Coach House Institute Report

During academic year 2013–2014, the Coach House Institute (CHI) was led by Prof. Dominique Scheffel-Dunand, Director of the McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology (MPCT), as Brian Cantwell Smith, Director of the CHI, was on medical leave for the fall semester of 2013, and on sabbatical leave for the winter semester 2014.

Five CHI activities received primary focus during the year.

1. **50th Anniversary of the Opening of the Centre for Culture & Technology**¹

   On 23–24, 2013, the Coach House Institute and its associated McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology celebrated the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Centre for Culture & Technology. The Centre was originally established on October 24, 1963 by Claude T. Bissell, President of the University of Toronto, and John Kelly, President of St. Michael’s College. Marshall McLuhan was named as the inaugural Director. The Centre became McLuhan’s office in the English Department at St. Michael’s College.

   The program for the celebratory events is included as Appendix A. In addition to words of greeting from Michael and Eric McLuhan, the program included:

   a. Keynote addresses by Dominique Wolton (Director, Institut des sciences de la communication du CNRS, Directeur, Hermès, CNRS éditions, Paris, France) and by Brian Cantwell Smith, Director of the CHI.

   b. The launch of an exhibit at the Coach House, linking the CHI to the recently acquired personal library of Marshal McLuhan, located at U.of.T’s Fisher Rare Book Library (discussed below); and

   c. Three panels and discussion sessions on topics in Culture & Technology with participation from: (i) over a dozen faculty members from five Faculties at the University of Toronto; (ii) nine faculty members from five other universities (three in Canada, two in the U.S.); (iii) seven iSchool doctoral students; and (iv) four members of the public, including representatives from the arts, from the National Film Board of Canada, etc.

2. **Culture and Technology Lecture Series**²

   The 50th Anniversary of the Opening of the Centre for Culture & Technology (above) also marked the launch of the inaugural Culture and Technology Lecture Series, a year-long graduate student-led initiative to bring international scholars to Toronto to discuss whether and how fundamental theories of information can incorporate, accommodate,

¹http://mcluhan.ischool.utoronto.ca/c-and-t-50th-anniversary/
²http://mcluhan.ischool.utoronto.ca/culture-and-technology-lecture-series/
or abstract away from the diverse epistemic and ontological commitments of varied communities.

Each invited scholar was asked (i) to present a public lecture, advertised at the iSchool, across the University of Toronto, and at other GTA universities; and (ii) to send, in advance, a paper—ideally a work in progress—to be read by iSchool graduate students; and (iii) to participate in a graduate-student seminar where the students could ask questions about the submitted paper, and discuss the issues of the paper and the public presentation.

The web description of the lecturers and their lectures is included as Appendix B.

Lectures during the first year were presented by:

a. Brian Cantwell Smith, Professor of Information, Philosophy, and Computer Science, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto.

b. Dominique Wolton (Directeur, Institut des sciences de la communication du CNRS, Directeur et fondateur, Hermès, CNRS éditions, Paris, France)

c. Sandra Braman, Professor of Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

d. Sandy Pearlman, Dean’s Visiting Professor for Interdisciplinary Innovation at the University of Toronto and Visiting Professor at McGill University.

e. Bernd Frohmann, Professor Emeritus and Adjunct Associate Professor in the Faculty of Information Studies at The University of Western Ontario

f. Pieter Adriaans, Professor, Machine Learning/Artificial Intelligence University of Amsterdam

g. Jenna Burrell, Associate Professor, School of Information, UC Berkeley.

The series was launched in relation to the new Culture & Technology concentration in the Master of Information (MI) degree at the iSchool—particular in light of its mandate of providing experiential learning and transferable skill training opportunities for students. Particular skills associated with developing and presenting this lecture series included: (i) working with other students to develop, invite, communicate with, arrange logistics for, distinguished international scholars; (ii) networking with other academic units on campus and external to the U.of.T to publicize events; (iii) presenting speakers and hosting the public lecture series; and (iv) reading and discussing papers submitted by the visiting scholars at the affiliated seminar.

3. Inauguration of a permanent exhibit in the Coach House, entitled “All Media Work Us Over Completely.” Curated by PhD student Chris Young, this exhibit links the CHI with the McLuhan personal library recently acquired by the Fisher Rare Books Library. The exhibit presents McLuhan’s interaction with literary texts, and his insights on the authors’ concepts inscribed on the pages.
4. Launch of the **Culture & Technology (C&T) Concentration** within the Master of Information (MI) degree within the iSchool.

The C&T concentration\(^3\) was approved during the previous academic year. This year the first course in the concentration, INF 1501 (Culture & Technology I) was taught by adjunct professor Matt Price, replacing Brian Cantwell Smith, who was on medical leave. A syllabus for the course is included as Appendix C.


In conjunction with the **Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Media Ecology Association (MEA)**\(^4\) to be held June 19-22, 2014, at Ryerson University, the CHI will host a public forum and performance from 5:30-9:00 pm, on June 20th. The forum will be a locus for progressive thinking and questions at the intersection of “Culture & Technology” in the 21st century. The aim of the event is to invite innovative researchers, entrepreneurs, public thinkers and artists to the CHI to exchange and discuss perspectives on our rapidly changing digital world with those enunciated by McLuhan fifty years ago. A description of the event, and a list of invited speakers, is included as Appendix D.

Planning for CHI activities and workshops for Fall and Winter 2014-2015 is going, to ensure that the CHI can move forward with its mission in a scalable manner in terms of funding and engagement of stakeholders from diverse environments.

\(^3\) [http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/c%26t](http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/c%26t); and

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Appendix A — Program, 50th Anniversary of the Opening of the Centre for Culture & Technology

CULTURE & TECHNOLOGY LECTURE SERIES

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF THE CENTRE FOR CULTURE & TECHNOLOGY @ THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 23, 2013 (COACH HOUSE INSTITUTE)

5:00-5:15 p.m. Welcoming words
Seamus Ross (Dean, School, UofT), Dominique Scheffel-Durand (Director, McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology, UofT, and Centre for Research on Language Contact, YorkU)

5:15–5:30 p.m. Launch of exhibit at the Coach House

Greetings: Michael McLuhan, Eric McLuhan, Anne Dondertharn (Associate Librarian for Special Collections and Director of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library)

“All media work us over completely”
Exhibit curator: Chris Young (PhD Student, School, UofT)

5:30-6:00 p.m. Inaugural lecture of the 2013 Culture & Technology Lecture Series

Keywords: Brian Cantwell Smith (Director Coach House Institute, UofT)

6:00-9:00 p.m. Wine & cheese, Storytelling about Marshall McLuhan

Host: Michael Edwards (Former Executive Director, McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology)

Participants: David Novack (Entrepreneur and entrepreneur at It + Ni, Gerry Fahlke (National Film Board of Canada), Panchal Mansaran (Artist), Steve Kline (Professor, Simon Fraser University), Adriana Karacz (Adjunct Professor, Fordham University)

THURSDAY OCTOBER 24, 2013 (COACH HOUSE INSTITUTE, SENATE CHAMBER)

10:30-12:30 p.m. Culture & Technology: A name? An idea? A place? A network?

Moderator: Domenico Pietropaolo (Principal of St. Michael’s College, UofT)

Participants: David Olson (Professor Emeritus, CISS, UofT), Derrick de Kerckhove (Professor Emeritus, UofT), Francesco Guardini (Italian Studies, St. Michael College, UofT), Dominique Scheffel-Durand

Local network: Louise Poissant (Doyenne, Faculté des arts, UQAM), Gala Moore (Professor Emeritus, Former Director, Knowledge Media Design Institute, UofT)

International network: Maria Pia Rossignaud (Media Dzuemilia)

12:30-1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30-2:30 p.m. Making sense of Culture & Technology: How prescient & relevant is McLuhan today? The next generation’s point of view

Moderator: Mark Chiwess (Director, Knowledge Media Design Institute, UofT)

Participants: Brian Griffin (PhD Student, School, UofT), Andrea Green (Master’s Student, School, UofT), Mark Sedore (PhD Student, School, UofT), Jenna Jacobson (PhD Student, School, UofT), Adam Pagen (PhD Student, School, UofT)

3:00-4:30 p.m. Mondes francophones (Senate Chamber, Glendon College, York University)

Keywords: Dominique Wolton (Directeur, ESSC & Hermès, CNRS editions, Paris, France)

3:00-5:00 p.m. Massaging Culture & Technology: How prescient & relevant is McLuhan? A suspended judgement

Moderators: Leslie Ragan Shade (Associate Professor, School, UofT)

Participants: Bob Logan (Professor Emeritus, Physics, UofT), Lance Strate (Professor, Fordham University), Matt Ratto (Assistant Professor, School, UofT), Jarina Marches-Laut (Professor, Film, YorkU), Joshua Meyrowitz (Professor, Communication, University of New Hampshire), Paul Höffert (Professor, Digital Media, YorkU)

Respondent: Steve Kline

LOCATIONS

Coach House Institute
(Formerly, Centre for Culture & Technology)
59A Queen’s Park Crescent East, Toronto

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
Maclean-Hunter Room
120 St George Street, Toronto

Senate Chamber, Glendon Campus
York University (Glendon College)

http://uoft.me/cDts #McLuhanCHI #McLuhanCHI

SPONSORS

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto

Département d’Études françaises, York University (Keulemaar College)

École des Affaires Publiques et Internationales, York University (Glendon College)

Centre de recherche sur le contact linguistique, York University (Glendon College)

Centre d’Études de la France et du monde francophone, University of Toronto

Institute of Communication, Culture and Information Technology, University of Toronto

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY OF INFORMATION

THURSDAY OCTOBER 24, 2013 (FISHER RARE BOOK LIBRARY)

7:00-8:30 p.m. 2nd lecture of the 2013 Culture & Technology Lecture Series

Keywords: Dominique Wolton (Director, Institute des sciences de la communication du CNRS, Directeur, Hermès, CNRS editions, Paris, France)

In conversation with: Guy Proulx (Professor, Psychology, Glendon College, YorkU), Hervé Saint-Louis (PhD Student, School, UofT), Anthony Wensley (Director of the Institute of Communication, Culture & Information Technology, UTM)

8:30-9:30 p.m. Reception

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto
Appendix B — Culture and Technology Lecture Series

During 2013-2014, in a student-led initiative, the iSchool’s Coach House Institute (CHI) will host a series of lectures and discussions addressing cultural specificities in our understanding of information. The aim will not be to focus on culturally diverse uses of information, but instead to investigate the nature of information itself – and to ask whether, and if so how, fundamental theories of information incorporate, accommodate, or abstract away from the diverse epistemic and ontological commitments of varied communities.

Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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Dominique Wolton

Information is not Communication
October 24, 2013 • 7:00-8:30 PM
Fisher Rare Book Library

Second lecture of the 2013 Coach House Institute Lecture series on Culture & Technology (C&TLS)

Keynote: Dominique Wolton (Directeur, Institut des sciences de la communication du CNRS, Directeur et fondateur, Hermès, CNRS éditions, Paris, France)

In conversation with: Guy Proulx (Psychology, Glendon College, York University, Former Director of the Cognitive and Behavioural Health Program at Baycrest); Hervé Saint-Louis (PhD, iSchool), Anthony Wensley (Professor and Director of the Institute of Communication, Culture & Information Technology, University of Toronto Mississauga)


French sociologist and political scientist Dominique Wolton, director of the Research Institute on communication of the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) – and Director of the scientific publication Hermès, will be in Toronto from October 22 to 26 to participate to the 50th anniversary of the opening of the McLuhan Centre for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto. He will give a lecture and talks on information and communication, and their relationship to culture, society and politics.

Sandra Braman

Information as Agent: Power in a Post-Hegemonic World
November 11, 2013 • 7:00-8:30 PM
Fisher Rare Book Library

Sandra Braman

Sandra Braman has been studying the macro-level effects of the use of new information technologies and their policy implications since the mid-1980s. Current work includes Change of State: Information, Policy, and

With National Science Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Rockefeller Foundation support, Braman has been working on problems associated with the effort to bring the research and communication policy communities more closely together. She has published over four dozen scholarly journal articles, book chapters, and books; served as book review editor of the Journal of Communication; is former Chair of the Communication Law & Policy Division of the International Communication Association; and sits on the editorial boards of nine scholarly journals.

During 1997-1998 Braman designed and implemented the first graduate-level program in telecommunication and information policy on the African continent, for the University of South Africa. Currently Professor of Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Braman earned her PhD from the University of Minnesota in 1988 and previously served as Reese Phifer Professor at the University of Alabama, Henry Rutgers Research Fellow at Rutgers University, Research Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois-Urbana, and the Silha Fellow of Media Law and Ethics at the University of Minnesota.

Sandy Pearlman

As The Age of Saturation Encounters Asymptopia, Or, As You Like It

February 11, 2014 • 7:00 PM
Fisher Rare Book Library

Abstract:
"Ah, music," he said, wiping his eyes. "A magic beyond all we do here!"
~ Dumbledore, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Or,
"Music is a hidden arithmetic exercise of the soul, which does not know that it is counting."
~ Gottfried Leibniz

After all, it's all a matter of perception...

"Fullness, Superabundance, Overload": Saturation – Roget's Thesaurus

Or,
"Music is the wine that fills the cup of silence."
~ Robert Fripp

"We can prove that some line – namely, an Asymptote, constantly approaches another by showing what will be the case if the progression is continued as far as one pleases... Even so there are Asymptote figures in geometry where an infinite length makes only a finite progress in breadth."
~ Gottfried Leibniz

Or,
"So put me on a highway
And show me a sign
And take it to the limit one more time."
~ The Eagles

The invention and evolution of the analog photographic, motion picture and sound reproduction technologies, which characterized the media of most of the 20th century, and which remain, either, with us still or even counter-intuitively resurrected in the 21st century present, strikingly and synchronously coevolved with the development of the 19th century Romantic Symphony and its characteristically saturated sonorities. As if, in the case of sound recording, these technologies were embedded with optimization factors for the reproduction, amplification and glorification of those romantic sonorities, which became characteristic of not only the symphonic music of the 19th century, but, the film and popular music of most of the 20th century as well — including most spectacularly the technologically incarnated folk music known as heavy metal. This trend line persisted until the last twenty years of the 20th century when the decisive proliferation of newer digital media technologies created under the imperatives of the Nyquist/Shannon/Weaver information theoretics, which were (never forget) originally developed to solve all the problems entailed in the long distance telephonic transmission of specifically speech changed absolutely everything. At that point, Saturation encounters Asymptopia and a new set of perceptual limits is imposed upon the new genus of Digital Media Objects. From that point on, everything gets really strange or really bad, depending upon your perspective... As for As You Like It, Rosalind was the grand mistress of perception after all. And perceptual theory is the key to the puzzle of this lecture. Never forget that Rosalind, “can do strange things”. As for the rest of the story see you at the lecture.

~Sandy Pearlman

Bio:
Sandy Pearlman is currently Dean's Visiting Professor for Interdisciplinary Innovation at the University of Toronto and Visiting Professor at McGill University. Over the years, Pearlman has taught and created
Bernd Frohmann  
**Document, Index, Trace, and Death: Briet’s Antelope Lessons**  
February 25, 2014 • 7:00-8:30 PM  
Fisher Rare Book Library 120 St. George Street  

**Abstract:**  
The first third of this paper is about my concept of documentality, which I think avoids some dead ends in thinking about documentation in general. I take speech as my example of how the documentality of even such a seemingly ephemeral phenomenon can emerge and be strengthened, in this case through the modes of materialization of utterance provided by Aristotelian rhetoric, which, I also argue, are relevant to important contemporary verbal performances. The rest of the paper is about what I call “Briet’s antelope lessons.” I argue that from her brief discussion of the “vêture” of documents cascading from her now-famous antelope, we learn that its ambiguous connection to those documents poses a specific problem pertaining to the documentality of things. How is the fate of the primary document (the antelope) related to its secondary documents (its “vêture”)? And how are connections between documents and their referents established, maintained, and severed? Briet’s antelope lessons direct us to such questions. Four case studies are presented as illustrations of this problem: the gardens of Villandry, the glass flowers of Harvard’s Ware Collection, practices of telepresence, such as Second Life and webcam sexual activities, and the Visible Human Project.  

**Bio:**  
Bernd Frohmann is Professor Emeritus and Adjunct Associate Professor in the Faculty of Information Studies at the University of Western Ontario. He is the author of “Deflating Information: From Science Studies to Documentation” (University of Toronto Press, 2004) and various articles and book chapters on information and documentation studies. His current research interests are in contemporary media studies.

Pieter Adriaans  
**Information, art and meaning: Painting as a post-saturation discipline**  
March 25, 2014 • 7:00-8:30 PM  
Fisher Rare Book Library • 120 St. George Street  

**Abstract:**  
There is no doubt that the theories of information and computation are valuable tools for the analysis of objects of art and their production. They help us to model the cognitive processes involved in the understanding and appreciation of art that take place in our brain. They can even give us insight in the cultural and historical structures that govern the development of art over longer periods in time. In my lecture(s) I will discuss a number of these issues. It can be doubted, however, that theory of information can explain the phenomenon of meaning as it emerges in the individual human consciousness and the related emotions that works of art generate. At best information theoretical analysis seems to reveal correlations between meaning and the information content of data sets, but there seems to be no straight forward syntactical relationship. 

In my talk I will, for the first time, discuss these issues in the context of my own work as an artist. Painting is an interesting form of art since, from an information theoretical point of view, its conceptual space appears to be saturated: everything has been done already, the amount of images we are confronted with every day is staggering. There are more saturated art forms (pop-music, classical music, the blues solo, photography, classical dance). Probably every form of art will reach such a stage in the future. Still it seems to be possible to make new paintings of extraordinary strength and meaning. There is a chasm between the conceptual analysis of art and its meaning. This creates a new space of possibilities and freedom for the artists working in such “post-saturation” disciplines.  

**Bio:**  
“I still believe in the old Renaissance ideal of the universal man, not in the sense of knowing everything about everything but as the ambition to understand universal structures from different perspectives.”

Over the years Pieter Adriaans (1955) has built up an impressive unusually broad oeuvre that varies from paintings and sculptures to installations, books, papers and musical compositions. This achievement is remarkable given the fact that Adriaans also has a masters in philosophy, a PhD in theoretical computer science and has, together with his business partner Dolf Zantinge, founded a very successful computer company. He is part-time professor of learning and adaptive at the University of Amsterdam.
Adriaans got his first drawing lessons at the end of the sixties from the well-known painter Jacobus Koeeman in Bergen aan Zee. In 1971, at the age of sixteen he was accepted as a student at the St. Joost School of Fine Art and Design, but, being disappointed by lack of interest in the technical aspects of drawing and painting at this institute he decided to combine the development of his talents with a thorough intellectual training. Ever since this time he has combined a scientific career with artistic activities. In the seventies he was member of Taawkengnootschap Pictura, in Dordrecht. He got painting lessons from G.E. Meertens, and from J. Van Kestener. He studied philosophy (and some mathematics) in Leiden from 1976 till 1983, the Netherlands, under Nuchelmans and van Peursen. Under guidance of Prof. Marcel Fresco he studied the philosophical works of the Dutch poet Johan Andreas Dár Moux (1883-1919), who had a major impact on his ideas on art and science. In 1981 he discovered the work of the twelfth century sculptor known a the “Maître de Cabestany” whose freedom of deforming the human body has been vital in the development of his style. In the eighties he started research into knowledge based systems and logic programming. This culminated in to the founding of the software company Sytologic in 1986. The success of this company allowed Adriaans to further explore the interplay between art and science. Eight years, later when Sytologic was a leading firm in data mining artificial intelligence and systems management with offices in Holland, Dublin, London and California, it was sold to Perot Systems Inc. This allowed Adriaans to take up one of his most ambitious projects up: Roboassl, the building and exploitation of a self-learning racing yacht. This high profile project ran successfully from 1997 till 2002. In 1992 got his doctorate at the university of Amsterdam and in 1998 he was appointed professor of learning and adaptive systems at the same institute. Over the years his research interest has shifted towards complexity theory, philosophy of information and meaningful information. In the years 2000 and 2001 he visited the Wijka Academie in The Hague were he got lessons from Ed van der Koozy, Ren Hazenberg en Marijke Verhof. Since then he has developed his own style of painting. Using multiple layers of acrylics paint he creates large radiant canvasses in his characteristic robust handwritting. These paintings are greatly appreciated by a growing group of admirers. Pieter and his wife Rini live in Kockengen in the Netherlands and part of the year on the island of Sao Jorge, one of the Azores.

Jenna Burrell

The Materiality of Rumor

April 29, 2014 • 7:00PM

Fisher Rare Book Library • 120 St. George Street

Abstract:

In this talk I will discuss rumors as a type of small media and as “secondhand accounts” rather than “false tales.” Over the years, I have encountered a number of rumors while doing ethnographic fieldwork in Ghana including one about Bill Gates – the illiterate dropout, rumors about young Ghanaians who got rich off the Internet, and a rumor about an impending earthquake (spread, in part, by mobile phone) that led people to flee the streets one night in 2010. The study of rumor has served as a useful lens for thinking about how digital technologies are received by new populations of users. Among youth in Ghanaian Internet cafes, the accounting work done in rumors resolved issues of morality and efficacy related to Internet use. Rumors compel retelling and have a bodily existence through the people who spread them. The consequences of rumors range from overwhelmingly and undesirably material. The durability of rumor offers a way to rethink an overdrawn dichotomy between material and symbolic that often subtly (or not so subtly) informs the social study of digital technologies.

Bio:

Jenna Burrell is an Associate Professor in the School of Information at UC Berkeley. Her first book Invisible Users: Youth in the Internet Cafes of Urban Ghana (The MIT Press) came out in May 2012. She completed her PhD in 2007 in the department of Sociology at the London School of Economics. Before pursuing her PhD she was an Application Concept Developer in the People and Practices Research Group at Intel Corporation. Her interests span many research topics including theories of materiality, user agency, transnationalism, post-colonial relations, digital representation, and especially the appropriation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by individuals and groups on the African continent.
Appendix C — Syllabus, C&T Introductory Course
INF1501: Culture & Technology I

Syllabus

I • Overview
An introduction to some of the methods and traditions used to identify, understand, analyze, investigate, and critique issues at the intersection of culture and technology. Provides a background in philosophy of computing and information, philosophy of technology, and science and technology studies. Particular focus on issues relevant to computing, information systems and services, digital technologies, the internet, and social media. Affiliated with the McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology, a program of the Coach House Institute (CHI).

Learning outcomes: In this course, students will develop:
1. An historical perspective on the emergence of mechanical conceptions of science and technology;
2. An understanding of the mechanical (material) and semantic (semiotic, intentional) aspects of contemporary computing and information technologies;
3. Analytic, conceptual, and critical skills necessary in order to analyze issues at the intersection of technology and culture;
4. Expertise and familiarity with reading across disciplinary boundaries; and
5. Experience in presenting, critiquing, and understanding diverse intellectual viewpoints, though mentored participation in processes of peer review and collaborative discussion.

II • Format
1. The class will consist of 12 three-hour sessions, to be held in the (small) main conference room of the Coach House Institute, at 69A Queen’s Park East (on the University of St. Michael’s College Campus)
2. Each week’s class will consist of three parts
   a. Lecture and/or presentation of the readings (lecture notes will be provided after class)
   b. Student-led questions for discussion: Each week, a different group of students will be assigned the task of (i) forming their own questions from the readings, as a basis for discussion, and (ii) collecting proposed questions and discussion points from the other members of the class, (iii) integrating these into a framework for discussion, and (iv) presenting this framework, following the lecture, as a catalyst for discussion.
   c. Class discussion, based on the lecture, readings, and student presentation of part (ii).
3. Assignment: Students will write a 6,000-8,000 word paper, and provide peer review commentary on the work of other students, in a four stage process:
   a. Students will submit a short (1–2 page) “skeleton” of a topic and proposed argument or set of questions to be addressed (week 4). Skeletons will be returned, with comments, within 1 week of submission.
   b. Students will post first drafts of their paper to the class website on Blackboard (week 7).
   c. The class will be divided, by random drawing, into groups of 4 people. Each member of each group will read and post comments on the first drafts of the other 3 students’ papers. Comments
are to be posted within one week of when the drafts are posted. During this time, students will not be allowed to modify the posted first drafts.

d. Based on both (i) their own further readings and thoughts, (ii) the comments that have been posted on their first drafts, (iii) what they have learned commenting on the drafts of the other members of their group, students will complete a final version of their paper (to be submitted on the last day of class).

A. Grading

1. 10% — Presentation: distillation of readings, framework of questions for discussion.
2. 10% — “Skeleton” of topic, with questions and (if possible) argument framework.
3. 20% — First draft of paper
4. 15% — Comments on the 3 other students’ first drafts (3 x 5%)
5. 35% — Final version of paper: 45%
6. 10% — Class participation
7. 100% — Total

Part II • Syllabus

I • The Rise of Mechanism (2 weeks)

— In which we begin the exploration by developing a grounding in the origins of the Philosophy of Mechanism: the view, nearly universally accepted in science as traditionally conceived, that science involves providing “mechanistic explanations” of structures, phenomena, and events, and that a universe of “causal bumping and shoving” (so-called “atoms in the void”) underlies all of reality. As will be examined in subsequent sections (see esp. §…), this classical view is both epistemologically and ontologically challenged by current thinkers, for example in Science Technology Studies (STS) and feminist philosophy of science. One cannot really understand those critiques, however, without first understanding the target of the criticism. In spite of these critiques, moreover, questions about “what constitutes a mechanism” remain widely debated in contemporary science—for example, in theoretical biology. In addition, contemporary efforts to provide “scientific” theories of fundamental aspects of human culture and the human condition, including altruism, fidelity, intelligence, emotion, language, and sociality, tend to devolve into mechanist analyses. As best we can, therefore, we need to understand what it is to be a mechanism. Later in the course we will also want to ask whether computers and information technologies are “mechanisms” in this sense.

A. Week 1

1. Required
   a. Origins
   b. The Scientific Revolution—original sources
      i. Descartes: Sixth meditation. In Meditations on First Philosophy, 1641. 8 pp.

1 Two translations available online:
   Vetch: http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes
   Bennett: http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/de.html
INF1501H
Culture & Technology · I — Syllabus
Fall 2013

2. Secondary
a. Robert Boyle, The Origin of forms and Qualities (according to the corpuscular philosophy) illustrated by (1) considerations and (2) experiments 1: The Theoretical Part, 1666.3
b. Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, 1717

B. Week 2
1. Required

2. Secondary

II • Logic and Symbols (2 weeks)
— In which we complement the study of mechanism with a parallel introduction to the emergence of our contemporary understanding of logic, rationality, and reason—from its emergence as an explicitly theorized subject matter in the mid-19th century (with Peirce and Boole) up to the development of computation. As we will see, information and computational technologies are deeply based on this tradition, including contemporary understanding of symbols, meaning, communication, etc.

A. Required
2. Lecture notes on Frege, logic, and the foundations of mathematics
3. Icons, indices, and signs—Charles Saunders Pierce
   b. Wikipedia: “Semiotic elements and classes of signs”:5

B. Secondary
2. George Boole and the Laws of Thought:

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3 http://www.isaacnewton.ca/gen_scholium
5 http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics
6 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semiotic_elements_and_classes_of_signs
III • Sociology of Knowledge, and Science & Technology Studies (4 weeks)

In which we move forward to the middle of the 20th century, to the rise of Science and Technology Studies (STS), which emerged in turn out of the sociology of knowledge. STS came into existence as an interdisciplinary blend of sociology, anthropology, history, and (some) philosophy—though it has increasingly coalesced into disciplinary form in its own right, with its own departments and degrees (e.g., at MIT, Cornell, and Simon Fraser). Even a full course introducing STS would inevitably cover only highlights; to include it in a section of this course will inevitably convey merely a taste of its concerns. Note: only required readings are listed here; guides to additional literature can be found in many places, including a syllabus developed by Michael Lynch at Cornell, which will be provided as a resource for additional reading.

A. Background

B. Classics
2. Ihde. "A Phenomenology of Technics".

C. STS

IV • Computing and Information (3–5 weeks)

In which, using the 3 very different perspectives and approaches surveyed in Parts I–III, we turn to the development of the computer and contemporary theories of information and communication. We will trace their intellectual heritage in both mechanistic and rationalistic forms of explanation stemming from the 17th century and onwards, examine their presence in current conceptions of digital, computational, and information technologies.
A. History

B. Cog sci and semantics—an application to the human condition

C. Philosophy
1. Floridi, “The Philosophy of Information” (choose which version)

D. Contemporary Discussion

V • Rethinking the world (2 weeks)
— If time permits, we may conclude the exploration by looking forward—towards new conceptions of the world itself, borne out of strenuous critiques of the classical epistemological and ontological models on which traditional conceptions of science and technology were based. A growing number of writers are proposing to move past critique in order to sketch alternative conceptions of the world and our place within it. The following reading list enumerates a few of the most prominent recent books. Rather than expect any given student to read more than one of the following, it is expected instead that students will be divided into small groups, each of which is assigned to read one of the following books, and to present a synopsis and critique to the rest of the class, as part of a general discussion.

http://codev2.cc/


3. Brian Cantwell Smith, *The Origin of Objects*, MIT Press, 1996. The following critique and response address the book; they may be found to be a simpler introduction to its main themes:


7. Depending on student interest and further investigation, some of the literature in the so-called “speculative realism” tradition may also be explored.
Appendix D — “Crossfading” Voices, Registers & Publics

“Crossfading” Voices, Registers & Publics
Friday, June 20th:

Reception 5:30-7pm
Public forum + music performance: 7-9pm
Walter Hall, Faculty of music, University of Toronto
80 Queens Park, Toronto, ON M5S 2C5

As the world embraces digital media (DM) as the substrate of knowledge, communication & creative expression, DM will catalyse social reconfiguration as profound as the shift from oral to written culture. At stake is not just technology, or even practice, but the conceptual fabric in terms of which people, nature & society are understood.

Marshall McLuhan’s “Centre for Culture & Technology”—a site of incalculable historic, symbolic & iconic value is where fifty years ago McLuhan & colleagues such as Harold Innis, Eric A. Havelock, Walter Ong & Edmund Carpenter pioneered work that probed and discussed how media & alphabetic communication technologies shaped culture.

During the 15th annual convention of the Media Ecology Association in Toronto, The Faculty of Information Coach House Institute at the University of Toronto proposes to hold on June 20th an evening of conversations to build on & substantially transform the legacy of McLuhan’s probes and thoughts. This public forum will be the locus for progressive thinking and questions at the intersection of “Culture & Technology” in the 21st century. Innovative researchers, entrepreneurs, public thinkers and artists are invited to the CHI public forum to contrast perspectives on our rapidly changing digital world with those enunciated by McLuhan fifty years ago.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Marshall McLuhan’s iconic text Understanding Media this public forum will be the locus for progressive thinking and questions at the intersection of “Culture & Technology” in the 21st century. Innovative researchers, entrepreneurs, public thinkers and artists are invited to the CHI public forum to contrast perspectives on our rapidly changing digital world with those enunciated by McLuhan fifty years ago. By probing the phenomenon of “Technopoly” as defined by Neil Postman, and “crossfading” speakers’ voices, the audience will be exposed to mixing registers and intellectual inputs matching the socio-technical challenges we are facing today!

The speakers will address two questions before opening the discussion:

1. Reflecting on your personal and professional journey, what are the big issues at the intersection of Culture and Technology today?

2. McLuhan’s Understanding Media was a probative breakthrough in understanding the shaping influences of technologies leading to the mid-twentieth Century. He employed poetic devices and insight to understand
popular culture. How can we best go about "Understanding media" in the twenty-first century? How might The Coach House Institute best evolve to engender this understanding?

Proposed list of speakers, probers and respondents awaiting confirmation:

Suroosh Alvi is the co-founder of VICE magazine, a youth media brand operating in 34 countries. Alvi is a traveled journalist and an executive producer of film, covering global youth culture, news and music. He has hosted and produced award-winning documentaries investigating controversial issues, movements, and subcultures.

Elizabeth Dowdeswell, President and CEO of the Council of Canadian Academies. Her consulting practice tackles complex issues of social importance, providing institutional and governance advice. Recently she served as founding President & CEO of Canada’s Nuclear Waste Management Organization. She is also an adjunct professor in public health at the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health, University of Toronto.

Tom Jenkins: Chair of OpenText Corporation in Waterloo, Ontario. Mr. Jenkins is a member of several boards, including the Government of Canada's Advisory Panel on Open Government, the Canadian Digital Media Network, the C.D. Howe Institute and the Canadian Council of Chief Executives. He is also one of the founders of Communitech, Waterloo Region's technology association. Mr. Jenkins holds a Master of Business Administration from the Schulich School of Business at York University, a Master of Applied Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Toronto and a Bachelor of Engineering Physics and Management from McMaster University.

Joshua Meyrowitz Professor & Chair of Communication Department, University of New Hampshire in Durham; Author of No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior. International Communication Association (ICA) Fellows Book Award 2014 recipient.

Don Morrison former COO of Research in Motion (RIM)/Blackberry. Involved currently with the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values at MIT & the Mastercard Foundation, which focuses on microfinance and education, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa; a Canadian organization called Free the Children.

John Oswald Canadian composer who coined the word Plunderphonics or the practice of making new music out of previously existing recordings. In 2004, Oswald was one of six artists to win the annual Governor General’s Awards in Visual and Media Arts, as awarded by the Canada Council for the Arts, for lifetime achievement.

Greg Power Greg Power brings more than 25 years communications experience to his role as a former journalist, consumer marketer and public relations consultant. He has produced radio documentaries for CBC Radio and Radio Canada International, led corporate and community communications for Avon Canada and been a senior executive
at Cossette Communications, Edelman Canada, Hill & Knowlton Canada and Rapp Collins Worldwide. As President and General Manager of Weber Shandwick Canada, Greg provides strategic oversight to the firm’s offices in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver and is a member of the agency’s North American leadership team. Greg specializes in developing communications strategy, development of master narratives and storytelling, media and presentation training and C-suite advice and counsel. Greg holds a Bachelor of Arts in sociology from McGill University and a Bachelor of Journalism (High Honours) from Carleton University.

Geri Sinclair  
**Ryerson Distinguished Visiting Professor**, Dr. Gerri Sinclair's cross-domain career includes more than 20 years' experience spanning the fields of internet and new media technology, entrepreneurial business, academic research, and government policy.

Moses Znaimer, co-founder and former head of Citytv, the first independent television station in Toronto, Canada, and the current head of ZoomerMedia. By 1984 Znaimer and John Martin's vision of a 24-hour music video station was realized with the creation of MuchMusic. Much like City, MuchMusic emphasized the liveness and spontaneity of television, relying largely on hand-held cameras, and impromptu shots of VJs taken just about anywhere in the CHUM-City offices.

**Probers & Respondents:**

Rob Bowman, Professor Bowman pioneered popular music studies at York University. Rob Bowman’s work as an interpreter and documentarian of historical recordings of popular music has been recognized internationally. A five-time Grammy Award nominee, he won a Grammy in 1996 for Best Album Notes for his 47,000 word monograph accompanying the 10-CD boxed set of The Complete Stax/Volt Soul Singles, Vol. 3: 1972-1975, which he co-produced. Parallel to his career as a teacher, writer, critic and broadcaster, Rob Bowman continues to perform professionally.

Brian Griffin, PhD candidate, University of Toronto Faculty of Information

Jenna Jakobson, PhD candidate, University of Toronto Faculty of Information


Samuel Pearlman, Dean’s Visiting Professor for Interdisciplinary Innovation at the University of Toronto and Visiting Professor at McGill University. Producer, creator, songwriter, manager and theorist for some of the most important bands and musical
trends of the last 30 years (among them Blue Oyster Cult, Clash, Black Sabbath, and Pavlov’s Dog).

Adam Pungen, PhD candidate, University of Toronto faculty of Information.

Dominique Scheffel-Dunand, Professor in Linguistics at York University & Director of the Faculty of information McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology at the University of Toronto. Currently she serves as the acting Director of the Faculty of Information Coach House Institute at the University of Toronto.

Discussions fading into a musical performance by John Oswald