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## 2008 Spring Humanities Symposium: Eyes Wide Open: Engaging Technology with our Humanity

Messiah College

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## 2008 SPRING HUMANITIES SYMPOSIUM

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### Eyes Wide Open: Engaging Technology with our Humanity

We live in an era seemingly dominated by the power of modern science and its associated technologies. This has been both a cause for celebration and anxiety because all the material benefits of modern science and technology have been invariably accompanied with angst and uncertainty about how this affects our experience of being human. Scientific understandings of the world and modern technological advances (in communication, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, stem cell research, nanotechnology, etc.) are transforming human life, raising new questions about what it means to be human, how we communicate with one another, relate to our environments, form communities, and remain persons of faith. Do these developments empower us or deny us our agency? Are humans increasingly becoming cyborgs—living beings who seamlessly integrate with machines? How we respond to these trends and questions will no doubt shape our worlds for generations to come.

The 2008 Spring Humanities Symposium provides an opportunity for the Messiah College community to explore the many aspects of technology and humanity. The Executive Committee for the Center for Public Humanities has planned this symposium with the hope that it will generate public dialogue that contributes to our common life together and to our understanding of the wider world.

#### Schedule

Monday, February 25	
3:45-4:30 p.m.	<p><b>OPENING RECEPTION.</b> <i>Howe Atrium, Boyer Hall</i> Welcome and Opening Remarks, Dr. Bernardo A. Michael, Director, Center for Public Humanities ( 4:20)</p> <p><b>INTERACTIVE DISPLAY (DAILY).</b> <i>Boyer Hall Alcove</i> The Hermeneutics of St. John, Professor Reid Perkins-Buzo (Communication) Using John 11:1-16—a sacred text containing the basis for much of traditional Christianity—the installation enacts it as a <i>domum hominibus ex Deo</i>, but always, already, involved with human interpretation and technology. By creating multiple audio-visual layers, the ancient technology of text is diffracted through the newer technology of interactive multimedia, recasting the traditional hermeneutic circle as a synesthetic presence. The inescapable act of interpretation becomes an audio-visual experience through the viewer's involvement in the synesthetic encounter of the human-machine shared performance—profoundly engaging technology with our humanity.</p>
4:30-6:00 p.m.	<p><b>STUDENT COLLOQUIA, Boyer Hall 131</b></p> <p><b>What Are People For?</b> Wendell Berry's Critique of Technological 'Progress', Kimberly MacVaugh, (Politics) Wendell Berry, an award-winning novelist, poet, and social critic, criticizes our society's modern reliance on technology and the Western belief that science and industrial progress will solve all the world's problems. He is considered a prophetic voice in America, and he calls for us to recognize and return to our agricultural, small community roots where we are aware of ourselves, our neighbors, and our environment.</p> <p><b>Of Kings, Cattle, and Kukhonta:</b> The Struggle to Balance Globalization, Technology, and Traditional Land Tenure in Swaziland, Amanda McMillan (Senior Honors Thesis, Politics) As the forces of globalization, modernization, and democratization mark indelible paths across the globe, African agrarian societies struggle to balance the wave of modernity with traditional governments and land tenure systems. The small agrarian country of Swaziland provides premiere opportunities for a case study of political readjustments to globalization as illustrated by shifting values regarding land tenure. Drawing upon secondary literature and eleven interviews with Swazi nations, this paper will explore the impact of the interrelated forces of globalization and democratization on traditional Swazi values.</p>
7:00-8:30 p.m.	<p><b>SYMPOSIUM FACULTY LECTURE SERIES, Boyer Hall 131</b></p> <p>Technology, Human Welfare and the Issue of Global Warming, Dr. Caleb Miller (Philosophy)</p> <p>The harnessing of fossil fuels is itself both a technological achievement and the instrument of further technological development, both of which have dramatically influenced human lives and communities. This raises the question of technological and scientific hubris or overreach. On the one hand, it is argued that technological development is causing a human catastrophe that its developers did not anticipate. On the other hand, the presenter will argue that the theories of global warming and political cause lack humility about the ability of human scientists to understand, predict and manage the extremely complex forces of nature. Both of these arguments are rooted in concerns about the degree to which the technological mastery of human life and nature are possible or desirable.</p> <p>The Big Picture: Divine Providence, Technology, and the Future, Dr. Robin Collins (Philosophy)</p> <p>The first half will present evidence that just as the universe is fine-tuned for the existence of intelligent life, it is also intricately adjusted so that such life could develop technology, that is, if the laws of nature were not precisely set, advanced technology would be impossible. Thus technology appears to be directly part of God's providential purpose for humans. The second half of the paper will explore possible implications of this claim, particularly concerning the future of the human race. It will engage a variety of theological positions along with views o the philosophy of human and cosmic history, from more apocalyptic thinkers such as cultural theorist Rene Girard to evolutionary optimists such as Teilhard de Chardin.</p>
9:00 p.m.	<p><b>FILM, Boyer Hall 137 - Parmer Cinema</b></p> <p>Peace through PayPal? KIVA Microloans, Dr. Sheila Rodriguez (Modern Languages), Technology, Social and Economic Justice.</p> <p>KIVA, which means unity in Swahili, is a San Francisco-based organization providing loans that change lives. KIVA models positive, creative use of technology to encourage social justice. Through pictures and information posted on its website, KIVA is able to match small business owners in countries like Uganda with lenders far away. KIVA's use of technology makes possible human connections that would not have been possible otherwise. KIVA microloans help combat hunger and helplessness, giving a fresh start to families while enhancing self-esteem and independence.</p>
Tuesday, February 26	
9:45-10:30 a.m.	<p><b>COMMON CHAPEL, Brubaker Auditorium</b></p> <p>"Spirit Wide Open: Engaging Faith with our Technology," Dr. Brian Smith (College Ministries)</p>
>4:00-5:30 p.m.	<p><b>FACULTY-STUDENT COLLOQUIA, Boyer Hall 131</b></p> <p>Opening Eyes through Communication Technology: Enhancing Humanity through Two-Way Public Relationships, Professor Hance McCowen (Communication) and students Ashley Cole, Lindsay Hench, Elizabeth Long, Emily Myers, Adam Northam, Hannah Perry, Stephanie Rajchel, Jen Ward</p> <p>Students from COMM 426 will present a synopsis of their semester's work, demonstrating how technology assists in applying communication to open eyes and bridge gaps between various segments of humanity. In particular, several aspects of their proposed campaign will use technology in behind-the-scenes as well as public ways. The presentation will be followed by a discussion on applied humanities, organization-public, relationships, technology, and the role of communication management in transforming lives.</p> <p>Popular Culture in the Land of the Czars: Media Hermeneutics and the Russian College Student, Jared LawPenrose (Communication)</p> <p>Russia's youth struggle between being Russian at the same time as they engage American popular culture as related through the media. Based on research conducted in Nizhny Novgorod, this paper charts the struggles of Russian students to create their own unique identity. This presentation will conclude with a discussion of the concept of media stewardship.</p>
7:00-8:30 p.m.	<p><b>SYMPOSIUM FACULTY LECTURE SERIES, Boyer Hall 131</b></p> <p>Embryonic Stem Cells and Therapeutic Cloning: Current Technology and Ethical Considerations, Dr. Barbara Ressler (Engineering)</p> <p>The use of embryonic stem cells for treatment of human diseases has received much attention in the popular press without careful dissemination of the facts behind the technology. Questions such as how are stem cells created, what can we do with them now, and what are we trying to do with them, will be addressed. The ethical considerations of stem cell technology are numerous. The goal of this presentation is to provide technical information that will help us guide our ethical discussions of this important "hot button" technology.</p> <p>God is God and We are Not: Technology and Identity in the Age of Information, Dr. John Bechtold (Psychology)</p> <p>What is our relationship to technology? How might technology serve to change how we see ourselves in a culture that is saturated with high tech gadgets and instant information. This presentation will suggest that the technologies we use alter the way we see ourselves in that they may empower us to see ourselves consistent with traditional attributes of God, His omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. Our brush with deity through technology can make us less human rather than more human and humans need to find ways to safeguard themselves against that.</p>
9:00 p.m.	<p><b>FILM-DISCUSSION, Boyer Hall 137 - Parmer Cinema</b></p> <p>I Am Human: I Am Technology: Encountering Our Liberation, Alienation, or What?, Professor Reid Perkins-Buzo (Communication), Dr. Timothy Schoettle (Philosophy), Dr. Chris Staetker (Mathematics) &amp; Steven Barger (Sociology)</p> <p>A few short films on the subject of humanity and technology will be shown, followed by a discussion of them. Favorite short films include: <i>Dad Fair</i> (<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zi1h1h1u1k">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zi1h1h1u1k</a>) which emphasizes the role that technology can play in enflaming our impossible longing for beauty and self-improvement, and <i>Papiroflexia</i> (<a href="http://pixelnitrate.com/movie.php?movie=papiroflexia">http://pixelnitrate.com/movie.php?movie=papiroflexia</a>) which presents a more optimistic view of the liberating potential that technology can have if used creatively.</p>
Wednesday, February 27	
4:00-5:30 p.m.	<p><b>CONCURRENT FACULTY-STUDENT COLLOQUIA</b></p> <p>1. "Mapping our Pasts: Archaeology, GIS Technology, and Public Knowledge," Dr. David Pettegrew (History) &amp; Professor Jeff Erickson (Biological Sciences), <i>Boyer Hall 131</i></p> <p>While it may be argued that technology is producing ever-greater individualized specialization, it is also greatly enriching academic research, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, and creating new opportunities for engagement with the public. In this session, faculty and students from the departments of History &amp; Biological Science discuss how technology in their fields has contributed to more sophisticated scholarship, interdisciplinary research, and collaborative learning. The faculty will lead off with discussions of changing technologies in archaeology and spatial mapping and their ramifications for the disciplines of History and Biological Science. Then several students will discuss projects in Geographic Information Systems and archaeology completed for two classes during the fall semester: History 305 ("Archaeology &amp; Historical Interpretation") and GIS 245 ("Introduction to GIS"). This session will discuss the archaeological investigations of the Musser Farm property at Messiah College completed in late October / early November 2006, as well as technological uses further afield.</p> <p>2. Collaboratory Fair on Technology and International Development, The Collaboratory for Strategic Partnerships &amp; Applied Research, <i>Howe Atrium, Boyer Hall</i></p> <p>The Collaboratory Fair will address the topics of technology and international development. Dr. David Vader will give a short talk on the Collaboratory and its use of appropriate technology in the Collaboratory's service and development projects overseas. Collaboratory Group Leaders and members will set up booths to showcase their projects and to discuss technology in the context of their Group and discipline. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on and discuss appropriate technology with Collaboratory members.</p>
7:00-8:30 p.m.	<p><b>CONCURRENT SYMPOSIUM FACULTY LECTURE SERIES</b></p> <p>Technology and the Learning Community: Does Using Personal Response Systems in the Classroom Make Learning More or Less Personal?, Dr. Jennifer Fiesler (Education) &amp; Dr. Robert Kilmer (Management &amp; Business), <i>Boyer Hall 131</i></p> <p>The primary purpose of using personal response system (PRS) technology is to increase the amount and range of student participation in the classroom thereby allowing the instructor to conduct ongoing formative assessment of learning for all students. While the connections to learning have been studied by PRS users, the impact on the learning community in that classroom has been of secondary interest, if it is even considered at all. There will be a brief demonstration of the technology, a discussion of the ways in which we use the technology in our classrooms, describing student responses to the technology and our evaluation of its impact on the interpersonal aspects of the class. It will be followed by an open discussion on suggestions for use, personal experiences with technology in the classroom, and thoughts on how such technology might affect learning and community development in a classroom.</p> <p>Borderlands: Cyberspace as a Sight of Resistance, Dr. Jean Corey (English) &amp; Mr. Heraldo Kane-Osoto (Office of Multicultural Programs), <i>Boyer Hall 130</i></p> <p>Over the past few years the development of web groups such as facebook, myspace, and blogs have afforded individuals both impetus and access to public forums. As people from around the world interact through these modes of communication, they often cross physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual borders. This session will explore how cyberspace becomes a borderlands, often offering sites of power and resistance to historically marginalized people groups. Engaging the concepts of cyberspace and borderlands with our eyes wide open, we will be pushed to conceive a new way of speaking, organizing and mobilizing.</p> <p>Writing Social Histories of Technology: Rethinking the History of Cartography, Dr. Bernardo Michael (History), <i>Boyer Hall 130</i></p> <p>The study of Cartography has all too frequently focused on the technicalities of surveying, mapmaking and its institutional manifestations: Surveyors, mapmakers, instruments, and surveying institutions found prominent place in such accounts. However, the history of cartography is more than all this. Over the past two decades, a number of new studies have emerged that seek to understand the cartographic impulse within wider social and ideological contexts. Maps suddenly became ideological artifacts, entangled in social relations and structures of power. This paper seeks to add to this growing literature by drawing on evidence from colonial south Asia to unpack the following themes: Maps are not just representations on paper, rather these representations are worked out on the ground through a range of practices. The impulse to produce colonial maps can be traced to deep-seated social relationships involving a range of (for instance) agrarian entitlements concerning property, taxation and tribute. Finally, modern maps may also be viewed as a technology of governance—that aims at the representation, control, and manipulation of territory. Such an approach suggests that the study of technology can proceed beyond its specialized niches to include a wider range of social agents and processes.</p>
9:00 p.m.	<p><b>FILM-DISCUSSION, Boyer Hall 137 - Parmer Cinema</b></p> <p>Ethnographies of Technology &amp; Representation across Cultures, Charley Wilkinson (Communication)</p> <p>Exhibiting a documentary produced from footage shot in Nepal during a May term cross cultural course, the project will focus on the people and places visited, and the intense cultural divide separating a group of Messiah students and "Third World" Nepali citizens. Traveling in a place where few are able to afford "everyday luxuries" by American standards has many challenges, and introducing people who live without computers or television to media through video and photography becomes a unique challenge to connect not only from one man to another, but across entire cultures as well.</p>
Thursday, February 28	
4:00-5:30 p.m.	<p><b>STUDENT COLLOQUIA, Boyer Hall 131</b></p> <p>History &amp; Technology: How Historians Teach the Public through Electronic Tours, Mary Shade (Senior Honors Thesis, History)</p> <p>One of the means through which the public explores and learns about history is through guided tours. My presentation will consider and touch upon the following questions: How has technology impacted history, and the way history is shared with the public? How have guided tours evolved due to new technologies? What are the benefits and disadvantages of self-guided audio-tours? How has technology changed the experience of a historic tour? How have new technologies on historic tours affected what people learn while on tour?</p>
8:00-9:15 p.m.	<p><b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS (Brubaker Auditorium)</b></p> <p>A User's Guide to Unintended Consequences: Technology, Failure, and Resourcefulness Contact the Messiah College Ticket Office at (717) 691-6036 for free tickets.</p> <p>Dr. Edward Tenner is a noted independent public intellectual who has written and spoken on the subject of technology and culture. His book, <i>Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences</i>, has been an international bestseller. He has also written <i>Our Own Devices: The Past and Future of Body Technology</i> (Alfred Knopf, 2003). With a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, he has held teaching and research positions at Chicago and became science editor of Princeton University Press.</p> <p>Tenner's intellectual pursuits have located him at the interface of the study of human interactions with science and technology. In 1991 he received a Guggenheim Fellowship and was appointed a visitor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. He is a visiting scholar of the Department of History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania, and an affiliate with the Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies of the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University. He has also held visiting positions in the Princeton University Council of the Humanities, and the Departments of Geosciences and English.</p> <p>Tenner has contributed essays and reviews to many of the leading newspapers and magazines of the U.S. and the U.K., including U.S. News, the Wilson Quarterly, Technology Review, Raritan Quarterly Review, American Heritage of Invention and Technology, Metropolis, the former Industry Standard, and Designer/Builder.</p>
9:15-10:00 p.m.	<p>Book Signing, Lobby of Brubaker Auditorium</p>
Friday, February 29	
4:00-5:30 p.m.	<p><b>PLENARY SESSION, Boyer Hall 131</b></p> <p>Talk-Back Session on the Keynote Address and the Symposium Theme Panelists: Dr. Gerald Hess (School of Health and Natural Sciences), Professor Carl Erickson (Engineering), Dr. Anita Voelker (Education), Dr. Larry Lake (English) (Refreshments Provided)</p>
9:00	<p><b>FILM, Boyer Hall 131</b></p> <p>Afiro@Digital</p> <p>Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Programs</p> <p>The impact of digital technologies on African life is apparent in film, music, fashion, and education. Director Babafunmi Babalola-Kanayo presents the views of Africans in a new international, digital culture. A discussion with Dr. Anne Marie Stoner-Eby (History) and Dr. David Dzaka (English) follows the screening.</p>



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