

F&M 155: Cinema After Digitization

CONTACT

Prof. Jacob Gaboury
Dwinelle 142

Office Hours: Wed 12-2
<https://calendly.com/gaboury/>

Lecture: Tu/Th 3:30-5:00pm

Screening: Online

NOTE: Food and drink are not allowed in Dwinelle 142.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the influence of digital technology on contemporary film and visual media. Drawing on cinema studies, art history, architecture, and media studies we will historicize the radical shift brought about by digital technology while engaging in debates over our post-digital, post-internet, post-cinematic media culture. Rather than presume the “newness” of digital media, we will take seriously the claim that digital technology marks a radical break with earlier media forms, and that this transformation has had a profound influence on the way we view and understand the world around us. Ultimately, we will ask what comes after digitization as a moment or period in the history of the cinema, and whether the cinema still exists as a distinct technical medium or aesthetic practice.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course has been designed to help you learn how to:

1. Identify, analyze, and describe contemporary themes in digital cinema and visual culture.
2. Understand the influence of digital media technologies on the production of images today, including digital software, hardware, platforms, and interfaces.
3. Produce original analyses of visual texts using formal essays, digital platforms, and visual tools.

SCHEDULE

1_Introduction

01/18

LECTURE:

Introduction and Syllabus Presentation

SCREENING:

Desk Set (Walter Lang, 1957)

01/20

LECTURE:

What Was the Digital?

READING:

Velimir Khlebnikov, "The Radio of the Future" (1921)

Ivan Sutherland, "The Ultimate Display" (1965)

Richard Brautigan, "All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace"
(1968)

ACTIVITY:

When Was the Digital?

CLIPS

Forbidden Planet (1956, Fred Wilcox)

Desk Set (1957, Walter Lang)

Title sequence from *Vertigo* (1958, Saul Bass & John Whitney)

The Information Machine (1958, Charles & Ray Eames)

Poemfield no. 2 (1966, Stan VanDerBeek with Kenneth Knowlton)

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968, Stanley Kubrick)

Pixilation (1970, Lillian Schwartz and Kenneth Knowlton)

Arabesque (1975, John Whitney, USA)

The Artist and the Computer (1976, John Ball)

2_Ends

01/25

LECTURE:

Digitization, Celluloid, Crisis, 1990s

READING:

D. N. Rodowick, "The Virtual Life of Film" in *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2007) 1-24.

CLIPS:

The Abyss (1989, James Cameron)
Terminator 2 (1991, James Cameron)
Jurassic Park (1993, Steven Spielberg)
The Mummy (1999, Stephen Sommers)

SCREENING:

The Matrix (1999, Lana and Lilly Wachowski)

01/27

LECTURE:

Expanding Cinema, Medium Specificity, Remediation, Relocation

READING:

Francesco Casetti, "The Relocation of Cinema," in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st Century Film*. Shane Denson and Julia Leyda, eds. Sussex, UK: Reframe Books (2016) <<https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/5-1-casetti/>>

ACTIVITY:

Where is the Cinema?

3_Software

02/01

LECTURE:

New Media, Seriality, Software Studies, Materiality

READING:

Lev Manovich, "Introduction" *Software Takes Command*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing (2013) 1-42.

CLIPS:

VFX Demos (2010-Present)
Xerox Star User Interface (1981)
Apple Lisa Infomercial (1983)
NeXT Machine Demo (1988)
Windows '95 Commercials (1995)

SCREENING:

Speed Racer (2008, Lana and Lily Wachowski)

GENRE: Identify genre and 10 exemplary films

02/03

LECTURE:

Video Editing, Skeuomorphism, Remix, Interface, Workflow

READING:

Leon Gurevitch "Cinema Designed: Visual Effects Software and the Emergence of the Engineered Spectacle" in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st Century Film*. Shane Denson and Julia Leyda, eds. Sussex, UK: Reframe Books (2016) <<https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/3-1-gurevitch/>>.

DEMOS:

After Effects, Cinema 4D, Rhino, Final Cut Pro, Premiere

4_Simulation

02/08

LECTURE:

CGI, Digital Objects, Raytracing, Light Simulation

READING:

Jacob Gaboury, "Introduction" *Image Objects: An Archaeology of Computer Graphics*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021).

CLIPS:

A Computer Animated Hand (1972, Ed Catmull)
Futureworld (1976, Richard Heffron)
Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan (1982, Nicholas Meyer)
Toy Story (1995, John Lasseter)

SCREENING:

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse (2018, Peter Ramsey, Bob Persichetti, Rodney Rothman)

02/10

LECTURE:

Motion Capture, Digital Models, Performance

READING:

Jacob Gaboury. "Model Objects." *Image Objects: An Archaeology of Computer Graphics*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021).

CLASS SCREENING:

Goodbye Uncanny Valley (2017, Alan Warburton)

5_Game

02/15

LECTURE:

Perspective, Gamic Cinema, Narratology vs. Ludology, Puzzle Films, Rhizome Narrativity, Interactivity

READING:

Galloway, Alexander "Origins of the First Person Shooter" in *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2006) 39-69.

CLIPS:

eXistenZ (1999, David Cronenberg)

Avalon (2001, Mamoru Oshii)
Elephant (2003, Gus Van Sant)
Hardcore Henry (Ilya Naishuller, 2015)

SCREENING:

Edge of Tomorrow (2014, Doug Liman)

GENRE: Thesis statement and 100-word outline

02/17

LAB DAY:

Doom (1993, id Software)
The Last of Us (2013, Naughty Dog)
Cuphead (2017, Studio MDHR)
Her Story (2015, Sam Barlow)

RESEARCH REPORT:

Game Aesthetics Report

6_Acceleration

02/22

LECTURE:

Classical Hollywood, Intensified Continuity, Chaos Cinema, Genre Aesthetics, Temporality, Nonlinear

READING:

David Bordwell, "Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film" *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Spring 2002) 16-28.

SCREENING:

Transformers: Dark of the Moon (2011, Michael Bay)

02/24

LECTURE:

Acceleration, Disembodiment, Disjuncture, Post-Perception

READING:

Shane Denson "Introduction" in *Discorrelated Images*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2020).

CLASS SCREENING:

Chaos Cinema I-III (2011-2012, Matthias Stork)

CLIPS:

Green Lantern (2011, Martin Campbell)

Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance (2011, Mark Neveldine)

Avengers (2012, Joss Whedon)

Upstream Color (2013, Shane Carruth)

7_Duration

03/01

LECTURE:

Slow Cinema, Long Takes, HDD, Compositing, Restraint

READING:

Lev Manovich, "Compositing" *The Language of New Media* (MIT Press, 2001), 136-160.

Bruce Isaacs, "Reality Effects: The Ideology of the Long Take in the Cinema of Alfonso Cuarón in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st Century Film*. Shane Denson and Julia Leyda, eds. Sussex, UK: Reframe Books (2016). <<https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/4-3-isaacs/>>

CLIPS:

Timecode (2000, Mike Figgis)

The Gleaners and I (2001, Agnès Varda)

1917 (2019, Sam Mendes)

SCREENING:

Children of Men (2006, Alfonso Cuarón)

03/03

LECTURE:

Short Form Cinema, TikTok, Reels, Snapchat, Infinite Scroll

READING/VIEWING:

James Bridle, "Something is Wrong on the Internet" November 6, 2017.

<https://medium.com/@jamesbridle/something-is-wrong-on-the-internet-c39c471271d2>

"Touch" (2018, James J. Hodge, C.A. Davis, John Bresland)

<https://www.triquarterly.org/node/303191>

SHOW & TELL:

YouTube, TikTok

GENRE: Final Essay Due

8_Surveillance

03/08

LECTURE:

Horror Aesthetics, CCTV, Biometrics, Panopticon

READING:

Catherine Zimmer. "Commodified Surveillance: First-Person Cameras, the Internet, and Compulsive Documentation" *Surveillance Cinema*. NYU Press, 2015, 73-114.

CLIPS:

How Little We Know of Our Neighbors (2004, Rebecca Baron)

Red Road (2006, Andrea Arnold)

We Live in Public (2009, Ondi Timoner)

SCREENING:

Paranormal Activity (2009, Oren Peli)

03/10

LECTURE:

Sousveillance, Visibility, Opacity, Representation

READING:

Stark, Luke. "Facial recognition, emotion and race in animated social media." *First Monday* 23, no. 9 (2018).

VIEW:

Dash Cam/Body Cam Footage

ACLU Mobile Justice

CV Dazzle (2010-Present, Adam Harvey)

Makeup Tutorial HOW TO HIDE FROM CAMERAS (2013, Jillian Mayer)

09_Poor

03/15

LECTURE:

Compression, Piracy, Streaming, Buffering, Latency, Glitch, Datamoshing

READING:

Hito Styerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image" *e-flux* #10 (2009)

<<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>>.

Neta Alexander "Rage against the Machine: Buffering, Noise, and Perpetual Anxiety in the Age of Connected Viewing" *Cinema Journal* Vol. 56 No. 1 (Fall 2016).

SUGGESTED:

Rosa Menkman, *The Glitch Moment(um)* Amsterdam, NE: Network Notebooks (2011) 12-45.

CLIPS:

Killing Lena (2010, Jamie Allen)

Lossless #3 (2008, Rebecca Baron and Douglas Goodwin)

Monster Movie (2005, Takashi Murata)

Welcome to Heartbreak (2009, Kanye West and Kid Cudi)

SCREENING:

"Shut Up and Dance" and "Nosedive" *Black Mirror* (2016)

MEDIUM: Identify medium and 10 exemplary films

03/17

LECTURE:

Memes, Networks, Virality, Spam, Community

READING:

Finn Brunton. "Constitutive interference: Spam and online communities."
Representations 117, no. 1 (2012): 30-58.

SHOW & TELL:

Memes, Viral Video, Spreadable Media

10_Spring Break

NO CLASS

11_SCMS

NO CLASS

Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference
Chicago, IL

12_Platform

04/05

LECTURE:

Platform Aesthetics, Formats, Hardware, Codecs

READING:

Denson, Shane. "The Horror of Discorrelation: Mediating Unease in Post-Cinematic Screens and Networks." *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 60, no. 1 (2020): 26-48.

CLIPS:

Host (2020, Rob Savage)

Pulse (2001, Kiyoshi Kurosawa)

The Lawnmower Man (1992, Brett Leonard)

SCREENING:

Unfriended (Leo Gabriadze, 2014)

MEDIUM: Thesis statement and 100-word outline

04/07

LECTURE:

Interface Design, Walled Gardens, GUIs

READING:

Ed Finn. "House of Cards: The Aesthetics of Abstraction" in *What Algorithms Want: Imagination in the Age of Computing*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (2017) 87-112.

CLIPS:

Touching Software (2016, Ben Grosser)

13_Immersion

04/12

LECTURE:

3D, Stereoscopy, Cinemascope, Phenomenology

READING:

Whissel, Kristen. "Parallax effects: Epistemology, affect and digital 3D cinema." *Journal of Visual Culture* 15, no. 2 (2016): 233-249.

CLIPS:

Dial M for Murder (1954, Alfred Hitchcock)

Flesh for Frankenstein (1973, Paul Morrissey)

Captain EO (1986, Francis Ford Coppola)

SCREENING:

Ready Player One (2018, Steven Spielberg)

04/14

LECTURE:

Virtual Reality, Mixed Reality, Augmented Reality, "The Metaverse"

READING:

Engberg, Maria, and Jay David Bolter. "The aesthetics of reality media." *Journal of Visual Culture* 19, no. 1 (2020): 81-95.
Murray, Janet H. "Virtual/reality: how to tell the difference." *Journal of Visual Culture* 19, no. 1 (2020): 11-27.

SUGGESTED:

Bogost, Ian. "The Metaverse is Bad" *The Atlantic*. October 21, 2021.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2021/10/facebook-metaverse-name-change/620449/>

CLIPS:

The Metaverse and How We'll Build it Together (2021, Meta)

14_Non-Human

04/19

LECTURE:

Drone Cinema, Weaponized Vision, Robotics, Vertical Mediation,
(Dis)Embodiment

READING:

James Bridle "Under the Shadow of the Drone" Presentation by James
Bridle at Aksioma I Project Space. Ljubljana, Slovenia. 14 October 2015.
<<https://vimeo.com/143157879>>.

Lisa Parks. "Drones, Vertical Mediation, and the Targeted Class" *Feminist
Studies*. Vol. 42, No. 1, Everyday Militarism (2016), pp. 227-235.

CLIPS:

Powers of Ten (1977, Charles and Ray Eames)
The Bourne Legacy (2012, Tony Gilroy)
Oblivion (2013, Joseph Kosinski)

SCREENING:

Leviathan (Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Verena Paravel, 2012)

04/21

LECTURE:

GoPro, Google Street View, Animal Vision, Undirected Films

READING:

Joanna Zylińska “Nonhuman Vision” in *Nonhuman Photography*
(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017) 13-50.

SUGGESTED:

Leo Goldsmith “Leviathan: The Violence of Sensation” *Reverse Shot*
February 25, 2013 <<http://reverseshot.org/reviews/entry/1682/leviathan>>

CLIPS:

Power/Exchange (2003-Ongoing, Deborah Stratman)
9-Eyes (2009-Ongoing, Jon Rafman)
Vacated (2013, Justin Blinder)

15_Post

04/26

LECTURE:

Computational Photography, Computer Vision, Big Data, Photogrammetry

READING:

David Claerbout “The Silence of the Lens” e-flux #73 (May 2016)
<<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/73/60460/the-silence-of-the-lens/>>.
“Breaking News” *Radiolab*. Podcast. Available at:
<<http://futureoffakenews.com/videos.html>>

CLIPS:

Oil workers (2013, David Clarebout)
Face2Face (2016, Stanford University)

SCREENING:

Gravity (2013, Alfonso Cuarón)

04/28

LECTURE:

Anthropocene, Apocalyptic Cinema, Ruins Porn, Death Drive

READING:

Selmin Kara, "Anthropocenema: Cinema in the Age of Mass Extinctions" in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st Century Film*. Shane Denson and Julia Leyda, eds. Sussex, UK: Reframe Books (2016) <
<https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/6-2-kara/>>

CLIPS:

Melancholia (2011, Lars von Trier)
Horizon Zero Dawn (2017, Guerilla Games)
Fallout 4 (2015, Bethesda Game Studios)

MEDIUM: Final Essay Due

ASSESSMENT

10% Engagement
15% Exit Tickets
15% (5% x [4-1]) Quizzes
30% Genre Paper
 5% - Identification and Example
 5% - Thesis and Outline
 20% - Final Paper
30% Medium Paper
 5% - Identification and Example
 5% - Thesis and Outline
 20% - Final Paper

READING

This course will require you to read between 40-60 pages of academic and popular writing per week. These writings are designed to introduce you to new concepts and to provide critical arguments that will drive our class discussion. For this reason it is essential that you give yourself plenty of time to complete the reading before each class so that you can fully participate in our discussions in class. Depending on your experience with courses in the humanities, this may seem challenging or overwhelming, but it is essential. Stick with the readings and

it will get easier over time, and if you are struggling feel free and set up a meeting with me during office hours to discuss strategies to help you succeed.

All readings are available as PDFS on bCourses.

TECHNOLOGY

Laptops, smartphones, and tablets will not be allowed in class. All notes should be taken by hand, and you should come prepared to each class with paper, pen, and the course reader

EXIT TICKET

At the end of each class, I will give you five minutes to write an exit ticket, registering your attendance in class. An exit ticket is a 3"x5" notecard on which you write:

1. Your name
2. One of the following:
 - a. An issue we did not address that you would like addressed
 - b. A question you have based on today's discussion
 - c. A point you still do not understand that you want clarified
 - d. A question you wanted to ask but did not

I will collect these cards at the end of class and, based on your feedback, will structure the beginning of our next lecture accordingly. You will be required to bring a 3"x5" notecard with you to each class.

If for whatever reason you cannot make class, you will be allowed three class absences per semester. Beyond these three, any absences will impact your grade. More than six absences will result in your failing the course.

ENGAGEMENT

I expect you to attend and actively engage in class. You will notice that you are being graded not simply on your attendance, but on your engagement with the class. Engagement can mean any number of things, from asking questions in class to engaging course material both in and out of class. I recognize that different students have different learning styles, and may find it challenging to speak up every day in discussion. The important thing is that you find ways to make your engagement legible to me as best you can. If you think you are

struggling with this, please meet with me during office hours to discuss.

ESSAYS

You will be responsible for two essays to be completed over the course of the semester. Each of these assignments will follow a specific prompt that will be distributed at the start of the semester. These prompts have been modeled after the texts and screenings that we will engage as a class, and will ask you to extend these works to offer your own original critique. The goal of these assignments is to allow you to engage with genres and media beyond the boundaries of the syllabus, and to apply our reading and discussion to a media object of particular interest you. These texts will be written over the course of one month, and I will structure staggered deadlines to help you build your argument before the final assignment is due.

QUIZZES

Over the course of the semester I will administer four quizzes based on the reading for that day. They will be administered without advance notice, and cannot be made up. The content of the quizzes will be very simple, and is meant to simply check that you have done the reading for that day, regardless of how well you understand its argument or complexities. I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester when tallying your final grade.

LATE POLICY

I may offer extensions on writing assignments only if you provide me with at least three days' notice and sufficient evidence that you are working on an idea that requires more time. This does not guarantee an extension, but rather is the base requirement for a request. Do not ask for an extension the day before an assignment is due, or if you have not started writing yet. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 a grade for each day they are late (B+ to a B, B to a B-, etc.).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity>.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

If you have a documented physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Berkeley Disabled Students Program at (510) 643-0518. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.