JNST OOOH.02

Medicine, Machines, Bodies

T/TH 9:30-10:50am

Prof. Tim Seiber

In this course, we will look at the way modern medicine images and imagines the human body. Using processes of visualization including sonography, x-ray, tomography, and magnetic resonance (among others), contemporary medicine treats the body as at once a space of exploration, and as a surface on which to project images of a healthy, stable, and successful citizen. Moreover, advanced computation has invaded the hospital, with surgeons training with and sometimes even using computer software during complicated surgeries. How has technology become central to medical knowledge, and in what ways does this change our understanding of how the body works? This class will explore the ways that machines expose and display human bodies for contemporary medicine, and the relationships between the cinematic and scientific aspects of visuality that make seeing a central aspect of knowing. Using tools from science and technology studies, feminist and queer theory, anthropology, film and media, and the history of medicine, we'll look at a variety of examples from brain scans to bacterial art, thinking always about how power works in and through processes of looking, and asking ourselves what the body of the future will look like – and how it will be treated – as machines and medicine become inextricably linked. Moreover, we will look at non-human bodies and non-machine ways of knowing to ask ourselves what the limits of advanced medicine might be, and how we might know our bodies in other ways. This class includes readings from popular culture, scholarship in a number of fields, and practical assignments leading toward a two day class conference as our final assignment.