

Calendar and Readings (week of May 2)

Due dates this week

- Rewrite of paper #1 due Wednesday, May 4
- First draft of paper #2 due Thursday, May 5
- Hardcopy printouts of paper #2 are due at TWP (Huang 049) for 181W students whose last names begin with A–K by noon on Friday, May 6

Monday, May 2

Most of today's class will be taken up with a showing of the film *Code Rush*, which follows several employees at Netscape in the year that they release Mozilla, up to the point at which they were acquired by AOL. The 55-minute documentary fits nicely into this point in the course for two reasons. First, it contains several clips that offer important insights into the power of the Microsoft monopoly I'm discussing in today's class. Second, it raises disturbing questions about the nature of work in the high-tech world. There are, of course, many exciting aspects to life in the fast lane of Silicon Valley, but it is worth thinking about what might be lost.

Thought question:

- If history is any indication, most of you will end up working for computer companies in Silicon Valley after you graduate from Stanford (and, even if that is not the direction you hope to follow, you probably know enough people who are heading in that direction to put yourself in their shoes.) What excites you about the idea of working in the industry during what seems likely to be another boom time? What fears and concerns do you have?

Wednesday, May 4

On Wednesday, I want to begin a discussion of cyberspace culture that focuses on the prominence of the "cyberlibertarian" philosophy that Langdon Winner and Paulina Borsook describe in the reader and that comes through loud and clear in John Perry Barlow's declaration of independence.

Readings: The following articles in Part 8 of the reader: "A Declaration of Independence in Cyberspace" (page 293), "Cyberselfish" (page 333), and "Cyberlibertarian myths and the prospects for community" (page 339).

Thought questions:

- From the birth of the ARPANET in 1969 to the end of NSF subsidies in 1995, the Internet was conceived, developed, funded, and maintained largely by the U.S. government. Today, however, there is a widespread belief among Internet users that the government can play no positive role in developing the networks of the future. How do you explain this seeming contradiction?

- What similarities and differences do you see in the perspectives outlined by the authors of “Cyberspace and the American Dream” and John Perry Barlow’s vision as he articulates it in “A Declaration of Independence in Cyberspace”?

Extra-credit opportunity for this week

After the showing of *Code Rush* on Monday, we’ll have about 15 minutes to discuss the ups and downs of life on the roller coaster that is Silicon Valley. Your extra-credit opportunity for this week is to add personal stories to that discussion, which can be either your own stories or those of people you know who are willing to share their experiences. By 11:59 P.M. Sunday, your job is to send me a story—which can run anywhere from a paragraph to a couple of pages—that describes either an incredible experience or a heartbreaking story that comes from working in a high-tech firm in the Valley. If I think that your story is worth sharing with the class, I’ll repost it on a new CourseWork forum and assign you an extra-credit point.

Reaction paper assignment for sections starting May 5

Write a one-to-two page paper in which you react to the notion—as Borsook and Winner outline it—that cyberlibertarianism is the dominant political philosophy in the high-tech world. To what extent do their observations ring true in your experience? Has high-tech culture changed in the last decade in ways that make cyberlibertarianism more marginal in the community? If so, can you identify any new philosophical predispositions that have risen to take its place?