Mediation and Liberation

In this course we will be concerned with theories of mediation in relation to the project of human and nonhuman liberation. We will take up critical, theoretical, and philosophical work that pays particular attention to the relations of mediation and liberation, beginning with Frankfurt School theorists like Benjamin and Kracauer, for whom mediation was understood in the context of the fascistic politics of the Third Reich. We will then turn to late 20th century theorists like McLuhan, Simondon, Baudrillard, Haraway, Deleuze, and Latour to develop the concept of mediation further, particularly in relation to technology and liberation. We will conclude by looking at 21st-century examinations of mediation and liberation, focusing both on nonhuman liberation and on the recent (re)turn to fascism in democracies like the US and Brazil. Our aim will be to understand how the material and political ramifications of networked mediation technologies of the past century and more both repress and contribute to the liberation of humans and nonhumans. In this course we will focus more on what media do in relation to liberation than on what they communicate or represent. Thinking, talking, and writing about mediation can be, and will be in this course, considered as a liberatory endeavor, and we will take up some of these liberatory concerns in regard to human and nonhuman mediation.