

Thursday October 6th 4:00 pm 470 Stephens Hall UC Berkeley

Center for Science, Technology, Medicine, and Society
(CSTMS) Fall 2011 Colloquia Series

***The Worm, the Apple and the “Consumerization”
of Hacking Practices and Culture***

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This presentation focuses on the emerging practices involving the hacking of some of Apple’s devices and it analyzes them as a new form of consumer culture that develops around users’ manipulations of consumer technologies. More specifically, the talk describes two different forms of widespread hacking practices of Apple’s devices. The first consists in doing a so-called “hackintosh,” which modifies non-Apple hardware to work with Apple operating systems and software. The second is the practice of “jailbreaking,” which modifies Apple’s iPhone and iPad by allowing users to install un-authorized software on these devices and utilize the devices in ways unintended by the manufacturer.

These two forms of hacking are discussed in terms of what they can tell us about the blurring boundaries between consumer culture, hacking practices, and the modification of technologies. I emphasize that these practices of modification can be interpreted as a form of “hackerization” of the use and consumption of digital devices. On the other hand, these forms of hacking can be also considered as part of a step toward the “consumerization” of hacking culture and activities, whereby hacking becomes a more popular and widespread activity and is integrated into consumer behaviors, market production, and capitalistic exchange.

The talk will focus on the roles of the web 2.0 and user-generated content in the evolution of these practices. Thus, I will discuss how these emerging forms of consumer hacking fit into and foster the ongoing debate regarding the consequences of the “participatory web” on the production of knowledge and on the exploitation of consumer activity and labor.

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