English 5380: Rhetoric of the Future **Dr. Timothy Richardson**
Office Hours: TTH 11am-12:30pm @ 424 Carlisle Hall http://blog.uta.edu/~timothyr/

Rhetoric of the Future

Charles F. Kettering, in perhaps the greatest display of deliberative rhetoric ever, famously argued, "We should all be concerned about the future because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there."

Rhetoric of the Future considers some of the ways we talk about the future, how we argue for and describe it, in order to better understand what sorts of arguments are successful and what "successful" means. Taking seriously William Gibson's claim that "the future is already here — it's just not very evenly distributed," we are most interested in how the future is figured and what we can learn of the motivations and assumptions behind those descriptions.

Readings will be various and may include work from rhetorical theory, design and human/computer interface theory, literature, design fiction, and new futurism. All coursework will be born-digital — it's the future — but no prior knowledge or ability in specific computer applications is required. Class will be divided between seminar discussions and studio work and will consist of both solitary and collaborative projects, including several presentations.

Required Accounts:

a Scalar account
a Tumblr page devoted to this course

Recommended Accounts:

Evernote, Pocket, Dropbox, anything else you could use to save, share, and annotate the web; share your methods

Reading List:

Paper Books:

- *Shaping Things* — by Bruce Sterling
- *Doktor Sleepless Volume 1: Engines of Desire* — by Warren Ellis
- *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* — by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby
- *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* — by Ian Bogost

Projects:

Critical Tumblr-ing

Mostly, people post stuff on Tumblr because they like that stuff. Often, the page has a focus to start with. Sometimes, these posts start to create a context or focus outside of what the blogger intended. Use your course Tumblr account to gather anything course-topical that you find interesting and follow others in the course, too. It's a different, public way of taking notes and keeping track of inspiration. See what happens. Also, do the below for a grade.

Make a minimum of one course post a week (title it COURSE POST #: SOME SNAPPY TITLE HERE) with the following criteria. Each of these posts must consist of a minimum of

1. two images
2. either a link or a quote relating to or commenting on the image(s)
3. a text box in which you make clear the connection(s) to the course readings and/or "the future" as we're discussing it.

Your post may be in response to someone elses post, but you cannot repost someone else's image who is in the class. We'll have a master list so that we can all follow each other.

We will discuss some of the most engaging or thought-provoking of these Course Posts as a group.

Speculative Archaeology - Kickstarter

(lifted from really specific, detailed ideas by Anthony Collamati with much thanks)

Find a Kickstarter project that hasn't closed yet and that you find particularly engaging, promising, whatever. Be prepared to present it to the class and make an argument for what's special and deserving of attention therein (in 5-10 minutes)

After these presentations, you'll be placed into (random) groups of three and will choose ONE of these Kickstarter projects to use for the assignments below.

1. in conjunction with **the Present Future**

Pull together the information the pitch gives you. What need or desire is the project addressing? What do the different levels tell you of the organizers' expectations of audience? What do the actual numbers of backers at each level tell you? Do you think it will be funded? Why or why not? Write this up as a report to be presented to the rest of the class (with slides, etc.).

2. in conjunction with **the Historical Future**

Trace an incremental, speculative history for it. In 6 steps, extending 300 years back (so, from 1714 or so), trace the evolution of the technologies or innovations that made the proposed project possible. Make charts, timelines, reenactments, whatever. Make it historical.

3. in conjunction with **The Future**

Now, speculate on 3 future steps about advancements that will transform the prototype in the next 20 years. The final project should take the form of a design fiction (as generally understood) and may take a variety of forms: prototypes and sketches, a fake Kickstarter page, print advertising series, "serious academic article," product video, etc. You should append/include detailed rationalizations/evidence to support your project with works cited.

Scalar Book:

Find some vigorous, ongoing discussion about the near future that focuses on a field or issue you're interested in. This could be environmental reclamation, the future of the book, ubiquitous computing, whatever sparks your imagination and interest. Collect as much information, as many discussions and arguments, as many images and studies, as you can. Try to organize these in various interesting ways. Take most of the semester to do this, but keep engaged. Eventually, do this in Scalar more formally, in 5-10 "pages." These will be your individual contributions to our course "book."

Near the end of the semester, you will present you media-rich, intensely-written pages to the class. As a class, we will tag pages and objects, map paths through and among our pages, and decide on what forms we think best matches what we want to say right now.

This is your and our final project.

Grades:

10 points	Kickstarter Pitch
30 points	Critical Tumblr
20 points	Kickstarter #1
20 points	Kickstarter #2
20 points	Kickstarter #3
30 points	Scalar Pages
20 points	Attendance (5 points off per absence)

150 points, so

135-150 points = A
120-134 points = B
105-119 points = C
90-104 points = D

Policies: I will not accept late assignments unless you have made arrangements with me in advance. In case of illness or emergency, please contact me as soon as possible. Failure to have an assignment in class when it is due will count as an absence.

Student e-mails will be addressed only during scheduled office hours.

Americans With Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 - The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of federal legislation entitled *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability. Also, you may visit the Office for Students with Disabilities in room 102 of University Hall or call them at (817) 272-3364.

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (http://wweb.uta.edu/aao/fao/).

Academic Integrity: Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code)

will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

Student Support Services Available: : UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at www.uta.edu/resources.

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit http://www.uta.edu/sfs.

Emergency Exit Procedures: Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals

NOTE: This is a general plan for our classroom discussions and assignments. Due dates and assignments are subject to change with notice from the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Jan 13	Course Introduction
Jan 20	**Initial Readings:** Writing Future Rhetoric — G. L. Ercolini and Pat J. Gehrke The hitchhiker's guide to ubicomp — Mark Blythe Forgetting to be (Post)Human: Media and Memory in a Kairotic Age —

	Collin Gifford Brooke *Alien Phenomenology* (Ch 1, 4, & 5) — Ian Bogost
Jan 27	Kickstarter Pitches **the Present Future** *Shaping Things* — by Bruce Sterling Interactions: 20130708-City Spaces & Spaces for Design — Rogério de Paula
Feb 3	It's not a bug, it's a feature: the rise of glitch art — Grace Wong booktwo.org — James Bridle • Land Art for the Internet • Impersonating the Machine • No Dads, No Filters • Starbooks and the Death of the Work • Everything wants to be digital • Network criticism • Network Realism: William Gibson and new forms of Fiction • The New Aesthetic and its Politics The New Aesthetic (Tumblr) Presentations and workshops
Feb 10	Kickstarter Achaeology #1
Feb 17	**the Historical Future:** *Doktor Sleepless Volume 1: Engines of Desire* — by Warren Ellis You Will Never Own a Jetpack — Steven Shapiro *What Technology Wants* (Ch 1) — by Kevin Kelly Interactions: 20130708-History of the Future — Aaron Marcus Presentations and workshops
Feb 24	Weird Britain in Exile — Jamie Sexton The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology — Mark Fisher how to think about the future: hauntology — Charles Beckett Hauntologists mine the past for music's future — Mark Pilkington Scarfolk Council booktwo.org — James Bridle • Hauntological Futures • Starpunk Presentations and workshops
March 3	Kickstarter Achaeology #2
March 10	SPRING BREAK
March 17	**The Future:** *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* — Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby The Poetics of Design Fiction — Thomas Markussen & Eva Knutz GUEST INFORMANT: Rachel Armstrong, on Where The Future Went Presentations and workshops

March 24	*What Technology Wants* (Ch13 & 14) — by Kevin Kelly Three Reasons Why Your Predictions of the Future Will Be Wrong, Humanity Plus Talk, "Bad Futurism" — Jamais Cascio Presentations and workshops
March 31	booktwo.org — James Bridle • Stop Lying About What You Do • An Elixir of Reminding • The House of Wisdom • #wikileakspaper • The Author of Everything A Brief Rant on the Future of Interaction Design Bret Victor Complete Update of All Exponential Technologies & Singularity cases and its Implications — Yuri Geest Hyper-Reality: A New Vision of the Future — Keiichi Matsuda ICA Talk 15th June 2013 (James Bridle - The Rendered World) 'The Optimist': how Disney Imagineering is bringing alternate reality games to the mainstream — Bryan Bishop Presentations and workshops
April 7	Kickstarter Achaeology #3
April 14	Course Book presentations & workshops
April 21	Course Book presentations & workshops
April 28	Course Book presentations & workshops