# Algorithms as Pets and Politicians

Using Art Practice to Reconsider the Politics of Algorithms

Date: Monday, May 20th
Time: 11:30am - 03:00pm
Location: ISCP's 2nd Floor Lounge, 1040 Metropolitan Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11211

Workshop leaders:
Alex Juhasz (Chair, Film Department at Brooklyn College, CUNY)
Kyle Booten (Neukom Postdoctoral Fellow)
Orr Menirom (Independent Artist)

SHORT WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:

*Machine learning algorithms play an increasingly important and ambiguous role in contemporary politics, making decisions about what political messages we see, fueling clickbait culture, and spreading fake news. In this workshop, participants will consider the design of machine learning systems as an artistic question. In a hands-on activity, they will interact with a web-based "pet" algorithm, training it to embody certain political or philosophical views.*

*No programming experience is necessary; in fact, this workshop is imagined as an opportunity for non-programmers to gain critical literacy in how to care for a machine learning system. Other activities will include discussing artwork related to algorithmic logic and discussing the influence of machine learning on both contemporary aesthetics and politics.*

*\*\*\**

# Total Running Time: 3 hours and 30 minutes

It is recommended to attend all 3 parts, but participants may choose to attend one or two parts, depending on their availability.

Lunchtime will take place during the workshop and there will not be an official break to go out and buy food- please bring a brown food with you!

## Part 1 - Intro and discussion (11:30am -12:30pm)

Round of names +introduction to the media literacy project 100HardTruths (Alex)
Workshop structure and objectives, introduction to the topic of algorithms and art (Kyle)
Screening + artist talk (Orr)
Discussion: algorithms, aesthetics and politics

## BYOBB (Bring your own Brown Bag) Lunch (12:30pm)

## Part 2- Algopet Game (12:30pm-1:30pm)

Rules, instructions, goals and outcomes:
1. The game is played in groups of 2-3.
2. Each group selects 4 cards with different personalities, professions, political agendas and geographic locations. Those will be the guidelines that describe the personality of Egg which they will to program.
3. Install the browser on your computer. Press the "start" button, and a new SpeakingEgg is born.
4. Start "training" the Egg's algorithm by feeding it text from various sources. The goal of the game is to make the algorithm express its own ideas that match the personality which the group selected for it.

## Part 3- The Tamagotchi Effect (1:30pm-3:00pm)

*Group reading of selected sentences generated by the algopets
*A few words about the model of algorithms which were used to program the Egg (Kyle, Orr)
*Participants will share and discuss their own personal projects and other relevant artworks