Senior Seminar at East-West University
Technology and Humanity

Mid-quarter project:
how do art and technology interact?

1. **Neil Postman, "every technology has its bias"**

Seven questions to ask of every new technology:

1. What is the problem to which this technology is a solution?
2. Whose problem is it?
3. What new problems will be created if this technology is adopted?
4. Who will be the losers? (i.e. who will be harmed by this technology?)
5. What institutions will gain power?
6. What changes in language will this technology bring?
7. What alternative uses of the technology are possible?

(from *Building the bridge to the 18th century* and from 1996 COD lecture)
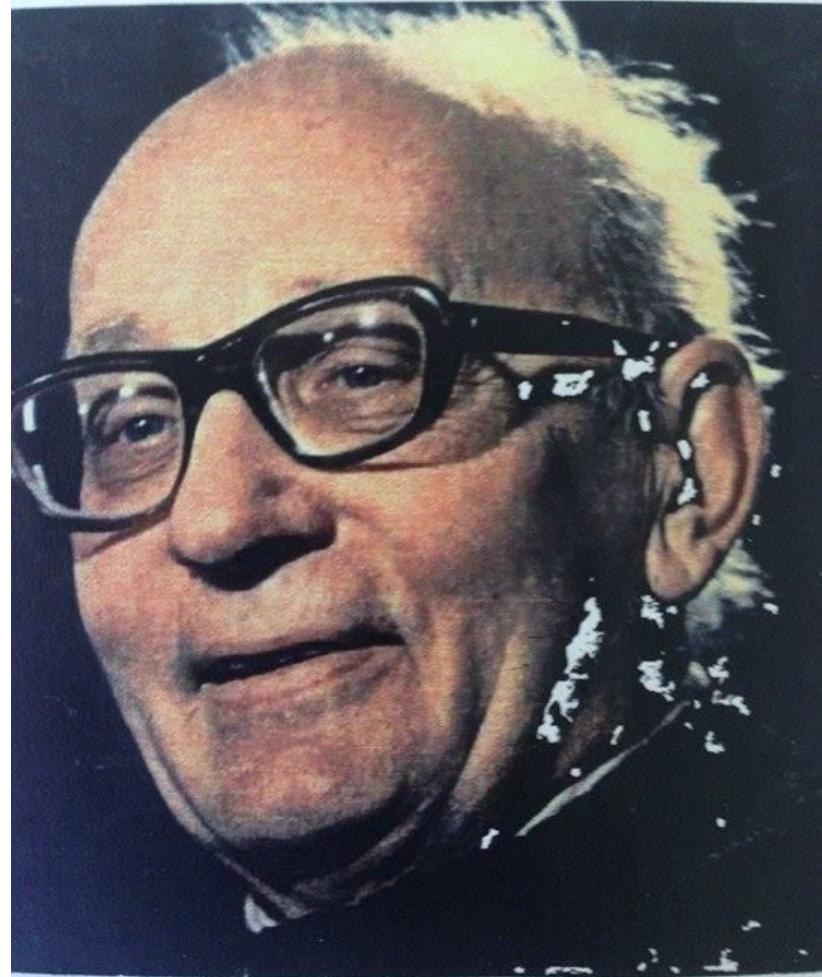
2. Yuri Rozhdestvensky

1927-1999

Moscow Lomonosov University

Chair,Deartment of General Language Studies
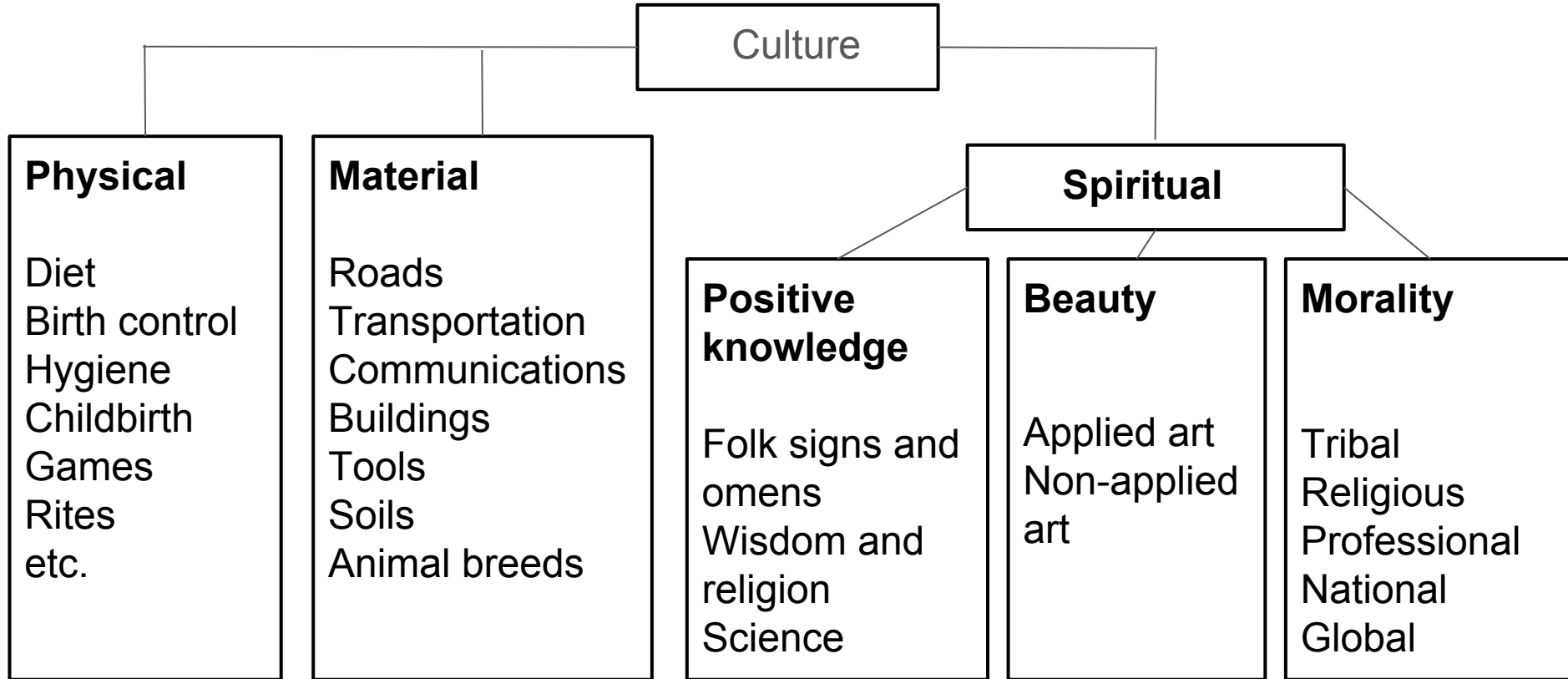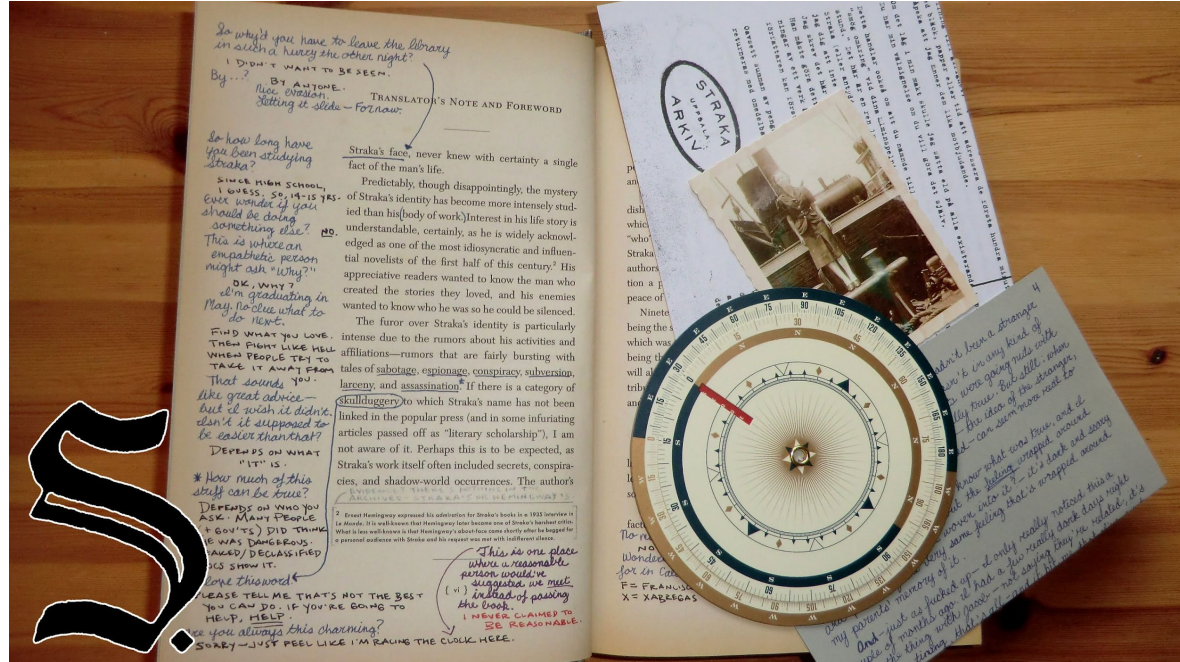
Founder of the Russian school of

Media Ecology

2a. Yuri Rozhdestvensky, General Language Studies

ECOSYSTEM

Future						????
15 years ago					Electronic	Electronic 2
50 years ago				electric	electric 2	electric 3
500 years ago			printed	printed 2	printed 3	printed 4
5000 yrs ago		written	written 2	written 3	written 4	written 5
50,000 yrs ago	oral	oral 2	oral 3	oral 4	oral 5	oral 6

2b. Yuri Rozhdestvensky, *Intro to the study of Culture*

Culture

Physical

Diet
Birth control
Hygiene
Childbirth
Games
Rites
etc.

Material

Roads
Transportation
Communications
Buildings
Tools
Soils
Animal breeds

Spiritual

Positive knowledge

Folk signs and omens
Wisdom and religion
Science

Beauty

Applied art
Non-applied art

Morality

Tribal
Religious
Professional
National
Global

S by Doug Dorst and JJ Abrams

Calls attention to the medium

S: it is engaging to handle physical objects

- S: "Readers are intended to be able to read the novel, the [inserts] and the readers' notes, which requires us to process this text as we process a webpage. While browsing a webpage we get sidetracked to other links which may catch our eye, or even to an advertisement of a sale…. Generally, I can be a speed reader, although this novel was quite a challenge to multi-task with." [NB: on a web page other links are optional; in S all components are needed for the puzzle. Web-approach does not work]
- It helps the reader to truly immerse themselves into the story as if one was actually a participant in the text
- It makes the reader engage with the book… It is almost impossible to be bored by it.

S: old media in new combinations

- [in S] we find a creative change compared to traditional books… The conversation between two readers seems like comments in the internet. … The books we used to read are designed to read through page to page, and [we are] not allowed to jump. <u>With appearance of network thought, it allowed us to leave comments on the side of the texts, and read not chronologically</u>.

  [NB: this 20-year-old does not know about marginalia :)]

- This book makes you think about the way things used to be when people used to communicate through letters

- … at times was a bit overwhelming... Handwritten dialogue made the main story a bit better because of the input and conversations in and out of the story. <u>The way the authors played with these media is refreshing</u> because of how un-ordinary it is.

The tRutH by Terry Pratchett

The rumor spread through Ankh-Morpork like wild-fire (which had quite often sprea[d]
through Ankh-Morpork since its citizens had learned the words "fire insurance").
The dwarfs can turn lead into gold…
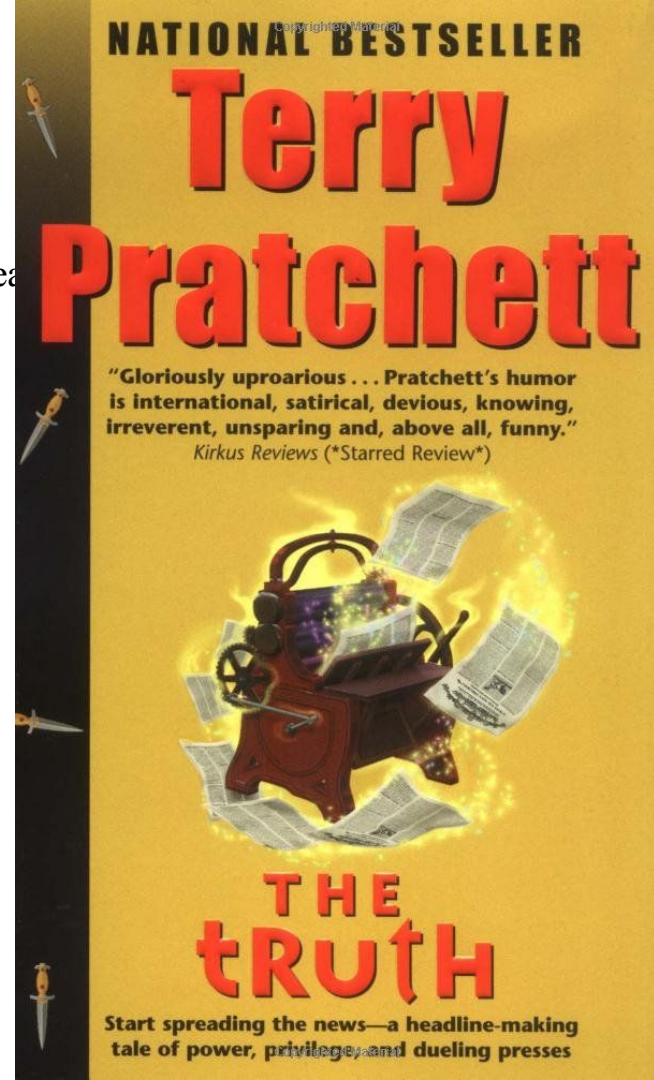
The Truth: traditional medium

"We would rather study the transition from written culture to print through the comedy-mystery like The Truth, than through history lectures."

"The Truth illustrates the birth of investigative journalism ..."

Black Mirror by Charlie Brooker, Netflix
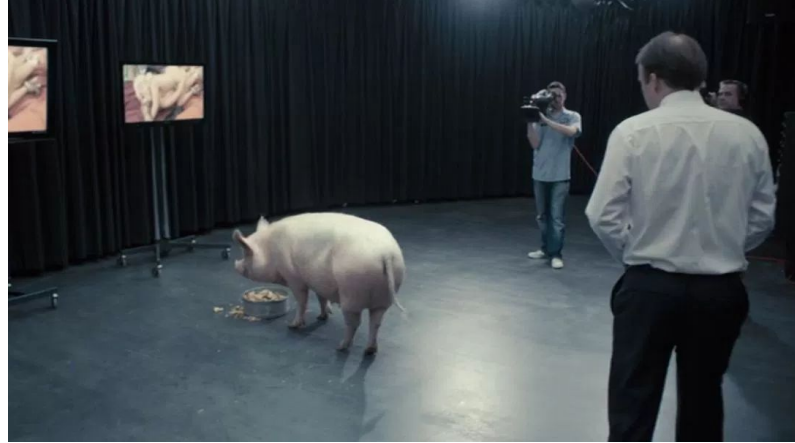
Series 3 ep.1 Nosedive

"...is a great example how the world may actually turn out to be"

Series 1 ep.3 The Entire History of You

"Neil Postman was right - 'the human dilemma is as it has always been, and we will solve nothing by cloaking ourselves in technological glory' "

Series 1 ep.1 The National Anthem

Performance art which used youtube, film, lighting, human psychology.

"The artist who blackmailed the prime minister has abused his power"

Assignment: how do art and technology interact?

Critical thinking needs:

Many students are used to the following:

     Memorize information

     Read the prompt, answer the questions in the prompt exactly

"Intellectual equipment of the future", however, requires the following (per former US Secretary of Labor):

1. Examine data
2. Decide which data is relevant
3. Reorganize data in a logical pattern
4. Define the problem (aka formulate your own prompt!)
5. Ask difficult questions
6. Make connections to the bigger picture
7. Make deductive and inductive leaps (aka independent conclusions)

Data includes: Postman, Rozhdestvensky, Black Mirror, S, The Truth

Definition of technology

1. Anything outside human body that helps to perform practical tasks
2. Digital tools: phones and the internet (default option for the students)

Purposes of art:

1. A playground where the artist experiments with different media. (e.g. junk art, body suspension, *S*, *Executive Severance)*
2. A message or a warning to society (e.g. *Black Mirror*)
3. An fictional illustration of real life (e.g. *The tRutH)*

Class conclusion: New technologies do not change these three purposes of art

What is new with digital technologies: requirement for more self control

Digital art requires more self control

now that the volume of available entertainment has grown, "we lose ourselves in the entertainment, in the internet, and wonder if the world is what it looks like in the internet instead of exploring by foot"

"If people had the willpower to look away, the kidnapper's sickening plan would not have worked; but people are people"

"If situations get dangerous due to technology aiding in whatever the culprit is doing then the law enforcement and or society should do a better job of keeping themselves safe"

"Just like anything else being in the wrong hands can be a bad situation, the same rules would apply to [using digital technology to create art]. Just because one or a small percentage of people think that using technology to do an unusual or evil "art" is acceptable, it doesn't mean that [using digital platforms] is a negative thing"

The answer

Digital technologies have enhanced the power of works of art

With great power comes great responsibility

The responsibility cannot be placed on artists, because their loyalty is to the art, not to society.

Thus, the responsibility rests on the audiences. The audience is responsible for

- critical judgement
- looking away when necessary