**The New Zealand Centre of International Economic Law
invites you to a Public Lecture:**

Old & New Net Wars Over Free Speech, Freedom & Secrecy or How to Understand the Hacker & Lulz Battle against the C0$

Gabriella Coleman

Why have geeks—both in the past and present—been compelled to protest the Church of Scientology so vehemently and for nearly two decades? This talk poses this question to present a cultural history and political analysis of one of the oldest Internet wars, often referred to as "Internet vs Scientology". In recent times, this phenomena took the form of "Project Chanology," orchestrated by a loosely defined group called Anonymous who has led a series of online attacks and real world protests against Scientology starting in winter 2008. Over the last two decades, Scientology has sought to censor material that circulated on the Internet, such as secret Church documents ("advanced tech"), criticisms of the church, as well as internal Church videos, often by asserting intellectual property rights; these moves have prompted protests among netizens, geeks, and hackers who tend to abhor censorship. However, to more fully understand these depth and breadth of these battles and protests, we must also examine how the geek cultural world and Scientology stand in an antipodal relation to each other. Scientology is experienced by geeks, perhaps almost unconsciously, as an ideal, almost mythic nemesis, where tremendous pleasure is derived in protesting the religion.

Through an analysis of cultural inversion, I will consider how long-standing liberal ideals, notably of free speech, take cultural root in the context of these battles. I compare the past and contemporary protests to examine important political transformations in Internet culture between the mid 1990s and today, most especially the rise of Internet trolling and the "lulz"- a bastardization of laughing out loud (lol), denoting the pleasures of pranking.

Gabriella Coleman is an anthropologist who examines ethics and online collaboration as well as the role of the law and new media technologies in extending and critiquing liberal values and sustaining new forms of political activism. Between 2001-2003 she conducted ethnographic research on computer hackers primarily in San Francisco, the Netherlands, as well as those hackers who work on the largest free software project, Debian. She is completing a book manuscript "Coding Freedom: Hacker Pleasure and the Ethics of Free and Open Source Software" (under contract with Princeton University Press) and is starting a new project on peer to peer patient activism on the Internet. She is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including ones from the National Science Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Social Science Research

5:30 – 6.30pm, Thursday 21 January 2010

Lecture Theatre 3, Ground Floor, Government Buildings, Pipitea Campus
15 Lambton Quay, Wellington

New Zealand Centre of International Economic Law public lectures are free of charge. No RSVPs are required