas.edu/deanofstudents/conductguidelines.html>

<http://provost.utdallas.edu/>

<http://www.charissaterranova.com/syllabi/utd-policies.htm>

**Schedule:**

**Tuesday January 13 Introduction + Screening of *Soylent Green***

- Introduction, sign-up for class leadership exercises and final presentations
- Screening of *Soylent Green*

**PART I: ART/SCIENCE/TECHNOLOGY AND PROGRESS**

**Tuesday January 20 Population Explosion and Beyond**

- Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, 129.237.201.53/books/malthus/population/malthus.pdf.
- Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, 18-44

**Tuesday January 27 Teleological Thinkers I: Charles Darwin and Social Darwinism**

- Charles Darwin, Introduction and Chapter 4, *The Origin of the Species by Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, <http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/origin.html>
- Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, 13-66.

**Tuesday February 3 Teleological Thinkers II: Karl Marx**

- Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, Book 1, Part 1, Chapter 1, "The Commodity," 125-176.
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

**Tuesday February 10 Teleological Thinkers III: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel**

- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, Chapter V, 76-97
- Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, 17-30.

## **PART II: FUSIONS: EMERGING COMPLEX SYSTEMS**

### **Tuesday February 17 Art/Science/Technology: Scientists and Political Activism, 1930s UK**

- Donna Haraway, *Crystals, Fabrics, Fields: Metaphors that Shape Embryos*, 1-63.
- Gary Werskey, *The Visible College: The Collective Biography of British Scientific Socialists of the 1930s* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978) 52-60; 67-77; 212-261.
- William McGucken, *Scientists, Society, and State: The Social Relations of Science Movement in Great Britain, 1931-1937* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1984) 71-94.

### **Tuesday February 24 The Humanities and Science/Technology: Between Two Cultures**

- C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures, and a Second Look*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 1-100.
- Stefan Collini, Introduction, *The Two Cultures, and a Second Look*, vii-lxxiii.

### **Tuesday March 3 Fusions of Art, Science, and Technology I**

- Peder Anker, *From Bauhaus to Eco-House: A History of Ecological Design*
- Detlef Mertins, "Where Architecture Meets Biology: An Interview with Detlef Mertins," [http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=arch\\_papers](http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=arch_papers)
- Detlef Mertins, "Bioconstructivisms," [http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=cplan\\_papers](http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=cplan_papers)

### **Tuesday March 10 Fusions of Art, Science, and Technology II**

- Rudolph Arnheim, *Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order*
- Melissa Sue Ragain, "'Homeostasis Is Not Enough': Order and Survival in Early Ecological Art," *Art Journal*, vol. 71, no. 3 (2012) 78-97

### **Tuesday March 10 Fusions of Art, Science, and Technology III**

- Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General Systems Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications*, 3-53
- Jack Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," *Artforum*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (September 1968) 30-35.
- Jack Burnham, "Art and Technology: The Panacea that Failed," *The Myths of Information*, ed. Kathleen Woodward (New York: Coda Press, 1980) unpaginated
- Woody Vasulka, "Experiments in Art and Technology: A Brief History and Summary of Major Projects," [www.vasulka.org/archive/Writings/EAT.pdf](http://www.vasulka.org/archive/Writings/EAT.pdf)

## **Tuesday March 17 Spring Break**

### **Tuesday March 24 Fusions of Art, Science, and Technology IV**

- Margit Rosen, "The Art of Programming: The New Tendencies and the Arrival of the Computer as a Means of Artistic Research," *A Little-Known Story about a Movement, a Magazine, and the Computer's Arrival in Art: New Tendencies and Bit International, 1961-1973* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011) 27-42.
- Darko Fritz, "Notions of the Program in 1960s Art: Concrete, Computer-generated Art, and Conceptual Art," *Editions HX David-Oliver Lartigaud*, ed. (Orléans, France: Architecture-Art Contemporain-Cultures Numériques, 2011) 26-39.
- George Rickey, "The New Tendency (Nouvelle Tendence – Recherche Continue)," *Art Journal*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Summer 1964) 272-279.
- Jacopo Galimberti, "The N Group and the Operaisti: Art and Class Struggle in the Italian Economic Boom," *Grey Room*, vol. 49 (Fall 2012) 80-101.
- Darko Fritz, "Vladimir Bonacic: Computer-Generated Works Made within Zagreb's New Tendencies Network (1961-1973)," *Leonardo*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2008) 175-183.

### **PART III: Techne/Techne/Technesis/Biopolitics: Moving Beyond the Divide**

#### **Tuesday March 31 Techne, Technology, Technesis**

- Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, intro and trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977) 3-35.
- Mark B. N. Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000) 1-148.

#### **Tuesday April 7 The Biopolitical State**

- Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998) 71-112.
- Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2008) 1-25; 239-289.

## **PART IV: Final Presentations**

**Tuesday April 14 Final Presentations**

**Tuesday April 21 Final Presentations**

**Tuesday April 28 Final Presentations**

**Friday May 8 Final Paper Due**