Description
In this course, we will study the shifting ideas and cultural representations of computing technology and the yet unnamed Internet during the 1980s, and we will explore how the concept of "cyberpunk" in various media was informed by, and departed from, oppositional subcultures such as punk and hacker cultures. One of our main questions will be whether these cultural forms were capable of, or even interested in, offering resistance to the ongoing development of postmodernity in American social and political life. We will also investigate the extent to which the '80s was a decade marked by growing conservatism, as is often argued. The texts we will use to pursue these themes are key works of fiction, film, and music from the '80s, but we will also consider other forms of cultural production, such as television broadcasts and advertising, as well as read critical essays.

Texts
- available at the RU Bookstore, and from many other booksellers.

All other required texts provided for download via Sakai (https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal) or external links. You are required to check Sakai and to bring each day's required texts to class.

Requirements

| Grade % |
|---|---|
| Informed participation in class discussion | 10 |
| 4-pg. paper: Comparative essay on *Neuromancer* and a cyberpunk film (see attached list) due in class April 12 | 25 |
| 4-pg. paper: Analytical essay on *Max Headroom* due in class May 3 | 25 |
| Final exam May 10, 8:00-11:00 pm | 40 |

Policies
- Attendance at all classes is expected. A sign-in sheet will be distributed at each class. Because the course has a brief format, more than 2 absences--for any reason--will lower your final grade. Consistent lateness will be noticed and count for an absence.
- You must join the course Sakai site (you should be added automatically) and follow it for announcements and updates. If you would like to receive messages from Sakai at an e-mail address other than your Rutgers account, tell me what it is.
- You are responsible for completing all reading for the class meeting when the reading is due.
- Late papers lose a full letter grade. You must discuss any special circumstances with me in advance. Papers are due in class; do not send them by e-mail unless I ask you to.
- This is a course about cyberculture, but text-messaging and other kinds of electronic distractions are still inappropriate in the classroom and not permitted. Portable computers may
be used only to access course texts. Surfing the web or being otherwise disengaged from class will get you marked absent or asked to leave.

• You must abide by the university's policy on academic integrity, found at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml. Your assignments for this course will not require secondary sources (outside reading), but if you choose to do research, you must cite all sources you consult, including those found on the Internet. If you have any questions about citation--how to do it correctly, or why--or what plagiarism is, don't hesitate to ask me.

• You must complete all assignments to pass the course.

Learning goals
In this course, you will learn about several important, related movements in the arts, culture, and technologies of the late twentieth century by reading, viewing, discussing, and writing about important texts in this field. By the end of the course, you should be able to identify major figures, formal elements, and thematic preoccupations of these cultural forms, and you should be able to make an informed assessment of their significance. More broadly, you will consider the status and methods of oppositional cultural forces in the late twentieth century, and it is hoped that you will compare these to the situation of alternative cultures and movements in our world today.

Schedule (subject to minor adjustment as our course evolves)

10 Mar
Introduction: what is cyberpunk?
View: excerpt from Blade Runner (1982), dir. Scott

15 & 17 Mar
SPRING BREAK
assignment: read Neuromancer (1984) and watch (at least) one film on the attached list; e-mail me a message with 1) your major; 2) any other relevant courses taken; 3) why you are taking this course; 4) a question about Neuromancer that comes from reading the first section (pp. 1-39). I will reply with the location of resources for studying the remainder of the novel.

1. Cyberpunk fictions, lineages, and variations
22 Mar
Neuromancer

24 Mar
Neuromancer

29 Mar
31 Mar
Listen: from Warren Zevon, Transverse City (1989)

2. What's the critique of cyberpunk?: Alternative visions
05 Apr
Read: Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985), pp. 82-115

07 Apr
Read: from Kathy Acker, Empire of the Senseless (1988), pp. 33-40

3. What's "punk" about cyberpunk?: Cultures of resistance
12 Apr
Listen: punk and postpunk playlist, to be distributed
Read: Pat Cadigan, "Rock On" (1981), pp. 48-55

Paper due: Comparative essay on Neuromancer and a cyberpunk film

14 Apr
Listen: '80s indie playlist, to be distributed
Read: from Michael Azerrad, Our Band Could Be Your Life, pp. 3-60

4. What's the "cyber" in cyberpunk?: Extensions into cybercultures
19 Apr
View: Max Headroom (1985), dir. Morton and Jankel
Read: Selected contemporary reviews

21 Apr

26 Apr
Read: Andrew Ross, "Hacking Away at the Counter-Culture" (1991), pp. 254-67

28 Apr
Read: Neal Stephenson, "In the Beginning Was the Command Line" (1999)
View: "1984" (1984)--Macintosh commercial, dir. Scott

5. Conclusion: Into the Virtual Future
03 May
Read: from Jean Baudrillard, The Gulf War Did Not Take Place (1991), pp. 23-28, 61-87
View: CNN Gulf War footage (1991)

Paper due: Analytic essay on Max Headroom

10 May: Final exam, 8:00 pm
Cyberpunk-related films
Choose one of these to compare to *Neuromancer* for your first paper, due Apr. 12. Note that we might not consider all of these films to be equally "cyberpunk" in content or style, but that productive analysis can be made about all of them in connection to elements of Gibson's novel. More details on this assignment will follow.

*La Jetée* (1962), dir. Marker
*Alien* (1979), dir. Scott
*Blade Runner* (1982), dir. Scott
*Videodrome* (1983), dir. Cronenberg
*WarGames* (1983), dir. Badham
*1984* (1984), dir. Radford
*The Terminator* (1984), dir. Cameron
*Brazil* (1985), dir. Gilliam
*Robocop* (1987), dir. Verhoeven
*Akira* (1988), dir. Otomo
*Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1988), dir. Tsukamoto
*Total Recall* (1990), dir. Verhoeven
*Twelve Monkeys* (1995), dir. Gilliam