Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (University of Toronto, 2018)

“Imagining Information: The Uses of Storytelling”

Department of English

Friday, June 26, 2020
1:00 P.M.
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Jentery Sayers, Department of English, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Nicole Shukin, Department of English, UVic (Member)
Dr. Steve Garlick, Department of Sociology, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Arthur Kroker, Department of Political Science, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Jim Tanaka, Department of Psychology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract
This thesis investigates a cultural logic of information. In a world saturated with information, how is representation defined, and what kinds of boundaries does it consequently set up for establishing what can be known? I argue that a cultural logic of information articulates a common cultural definition for representation: information is understood as either a “true” representation of reality, or a substitute for reality itself. As a result, information comes to be conflated with knowledge. But, in contrast to calls (scholarly and otherwise) to police the boundaries of information, I argue 1) that information is exceedingly difficult to separate, in kind, from storytelling, because 2) the provision of information almost always entails scrambles for narrative representation, which 3) are always staged in the terms of genre. The function of these conclusions is the constant undermining of this cultural logic. I examine the intersection of a variety of cultural and theoretical objects, including: Fox News and “Make America Great Again”; scientific modelling of climate change; Claude Shannon’s mathematical theory of communication; Karl Ove Knausgaard’s My Struggle; YouTube “lifestyle” communities; and the documentary “The Act of Killing.” I suggest that a methodology that accounts for the imbrication of information and storytelling better accounts for the vicissitudes of, and ideological struggles over, these cultural phenomena. It does so, in particular, by engaging with the subjective experience of information, and assessing how subjects imagine their relations to information and to networks. The purpose of this argument is to intervene in conversations about the articulation of life in control societies.