SSNET VISITING SPEAKERS: 2008-2009

The SSNet hosted several exciting visitors in 2008-2009. All of their presentations are available through the Podcasts link in the SNet 2008-09 Archive. Here is a brief summary of their contributions

Fall Speaker - EUGENE THACKER

Literature, Communication, and Culture, Georgia Institute of Technology
November 24, 2008

After Life

"The human being is a conclusion. . . ." Nietzsche's words resonate today, as a whole host of phenomena—from global pandemics to climate change—reveal themselves to be complex events operating at once above and below the scale of the human being. Significantly, there is often a tentative claim for life when describing such phenomena. Has the age old question, "What is life?," returned in our posthuman, post-singularity era? Drawing upon the examples of networks (a technical model), swarms (a biological model), and multitudes (the political model), this lecture explores the philosophical problematic at the center of each: a rethinking of the concept of life that is neither reducible to biology nor sublimated within theology. This problematic is, arguably, first formalized in a classical context in which the contours and limitations of any ontology of life today can be found in Aristotle's De Anima.

Eugene Thacker is Associate Professor in the School of Literature, Communication, and Culture at the Georgia Institute of Technology. His publications include *The Global Genome: Biotechnology, Politics, and Culture* (2005) and *Biomedia* (2004). He also edited *HardCode: Narrating the Network Society*. Thacker most recently co-authored *The Exploit* (2007, with Alexander Galloway) on the implications of the ontology of networks for political theory and is currently writing a book on the poetics of biopolitics.

Winter Speaker - KELLY MOORE

Sociology, University of Cincinnati
February 9-10, 2009

Disrupting Science: Social Movements, American Scientists, and the Politics of the Military, 1945-1975

In the decades following World War II, American scientists were celebrated for their contributions to social and technological progress. They were also widely criticized for their increasingly close ties to military and governmental power--not only by outside activists but from among the ranks of scientists themselves. *Disrupting Science* tells the story of how scientists formed new protest organizations that democratized science and made its pursuit more transparent. The book explores how scientists weakened their own authority even as they invented new forms of political action.

Drawing extensively from archival sources and in-depth interviews, Kelly Moore examines the features of American science that made it an attractive target for protesters in the early cold war and Vietnam eras, including scientists' work in military research and activities perceived as environmentally harmful. She describes the intellectual traditions that protesters drew from--liberalism, moral individualism, and the New Left--and traces the rise and influence of scientist-led protest organizations such as Science for the People and the Union of Concerned Scientists. Moore shows how scientist protest activities disrupted basic assumptions about science and the ways scientific knowledge should be produced, and recast scientists' relationships to political and military institutions.

Disrupting Science illuminates how scientific claims paradoxically remain important tools in public political debates, despite the weakened authority of scientists as political actors.

Kelly Moore is a sociologist whose primary interest is understanding "how governments and social movements shape knowledge production and distribution," Moore has recently published *Disrupting Science: Social Movements, American Scientists, and the Politics of the Military*, 1945-1975 (Princeton 2008). She gave a public lecture on this new book on Feb. 10th, and discussed her new work on "the politics of nutrition" with the SSNet seminar on Feb. 9th.

Spring Speaker – KAVITA PHILIP

Women's Studies, UC-Irvine
May 12-13, 2009

Technological Subjects

Emerging forms of postcolonial subjectivity and citizenship are being forged through technological modes of knowledge-production. Sharing and re-distributional practices (legal, illegal, and in-between) shape the margins of this discourse, and seek, within a fractured field of contestation, to define a future commons. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri predicted that "the commons is the incarnation, the production, and the liberation of the multitude."The corollary discourse is widespread, too: a disparate range of voices today (in the contexts of medicine, biology, and software technologies, for example) express shock at the growth of the Intellectual Property Rights industry. Many analyses seek "qualities" or "logics" or characteristics of particular sciences that supposedly facilitate, oppose, or dictate forms of property. Instead, this paper asks if we might investigate the ways in which notions of technoscience, the economy, and the human, constitute each other, and emerge contingently yet coevally.

Kavita Philip is author of *Civilizing Natures* (2003 and 2004), and co-editor of the volumes *Constructing Human Rights in the Age of Globalization* (with Monshipouri, Englehart, and Nathan, 2003), *Multiple Contentions* (with Skotnes, 2003), *Homeland Securities* (with Reilly and Serlin, 2005), and *Tactical Biopolitics* (with da Costa, 2008). Her research interests are in transnational histories of science and technology; feminist technocultures; gender, race, globalization and postcolonialism; environmental history; and new media theory. Her work in progress includes a monograph entitled *Proper Knowledge*, and a co-authored book with Terry Harpold entitled *Going Native: Cyberculture and Postcolonialism*. Kavita Philip's research interests are in technology in the developing world; transnational histories of science and technology; gender, race, globalization and postcolonialism; environmental history; and new media theory. She gave a public lecture on the topic of "Technological Subjects."