



HUMANITY  
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## **Morana Alač** **University of California, San Diego**

### **“On Educational Robots and Embodied Particularities of Interaction”**



***Wednesday, April 30, 2014  
12:00 – 1:30pm  
Barus and Holley Room 190***

***Co-Sponsored by Science and Technology Studies***

Design of educational robots uses as a resource and is animated by the idea of individualized learning. But what does actual interaction with educational robots suggest about individualized learning? To tackle this question I will report on an ongoing and long-term observational study of a social robotics project in a university laboratory of machine learning. As part of the project, researchers design low-cost educational robots geared toward children between 18 and 24 months of age. As they develop the computational architecture, the researchers immerse the robot in a preschool setting so that they can use their observations to guide the robot's future design. While following the tradition of laboratory studies, in this talk I will focus on the preschool's indigenous methods employed in interacting with the robot. I will pay attention to touch, spatial organizations, and how communicative modes – such as gesture, speech, gaze and body orientation – feature in encounters between preschool inhabitants, researchers and their robot. I will explore how these embodied and multisensory elements of interaction engage the idea of individualized instruction.

**Morana Alač** is Associate Professor in Communication and Science Studies at the University of California, San Diego. Alač's research deals with ordinary and practical aspects of science. She works with video to focus on the dynamics of embodied social interaction. Her recent work has focused on how scientists study cognition in environments heavily sustained by advanced technologies. In addition to social robotics, she conducted ethnographic studies in brain imaging laboratories (*Handling Digital Brains*, MIT Press, 2011).

This presentation is part of the HCRI's Multidisciplinary Speaker Series that showcases diverse and groundbreaking research undertaken by leaders in science, technology, design, and impact of robotics on society.

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