

Experimental Workshop I

School of Film and Media Studies

Purchase College, State University of New York

FLM 3610 CRN 42443

Fall 2018, Mondays, 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Music Building, Mixing Room 0017

Instructor: Joel Neville Anderson

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Office Hours: Mondays, 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (Music Building, Room 0053) and by appointment

Please Note: Students are expected to register for both the Fall (FLM 3610) and Spring (FLM 3620) semesters of this course. Students cannot take this class for only one semester.

Course Description:

This two-semester hybrid production/history course invites students to expand their creative horizons and sharpen their conceptual approach with a hands-on introduction to moving-image art and truly independent filmmaking. Students will have a unique opportunity to experience, discuss, and make a number of their own experimental media productions. Lectures and screenings will be complemented by group critique, visits with contemporary working artists, and multiple trips to the city for screenings. Experimental Workshop will explore the outer fringes of non-commercial cinema and moving-image art through an engagement with canonical works, key filmmakers, landmark movements, contemporary artists, amateur dabblers, stylistic genres and general aesthetic concerns. We will screen a broad selection of narrative and non-narrative, diaristic, abstract, structural, lyrical, and unclassifiable works by artists from all milieus and eras. While screenings are an important part of the course, we will not focus on traditional film analysis. We watch historic and contemporary works to better inform our own practice moving forward. The goal is not to recreate or imitate, but rather to understand what has preceded us in order to push to new creative realms. As the class title implies, experimenting (and sometimes failing) will be at the core of our practice. We will work with the knowledge that an experiment must have a control; it is not random, but done with great care and intention.

Reading and Viewing Assignments:

All texts assigned for reading are either downloadable as PDFs via Moodle or on reserve at the Purchase Library. All films and videos assigned for viewing are available as a DVD on reserve at the library or via online streaming platforms as indicated by the instructor. After completing the weekly reading and viewing assignments, bring your own copies of the relevant readings to class (either as a printed copy or PDF on a laptop or tablet) to reference during lecture and discussion. Whatever device you choose to watch the viewing material on I encourage you to do so in an environment free of distractions so you may concentrate on the creators' work. Texts, film/video pieces, and exhibitions offered on a weekly basis as "Recommended" sources are optional and meant for students with a particular interest in the topic, possibly for later reference as part of their future research and creative work.

Off-campus Screenings:

This class is actively engaged with contemporary experimental moving image production and as such students will be expected to attend cinematic events, screenings, and exhibitions around New York City. Often these events will correlate directly with our classwork, in-class conversations and screenings, and the work of visiting artists. Seeing contemporary work in context greatly enriches this course and attendance is mandatory. Plan and budget accordingly.

Journals:

Students are expected to keep a journal in which to express their thoughts on the screening material and readings. Your journal entries should be informal, offering thoughtful observations and questions. Journals should devote at least two to three pages to each week of material, either handwritten on lined looseleaf paper or typed and printed (if handwriting is not legible, you may be asked to prepare typed and printed versions instead). Hard copies of journal entries will be collected periodically at the start of class—be sure to record your thoughts on the readings as well as screenings. I will return these to you with comments on a regular basis throughout the semester.

Film/Video Projects:

This two semester course culminates in students' production of their Spring Thesis Project. In developing our practice and preparing for that goal, students will create a number of short-term projects or exercises based on a set of controls offered by the instructor. The syllabus notes when these projects will be introduced/assigned, as well as when they are due to be screened in class. Please ask the instructor any questions regarding the process of completing your project on the day they are assigned, during office hours and scheduled meetings, or via email. On the due date, please come prepared with your project on an external hard drive with appropriate cables, a laptop with appropriate cables and/or dongles, an online streaming link with appropriate passwords, or if screening on film, confirm the availability of the necessary projector in the mixing room where class will be held. If you foresee any time delay due to file transfer or another technical process, please let the instructor know before class begins so that any necessary adjustments in screening order can be made.

Creative projects will be graded according to the following criteria:

- **Concept:** Evidence of the thoughtful conceptualization of an idea and your realization of that idea in the work. The multi-layered, nuanced, and surprising moments in your work will be evidence of your thoughtful approach, as well as production materials such as sketches and notes, which can be shown additionally, however, it is the work itself that matters the most.
- **Risk:** Evidence that you attempted to synthesize some of the new ideas discussed in class and incorporate them into your work in a way that pushes the limits of what you already know. In order to grow as artists we must feel discomfort at times. It is important to see in your work, evidence that you are attempting to reach beyond what you feel like you already master, both technically and conceptually.

- **Rigor:** The project should be put together with intention and care. Going through the motions or throwing things together is not sufficient. With each assignment it is your task to discover the thing you want to say and say it completely and coherently, even if you do not understand what you mean at the time. This thought must be fully executed for us to try to read your work.

Grading:

Attendance/Participation: 25% of final grade

Journals/Presentations: 15%

Film/Video projects: 60%

Policies and Guidelines:

- **Attendance:** Your attendance at each class is mandatory, and repeated absences will result in a lowered grade. Please clear any expected absences with me in advance, and provide appropriate documentation (such as record of a medical visit). If you do miss class, please check with me or your peers to catch up on assignments and handouts. Arriving to class after the start time on two occasions will be recorded as one absence. Arriving more than 20 minutes after the start time will be considered an absence.
- **Preparation and Participation:** In addition to completing assigned film/video projects, approximately two to three hours of screening material, in addition to one to two articles or book chapters may be assigned to watch and read each week. Students are expected to review the material in detail, and come prepared to participate in discussion. Your thoughts are valuable to me and your fellow students. Students are responsible for all assignments, even if they are absent, unless otherwise discussed.
- **Classroom Technology:** Laptops or tablets may be used during class for note-taking and referring to class readings only, unless otherwise discussed. Laptops or tablets may also be used during class presentations. Use of mobile phones is not permitted, and will result in students being asked to leave the classroom and a lowered participation score.
- **Email Correspondence:** Please check your university email regularly for announcements and updates to the syllabus and assignments.
- **Moodle:** Moodle will be an important resource for this class, and students should check it regularly for announcements.
- **Instructor Delay:** In rare instances, the instructor may be delayed arriving to class due to an emergency. If the instructor has not arrived by the time class is scheduled to start, students must wait a minimum of thirty minutes for the instructor's arrival before leaving. In the event that the instructor will miss class entirely, a sign will be posted at the classroom.

Academic Honesty:

Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university. Reuse, reference, appropriation, and quotation are an integral part of working creatively—we expect and encourage these behaviors over the course of the semester. These processes, however, are distinctly different than plagiarism: passing off another's work as your

own. This course will have a zero tolerance approach to plagiarism. If you are unclear as to the distinction between these ideas, or how a specific project or approach might fit into these guidelines, please do not hesitate to ask.

Disabilities Notice:

If you require any assistance or accommodations, or have questions related to accommodations, please speak with me as soon as possible. Students with documented physical, learning, and psychological and other disabilities are entitled to receive reasonable accommodations. If a student needs accommodations, they must first register with the Office of Access and Accommodations at 914.251.6035 or orcou.accommodations@purchase.edu.

Religious Accommodations:

If you require academic accommodations for a religious observance, please speak with me as soon as possible to consider a reasonable modification.

Course Schedule:

Week 1 (August 27): Course Overview: What is the avant-garde? What is it for you?

In-class screening: Mengqi Zhang

* **Introduction of Project #1: “Fair Exchange”**

Recommended: “John Akomfrah: Signs of Empire” exhibition, New Museum, closing September 2, 2018. (Open Tuesday through Sunday.)

Week 2 (September 3): No class—enjoy

Week 3 (September 10): Cinema in Space

* **Watch and critique: Project #1: “Fair Exchange”**

Have read: Douglas Crimp, “Action around the Edges”

Have watched: Joan Jonas, Gordon Matta-Clark (streaming details circulated over email)

* **Introduction of Project #2: “Making Space”**

Week 4 (September 17): No class—field trip on Saturday, September 15

* **Field trip to the Whitney Museum of American Art (visiting the “David Wojnarowicz: History Keeps Me Awake at Night” and “Pacha, Llaqta, Wasichay: Indigenous Space, Modern Architecture, New Art” exhibitions) and The Kitchen (visiting the “Chitra Ganesh: Her garden, a mirror” exhibition, and “An Evening with Experimenta India” screening).**

Have watched: LaToya Ruby Frazier, Hito Steyerl (streaming details circulated over email)

Week 5 (September 24): Cinema and Landscape

* **Introduction of “How I Situate My Work” Presentation**

Have read: Yuriko Furuhashi, “Returning to actuality: *fukeiron* and the landscape film”

Have watched: *A.K.A. Serial Killer* (Masao Adachi, 1969)

In-class screening: James Benning, Sky Hopinka, Joyce Wieland

Week 6 (October 1): Cinema Against Capital

*** Watch and critique: Project #2: “Making Space”**

Have read: Karl Marx (excerpts)

Have watched: *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi, and 27 Years Without Images* (Eric Baudelaire, 2011)

*** Introduction of Project #3: “Empty Portrait”**

Week 7 (October 8): Shifting Horizons

*** Presentations: “How I Situate My Work”**

Have read: Fredric Jameson, “Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film”

Have watched: *Dog Day Afternoon* (Sidney Lumet, 1975, on reserve at the library)

In-class screening: Pierre Huyghe, Chris Marker, Sarah Maldoror

Week 8 (October 15): Cinema Against Spectacle

*** Watch and critique: Project #3: “Empty Portrait” (Group #1)**

Have read: Terri Frances, “Cosmologies of Black Cultural Production: A Conversation with Afrosurrealist Filmmaker Christopher Harris,” Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (excerpts)

Have watched: *Society of the Spectacle* (Guy Debord, 1973)

In-class screening: Isaac Julien, Martin Arnold, John Akomfrah, Mónica Savirón, Christopher Harris

*** Introduction of Spring Thesis Project and proposal and planning process (schedule individual meetings to be held at the beginning of next class)**

Week 9 (October 22): Reassemblage

*** Individual meetings throughout day (scheduled prior week): Prepare draft/notes for written proposal, in addition to pre-production media such as stills, test or rough footage.**

*** Watch and critique: Project #3: “Empty Portrait” (Group #2)**

Have read: Nicholas Mirzoeff, *How to See the World* (excerpts—full book available for reference on reserve at library), Trinh T. Minh-ha (excerpts)

Have watched: *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, 1958), *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989, available on Kanopy)

In-class screening: Bruce Conner, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Ja’Tovia Gary

*** Introduction of Project #4: “Decon Recon”**

Week 10 (October 29): No class—field trip on Sunday, October 28

*** Field trip to Queens Museum (visiting the Queens International 2018 and Panorama of the City of New York).**

Week 11 (November 5): Cinema as Essay

*** Watch and critique: Project #4: “Decon Recon”**

Have read: Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan, *Essays on the Essay Film* (excerpts)

Have watched: Harun Farocki (selections)

In-class screening: Jonas Mekas, Jem Cohen, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Su Friedrich

*** Introduction of Project #5: “First Person”**

*** Schedule individual meetings for Spring Thesis Project to be held at the beginning of next class.**

Week 12 (November 12): Film Materiality, Cinema as Image and Language

*** Individual meetings throughout day (scheduled prior week): Bring revised written proposal, in addition to pre-production media such as stills, test or rough footage. Next week the final revised proposals will be due in class, in addition to a class presentation.**

Have read: P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000* (excerpts—full book available for reference on reserve at library)

Have watched: Stan Brakhage (selections)

In-class screening: Stan Brakhage, Carolee Schneemann, Hollis Frampton, Maya Deren

Week 13 (November 19): Digital Materiality, Cinema as Data and Voice

*** Presentation: Spring Thesis Projects and Planning Outline**

Have read: Hito Steyerl (excerpts), Édouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation* (excerpts—full book available for reference on reserve at library)

In-class screening: Hito Steyerl, Mounira Al Solh

Week 14 (November 26): Cinema as Dance

Have read: Édouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation* (excerpts—full book available for reference on reserve at library)

Have watched: *The Hole* (Tsai Ming-liang, 1998)

In-class screening: Maya Deren, Nao Yoshigai

Week 15 (December 3): Class Screenings Part 1

*** Watch and critique: Project #5: “First Person” (Group #1)**

Week 16 (December 10): Class Screenings Part 2

*** Watch and critique: Project #5: “First Person” (Group #2)**