



PennState
College of the
Liberal Arts

LECTURE SPONSORED BY THE DIGITAL CULTURE
AND MEDIA INITIATIVE, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Drone Warfare, Drone Art, and the Limits of Identification



JENNIFER RHEE
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Thursday, April 5, 2018
3:30 p.m.

GRUCCI ROOM • 102 BURROWES BUILDING

This talk comes from Rhee's book *The Robotic Imaginary: The Human and the Price of Dehumanized Labor* (University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming 2018). She traces connections between U.S. robotics technologies and cultural forms at the sites of dehumanization and devalued labor. Rhee argues that the figure of the robot in contemporary culture and technology is largely shaped by the conceptions of the human and more importantly of the dehumanized. She looks specifically at the labor of drone operators and what she call "drone art," or contemporary artistic responses to drone warfare. Drawing on the racializing aspects of early cybernetics military research, she looks at drone art that responds to drone victims' dehumanization by examining the limits of identification as a means of ethical response. Instead, drone art points to an understanding of the human through unrecognizability, difference, and unfamiliarity, rather than recognition, familiarity, and knowability.

JENNIFER RHEE is Assistant Professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her research and teaching are in science and literature and media studies. Jennifer's book *The Robotic Imaginary: The Human and the Price of Dehumanized Labor* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018), will be published later this year. Her work has also appeared in journals including *Camera Obscura*, *Configurations*, *Mosaic*, and *Postmodern Culture*. She is currently working on her next book on counting technologies, from statistics to biometric surveillance.