

The Postmodern Reading Group

This summer we've organized a reading group that addresses the gradual transformation of postmodernity on knowledge production and how this process has shaped social subjects within the institution, the State, the psycho sphere, and the imagistics of society (aesthetics). We'll return to Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, a contradictory historicity of postmodernism that discusses how new modes of narrativity change institutional frameworks and performances. We see Lyotard as speaking to the current moment's inability to slow down, and the paradox of anxiously keeping up with capital accumulation in the digital age. "In this sense, the system seems to be a vanguard machine dragging humanity after it, dehumanizing it in order to rehumanize it at a different level of normative capacity."

The transition works twofold: the meta-relationship and capacity to negotiate our bodies, enter different avatars, be post-human, opens up the potential for alternative sociability while de-emphasizing competency and giving the State full reign over what remains, namely language. The battle over the image of society is bound with permissions – what we say, show, don't say, don't show. As cognitive capitalism depoliticizes the social agent by moving her further and further from her body through the mediation of her desires, the social subject finds herself competing in an immeasurable way. The precaritization of the labourforce is only possible in a time of desiring machines in Lyotard's postmodern society. Here the postmodern condition becomes visceral: how do we negotiate the input/output of

environment/society/"individual" when agency is removed from discourse, and the grand narrative of the cogito is reduced to the physiological and historical processes to which it is subject? How does the precariat, a post-human who both recoils from commitment and desires the commodity, take to the streets? How does one disrupt the feedback loops of the system of society through criticality? Through engaged and engaging reading and discussion, we hope to address transitions in communication, knowledge productions, aesthetics, and capital – put design-makers (who are often ourselves), experts, artists, statesmen, and our relationships on trial.

Summer 2012 / Schedule

Week one: June 5

Re-reading Jean-François Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition: Why? And where might it take us?

Read: foreword & appendix

postmodernity in art/literature/capital/bureaucracy

Week two: June 14

Still reading Lyotard: Setting the Stage

Read: pp 3-41

defining actors/agents and modern/postmodern narrativity/what postmodern metanarratives are removed from (modernism, the grand narrative)

Week three: June 21

Still reading Lyotard: The Stage

Read: pp 41 (Research and Its Legitimization through Performativity)-67

science/arts/institutions/shapes

Week four: July 6th

Main Text: Katherine Hayles's How we Became Posthuman, Intro and Chapters 1 + 2

the condition of virtuality / feedback loops / gender and the Turing test

"Why Does Society Describe Itself as Postmodern?" by Niklas Luhmann

Week Five: July 11th

Reading Elizabeth Grosz's "Bodies – Cities" from *Space, Time, and Perversion* and discuss Paul Virilio's Speed and Politics (Part 1)

speed as the engine of destruction/ implications on bodies and knowledge/ not asking what sexual practices have to share with one another/ acknowledging the messiness of relationships/ the centre of the state is not in the middle, it is on top

Week six: July 25

Reading Franco Berardi's "Cognitarian Subjectivation" and Matteo Pasquinelli's

"Mechanic capitalism and network surplus value"

panic and depression/ the colonization of time/ semiocapitalism/ the manipulation and valorization of language within it/ information machines deterritorialize the division of labour across society

Week seven: Thursday, August 2

Reading Franco Berardi's analysis on connection vs. conjunction and Hannah Arendt's

"What remains? the language remains"

if one can only write/ there is no thought process without personal experience/ "this page is not found" is conjunction

Week eight: Thursday, August 16

Reading Aesthetics and Politics: Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukacs (Presentation 1)

Too much blood and ink / art machines / revolutionary machines / remain separate.

Week nine: Wednesday, August 22

Reading Aesthetics and Politics: Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin (Presentation 2), and Jameson's conclusion

Week ten: Thursday, August 30

Reading sections from Jameson's Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism