

REL 595 Religion, Art, Aesthetics: Technology  
Fall 2016  
T 3:30-6:15, HL 504

Zachary Braiterman

How do religion and technology relate one to the other, come to bear upon one another, depend upon one another? Is religion itself a form of technology? Is there an irreducible religious component part of technology? Looking past the sociology of religion and other empirical studies of religion and modern technology, our interests explore the structural ramifications of technology upon religion, religious experience and community. In this seminar we will look to the appearance of "men," machines, monsters, and animals as keys to understanding the intersection of religion with auratic aesthetics, technology, and new media. With a focus on the human and the inhuman in both religion and technology, readings extend from classical theorists of technology, including Benjamin, Heidegger, and then move on to postwar discussions of technology and technological transformation such as Haraway, Hayles, and others.

#### Course Requirements

##### Class participation

Weekly Critiques (1 page) (required, but not for credit)

Mid-term paper (5 pages)

Final paper (12-15 pages)

#### Required texts:

Benjamin, *Illuminations*

Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*

Barthes, *Camera Lucida*,

Flusser, *Into the Universe of Technical Images*

Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*

Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing*

Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*

Heschel, *The Sabbath*

Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*

Turkle, *Simulation and Its Discontents*

#### Readings

8/30 class introductions

- 9/6 selections, Plato & Aristotle  
Werner Herzog, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*
- 9/13 Heidegger, selections from *Being & Time*, "The Question of Technology" and selections from Bauhaus manifestos in COURSE READER
- 9/20 Benjamin, *Illuminations*: "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," "Some Notes on Kafka"  
Adorno, selections from *Aesthetic Theory* ("Art, Society, Aesthetics," "On the Categories of the Ugly, the Beautiful, and Technique," "Art Beauty: Apparition, Spiritualization, Intuitability," "Paralipomena")
- 9/27 Mumford, *Technics & Civilization*
- 10/4 NO CLASS: ROSH HA-SHANA  
(makeup class):  
Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* and selections from *Halakhic Man*
- 10/11 NO CLASS: YOM KIPPUR  
(makeup class):  
Flusser, *Into the Universe of Technical Image*  
Heschel, *The Sabbath*
- 10/18 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*  
Krauss, "Grid," "Index 1" and "Index 2"  
Braiterman, Religion and Photography
- 10/25 Latour, *Rejoicing* and selections from *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*
- 11/1 Hansen, *Embodiment Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing*  
*Electric Santeria: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*,  
chp.1
- 11/8 Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*;  
Mordecai Kaplan, selection from *Religion of Ethical Nationhood*
- 11/15 Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*  
Kubrick, *2001: A Space Odyssey*
- 11/29 Lev Manovich, *Language of New Media*  
selections from Jeremy Stolow (ed.) *Deus in Machina* and
- 12/6 selections, Jonas, *Imperatives of Responsibility*  
Turkle, *Simulation and Its Discontents*