

Media, Materiality, & the Architecture of Counter-Enshittification

Course: Arch 672 _ Propositions Studio _ Taubman College

Term: Fall 2026 _ Mo/Th 1:00–6:00pm

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This advanced studio engages the concept of *enshittification*, or the gradual degradation of online platforms like Facebook and Amazon as they become optimized for profit, and considers how architecture as a social and material practice can potentially resist this decline in quality of life.

The term *enshittification* captures a collective frustration with the digital systems that increasingly organize our lives. This frustration also reflects how deeply these systems are embedded in everyday routines and spaces, helping to naturalize the belief that the continual creation and proliferation of networked technologies constitutes progress. Thus, if tech companies take into account the spatial habits people already have around devices and places when engineering their platforms, then a critical redesign of physical environments could be a way of *resocializing the internet*. Moreover, the emergence of products related to digital detox, digital wellness, and phone distraction management reveals a latent cultural desire that yearns for a different relationship to technology – it appears people want the ability to opt out of this globalized datafied interior. The studio asks participants to materially intervene in this context.

Students enrolled in this course will challenge (or *counter-enshittify*) the naturalized, corporate-regulated, and often-pathological spatial cultures characterizing internet consumption today by offering alternative models for *connection* in a digital age. Digital platforms are supported by a lot of physical stuff – wires, screens, racks, adapters, routers, conduits, sensors, and more – that recedes into the background of our existence, operating invisibly within ceilings or behind walls and quietly structuring how people and information move through space. Instead of continuing to hide these infrastructural elements or treat them as neutral, this studio will strive to expose and recast them as part of an architectural language, paying close attention to the interrelations between material assemblies and social assemblies. Throughout the semester, students will find untapped potential in the properties and protocols of older media artifacts; draw inspiration from existing architectural details; and prototype unconventional tectonics. The studio will culminate in the design of a speculative building in which atypical joints help to format atypical interactions, ultimately reimagining how we might live together with digital technology.

Image: Departamento del Distrito, *Light Gauge*

