

FILM 105: Senior Seminar

Dead Media Research Studio

CLASS INFO

Prof. Jacob Gaboury
Tues 2:00-5:00, Dwinelle 226

Office Hours: Mon 11-1
Office Location: 6223 Dwinelle

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is devoted to media archaeology, that is, historical research into forgotten, obsolete, or otherwise “dead” media technologies. This might include typewriters, phonographs, Polaroid photography, prison tattoo codes, the Victorian language of floral bouquets, outmoded video game platforms, computing systems, musical instruments, smoke signals, scent organs, shorthand notation, and rocket mail delivery. Our premise is that understanding these things can help us gain a better sense of the development, meaning and legacy of media technologies, now and in the future; our goal is to introduce students to the skills and resources necessary for producing rigorous research on such obsolete and obscure media. It will include an exposure to scholarship in media archaeology; an intensive introduction to research methods; instruction on the localization and utilization of word, image, and sound archives; and an emphasis on restoring media artifacts to their proper social and cultural context. The course stems from the premise that media archaeology is best undertaken, like any archaeological project, collaboratively. Hence the course follows a research studio model commonly used in disciplines such as architecture or design.

STRUCTURE

The central focus of this course will be the excavation of textual, visual, and sonic materials and their arrangement into a series of “dead media dossiers” on specific topics. Students will be required to work in small groups as well as individually. Each topic is pursued over a two-week period. Upon completion of one topic a new topic is selected and the cycle repeats itself. The dossiers are published online via bCourses. Classroom time consists of student groups presenting their research findings for the week, followed by criticism and feedback from the instructors and other students. Since the weekly course requirements are relatively demanding, the course does not have any additional exams or papers. Over the course of the semester a collection of research dossiers will accumulate based on the student work.

SCHEDULE

1_Introduction

01/22

LECTURE:

Introduction and Syllabus Presentation

ACTIVITY:

Play and Critique, *Timeline: Inventions* Card Game

2_Archaeology

01/29

LECTURE:

Media Archeology and Historical Research into Media Technology

READING:

Siegfried Zielinski, "Introduction: The Idea of a Deep Time of the Media"
and "Fortuitous Finds instead of Searching in Vain"

E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model"

ACTIVITY:

Small Groups Created, Review Dossier Models, Identify Research Object

3_Methodology

02/05

LECTURE:

Research Methods, Multimedia Presentation, Archives and Sources

READING:

Brian Pfaffenberger, "Technological Dramas"

Michel Foucault, "The Historical a priori and the Archive"

Simone Natale, "There Are No Old Media"

ACTIVITY:

Trip to Bancroft Library (Details TBA)

4_Vision

02/12

READING:

Siegfried Zielinski, "The Economy of Time"

Jonathan Crary, "Techniques of the Observer"

ACTIVITY:

02/14 [Prelinger Library](#) Visit (5-7pm) and [Place Talks](#) (7-9pm)

5_Student Crit 1

02/19

ACTIVITY:

Presentation of First Research Dossier

6_Vibration

02/26

READING:

Jonathan Sterne, "A Resonant Tomb"

Lisa Gitelman, "New Media Publics"

ACTIVITY:

Identify Second Research Object

7_Perpetuation

03/05

READING:

Steven Jackson, "Rethinking Repair"

Shannon Mattern, "[Maintenance and Care](#)"

ACTIVITY:

03/02 [Fixit Clinic @ Berkeley Public Library](#) 1-4pm

Backup Visit to [Urban Ore](#), 900 Murray St, Berkeley, CA

8_NO CLASS

03/12

Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Seattle, WA

9_Student Crit 2

03/19

ACTIVITY:

Presentation of Second Research Dossier

10_SPRING BREAK

03/26

NO CLASS

11_Mechanization

04/02

READING:

Friedrich Kittler, "Typewriter"

Tom Mullaney, "The Moveable Typewriter: How Chinese Typists Developed Predictive Text During the Height of Maoism"

ACTIVITY:

New Small Groups Created, Identify Third Research Object

12_Calculation

04/09

READING:

Laine Nooney, "A Pedestal, A Table, A Love Letter: Archaeologies of Gender in Videogame History"

Lisa Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture"

ACTIVITY:

04/13 [Musée Mécanique](#) Pier 45, Fishermans Wharf, San Francisco, CA

13_Student Crit 3

04/16

ACTIVITY:

Presentation of Third Research Dossier

14_Construction

04/23

READING:

Shannon Mattern, [Deep Mapping the Media City](#)

ACTIVITY:

Identify Final Research Object

SCREENING:

[How Buildings Learn](#) (James Runice and Stewart Brand, 1997)

15_Destruction

04/30

READING:

Jussi Parikka, [The Anthroscene](#)

ACTIVITY:

Course Review

FINAL_Student Crit 4

05/13

ACTIVITY:

Presentation of Final Research Dossier

ASSESSMENT

20% Dossier #1

20% Dossier #2

20% Dossier #3

20% Dossier #4

20% Engagement

READING

This course will require you to read between 50-100 pages of academic and popular writing per week. These writings are designed to introduce you to new concepts and methods 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 online or via the course reader, which may be purchased at Instant Copying and Laser Printing, 2138 University Ave.

DOSSIERS

Four different dossiers on a specific piece of dead media are required. Two dossiers will be drafted collaboratively in small student groups; two will be solo. Each dossier will be presented orally to the class and will receive criticism from the instructors and from other students. Each solo dossier must be approximately 1000 words in length, each collaborative dossier about 3000. They must be historical and/or critical in nature, and may include textual, sonic, or visual material. Each dossier must be composed on the course website and will be accessible to the rest of the class.

Models

Shannon Mattern, ["Things That Beep: A Brief History of Product Sound Design"](#)

Shannon Mattern, ["Closet Archive"](#)

Mara Mills, ["Evocative Object: Auditory Inkblot"](#)

Jacob Gaboury, ["Sounding Silence"](#)

Sandy Isenstadt, ["At the Flip of a Switch"](#)

Finn Brunton and Lori Emerson, ["The Canon Cat: Processing Advanced Work"](#)

CLASS STRUCTURE

Each week 2-3 students will be tasked with initiating our discussion of the readings, which will require the preparation of 3-5 questions to be presented to the class. Discussion will then proceed around a “Think, Pair, Share” model before moving to more general discussion. We will then transition to research updates from each student or group before moving to the designated activity for that week.

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. If you think you are struggling with this, please meet with me during office hours to discuss.

ATTENDANCE

If for whatever reason you cannot make class, you will be allowed one class absence per semester. Beyond these two, any absences will impact your grade by 5% per missed class.

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, 260 César E. Chávez Student Center, #4250, (510) 643-0518. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.