THEORIES OF DIGITALITY

The course *Theories of Digitality* explores various frameworks and principles that underpin critical readings of contemporary and emerging technologies. The course progresses along a comparative line and evaluates the possibilities and limitations of drawing on continental philosophers from Karl Marx and Martin Heidegger to Michel Serres for thinking through our present moment. We will ask whether these 19th and 20th-century theories are still relevant to the exploration of various issues, at the center of which is ubiquitous digitality. By utilizing a comparative approach, the meetings will cover ethical, social, and political questions prompted by new media, paying particular attention to the topics of automation, materiality, surveillance, etc. We will work towards producing a research paper to be submitted to a conference in a given field i.e., present your work to peers.

Ella Klik, Ph.D.
Office Hourse: by appointment

Learning Objectives

- Familiarize yourself with 20th-century philosophies

- Understand the social and cultural impact of digital technology on society

- Unpack the political, economic, and ethical dimensions of digitality

- Analyze how digital media shape our encounter with the world and each other

- Apply digital theory to better understand case studies and objects of your choice

READING SCHEDULE

1

INTRODUCTION
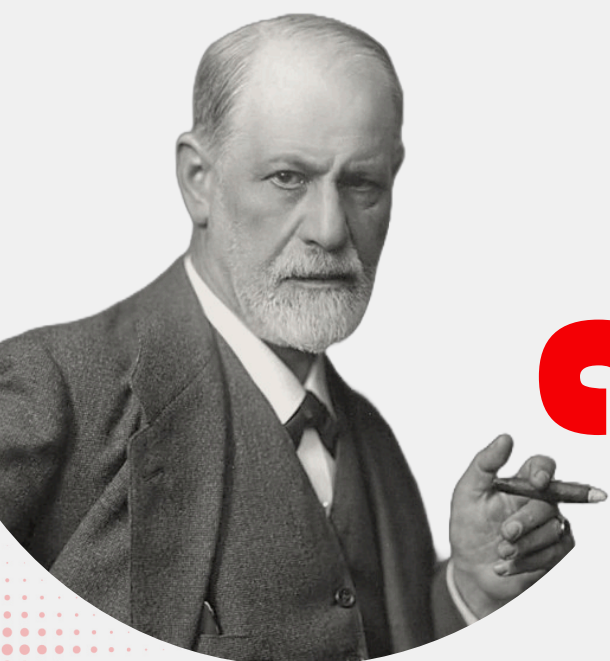Alexander Galloway, "Afterword: A note on method," in Uncomputable: play and politics in the long digital age (Verso Books, 2021), 247-259.

2
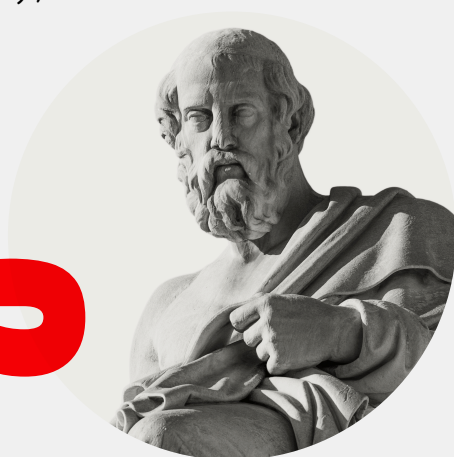
MATERIAL & VIRTUAL
Plato. Lysis; Symposium; Phaedrus (Harvard University Press, 2022). Short selections.

Michael Heim, "The erotic ontology of cyberspace," Cyberspace: first steps (1991): 59-80.

3

MEMORY = ARCHIVE?
Sigmund Freud, "Notes on a mystic writing pad," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. 19 (1925): 227-232.

Belinda Barnet, "Pack-rat or Amnesiac? Memory, the archive and the birth of the Internet," Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies 15, no.2 (2001): 217-231.

4
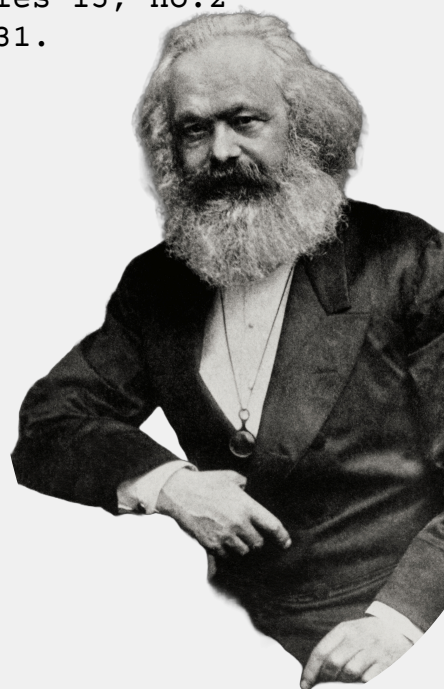
FUTURE OF WORK AND AUTOMATION
Karl Marx, "Chapter 15: Machinery and Large-Scale Industry (sections 1-4)," Capital Vol. 1.

Aaron Bastani, "What Is Fully Automated Luxury Communism?" in Fully automated luxury communism (Verso Books, 2019), 50-93.

5
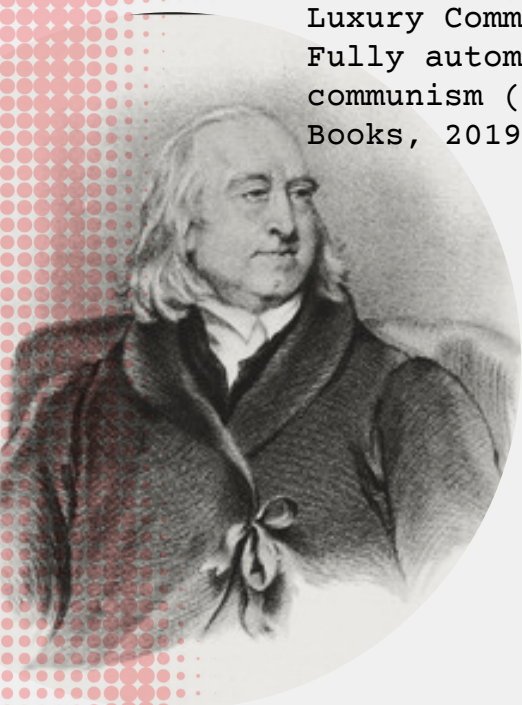
SUREVILLANCE AND CONTROL
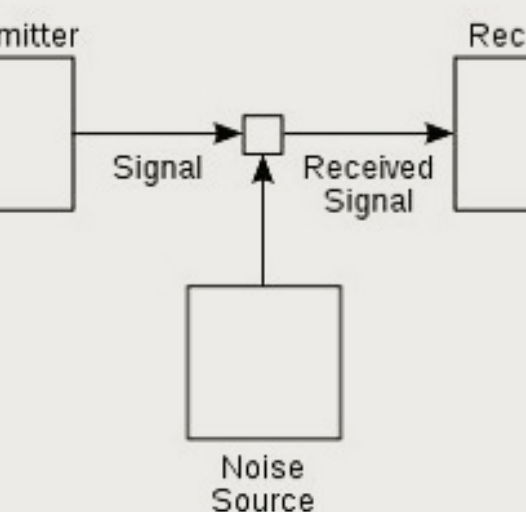Jeremy Bentham, "Letters I, II, V, VI," in The Panopticon Writings (London: Verso, 1995).

Philip E. Agre, "Surveillance and capture: Two models of privacy," The New Media Reader (MIT Press: 2003), 737-760.

6

THE THING
Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in Poetry Language, Thought (Harper & Row, 1971), 163-175.

Bruno Latour, "Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern," Critical Inquiry 30, no. 2 (2004): 225-248.

7

CYBERNETICS & NOISE
Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, "A mathematical model of communication," in Information: A Reader (Chicago University Press: 2022), 20-29.

Rosa Menkman, The glitch moment(um) (Institute of Network Cultures, 2011), 12-33.

RHIZOMATIC FORMS

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus (University of Minnesota Press, 1987), selections.

Douglas-Jones, R. C., and Salla Sariola. "Rhizome yourself: experiencing Deleuze and Guattari from theory to practice." Rhizomes cultural studies in emerging knowledge 19, no. Summer (2009).

8

RHIZOME

9

GENERATIVE MACHINES
Students' choice
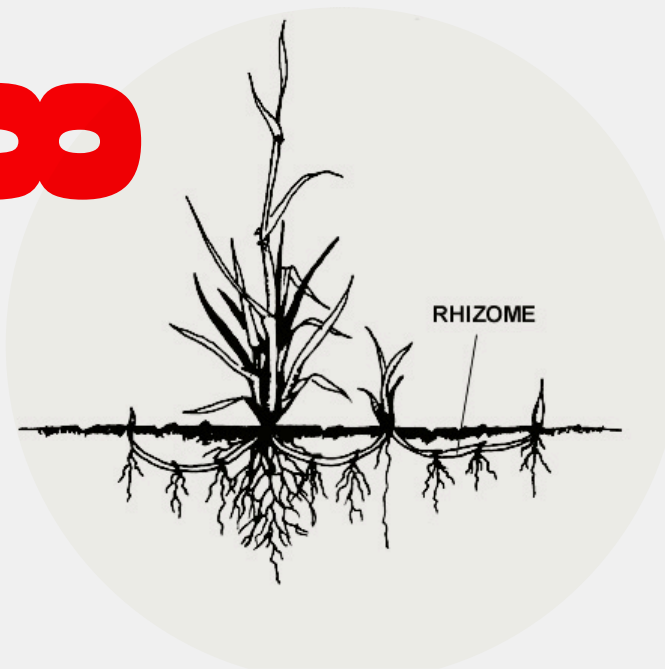
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Hubert Dreyfus, What Computers Can't Do: The Limits of Artificial Intelligence. (Harper & Row, 1972). Selections.

David W Bates, An Artificial History of Natural Intelligence: Thinking with Machines from Descartes to the Digital Age (University of Chicago Press, 2024). Short selections.

10

11-12

STUDENTS PRESENTATIONS

CRITIQUE AT PRESENT (?)

Antoinette Rouvroy, "The end(s) of critique: Data behaviorism versus due process," in Privacy, Due Process and the Computational Turn (Routledge, 2013).

13

GRADE BREAKDOWN
Class participation and engagement: 20%
Abstract: 10%
Presentations: 25%
Final paper: 45%