

Scott Benzel

Mindless Pleasures Syllabus Spring 2019 Mondays 4 - 6p C108

Course Description

Physicist George Gamow's 1955 article "*Information transfer in the living cell*" prefigured the rise of second-order cybernetics and *autopoiesis* or self-organization within systems, both living and nonliving. Niklas Luhmann applied second-order cybernetics to social phenomena including art, revolutionizing social theory with his 'neocybernetics'. *Mindless Pleasures*, from the working title for Thomas Pynchon's groundbreaking *Gravity's Rainbow*, continues the exploration begun in *Pandaemonium of the Sun*, introducing participants to the ontological and epistemological issues arising from second-order cybernetics, assemblage theory, and neocybernetics as well as from physical theories including complexity theory, quantum theory, and retrocausality. The course will examine innovations in art, science, and philosophy and continue *Pandaemonium of the Sun's* investigation of obscure and occluded 'archaeologies of knowledge' with a strong focus on mind and 'mindlike effects'.

'There is nothing so absurd or incredible that it has not been asserted by one philosopher or another' — Descartes

All readings are included in the PDF folder. Most are excerpts of longer texts. Readings are suggested, not required, and are incorporated into the lectures. For maximum effect they should be skimmed in advance.

1, January 28 *Tannhäuserism, Undecidability, Kybernetes* *'All the richness of the imagination . . . in its lawless freedom produces nothing but nonsense', Kant cautions. Nonsense, then, does not befall the imagination like a foreign pathogen; rather, it is the very law of imagination's own 'lawlessness'. Kant therefore prescribes a rigid antidote: even in the field of the aesthetic, understanding must 'severely clip the wings' of imagination and 'sacrifice . . . some' of it. — Menninghaus*

Tannhäuser im Venusberg or Netflix and Chill *Tannhäuserism, 'The Attention Economy', and The Netflix Prize; Black Widows, 'Media mirages' and 'the wilderness of mirrors', reflexive algorithms; Bayreuth to Hollywood; What algorithms want; Tannhäuserism and memetic dysbiosis*

Ed Finn, *House of Cards: The Aesthetics of Abstraction*

Renee DiResta et al., New Knowledge, *The Tactics and Tropes of the Internet Research Agency, 2018, skim*

Jupiter/Matrioshka Brains — Cultural to Postbiological Evolution *'Matrioshkas consume the entire power output of stars, consume all of the useful construction material of a solar system, have thought capacities limited by the physics of the universe and are essentially immortal'* — Robert Bradbury

Stapledonian thinking, the Fermi Paradox, the modified Drake Equation, Kardashev Civilization Types, Cultural Evolution to Postbiological Evolution, the new replicator, Weberian 'rationalization' to integration, Matrioshka POV, Dark Matter hypothesis

Steven J. Dick, *Bringing Culture to Cosmos, The Postbiological Universe*

Susan Schneider, *Alien Minds*

Robert J. Bradbury, *Matrioshka Brains*

Additional Reading/Primary Documents

Adam Frank, W.T. Sullivan III, *A New Empirical Constraint on the Prevalence of Technological Species in the Universe*

A. Sandberg, *The Physics of Information Processing Superobjects: The Daily Life among the Jupiter Brains*

On Formally Undecidable Propositions and 'Steersmen' *'Science seeks the laws only, but Foresight requires in addition due emphasis on the relevant facts from which the future is to emerge. Of the two tasks required for Foresight, this selection amid the welter is the more difficult.'* — Alfred North Whitehead

Russell's paradox, Hilbert's Program, Gödelian Arguments, the Extended Machine Objection, Penrose, Chalmers, Weiner and first order Cybernetics, James and John Whitney, Gamow and second order Cybernetics

Charles Fort, *Every Science is a Mutilated Octopus*
Hugh Dubberly, Paul Pangaro, *Cybernetics and Counterculture*

Additional Reading/Primary Documents

Zabet Patterson, *From the Gun Controller to the Mandala - The Cybernetic Cinema of John and James Whitney*

Kurt Gödel, *On Formally Undecidable Propositions...*,

'The Inversion' and the Brud, Bad Faith Cultural Evolution *The Inversion, The Brud, The Brood, The Family; Google and Facebook AI, affective computation, the Psy Group, Black Cube*

Luciana Parisi and Tiziana Terranova, *A Matter of Affect: Digital Images and the Cybernetic Re-Wiring of Vision*
The Invisible Committee, Fuck Off, Google

2. February 4 Zero Nature — Assignifying semiotics, 'No biosphere without semiosphere'

'The pattern is the thing. What I have tried to do is to turn information theory upside down to make what the engineers call "redundancy" [coding syntax] but I call "pattern" into the primary phenomenon. . . . If a pattern is that which, when it meets another pattern, creates a third—a sexual characteristic exemplified by moiré patterns, interference fringes and so on—then it should be possible to talk about patterns in the brain whereby patterns in the sensed world can be recognized.' — Gregory Bateson

Assignifying Semiotics, Feedback, Feedforward, and punctuated equilibrium, Autopoiesis, biopower to semiopower is biosemiotics, Power Laws and Emergence

Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco Varela, from *Autopoiesis and cognition, the realization of the living*

Jesper Hoffmeyer, *From Thing to Relation, On Bateson's Bioanthropology*

S. Hsu and A. Zee, *Message in the Sky*

Desire — a field, not a force *Libido Sciendia, Very slow AI's, Alexandre Kojève and the 'desire to be desired'; the Inhuman, the replicator, and affective computation*

Bifo, *Alterity and Desire*

Lock in *'In any universe described by the Theory of Relativity, time cannot exist.'* — Kurt Gödel

Boltzmann Brains, B Theory, Minkowski's 'block universe', Gödel Universes and closed timelike loops, Bemian retrocausality, pace layers, lock in and computation, path dependency, UNIX, MIDI to blockchain, positive lock in and emergence, video feedback; Bubble to Mirage Epistemologies

Daryl J Bem, *Feeling the Future: Experimental Evidence for Anomalous Retroactive Influences on Cognition and Affect*

Additional Reading/Primary Documents

Seth Lloyd, et al., *Closed Timelike Curves via Postselection: Theory and Experimental Test of Consistency*

Outside the Light Cone — The Jokers, the Pope of the Elves *'Probability math predicts the future.' So says the half-educated man. A thousand years ago he would have mouthed "E equals MC squared" and believed he had encompassed the soaring castle of mathematical imagination . . . Probability math arises from the premise that we dwell in a truly infinite totality, space and time without limit, worlds without end - a creation so vast that what we are pleased to call our cause-and-effect datum Universe is a mere circle of candle-light. In such a totality we can only echo the words of Quixote: All things are possible . . .'* — Terry Pratchett

The Jokers' chain stars, Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory, Grothendieck universes, strongly inaccessible cardinals

Terry Pratchett, from *The Darkside of the Sun*

3. February 11 Mimic Functions *Recombinatorics from Llull, Bruno, Trithemius, and Leibniz to Turing and von Neumann, Crick and the Double Helix, CRISPR, Mimic functions, and Echosteganography, Guy de Cointet, Richard James,*

Anika Yi, and Cicada 3301

DM=XO Dellschau to Federov, and Tsiolkovsky to Goddard and Oberth to Peenemunde, Project Hermes, Ley and von Braun, White Sands to SpaceX and Oumomoa and Astrochicken

Thomas McEvelly, *C.A. Dellschau's Aporetic Archive*

Marlène Laruelle, *Totalitarian Utopia, the Occult, and Technological Modernity in Russia: The Intellectual Experience of Cosmism*

Agent Zero Alexandra David Neel to Apparatus Theory and Assemblage Theory to Agential Realism

Alexandra David Neel, from *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*

Alok Chaturvedi, *Synthetic Environment for Analysis and Simulation* slideshow

Joshua Epstein, from *Agent Zero*

February 18, No Class, President's Day

4. February 25 UFO Communism J. Posadas to Jodi Dean to Wendt and Duvall's *Sovereignty and the UFO*; the Buzludzha Monument, offworld Brutalism, SETI, and Breakthrough Listen's interpretations of the Wow Signal, Laid-Back Summity: 'Hot Tub Diplomacy', Soviets at Esalen, NYT, Bigelow Aerospace, NIDS, and AATIP

Jodi Dean, *Fugitive Alien Truth*

Wendt and Duvall, *Sovereignty and the UFO*

Additional Reading/Primary Documents

J. Posadas, *Flying Saucers, The Process Of Matter And Energy, Science And Socialism*

Beyond the Zero — Towards an Alchemy of Capital Newton, Keynes, and the Alchemy of Capital, the General Equivalent, the Universal Conveyance, Klossowski's Living Currency, Lazzarato's Subjectivation and Machinic Enslavement, AZX to blockchain, RenTec and Statistical Arbitrage; Plumbers, Dark Pools, Lit Markets; Kunst = Kapital

Mike Neary, from *Marx and the magic of money, Towards an alchemy of capital*

Maurizio Lazzarato, from *Signs and Machines, capitalism and the production of subjectivity*

Scott Patterson, from *Dark Pools, the rise of AI Trading*

Additional Reading/Primary Documents

Fabian Muniesa, *Is a stock exchange a computer solution, Explicitness, Algorithms, and the Arizona stock exchange*

Lexicon Devil — Antiepistemologies, Mindless Pleasures, and Limited Hangouts 'You saw nothing. The state secrets privilege applies even to your memories'. —Marc Ambinder, D.B. Grady.

Protagoras, *Secrecy, and Democracy*, Simmel and Weber, *Project Mockingbird*, Sakharov's UIS, Shils' *Secrecy Triangle*, Michaels' *Iron Law of Oligarchy*, Hulk Hogan, *Gawker*, Peter Thiel, and *Discourses on Livy, Contemporary Interior Epistemologies*

Scott Horton, from *Lords of Secrecy*, skim

Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy, BOOK III, CHAPTER VI: Of Conspiracies*, skim

5. March 4 Tulip Hysteria Coordinating 'Art is not chaos but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or the sensation, so that it constitutes, as Joyce says, a chaosmos, a composed chaos- neither foreseen nor preconceived. Art transforms chaotic variability into chaoid variety... Art struggles with chaos but it does so in order to render it sensory.' — Deleuze and Guattari

Locus Solus, The Wild Boys, The College de 'Pataphysique, Oulipo, Painting(s) of Dorian Gray, Laurie Parsons, White

Giraffe, *Pandaemonium of the Sun, Salvador Mundi*

Italo Calvino, *Cybernetics and Ghosts*

Bob Nickas, *Laurie Parsons, Dematerial Girl*

I Love Bees, NPCs, Qlippoth, and Demon Seeds — Ontopower and Emergent Pararealities

The spirit of nature is a hidden one; it does not manifest itself in the form of a spirit: it is only a spirit for minds that know it, and it is spirit in itself, but not for itself. — Hegel

ARGs, Non playable characters, Narrative Laundering, and Amplification; Airgaps to Mindgaps, Ontopower, 'operational logic', and Affective Computation, Stuxnet, Infinitychan, Youtube, Orphans of Sagittarius, 'Media Mirages'

Jane McGonigal, *Why I Love Bees: A Case Study in Collective Intelligence Gaming*

Tiqun, *On the Economy considered as Black Magic, skim*

A Brief PseudoHistory of Pararealities *The Globe and The New Atlantis, Andreae's Christianopolis, More's Utopia; Agartha to Shambala; New Chronologies, Jean Hardouin, Fomenko and Rohl, Illig's Phantom Time Hypothesis; The Human Potential Movement and the New Age, McKenna's Timewave; Sun Ra 171; Chans, Tubes, and Gameworlds*

Sun Ra, *Sun Ra 171 Syllabus*

6. March 11 *How to Do Things with Taste, Dissonance, Flavor, and Escape — Preface for a solo by Miles Davis*

Fred Moten, *Taste, Dissonance, Flavor, Escape, Preface for a solo by Miles Davis*

Pauli/Jung synchronicity, Zener/Zenith tests, Soviet PSI

Francois Martin and Giuliana Galli Carminati, *Synchronicity, Quantum Mechanics, and Psyche*

CIA-RDP96-00787R000100120001-9, Controlled Offensive Behavior, USSR, skim

Amphetamine Loa *Katherine Dunham, Maya Deren, Max Jacobson, Gregory Bateson, Possession and Zombie Powder; Amphetamine Matrix, Edie Sedgwick, Rod Serling, Jackie O., and JFK*

7. March 18 *Lazarus Taxon — Ancestor Cults, Ancestor Simulations, 'Special Populations'*

'Essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful' — George Box

Lazarus Taxon, Elvis taxon, et al., Nolan and Green's 'Special Populations' and Recognition Primed Decisions, Oleg Adrianov's "high integrative activity"; counterfactuals, and Beane et al's simulation universe

Dan Gusfield, from *ReCombinatorics, The Algorithmics of Ancestral Recombination Graphs, Explicit Phylogenetic Networks*

Silas R. Beane, et al., *Constraints on the Universe as a Numerical Simulation, skim*

Un Perm' au Casino Transcendental Empiricism *'... beware of mathematicians, and all those who make empty prophecies.'* — St. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim. Liber Secundus, 17, 37*

Transcendental Empiricism from Synthetic Cubism to Bergson and Deleuze; Alternate art histories, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Louise Norton, and 'Fountain', 'The Staircase', Reutersvard, Escher, and the Penroses; Marcel Duchamp, Betty Asher, Walter Hopps at the Lido de Paris, Stardust Casino, Las Vegas; Ed Fredkin, Pancomputationalism and Digital Philosophy

Betty M. Asher, from *Oral history interview, 1980 June 30 and 1980 July 7 Archives of American Art*

Daniel W. Smith, *Deleuze and the Production of the New*

Crippled Symmetry *Hysteron Proteron, Lionel and Roger Penrose and Symmetry, Cognitive/Structural Assymetry, the IC, the Deep Private, and the 'Culture Industry', Cognitive Arbitrage*

Emma L Briant, *Pentagon Ju-Jitsu - reshaping the field of propaganda*

8. March 25 *Psyop to Mindwar to Likewar* 'Strange Defeat', Bateson and 'black propaganda', Lotka-Volterra Predator-Prey Equations, *Swarm*, *InQtel*, *Weaponized FOMO*, *Sesame Credit*

P W Singer; Emerson Brooking, from *LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media*
William S. Burroughs, from *The Revised Boy Scout Manual*

***Dragon's Teeth* — SMISC, JTRIG, HSOC, SCL, CA, and the rise of Stochastic Terrorism**

Cadmus and the Spartoi, *Online HUMINT*, *Stochastic Terrorism*

Mandeep K. Dhimi, *Behavioural Science Support for JTRIG's (Joint Threat Research and Intelligence Group's) Effects and Online HUMINT Operations*

Hypocognition and Agnogenesis, Hypercognition '...there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know... it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones.'
— Donald Rumsfeld

Peter Galison, *Removing Knowledge, The Logic of Modern Censorship*

April 1, No Class, Spring Break

9. April 8 *Reputation Economics* *Sectione D*, and *Hawala*, *Sesame credit to social credit*, *kompramat*, *reputation in art*

Isabelle Graw, *Market Reflexive Gestures in Celebrity Culture*, *skim*
Samuel P. Fraiberger, Roberta Sinatra, et al., *Quantifying reputation and success in art*

Roberta Breitmore, Fundamental Fysiks, and Emergent Parapersonae

Lynn Hershman, *Roberta Breitmore, Fundamental Fysiks Group and Bell's Theorem*, , *George Sand, The Baroness Elsa*, *Claude Cahun, Unica Žurn, Hans Bellmer, Poupee; Andy Warhol, Cindy Sherman, Lil Miquela, Blawko 22, Elsagate*

Inverse Turing tests, Precrime, Prediction Regimes, and the Prison Industrial Complex *Total information awareness, PROMIS, PRISM, ECHELON, Trapwire, Gotham, et al.*

Peter Mantello, *The machine that ate bad people, The ontopolitics of the precrime assemblage*
Angela Y. Davis, *The Prison Industrial Complex*

10. April 15 *Metabolic Rift, Libidinal Parasitism, and the Thermodynamics of Desire* '...in capitalism is...the return, but unaffirmed and unrecognized, of what it rejects—libidinal intensity in the heart of neutralized exchanges.' *Lyotard*

Yves Citton, *Attentional Capitalism*
Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Queering Homophily*

Extremophiles — Culture, Labor, In Bloom 'Alienation is also the alienation of alienation itself.' — Hegel

Angela McRobbie, *The Artist as Human Capital*
Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminist Manifesto*, *skim*
Tiqqun, *from Theory of Bloom*, *skim*

Holographic Entanglement Entropy *The Ryu-Takayanagi conjecture, the Calabi-Yau manifold, Dali, Carroll, and Holographic Entanglement*

Thomas Banchoff, *The Math Connection, Dali*

Shinsei Ryu, Tadashi Takayanagi, *Aspects of Holographic Entanglement Entropy, skim*

11. April 22 Rainbow's Edge — NXIVM, 0xΩ, Quantum Cults and Simurealities 'No reasonable definition of reality could be expected to permit this'. — Albert Einstein

Grillflame, Stargate, Often, et al, SRI, SiRI, Synthetic PSI, Neuralink, and post-M.O.S.H. (Mostly Original Substrate Human) mindspace

refer back to CIA-RDP96-00787R000100120001-9, *Controlled Offensive Behavior, skim*

Brian D. Josephson and Fotini Pallikari-Viras, *Biological Utilisation of Quantum NonLocality*

David Roden, *The disconnection thesis*

12. April 29 Pataphysicians, Morning Stars 'the rule itself is the exception in a pataphysical science that rules out the rule' — Christian Bok

Andrew Hugill, *Occultation* from 'Pataphysics, A Useless Guide

Jean Baudrillard, *Pataphysics of the Year 2000*

Michael Lowy, from *Morning Star*

Funkentelechy *Form, Symbiogenesis, Pursuance*

Candice Delmas, *from A Duty to Resist, When Disobedience Should Be Uncivil, skim*

10^308 hedons — The Uses of Fun (Theory) 'Ultradense information does not give you ultradense economic value or ultradense fun unless you can also use that information in a way that consumes few resources. Otherwise it's just More Fun Than You Can Handle.' — LessWrong 2.0

Eliezer Yudkowsky, *31 Laws of Fun*

13. May 6 Back to No Future II *Archaicization, Apocalyptic winnowing, Biological displacement, Rich Biff Tannen*

Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., *Dis-Imagined Communities: Science Fiction and the Future of Nations*

The Good Life — Coherent Extrapolated Volition vs. Inadequate Equilibria *Usually when things suck, it's because they suck in a way that's a Nash equilibrium* — Eliezer Yudkowsky

J.F. Nash, *Non-Cooperative Games, skim*

Perceptrons and Chaoids '[a]ny emerging intelligent biological society which engages in the development of highly intelligent automata must resign itself to being completely dominated and controlled by automata. The only means of preventing domination by intelligent artificial automata would be to make them distinctly subnormal in intellectual capacity, when compared with the biological society, and to destroy them or clear their memories at regular intervals.' — MacGowan and Ordway (1966)

John Johnston, *Vital Cells*

J.T. Velikovsky, *The Holon Parton structure of the meme or the unit of culture*

14. May 13 Presentations