PennState
College of the Liberal Arts

Deconstruction and the Weaponization of Knowledge

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Thursday, April 19, 2018
4:00 p.m.

GRUCCI ROOM • 102 BURROWES BUILDING

Russia's attacks on the 2016 US election brought cyberwar to the forefront of American politics and demonstrated that this new type of warfare expands far beyond merely destroying infrastructure. These attacks yielded a rush to find technical solutions and appropriate political responses — all tempered by domestic beneficiaries of those attacks — but many of these responses underestimate the philosophical and epistemological depth of cyberwar. These types of incursion target the very fabric of our institutions and our collective ability to know the world, complicating any attempt to respond.

The Russia intervention touches on the nature of our twenty-first century technologies and on what Jacques Derrida calls the autoimmune nature of democracy — the proclivity for its structure to attack itself. This talk will argue that it is through theory, especially the work of Derrida, that we can begin to understand what is at stake in cyberwar. It will situate Russian interference in the 2016 election in the broader history of cyberwar and attempt to provide a frame for understanding cyberwar's destabilizing effects in the context of Derrida's later writing on democracy and reason.

JUSTIN JOQUE is the author of *Deconstruction Machines: Writing in the Age of Cyberwar* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018) and the visualization librarian at the University of Michigan. He completed his PhD in Communications at the European Graduate School and holds a Master's of Science of Information from the University of Michigan, with a focus on machine learning and data analysis.