CMPM 202 W2018
Computational Media Research

Readings – 1/13

Read the assigned texts:

> Psychopolitics, Byung-Chul Han (chapters 1, 2, 9, and 10)
> Creativity Support Tools, Ben Shneiderman
> Sustaining Social Creativity, Gerhard Fischer and Elisa Giaccardi
> New Media Arts and the Future of Technologies, by Linda Candy
> Toward a Critical Technical Practice: Lessons Learned in Trying to Reform AI, Philip Agre

Attend the CM Seminar (either in person or remotely): Jesse Harder from Electronic Arts

Respond to the ideas raised in each of the texts. I've listed some questions below to guide your response. Also, make sure to identify any terms or concepts that you aren't familiar with so that we can discuss them in class.

Add your response to the Google Team Drive "CMPM 202 W2020 - Reading Responses" by creating a Google Doc titled "W1_[your name]" before Monday at 9pm. Review your classmates' responses before Tuesday's class and be prepared to discuss the articles.

Questions:

- What do you think of Ben Shneiderman's summary of different approaches to creativity? How does your own work fit (or fail to fit) into the definitions of structuralist, inspirationalist, and situationist? Do you agree that creative applications need to include exploratory search, collaboration tools, and history-tracking? Does Shneiderman's phrase "low thresholds, high-ceilings, and wide walls" address accessibility?

- What do Gerhard Fischer and Elisa Giaccardi mean by the term "meta-design"? How does social creativity ease tensions between creativity and organization?

- Linda Candy describes new media artists as "power users" of software who innovate through playful interactions, unencumbered by complexity. What do you think of her framing of new media arts? What does she mean when she refers to the social, organizational, and cultural factors that need to be harnessed for innovation to take place?

- Philip Agre describes his development of what he calls a "critical technical practice" of artificial intelligence. What does he mean by this term? What could a critical technical practice mean for your area of research? Do you have a clear outline of the "historical constitution" of your own academic practice? What unspoken assumptions or "claims about human nature" are encoded in your research area?

- On page 14 of his article, Agre describes moving from a belief in "revolutions" to a belief in "hermeneutics". What does this mean? How do "critical tools" enable new understanding of "the depths below the ordinary practices of a technical field"? Do you agree that having a joint focus on "design" and "critique" requires a researcher to maintain a "split identity"?

- Byung-Chul Han, I think it's fair to say, has a more skeptical outlook on technology compared to Shneiderman, Candy, Fischer, and Giaccardi. How do you reconcile their attitudes toward

technological innovation? Is the notion of a "neoliberal exploitation" relevant to Shneiderman's notions of creativity? To Agre's notion of critical technical practice? Are artists and researchers also entrepreneurs? Is there an inherent contradiction within research related to (as Hamming calls it) "selling"?

- Explain Han's logic when he claims that transparency promotes total conformity; when he claims that every technology "brings forth devotional objects that are employed in order to subjugate"; when he claims that our smartphones are both effective surveillance devices and "mobile confessionals"; when he claims that power can be smart, friendly, fulfilling, and permissive (rather than only inhibitive), and that people can be controlled even when (or especially when?) they believe themselves to be free? How does Han say this relates to feelings of fear, guilt, burnout, and anxiety?

- Han writes that "gamification" is related to "commercialization", and that this process is "destroying communication". How would you summarize his definition of gamification? Do you agree that there is a pernicious relationship between gamification and communication?