



## Conditions for credit

13 October 2009

Whether you want to take this course for credit or not, you are equally welcome. Our joint effort should be to take a lot out of the four months we are going to spend together. Each one of us will have changed and become a different person, in some respect, when we enter February 2010. I promise, I will try hard to make these four months enjoyable, interesting, and surprising to you: in one word, rewarding. My attempt will be that you do not regret your own effort. Without it, we don't get anywhere. Your efforts should always be directed towards your learning progress, your insight, your understanding.

If you only want to come and join us, please do so and participate actively, nevertheless. I like students who decide to take a course for their intellectual advances and enjoyment. They are usually the most open.

But, of course, if you want or need to take the course for credit, you are also a citizen first class. In order to actually collect your six points of credit, you must, however, satisfy certain conditions. I describe them in the following lines. Just to remind you of the structure of our system: if you do what you read here, you get the six credit points. Quantity. Your mark is a different measure. Quality.

In order to collect, from this course, six points of credit, you must work for 180 hours and finish your work before March 31, 2010. You must spend this time on the following individual tasks and contributions:

- (1) you will be invited to generate your personal *portfolio* on „*the machine turned medium through art*“. You will be researching and experimenting during the term. Whatever you generate during this time, you should consider to include in the portfolio. Forms of such contributions can be your programs and their results, series of systematic experiments, texts, essays, quotes, sketches, images, sounds – whatever you like. Needless to say that digital media are particularly welcome. The condition is that you should always focus on the topic: the computer in transformation from machine to media, and the particular role that art plays in that transformation. You should express in an aesthetic way the findings of your research. Your portfolio should satisfy standards of aesthetic design.
- (2) to support your portfolio work, you will be required to work on a *research topic*, write an essay about your findings (five pages), and give a short presentation of your conclusions (fifteen minutes). Please, find below a list of suggested topics. The essay should satisfy standards of scientific writing (more on this below). The presentation should satisfy standards of performing in front of an audience (see below).
- (3) clearly, you are asked to participate in all our meetings as an *active member* of the group.

We all know from our experience that much of this will become clear as our working process unfolds.

### **A note on „scientific writing“**

Your writing is scientific if it is good writing with one extra condition. Each part and statement must be justified or justifiable. You must connect what you say to what others have said. You must put your reader into a position where he or she can follow up each and every of your claims. Whenever needed and possible, you should give a reference to a previous publication, and those sources must be unambiguously identified.

It is not a sin, if you appear in your text as the author („I“, „my“). You should not use first person singular terribly often, but you can do so. It is not a sin to speculate. But when you do so, use appropriate formulations. „In this case, I think (guess, believe, maintain, claim, conjecture, ...) the following ...“. Never use a factual formulation for which you do not have an explicit source.

Levels of justifying claims and statements are: mathematical proof, empirical result, technical construction, aesthetic decision, interpretation of a questionnaire, statistical evidence, case study, reference to an author (book, journal, news-paper, web site – the last one is the last resource only).

In a scientific text, questions, hypotheses, method, statements, justifications should be clearly discernible.

Images, diagrams, tables, figures, quotes must be accompanied by the exact source, if they are not your own product. The source must include the page number (the smallest unit).

### **A note on presentation**

The oral presentation of the results of work you have done is a different medium than a written text or a web-site. As a special medium, it follows different rules and aesthetics.

Try to be as clear, outspoken, concentrated, focussed as possible.

Be aware of the time span granted to you. Nowadays, you hardly ever do a presentation without projections from your computer. Their design, therefore, is crucial. So is their number. Usually, allow for at least two minutes or three for each slide. A 15-minute presentation would then have 5 or 6 slides only.

Always address the audience. Never talk to the wall.

Use longer passages of text only as an exception: when you want everyone to see this entire quote (very good: distribute it on paper).

Make very clear what your statement, issue, question, problem is. Use repetitions. Don't speak fast. Use pauses as a great aesthetic element.

Decide on a general form: where to locate your main message? Right at the beginning for maximal emphasis and surprise? Gradually building up tension with the message in the end (must have very good control of time)? Moving towards the message a little before or after half of the time, justifying it first, applying it second.

### **A list of topics for your research**

All our effort will be geared towards developing an understanding of questions like: What is the difference of machine and medium? How can the computer be considered to be both? What is computability? How is computability related to interactivity? What is computer art, historically and systematically? What are some typical examples of algorithmic art, conceptual art, op art, video art, software art, net art, ...? What distinguishes digital media from others?

Our methods will be experiment and search in combination. What you find, read, and discuss, should lead to the formulation of one, two, or three statements. These statements will stand out as the condensed form of your research. You will use those statements as the starting point for the design of a digital medium.

So you will use the computer as the instrument and means to express, in an aesthetic form, your statement about the transgression of machine into media through art.

Here is a list of topics that may help to discuss and answer those and related questions. You are supposed to select one of the topics as your research issue. During the course, you will work in such a way, that you collect more and more material, publications, statements, etc. about your topic. You will write an essay about this and present it orally in class.

*Issues of computability and interactivity*

How is computability defined? Where does the computer's name come from? How did the use of computers change between 1945, 1975, and 2005? How do people today understand „interactivity“ and „interaction“? Is interaction more than algorithms?

*Issues of the art of the 20th century*

We should discuss some prominent art movements of the century under the following questions: What are characteristics of the movement? Who were first and prominent agents of it? What are three important works? Did the movement generate anything that, in hindsight, may be viewed as one of the pre-conditions of computer art?

Such movements should be: futurism, dadaism, conceptual art, minimal art, video art.

Also of interest are the differences between algorithmic art, interactive art, software art, and net art.

*Issues of media and digital media*

Some studies should be done on a selection of positions (and texts) of media theorists. Their positions should be characterized in respect to our over-arching question. We should ask, how does this author's position on media relate to the computer, explicitly or implicitly? What do we conclude from this for a characterization of the computer as a digital medium?

Such authors should be: Marshall McLuhan, Ivan E. Sutherland (not a media theorist), Guy Debord, Ted Nelson, Friedrich Kittler, Jay David Bolter, Alan Kay.

You will certainly realize that these are still indications only. You still have some freedom in defining exactly what your research topic should be. You should, however, in doing so not deviate into a totally different area. I want to have a good mixture from the three blocks.

I want to get announcements and preliminary definitions of your topics on Tuesday, 20 October. Within the three weeks after, we will discuss the entire collection several times.