

Research Seminar of the Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research

Winter Semester 2019/20 | Linzer Str. 4 | R. 60070 | 28359 Bremen | www.zemki.uni-bremen.de



23.10.2019, 12:00-14:00



Simone Natale
Loughborough University, UK

Machines of Deception: Social Life after the Turing Test

Since its inception in the 1950s, the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been nurtured by the dream – cherished by some scientists while dismissed as unrealistic by others – that it will lead to forms of consciousness similar or alternative to human life. Yet, AI might be more accurately described as a range of technologies providing a convincing illusion of intelligence – in other words, not much the creation of intelligent beings, but rather of technologies that are perceived by humans as such. Drawing from the history of AI from the Turing Test to contemporary AI assistants such as Amazon's Alexa, the talk will argue that AI resides also and perhaps especially in the perception of human users. Taking up this point of view helps realize how our tendency to project humanity and intelligence into things makes AI potentially disruptive for social relationship and everyday life in contemporary societies.



30.10.2019, 12:00-14:00



Samuel Van Ransbeeck
University of Manchester, UK

Sonification as a Tool for Public Engagement: Sound as an Essential Component of Data-Driven Storytelling

The 21-century is the century of data: We are identified by our data stream: the data we consume and the data we share. This results in a plethora of datasets that have one thing in common: they are numbers stored on servers, with a large potential for further analysis and usage. To exploit that potential, and turn the data into knowledge, we need to find new ways of interpreting and understanding them. One way to interpret data is sonification: using non-speech audio to represent data. In this seminar I will argue why sonification can be an excellent tool for data-driven storytelling and how it can be used to create awareness, foster public engagement, and in the long run, instigate policy change.



6.11.2019, 12:00-14:00



Peter Lunt
University of Leicester, UK

The Performance of Power and Citizenship: David Cameron Meets the People

How do citizens respond to and engage the performance of political power in the context of mainstream media? Through an analysis of two television programmes aired during the UK Brexit referendum campaign of 2016 a picture emerges of citizenship as the performative disruption of the performance of power. In the programmes the then UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, met members of the public for a mediated discussion of key issues in the Brexit referendum. Their interactions are analysed here as a confrontation between the performance of citizenship and power reflecting activist modalities of disruptive citizenship played out in the television studio. The article ends with reflections on questions about political agency as individualistic forms of disruptive political autonomy.



12.11.2019, 12:00-14:00



Ghislain Thibault
Université de Montréal, Canada

To Drop, To Shoot, To Scroll: Aerial Media Logics and the Colonization of the Sky

Drawing from case studies within the history of aerial media, this talk addresses the media logics of communicating from, onto and through the air. Indeed, many attempts in the past century have been made towards turning the sky into a medium of mass communication: searchlights have been experimented with to project onto clouds; planes have been used to drop propaganda leaflets and haul advertisements banners; and blimps and drones have sailed over cities to disseminate signs. Through such examples, I will explore the production of discourses and knowledge about the arts and science of operating media in the sky. In particular, I will develop the concepts of dropping, shooting and scrolling as the media logics of aerial communication while also addressing the transition of so-called "natural" spaces into mediascapes.



20.11.2019, 12:00-14:00

Natalie Fenton
Goldsmiths College, UK
Media, Civil Society and the Commons: Resources of Hope and Resistance

Inequality and instability, discrimination and disillusion are rampant across much of the world and environmental disaster lurches ever closer. Public life has been hollowed out – increasingly administered by private companies and in thrall to a blinkered market logic – while the dream of a digital nirvana appears to have turned into a cesspit of corporate blandness and global bickering. All areas of mediated activity seem captured by market logic and competition through ever-more commercialization, privatization and restructuring that has led to a growing loss of authority and legitimacy in the media in general. This paper will outline the new citizens' and solidarity economies that are ethnographically emergent around the globe and translate them into new possibilities for media justice. It outlines the normative criteria for evaluating emancipatory possibilities, suggests what a politics of hope might look like and how the media can and must be part of it.



27.11.2019, 12:00-14:00



Jens Pohlmann
German Historical Institute, Washington D.C., USA

Hate Speech, Free Speech, and the NetzDG – Analyzing the Discourse on IT-Blogs

Following the assumption that the IT-blog sphere represents an avant-garde of technologically and socially interested experts, Jens Pohlmann presents (on the basis of his joined work with Adrien Barbaresi) a research platform to observe its input on the public discussion of matters situated at the intersection of technology and society. They examine digital text corpora compiled from German and US tech blogs to identify influential stakeholders in this subfield, their communication strategies, and the arguments they bring forward. What are the challenges these players detect with regards to the impact of digital technologies on democracy and to what extent do they differ from those recognized on the other side of the Atlantic? The first examination of these corpora focuses on the discussion of the German Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) and illustrates the diverging cultures concerning freedom of expression in Germany and the USA.



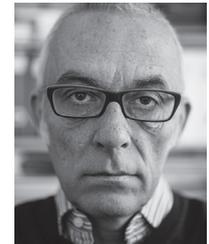
11.12.2019, 12:00-14:00



Usha Raman
University of Hyderabad, India

Reclaiming Patient Narratives in the Age of Data: Subjectivity and Identity in the Datafied Clinics

How do we constitute and understand the self when conversations in the clinic are mediated by layers of data of various kinds? What is the manner in which subjective experience can gain meaning in the face of an "objective" stream of data that objectifies and distances the patient from the attending health care professional? What communicates and how, in such a context? What sorts of vocabularies and understandings do individuals need to garner in order to communicate a sense of self – the deeply felt and possibly data resistant experiences – that must be read in alignment with this data layer? The talk will examine these questions, informed by a set of in-depth interviews with participants who reflect on the process of abstraction-by-data and their clinical experiences.



18.12.2019, 12:00-14:00

Vräath Öhner
Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Digital History (LBIDH), Austria

Filmwissenschaft im verteilten Archiv

Zu den für die Filmwissenschaft vielversprechenden Folgen der digitalen Transformation „traditioneller“ Archive gehört der Umstand, dass einige europäische Filmarchive gegenwärtig dazu übergehen, den urheberrechtlich unbedenklichen Teil ihrer Bestände online zugänglich zu machen. Weil diese Bestände in erster Linie ephemeres Filmmaterial enthalten, das nicht gerade zu den klassischen Gegenständen der Filmwissenschaft zählt (frühe kinematographische Ansichten und Aktualitäten, Wochenschaubeträge, Auftrags-, Industrie- und Lehrfilme sowie Amateurfilme), ist die Filmwissenschaft sowohl mit einem weitläufigen neuen Forschungsfeld als auch mit neuen Herausforderungen konfrontiert: Wie mit diesem Material umgehen, das sich aus einer ganzen Reihe von Gründen den etablierten Analyseverfahren der Filmwissenschaft hartnäckig zu entziehen scheint? Der Vorschlag am Beispiel der Onlineplattform I-Media-Cities (imediaticities.eu) greift auf eine alte Praxis der Orientierung in unbekanntem Gelände zurück: auf die kulturelle und räumliche Kartographie des ephemeren Materials.