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Curtin 108

Panel Chair: Tasha Oren

Andrew Lison (University of Kansas)

“Post-Historical Media: Negation and Digital Convergence”

The "End of History" posited by Francis Fukuyama in the late 1980s and early 1990s was, famously and paradoxically, both an embrace and a refusal of negativity: after this moment of finality, historically-significant ideological differences would supposedly no longer exist. As critics like Mark Fisher and Joshua Clover have argued, this notion and the world-historical collapse of state-socialist governments that accompanied it ushered in an era of neoliberal stasis defined by an elite consensus that no other course of political governance was viable. Yet this same period is also defined by the explosion of new media into popular consciousness via multimedia personal computers like the 1987 Macintosh II, which enabled the digital storage, concatenation, and transmission of images, sounds, and texts. This paper argues that the rise of multimedia can be seen as a classically Hegelian "negation of the negation," marking a transition away from the binary geopolitics of the Cold War powers and towards the increasingly extensive technical capacities of the binary media beginning to connect the planet. This shift, as with Fukuyama's pronouncement itself, was initially celebrated. More recently, however, and particularly after Edward Snowden's revelations of NSA wiretapping, it has been met with suspicion and accompanied by a sense of political decline as the refusal of both neoliberal policies and globalization made possible by digital advances has fueled a right-wing backlash. Revisiting multimedia dialectically, in its positive and negative aspects, can therefore offer insights into not only its historical role, but the political status of negativity today.

Sparkles Stanford (Boston College)

“Rethinking Copyright as a Space of Refusal”

In contemporary music, conceptions of copyright generally take their influence from either the Romantic artist or a universal commons perspective. In both it views itself as entitled to put any and all samples at its disposal, as evidenced by internet-based audio culture and Vaporwave. This attitude is dependent upon colonization, performing blackness and queerness, and an erasure of the historical origins of the sample itself, ranging from the apparent ignorance of John Oswald to the white supremacist work of Moonman. What then is an ethical way for white artists to conceive of copyright and musical production techniques? A creative ‘no’ is required. A production of a closed space, marked by a refusal to perform blackness, digitally or otherwise, a refusal to perform colonization. Yet this no is not enough to generate positive content. Two solutions present themselves, first in Boris Groys’s theory of contemporary digital reproduction as the production of new originals, and the internet archive as a site at which the desire for nonidentity is possible. This paper will argue that instead we should turn towards François Laruelle and think sampling and copyright in terms of his concepts of the power-of-semblance, the clone, and ethics based on the Victim-in-Person. It will attempt to articulate a de-potentialized notion of copyright, capable of a positive act of sampling, for which there is a common that is foreclosed to it.

Joyce Latham (UW-Milwaukee)

“#roguerangers and the Right of Public Employees to Speak”

On January 24, 2017, [@NotAltWorld](#), a band of resisters associated with the National Park Service, tweeted the following:

Can't wait for President Trump to call us FAKE NEWS.

You can take our official twitter, but you'll never take our free time!

9:07 PM - 24 Jan 2017

According to the *New York Times*, The Trump Administration had purged information about climate change from White House and State Department websites, although the archives of those sites are still available. They had also ordered a freeze on federal grant spending at the Environmental Protection Agency and appeared to be targeting policies based on science for removal. The Administration had also, as is common practice, directed agencies to restrict their communications until they were cleared by senior officials. One employee of the Badlands National Park released a defiant tweet about climate change, which was later removed. The President's Press Secretary explained it was a former employee.

This minor act of resistance has since triggered other actions and statements, particularly within the Park Service and Environmental Protection Agency. As the tweet above indicates, employees expect to enjoy a certain degree of intellectual freedom on their “down time” – their time away from the office. The question is, do they? The 2005 *Garcetti v. Ceballos* decision of the US Supreme Court raises serious questions about public employee rights to speak relative to their positions. Public employees, no matter what their social or governmental role may be, are effectively disenfranchised as active agents supporting the public good. The question becomes, how may we speak? This paper will explore the background of “No’s” and “Oh yeahs?” that now challenge the speech of public employees.