

Theocrit 9201

Cyber War Theory

Instructor: Dr. Nick Dyer-Witheford

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:30, FNB 4045

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Seminar: Tuesday, 9:30 -12:30, **STVH 3165**

Course Description:

Cyberwar is all the rage today. Stories of Russian election hacking, Chinese networked espionage, jihadi virtual recruitment, and Pentagon contracts in Silicon Valley abound, mostly told by spooks, hypesters, politicians and journalists. This course, however, examines the idea of cyberwar as the site of an encounter between two bodies of critical theory, one dealing with “cyber”—the realm of the digital, the other with “war”—the domain of organized violence. It defines cyberwar in a broad sense, not just as military hacking, but as a phenomenon with constitutive adjacencies to and overlaps with cyber-crime and cyber-activism, surveillance, terrorism, drones and autonomous weaponry. From this vantage point, we will study Marxist, Lacanian, Derridean, and Deleuzian accounts of cyberwar, and the prescient work of war theorists such as Virilio and Kittler; the relation of cyberwar to classical theories of war and international relations, from Clausewitz to Schmitt; and the rapidly emergent field of feminist and postcolonial cyberwar studies. The seminar will thus offer a far ranging examination of critical thought on the current wave of digital militarism. It will be geared to the interests of seminar participants in a way helpful both in the writing of comprehensive exams, theses and dissertations and/or in political practice.

Topic & Readings Schedule:

This schedule of seminar topics and readings is provisional; it will be redesigned and reiterated, if necessary several times, dependent on the interests and priorities of the seminar. Readings will be available on the seminar OWL site.

January 7 Introduction: Theorizing Cyber & War. Dyer-Witheford & Matviyenko, “Introduction”.

January 14 Falling Stacks. Bratton, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDRxNOJxXEE> or **The Stack, on Software and Sovereignty**, pp. 3-41; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8My0aLsIMA> or “The Black Stack”: Schmitt, “The New Nomos of the Earth” and “War with Modern Means of Destruction”, in *The Nomos of the Earth*, 351-355 and 309-322.

January 21 Absolute War, Real War: Clausewitz. Harman “Introduction” to Carl von Clausewitz, “On War”. Clausewitz, “Chapter One: What is War”, “Chapter Seven” “Friction in War”; Rid, “Cyberwar Will Not Take Place”; Canbarro and Borne “Reflections on the Fog of (Cyber) war.”

January 28 War Speed: Virilio and Kittler. Virilio, *Speed and Politics* and *The Information Bomb*; Kittler, “Cold War Networks” and “Alan Turing, the Artificial Intelligence of World War Two”, in *The Truth of the Technological World*. Winthrop-Young, “De Bellis Germanicus: Kittler, the Third Reich and German Wars.”

February 4 Class War. Balibar, “Marxism and War”; Kurz, “The Destructive Origins of Capitalism”; Dyer-Witheford and Matviyenko, “Chapter 1: The Geopolitical and Class Relations of Cyberwar”; Terranova, “Red Stack Attack.”

February 11 Nomad War: Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*; Weizman, "Lethal Theory"; Hardt & Negri, *Multitude* 1-31; Lazzarato & Alliez "To Our Enemies".

February 18 Reading Week No Class

February 25 Deconstruction Machines & Perception Attacks: Jacques Deconstruction Machines Chapters 1 and 2; Massumi, "Perception Attack"; Dyer-Witheford & Matviyenko, Chapter 2, "Cyberwar Subjects."

March 3 Feminist Cyberwars. Arvidsson. "Targeting, Gender, and International *Posthumanitarian* Law and Practice"; Jones "A Posthuman-Xenofeminist Analysis of the Discourse on Autonomous Weapons Systems and Other Killing Machines": Greene, "New Genres of Being Human": World Making through Viral Blackness."

March 10 Counterinsurgency and Necropolitics. Mbembe, Achille. "Deglobalization"; Niva, "Disappearing violence: JSOC and the Pentagon's new cartography of networked warfare"; Kapadia "Kissing the Dead Body: Conjuring "Warm Data" in Archives of U.S. Global Military Detention"

March 17 Robo-War: Drones and Autonomous Weapons. Chamayou, "The Manhunt Doctrine": Bloomberg, "Dancing to a Tune"; Crogan, "Visions of Swarming Robots: Artificial Intelligence and Stupidity in the Military-Industrial Projection of the Future of Warfare."

March 24 Krieg dem Krieg? Assange "When Google Met Wikileaks"; Noys, "War on Time"; Dyer-Witheford & Matviyenko, "Chapter 3: What is to be Done?":

March 31 Conclusions. Readings TBA dependent on directions taken by the seminar.

Evaluation

In class presentation plus written summary (5-10pp): 25%. A list of presentation topics will be circulated, but seminar participants are encouraged to propose their own, in discussion with the instructor. The aim of the presentation is to lead the seminar into an open and accessible discussion of the chosen topic, and its wider implications for the themes of the course.

Major research paper (20-30pp): 60%. The topic of the paper is to be determined in discussion between the student and the instructor. Papers that relate seminar themes to participants' own specific scholarly specializations in the field of theory and criticism are welcome. Students are advised to develop a term paper outline by around mid-term and discuss it with the instructor. *The final paper is due on April 10.* Late papers forfeit 10% per day. Any deadline extensions require proper academic accommodation.

Seminar participation: 15%. This portion of the grade is for attendance, preparation and constructive participation in seminar discussions.

Academic Offenses: Scholastic offences are taken seriously. Students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf