

## **Cinema in the Internet Age**

School of Film and Media Studies

Purchase College, State University of New York

CIN3500, CRN 65186

Spring 2020, Thursdays, 2:30 PM - 6:10 PM

Center for Media, Film, and Theatre, CMFT0065

Instructor: Prof. Joel Neville Anderson

Email: [joel.anderson@purchase.edu](mailto:joel.anderson@purchase.edu)

Office: Music Building, MUS0053

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10 AM - 12 PM, Thursdays 11 AM - 12 PM, and by appointment

### **Course Description:**

Networked computing has reconfigured cultural production, distribution, textual practices, and consumption. Students investigate how cinema registers these shifts by analyzing films that address the internet and by examining the ways that computing technologies renew film's significance. Readings cover the latest conversations in media theory, addressing such issues as photographic indexicality, database narratives, digital aesthetics, software studies, and social media.

### **Course Goals/Student Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the semester, students will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of key issues in contemporary cinema.
2. Understand and employ vocabulary terms and concepts corresponding to contemporary film and media theory.
3. Utilize digital tools to analyze contemporary moving image works, addressing not only complete films, but fragments in circulation, applying key concepts for analysis.

### **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 and film/video 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 the Final Essay assignment.

### **Weekly Responses:**

Each week, students are required to respond to the assigned viewing and reading material, analyzing the form and content of given cinematic works, and incorporating the historical contexts, theories, or arguments of the texts. This is not an informal film review, but an opportunity to demonstrate the modes of analysis we are learning in the course, while offering your own 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.*

### **Midterm:**

Students are required to put their skills interpreting and analyzing contemporary moving image media to intensive use in this assignment, in which they produce a series of short texts analyzing media fragments according to a series of prescribed conceptual threads which will then be presented in class. Alternatively, they may produce a short video essay. Requirements concerning the “media fragment analysis” and “video essay” options, as well as details of in-class presentation will be provided. This detail-oriented assignment will be good preparation for the cohesive historical and theoretical analysis required in the Final Essay. *Due at the start of class midway through the semester.*

### **Final Essay:**

Students are required to write a final essay analyzing a cinematic work and topic related to material from the class (10-12 pages, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, Chicago Manual of Style citations). I will distribute a prompt listing potential films/videos and topics, along with further guidelines. Students may consult with me during office hours to choose from the suggested films/videos/topics and discuss their approach, or propose a new one. Students are encouraged to choose which works and theoretical models they engage with, but if you would like to pursue titles and topics outside the list of prompts, it must be discussed with and approved by the instructor in advance. The “Recommended” readings each week will be useful in furthering students’ original research. *Due at the start of the final class meeting.*

### **Grading:**

Participation: 25% of final grade

Weekly Responses: 20%

Midterm: 20%

Final Paper: 35%

### **Policies and Guidelines:**

- Attendance: Your attendance at each class is mandatory. A single absence will be excused without question, however repeated absences will result in a lowered letter grade: 2 will result in a B as a maximum possible grade, 3 in a C, and 4 absences will result in automatic failure of the course. 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. Excusing absences will require documentation (such as a doctor’s note following a medical visit). If you do miss class, please check with me or your peers to catch up on assignments and handouts—this will be your responsibility.

- **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 between the lecture/discussion and screening portions. 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:** The Center for Media, Film, and Theatre screening room (CMFT0065) where the class is held has strict rules regarding food and drink due to the sensitivity of technology. Please only bring water into the screening room. You may eat a snack during the break, though please note there will not be time to run and purchase a snack outside the classroom building during 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](mailto:ODR@purchase.edu) (Student Services Building, 316A), [www.purchase.edu/odr](http://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)

## ***Part #1: CINEMA, UNDEAD***

### **Week 1 (January 23): Course Overview and Introduction: The Myth of Total Cinema**

In-class screening: *The Matrix* (Lana and Lilly Wachowski, 1999).

Recommended: Cael M. Keegan, *Lana and Lilly Wachowski* (2018, excerpts).

### **Week 2 (January 30): Media Theory, Pre- and Post-Cinema**

In-class screening: *Hugo* (Martin Scorsese, 2011, clips); *STRIKE* (Hito Steyerl, 2010); *STRIKE II* (Hito Steyerl, 2012); *Workers Leaving the Job Site* (Kevin Jerome Everson, 2013); *WALL-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008).

Read: André Bazin, “The Myth of Total Cinema” (1946); J. Hoberman, “The Myth of the Myth of Total Cinema” (2012); Eivind Røssaak, “Figures of Sensation: Between Still and Moving Images” (2006).

Recommended: Miriam De Rosa and Vinzenz Hediger, “Post-what? Post-when? A Conversation on the ‘Posts’ of Post-media and Post-cinema” (2017).

**\* First Weekly Response (on Moodle) due today and each following week unless noted.**

### **Week 3 (February 6): Cultures of Criticism**

In-class screening: *Kapò* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1960, clips); *Battle of Algiers* (Pontecorvo, 1966, clips); *Here and Elsewhere* (Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, 1976); *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979, clips); *Jarhead* (Sam Mendes, 2005, clips); *Zero Dark Thirty* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2012, clips).

Read: Jacques Rivette, “Of Abjection” (1961); Serge Daney, “The Tracking Shot in *Kapo*” (1992); Ruba Katrib, “It Is Still Taking Place” (2019); Robert Stam, “Mobilizing Fictions: The Gulf War, The Media, and the Recruitment of the Spectator” (1992).

Recommended: André Bazin, “Forbidden Montage” (1953); Serge Daney, “Montage Obligatory” (1991); Lawrence Weschler, “Valkyries Over Iraq: The Trouble with War Movies” (2005).

## **Part #2: ANIMATED DATABASES**

### **Week 4 (February 13): Pre-Digital Network Aesthetics**

In-class screening: *Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929); *Abstract* (Hito Steyerl, 2012).

Read: Lev Manovich, *The Language of Digital Media* (2002, excerpts); Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1885-1894, excerpts).

Recommended: Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* (1984, edited by Annette Michelson, excerpts).

### **Week 5 (February 20): Television’s Utopias**

In-class screening: *TVTV: Video Revolutionaries* (Paul Goldsmith, 2018, clips); *VTR: DCTV* (1975, clips); *Chinatown Health Fair* (DCTV, 1971, clips); *Centers* (Vito Acconci, 1971, clips); *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* (Nam June Paik, 1984, clips); *This Is What Democracy Looks Like* (Jill Friedberg, Rick Rowley, 2000).

Read: *Radical Software* magazine (1971-1974, excerpts); Zapatista texts (1996); Adrienne Russell, “Myth and the Zapatista Movement: Exploring a Network Identity,” *New Media and Society* (2005); Todd Wolfson, “Democracy or autonomy? Indymedia and the contradictions of global social movement networks,” *Global Networks* (2013).

Recommended: Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (1964, excerpts).

### **Week 6 (February 27): The Video Essay (and Fair Use Workshop)**

In-class screening: *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, 1958); *Report* (Conner, 1967); *Sans soleil* (Chris Marker, 1983, clips); *Capitalism: Child Labor* (Ken Jacobs, 2006); *RiP: A Remix Manifesto* (Brett Gaylor, 2008, clips); *Let’s Enhance* (Duncan Robson, 2009); *A Movie* (Jen Procter, 2010-2012); *Ozu // Passageways* (Kogonada, 2012); *A Brief Look at Texting and the Internet in Film* (Tony Zhou, 2014); *Searching* (Aneesh Chaganty, 2018, trailer); Abounaddara Collective shorts (2010-2017); Colectivo Los ingravidos shorts (2012-2020); *TRANSFORMERS: THE PREMAKE* (Kevin B. Lee, 2015); *War at a Distance* (Harun Farocki, 2003).

Read: Erika Balsom, *After Uniqueness A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation* (2017, excerpts); Debora Halbert, “Theorizing the Public Domain: Copyright and the Development of a Cultural Commons” (2003).

Recommended: Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution* (2012, excerpts); Codes of Best Practices in Fair Use, Center for Media and Social Impact.

**\* Introducing Midterm guidelines.**

### **Part #3: PEOPLE POWER**

#### **Week 7 (March 5): Against Technological Determinism**

In-class screening: *Startup.com* (Chris Hegedus and Jehane Noujaim, 2001, clips); *Control Room* (Jehane Noujaim, 2004, clips); *The Great Hack* (Karim Amer and Jehane Noujaim, 2019, clips); *The Square* (Jehane Noujaim, 2013); *Chronicle of a Summer* (Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, 1962, clips); *Leviathan* (Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel, 2012, clips).

Read: Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (2018, excerpts); Adrienne Russell, “Extra-National Information Flows, Social Media, and the 2011 Egyptian Uprising” (2011).

Recommended: Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism* (2013, excerpts); Paolo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (2012, excerpts).

**Extra Credit Opportunity (On-Campus): Attend *The Master* (Nawapol Thamrongrattanarit, 2014), March 11, 7:00 PM, CMFT 0065, part of the Spring 2020 Cinema Studies Screening Series and submit written report (400 words).**

**Extra Credit Opportunity (Off-Campus): Attend any one screening in the “1995: The Year the Internet Broke” film series at Anthology Film Archives (March 5-12) and submit written report (400 words).**

#### **Week 8 (March 12): The Politics of Play**

In-class screening: *Desire Inc.* (Lynn Hershman Leeson, 1990); *Life Squared* (Lynn Hershman Leeson, 2007); *She Puppet* (Peggy Ahwesh, 2001); *Sweet Dreams* (Jeanne Liotta, 2010); *Immemory* (Chris Marker, 1997); Fatima Al Qadiri, “Ghost Raid” music video from *Desert Strike EP* (2012); *Mendeel Um A7mad (NxIxSxM)* (Fatima Al Qadiri, Khalid al Gharaballi, 2012); *Atlantics* (Mati Diop, 2019, clips).

Read: Noor Al-Qasimi, “The ‘Boyah’ and the ‘Baby Lady’: Queer Mediations in Fatima Al Qadiri and Khalid al Gharaballi's Wawa Series” (2011); Britt Julious, “The Lure of an Untold Story: An Interview with Fatima Al Qadiri” (2013); Irene Chien, “Playing Against the Grain: Machinima and Military Gaming” (2010).

Recommended: Noor Al-Qasimi, “Ladies and Gentlemen, Boyahs and Girls: Uploading Transnational Queer Subjectivities in the United Arab Emirates” (2011); Irene Chien, “This Is Not a Dance” (2006).

#### **Week 9 (March 19): Midterm Presentations**

**\* Midterm presentations due today. (No Weekly Response due.)**

#### **Week 10 (March 26): Embodiment and Technology**

In-class screening: *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1982, clips); *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (Hironobu Sakaguchi, Motonori Sakakibara, 2001); *AI* (Spielberg Steven, 2001); *Waking Life* (Richard Linklater, 2001); *Ghost in the Shell* (Mamoru Oshii, 1995, clips); *Ghost in the*

*Shell* (Rupert Sanders, 2017, clips); *Afronauts* (Nuotama Bodomo, 2014); *The Last Angel of History* (John Akomfrah, 1996).

Read: Beth Coleman, “Race as Technology” (2009); Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Race and/as Technology* (2011); Rinaldo Walcott, “The Sight of Sound: *The Last Angel of History*” (2007).

Recommended: Bruce Sterling, “A Short History of the Internet” (1993); Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (2007, excerpts).

**\* Potential films/videos and topics for Final Essay assignment distributed today.**

### **Week 11 (April 2): NO CLASS—SUBMIT WEEKLY RESPONSE**

Watch *Citizenfour* (Laura Poitras, 2014).

Read: Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (2019, excerpts).

### **Week 12 (April 9): NO CLASS—SPRING RECESS**

**\* Students should have chosen topics for the Final Essay by today.**

## ***Part #4: RADICAL TRANSPARENCY***

### **Week 13 (April 16): Surveillance Cultures**

In-class screening: *Blow Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966); *The Conversation* (Frances Ford Coppola, 1974, clips); *Blow Out* (Brian De Palma, 1981, clips); *Hackers* (Iain Softley, 1995, clips); *The Net* (Henry Winkler, 1995, clips); *Enemy of the State* (Tony Scott, 1998, clips); *We Steal Secrets: The Story of Wikileaks* (Alex Gibney, 2013, clips); *The Internet’s Own Boy: The Story of Aaron Swartz* (Brian Knappenberger, 2014, clips); *(T)ERROR* (Lyric Cabral, 2015).

Read: Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (2015, excerpts).

Recommended: Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (2004, excerpts).

**\* Last Weekly Response due today.**

### **Field trip Friday, April 17: Theorizing the Web**

Theorizing the Web is an inter- and non-disciplinary annual conference that brings together scholars, journalists, artists, activists, and technology practitioners to think conceptually and critically about the interrelationships between the Web and society. Held at the Museum of the Moving Image in Queens (April 17-18). A report based on students’ attendance will be due the following class. (Note: the SUNYWide Film Festival will be held on the SUNY Purchase campus April 17-19, with festivities beginning Friday evening.)

### **Week 14 (April 23): Consumption and Performance**

In-class screening: *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (Tsai Ming-liang, 2003, clips); *Far From Heaven* (Todd Haynes, 2003, clips); *You’ve Got Mail* (Nora Ephron, 1998, clips); *The Social Network* (David Fincher, 2010, clips); *Catfish* (Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman, 2010, clips); *Pulse* (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2001, clips); *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sánchez, 1999, trailer); *InRealLife* (Beeban Kidron, 2013, clips); *Me and You and Everyone We Know*

(Miranda July, 2005, clips); *Of the North* (Dominic Gagnon, 2015, trailer); *The Road Movie* (Dmitrii Kalashnikov, 2016, clips); *Present.Perfect* (Shengze Zhu, 2019).  
Read: Michelle Cho, “Vicarious Media: Kpop, *Mukbang*, and Consuming Consumption” (2018); Nicole Erin Morse, “Authenticity, Captioned: Hashtags, Emojis, and Visibility Politics in Alok Vaid-Menon’s Selfies” (2017); Neta Alexander, “Speed Watching, Efficiency, and the New Temporalities of Digital Spectatorship” (2017).  
Recommended: Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (2012, excerpts); Catherine Zimmer, “Commodified Surveillance: First-Person Cameras, the Internet, and Compulsive Documentation” (2015).

### **Week 15 (April 30): The Myth of Digital Universalism**

In-class screening: *Life in a Day* (Ridley Scott, Kevin MacDonald, 2011, clips); Beam Remote Presence from Suitable Technologies commercial (2012); *The Cleaners* (Hans Block, Moritz Rieseewieck, 2018, trailer); *.TV* (G. Anthony Svatek, 2017); *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (Hito Steyerl, 2013).

Read: Sujatha Fernandes, *Curated Stories: The Uses and Misuses of Storytelling* (2017, excerpts); Vinson Cunningham, “Humans of New York and the Cavalier Consumption of Others,” *The New Yorker* (2015).

Recommended: Anita Say Chan, *Networking Peripheries: Technological Futures of Digital Universalism* (2013, excerpts); Pooja Rangan, *Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary* (2017, excerpts).

### **Week 16 (May 7): Final Screening and Discussion**

In-class screening: TBA

Read: Jenna Ng, “The Myth of Total Cinephilia” (2010); Tess Takahashi, “After the Death of Film: Writing the Natural World in the Digital Age” (2008).

**\* Final Essays due by email.**