an ACTLab New Media course - RTF331R unique# 08305 RTF390N unique# 08765

Extreme Freestyle Hacking

http://www.actlab.utexas.edu/efh
Instructor: Sandy Stone (sandy@actlab.utexas.edu, cell: 695-6732)
Office: The ACTLab office, CMA 6.124. Office hours by appointment
Teaching Assistant: Joseph Lopez (ludwigvan968@actlab.utexas.edu) cell: 413-7832)
Class meets in the ACTLab Monday 1:00-4:00pm

Course description: Hacking can refer to radical computer programming. In political art it's called detournement ("the theft of aesthetic artifacts from their contexts and their diversion into contexts of one's own devise" (Greil Marcus)); in music and video it's mashup, remix, fantasia or variations; in sound, circuit bending; in amateur radio and telephony, phreaking. Then there's gene hacking (Eduardo Kac's rabbits that glow in the dark) and culture hacking or bricolage ("the refunctioning, by societal "outsiders," of symbols associated with the dominant culture, as in the appropriation of corporate attire and Vogue model poses by poor, gay, and largely nonwhite drag queens" (Mark Dery)).

For our purposes, a hacker is "an inventive type, someone creative and unconventional, a person who sees doors where others see walls or builds bridges that others thought were planks on which to walk into shark-filled seas. Hackers are alive with the spirit of Loki or Coyote or the Trickster, moving with stealth across boundaries, often spurning conventional ways of thinking and behaving. Hackers see deeply into the arbitrariness of structures, how form and content are assembled in subjective and often random ways and therefore how they can be defeated or subverted. They see atoms where others see a seeming solid, and they know that atoms are approximations of energies, abstractions, mathematical constructions. At the top level, they see the skull behind the grin, the unspoken or unacknowledged but shared assumptions of a fallible humanity." (From "Hacker Generations", by Richard Thieme.)

In this course we explore hacking and the modes of cultural meaning production that arise around it. We're looking for programmers, DJs, musicians, activists, artists, podcasters, and students. We'll supply readings, films, videos and other resources. You will add your own resources to the mix. There are no written exams. Instead you will use the theories and tools you acquire during the semester to **make stuff** about some aspect of hacking. What you make can be in any form. You will do this in stages, starting with simple projects and moving to more complex ones. We encourage your own interpretation and voice.

Class is in studio and discussion format. This means that your active participation is a course requirement. During the semester I expect you to contribute your own ideas and arguments to the discussions, and to be willing to take the risks such contributions imply. In ACTLab courses we assume a high level of motivation on your part and your willingness to self-start, set your own goals, think independently, collaborate with others, seek help when you need it, and take risks. Let's make it an interesting semester!

Readings and Resources: All class readings will be available on the Resource webpage, http://www.actlab.utexas.edu/efh/resources.html . Some of the resources are there for you to browse as you feel the urge. Also, remember your best resource is always your own curiosity, and Google or Cuil or Clusty are your best tools. Experiment with keywords and see what happens. When you find something interesting, share it, either in person or via the mailing list efh@actlab.utexas.edu .

Other ACTLabbies are your greatest resource. A number of people in this class have taken ACTLab New Media classes before, and understand the way we do things. (We call them repeat offenders.) They can be your best resource for how to approach and complete your projects and documentation (see the documentation requirement below).

Critical information

The following six things are *required* for you to receive a grade:

1. Attendance at all classes.
2. Reading all assignments and coming to class prepared.
3. Participation in discussion.
4. Successful completion of two mini-projects and one final project.
5. Successful completion of documentation. See **documentation requirement** below.
6. Full cleanup of the ACTLab following final presentations. Leave it the way you found it -- no better, no worse.

Grading:

Participation in discussion	25%
First mini-project	5%
Second mini-project	20%
Final project	25%
Documentation (Web site)	25%
Total	100%

Documentation requirement:

You must provide complete documentation of your work in the form of a web site. A web site consists of a home page that says something about you, and additional pages for each project as necessary.

Documentation means a description of each project, how it was made, its relationship to the readings and discussions (i.e., its theoretical grounding), your thoughts about the project, etc., together with sound recordings, video, and/or still photos of the work in progress and the completed project.

You will make the web site in four stages. Each stage consists of documentation of one of the three projects, plus a fourth stage consisting of the homepage with your bio, external links, and whatever additional information you think is relevant. Stages one and two are due in class the week following project presentations one and two. Stages three and four are due no later than 5:00 p.m. December 15.

Your web site and all its content must be on the actlab server, nowhere else. No links to your own content on other servers are allowed, although you may provide "for further information" links to other web sites. Absolutely no links to UT Webspace are allowed, because Webspace is ephemeral and will break your actlab site later.

All sound files, videos, links, etc., must work, and video and audio must stream. Videos should be in QuickTime format using Sorensen3 compression hinted for streaming.

We suggest you look at other actlab students' websites, such as http://home.actlab.utexas.edu/~samanthap02 or http://home.actlab.utexas.edu/~mckibben, to see what they did.

End of critical information

Course Schedule

September 1: Labor Day -- No Class

September 8: First class day
Purpose of course & place in curriculum (powerpoint chart), outline of the semester's work, journaling, schedule in-class reports on readings/films/guest lectures, tutorial schedule, explanation of grading, assigning accounts & passwords, readings;
Discuss readings previously assigned via the mailing list and class web site (Steven Levy: *Hackers*, Chapter 1).

September 15: In-class website building workshop (Joey & Sandy)

Criteria for webpages that will be due October 13

Reading assignments for discussion on September 22:

Guy Debord: *The Society of the Spectacle*, Chapter I (http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/debord/1.htm)

The Situationist Manifesto (http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/manifesto.html)

September 22: Guest lecture: Brandon Wiley: *Curious Yellow*

Discussion of lecture and readings

Preparation for first project presentations

September 29: First Project Presentations, Day One

October 6: First Project Presentations, Day Two

October 13: Website Stage One due by 12:00 noon

Schedule office hours to critique webpages and first project

Webpage discussion

Guest lecturer: TBA

October 20: Guest lecture: *Hacktivism* (lecturer to be announced)

Reading assignment for Burkhart lecture, TBA

October 27: Guest lecture: Patrick Burkhart, *Chrystal Methodism in Action*

Discussion of lecture and hacktivism readings

Workshop: Simple motor; basic robotics; automatic writing

Discussion of second projects

November 3: Second Project Presentations, Day One

November 10: Second Project Presentations, Day Two

November 17: Website Stage Two due by 12:00 noon
Discussion of website materials
Guest lecture: Cynbe ru Taren, *The Great Perl7 Paper: Anatomy of a Hack*
Discussion of lecture

November 24: Guest lecture: Eric Beggs, *Hyperstereo Timelapse*
Discussion & workshop on digital stereoscopic techniques
Reading assignments for discussion on November 19:
Free Radio Berkeley archives (http://www.freeradio.org/)
Free Radio Network Links (http://www.frn.net/linksfrn.php)
Free Radio Santa Cruz (http://www.freakradio.org/)

December 1: Guest lecture: Jerry Chamkis, *Bombproofing Pacifica*
The Austin Free Radio Group
Discussion & workshop: Low Power Broadcasting

Saturday, December 13, 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m.: Final Presentations

December 15, 5:00 PM: Completed Web Site due

Have a wonderful holiday break!

The Fine Print:

This syllabus is V.1.0. May be updated as necessary.

Regarding Scholastic Dishonesty: The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For more information on scholastic dishonesty, please visit the Student Judicial services Web site at http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/.

About services for students with disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

About the Undergraduate Writing Center: The Undergraduate Writing Center, located in the FAC 211, phone 471-6222, offers individualized assistance to students who want to improve their writing skills. There is no charge, and students may come in on a drop-in or appointment basis.

Warning: As part of the normal process of teaching and/or discussing media and narrative, this class may contain explicit descriptions of, or may advocate simulations of, one or more of the following: Nudity, satanism, suicide, sodomy, incest, bestiality, sadomasochism, adultery, murder, morbid violence, paedophilia, bad grammar, deviate sexual conduct in a violent context, the use of illegal drugs or alcohol, or offensive behavior. But then again, it may not. Should your sensibilities be offended at any time, you are free to leave the classroom without penalty provided that you notify either the instructor or teaching assistant when you do so.

Fragile: Do not bend, fold, spindle or mutilate. May be hazardous to your health. Not recommended for children. Do not purchase if seal has been tampered with. Not responsible for direct, indirect, incidental or consequential damages resulting from any defect, error or failure to perform. May be too intense for some viewers. Batteries not included. For recreational use. An equal opportunity employer. Some settling of contents may occur during shipping. Use only as directed. No other warranty expressed or implied. No postage necessary if mailed in the United States. Substantial penalty for early withdrawal. Slightly higher in California. Keep away from fire or flame. Any rebroadcast, reproduction, or other use of this game without the express written consent of Major League Baseball is prohibited. Please keep your hands and arms inside the car while ride is in motion. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Contestants have been briefed before the show. Do not write below this line.