



New Inter-Disciplinary Program at Stanford Looks at Car From All Angles

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Photo: Kelly Wilkinson, KQED

Cars and academia may seem like an unlikely pairing. But a new program at Stanford will study the automobile from a wide range of perspectives, including design, sociology, history, and engineering.

Clifford Nass, director of Stanford's new Revs program says, "There is probably no technology that is more important and less studied than the automobile."

At the program's launch yesterday, Nass presented a discussion on the behavioral science that goes into developing car navigation systems. He said when BMW introduced a state-of-the-art talking navigation system in the 1990s, the company decided to recall it -- not because it didn't work, but because German male drivers complained that they didn't want to take directions from a female voice.

Nass says that's just one example of research that will be folded into the new program. "If you think about the social impact, the historical impact, the impact on literature and film... try to imagine 20th century film without automobiles, try to imagine the suburbs without automobiles. Try to imagine almost any aspect of life without automobiles. And there's remarkably little research."

Nass says the collaborative research that Revs will facilitate will hopefully affect the thinking that goes into future cars.

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- [The Revs Program website](#)
- [Stanford's press release about Revs Program](#)

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