

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

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ONLINE SPACES: THE EPHEMERA AND RITUAL, THE ARTISTIC AND SUBVERSIVE

Session Moderator: Kristin Gustafson, School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, UW Bothell
242 MGH

1:15 PM to 2:45 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Talking Pornheads: A Frank Look at the Textual Response to Internet Pornography

James Hyunsoo (James) Kim, Junior, Communication
Mentor: Matt McGarrity, Communication

Internet pornography is a cultural and generational phenomenon. A majority of the academic studies involving pornography tend to focus on the physical and psychological responses to pornography. From a Communication perspective, Internet pornography provides an interesting area of study as both a form of media and a topic of discourse. This study analyzes textual user responses to Internet pornography via comment sections on the popular pornographic website Pornhub.com. Eight classifications of comments were developed to include comments of Praise, Self-Promotion, Self-Description, Fantasy, Advertising, Asking/ Answering, Critique, and Miscellaneous content. Publicly available user profiles were also coded in complement to their respective comments. Profiles yielded user reported Age, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Relationship Status, and more. Through classification and close textual analysis, this study attempts to understand how and why users “talk back” to their porn.

Singapore: Political Voice through Social Media

Clarrie Ng, Junior, Interdisciplinary Studies (MCS)
Mentor: Kristin Gustafson, School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, UW Bothell

The progression and development of Singapore as an independent country has been a topic that draws in mixed reactions amongst the local and international community. As remarkable as Singapore’s economic growth has been, the avenues for political expression are limited. The goal of my project is to understand how the Singaporean public uses social media to voice their political opinions when significant restrictions and censorship are in place. Unlike in past decades, the rise of social media has allowed for a new outlet of voice in political opinions. I will examine closely if people

can be empowered to voice their political opinions with social media tools. I will record two Skype interviews per age group with Singaporeans ageing from teens, twenties and fifties and using a wide range of online responses on selected social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. This will allow me to draw the connections between the political voices of Singaporeans and social media. I want to compare the responses I get over different generations to examine whether the rise of social media change people’s attitude towards their political expression. Furthermore, I want to extensively look at the responses the people I interview and their reactions toward the comments made within social media sites. This would allow me to understand whether social media sites would be a platform to share and extent their views or an outlet to vent that otherwise serves no “actual” empowerment of their political views.

The Post(ing) Human

Kyle Kubler, Senior, Religion, French Language and International Affairs, University of Puget Sound
Mentor: Jonathan Stockdale, Religion, University of Puget Sound

Death has been a phenomena that has been dealt with in varying ways throughout human history. How we deal with physical death online, specifically through Facebook, has proved to be an insightful challenge to the current digital age. The use of Facebook as the link between the living and the dead highlights the level at which we appropriate our Facebook profiles as extensions of our physical body due to the desire for reinvention associated with death. While only a few studies exist directly related to death on Facebook, they expose communities of mourners interacting with each other and the deceased on a surprisingly horizontal level, and contacting the dead without necessitating time restraints or religious/spiritual intermediaries. Traditional death rituals usually have temporal limits on liminal periods of mourning, divided between pri-

vate and public time, but Facebook offers us unlimited access to memories of the deceased. The choice to mourn communally and virtually problematizes not only our personal relationships with the deceased, but also the legal ownership of our feelings and sentiments. The final element of death on Facebook examined in this paper is the spiritual space that deceased profiles occupy. For the secular and religious, these profiles give a virtually physical body to what might traditionally be called a spirit, which challenges the finality and permanence of death. In studying the posts and stories that decorate the profile walls of the deceased, it is clear that this virtual aspect of ourselves has very real elements, and it is exactly this questioning of reality that death demands of us in the first place.

In Transit: Investigating the Role of Mobile Technology in Contemporary Digital Arts Practice

Bennett Lukas (Bennett) Schatz, Senior, Digital Arts & Experimental Media, Comparative History of Ideas
Mentor: Shawn Brixey, Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media

Mobile devices have become ubiquitous in today's society, yet their role in artistic practice is often relegated to documentation, communication, and play. I have spent the last quarter as the TA for Media, Time, and Technology, a course designed to explore the use of mobile devices in contemporary arts research and practice. Student assignments ranged from concrete conceptual exercises to thought experiments designed to explore and develop idealized future works. My research draws on my experiences in this class as well as the development of my own artistic practice, focusing not only on emerging technologies but also the exploration and reconceptualization of historical works of art. Through the marriage of technological exploration and historical interrogation I hope to develop a personal practice that is grounded in the rich lineage of art yet always looking forward.

NSFW: The Subversive Cultural Logic of Anonymous Online Culture

Jordan Taylor Augustine, Senior, English

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Jos?? Antonio Lucero, International Studies/CHID

Mentor: Carolyn Pinedo Turnovsky, American Ethnic Studies

Mentor: Raj Chetty

Mentor: Simon Trujillo

NSFW ("Not Safe For Work") is an acronym used to indicate that a website, a picture, or a link contains inappropriate (usually pornographic) content. One could say that all of 4chan.org is NSFW. 4chan is an imageboard where communication takes place in the form of pictures and images posted by anonymous users and deleted minutes after they

appear online. This anonymity and ephemerality of communication unleashes levels of racism, sexism, homophobia, and general malevolence unseen in Social Web communities like Facebook. However, 4chan operates with virtually no advertisement (or profit-motive) while Facebook is now a publicly traded corporation, with a mandate to generate revenue for its stockholders by monetizing its assets, which happen to be the words, pictures, jokes, and plans of its more than 1 billion users. Discourses surrounding the Social Web speak in terms of "openness," "connectivity," and "transparency," promising a more civil online community. However, these trends make personal data and communication susceptible to appropriation by capital. How has 4chan remained a largely non-commodified space in the midst of the corporate colonization of the Social Web, and what do we make of its sociopathic ethos? I studied the community and signifying practices of 4chan's random board /b/, finding that although the fundamental anonymity and ephemerality of communication on the board free up participants to be racist, sexist, homophobic, and generally malevolent to degrees unseen in the Social web, these same conditions create a space for truly free speech (in both the monetary and behavioral sense), creating a novel mode of signification and a space for subversive political consciousness in the process.