

## CTCS 494 - Talking Trash: Media Cultures of Waste and Disposability



No, literally—this class is about trash.

Eszter Zimanyi  
Thursdays, 2-5:50PM

Look around and it seems all the eye can see is waste. From the plastic wrap barriers around our take-out orders to the piles of face masks thrown out daily during the COVID-19 pandemic, our planet is filled to the brim with discarded objects. People, too, appear increasingly disposable. Corporations hunt for the cheapest labor, governments battle for limited resources, and all of us fight to be seen in an oversaturated social media landscape that threatens to reveal our redundancy.

This class will explore waste and disposability through the lens of media studies and will address a wide range of themes, including but not limited to: climate change, migration, mental health, labor, disease and disability, social inequality, digital communication, celebrity, and interpersonal relationships. What do we see as waste, and what do we understand as wasteful? How do we learn to recognize what to keep and what to throw away? What are the visual and narrative conventions that make objects, places, stories, and people legible to us as “trash?” How do we feel when we “swipe left” and send another person to the digital dustbin, or when we find ourselves discarded there? And how might we recuperate trash through media to build something new? Potential screenings include: *Gleaners and I*, *Human Flow*, *Sleep Dealer*, *Manufactured Landscapes*, *Black Mirror*, *Blade Runner*, and *Wall-E*.