

Experimental Workshop I

School of Film and Media Studies

Purchase College, State University of New York

FLM3610 CRN 42443

Fall 2019, Mondays, 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Music Building, MUS0017

Instructor: Prof. Joel Neville Anderson

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Office: Music Building, MUS0053

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11 AM - 12 PM, 3-4 PM 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:

Readings will be posted on Moodle as PDFs. Films/videos assigned for viewing outside class will be available on reserve at the library or via online streaming, as specified by the instructor. (Whatever devices you choose to use to watch films/videos outside of class, 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.

Weekly Journals:

Each week, students are required to respond to the assigned viewing and reading material while reflecting on your own creative process, analyzing the form and content of given cinematic works. Your journal entries should be informal, offering thoughtful observations and questions. Each written response should address at least one film/video and at least one text assigned for that week. Post to Moodle under the appropriate weekly listing. Posts should be a minimum of 400 words in length. Students can miss one response out of the ten total due and still receive full credit. *Due by 9 AM on the day of class, beginning the second week, and due every following week until several weeks before the end of the semester to give students time to work on their Final Essay.*

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

Weekly 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**: Approximately two to three hours of screening material, in addition to one to two articles or book chapters will be assigned 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.
- **Respecting Yourself and Others**: You are expected to treat others in the class with respect. This means listening to their words and choosing your own with care.
- **Classroom Technology**: Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones are not to be used once class has begun. Laptops or tablets may be used during class presentations. Please bring a notebook and pen or pencil to class.
- **Breaks**: There will be a short break during class, usually at the midpoint. Returning after the class resumes will count as a late arrival. Please only leave the class outside of this set break time in case of emergencies. It is not necessary to ask for the instructor's permission, but please return within five minutes, and do not leave more than once. Inform the instructor at the start of the semester if you require an accommodation.
- **Food and Drinks**: Food and drink are allowed when class is held in the Music Building (MUS0017), though please be discrete and be sure to dispose of any trash. Please note there will not be time to run and purchase a snack outside the classroom building during break. However when class is held in the Center for Media, Film, and Theatre screening room (CMFT0065), there are strict rules regarding food and drink due to the sensitivity of technology. Please only bring water into the CMFT screening room. (You may eat a snack during the break.)
- **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 Integrity Policy:

The Purchase College academic integrity policy explicitly forbids cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another person and the representation of them as one's own original work. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the definition of plagiarism and the acceptable methods of attribution. These are serious matters and you need to be aware of what is and is not permissible. See <https://www.purchase.edu/offices/community-standards/student-code-of-conduct/section-a-academic-integrity/index.php> and related links for more information.

Tutoring Support:

All students at Purchase College can take advantage of tutoring services in the Learning Center (LIB0009) and the Einstein Corner (NSB3044). These are free, 45-minute, peer-to-peer tutoring sessions in a variety of subjects and in writing across the disciplines. I encourage you to take advantage of this service to help you excel in this class, as well as your other courses. Please visit the Learning Center (<https://www.purchase.edu/offices/learning-center/>) and Einstein Corner (<https://www.purchase.edu/academics/school-of-natural-social-sciences/academic-support/index.php>) websites for more information.

Accessibility:

The Office of Disability Resources collaborates directly with students who identify with disabilities to create accommodation plans, including testing accommodations, in order for students to access course content and validly demonstrate learning. For students who may require accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Resources as soon as possible: (914) 251-6035, ODR@purchase.edu (Student Services Building, 316A), www.purchase.edu/odr.

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:

(Note: all readings/screenings should be completed *before* the class for which they are assigned)

Week 1 (August 26): Course Overview: What is the avant-garde? What is it for you?

In-class screening: Mengqi Zhang

Recommended reading: Jing Meng, "Documenting the past: performativity and inter-subjectivity in the memory project"

* **Introduction of Project #1: "Fair Exchange"**

Week 2 (September 2): No class—enjoy

Week 3 (September 10): No class—field trip on Sep. 20 or 21

Week 4 (September 16): 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)

Recommended reading: Masha Gessen, “The Beautiful Uncertainty of Douglas Crimp”

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

Field trip: (Friday, Sep. 20 or Saturday, Sep. 21): Indigenous Histories and Futures

*** Self-directed field trip to the Whitney Museum of American Art attending “What Was Always Yours and Never Lost” program (Friday, Sep. 20 at 7 PM or Saturday, Sep. 21 at 4 PM) featuring Caroline Monnet, Colectivo Los Ingrávidos, Thirza Cuthand, Adam Khalil, Zach Khalil, Jackson Polys, and James Luna. (Prompts for journal entry to be circulated over email.)**

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

Week 5 (September 23): 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) (streaming details circulated over email)

In-class screening: James Benning, Joyce Wieland

Week 6 (September 30): Cinema Against Capital, Cinema Against Spectacle

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

Have read: Karl Marx (excerpts), Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (excerpts)

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

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

Week 7 (October 7): Film Materiality, Cinema as Image and Language

Have read: Ara Osterweil, “On Fuses,” P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000* (excerpts)

Have watched: Stan Brakhage (on reserve in library), Carolee Schneemann (streaming details circulated over email)

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

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

Week 8 (October 14): Radical Filmmaking

*** 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,” Clyde R. Taylor, *Breaking the Aesthetic Contract—Film and Literature* (excerpts)

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 next week)**

Week 9 (October 21): Reassemblage

*** Individual meetings this week (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: Trinh T. Minh-ha, “Documentary Is/Not a Name,” Nicholas Mirzoeff, *How to See the World* (excerpts—full book available for reference on reserve at library)

Have watched: *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, 1958), *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989) (streaming details circulated over email)

In-class screening: Bruce Conner, Trinh T. Minh-ha

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

Week 10 (October 28): Guest TBA

Have read: TBA

Week 11 (November 4): 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, streaming details circulated over email)

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 next week.**

Week 12 (November 11): A Thousand Suns

*** Individual meetings this week (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: N. Frank Ukadike, “The Hyena’s Last Laugh: interview with Djibril Diop Mambety,” *Transition* 78 (vol. 8, no. 2, 1999): 136-53. James Williams, “A Thousand Suns: Traversing the Archive and Transforming Documentary in Mati Diop’s *Mille Soleils*,” *Film Quarterly* (Fall 2016): 85-95.

Have watched: Djibril Diop Mambéty’s *The Journey of the Hyena* (“Touki Bouki,” 1973), *The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun* (“La petite vendeuse de soleil,” 1999) (streaming details circulated over email)

In-class screening: Mati Diop

Week 13 (November 18): 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 25): 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, streaming details circulated over email)

In-class screening: Maya Deren, Nao Yoshigai

Week 15 (December 2): Class Screenings Part 1

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

Week 16 (December 9): Class Screenings Part 2

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