

## **Experimental Workshop I**

School of Film and Media Studies

Purchase College, State University of New York

FLM3610 CRN 42443

Fall 2020, Mondays, 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Conducted Remotely

Instructor: Prof. Joel Neville Anderson

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

Office Hours: Schedule a time here: <https://calendly.com/joelnanderson/office-hours>

Zoom link:



**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.

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

By the end of the year-long course, students will:

1. Develop a formally unique and conceptually rigorous practice in moving image art that can be sustained into the future.
2. Demonstrate understanding of key issues in history and theory of experimental film/video.

3. Understand key elements of contemporary avant-garde film culture and tools for navigating the current landscape as a filmmaker, curator, or critic.

### **Reading and Viewing Assignments:**

Readings will be posted on Moodle as PDFs. Films/videos assigned for viewing outside class will be available via online streaming (using the library website or other platforms freely accessible to students), 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 (virtually) attend cinematic events, screenings, and exhibitions. 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 participation is mandatory. Plan and budget accordingly.

### **Discussion Platform:**

Roughly every other week, students will be 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 posts to Moodle should be informal, offering thoughtful observations and questions (300 words minimum) based on a prompt question by the day of class. The following day, students are required to post a response to a classmate's post with further analysis (100 words minimum). Each written response should directly address at least one viewing or reading for the week, and must be constructive and respectful. Students will also be required to post at least one recommendation of a moving image artist they are inspired by that is not on the syllabus (linking to a reading or viewing resource that introduces their work to the class) over the course of the semester. (Students are encouraged to comment on these additional contributions with constructive responses, but are not required). Students can miss one response out of the seven total due and still receive full credit. *The first post to Moodle is due by 9 AM on the day of class, and the second post is due by 9 AM two days after class.*

### **Film/Video Projects:**

This two semester course culminates in students' production of their Experimental Workshop 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 available as a

private online streaming (Vimeo, YouTube, etc.) or download link (WeTransfer, Dropbox, etc.) with appropriate passwords. (In the case of a download link, please provide to the instructor several hours in advance in order to allow for download time.) 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:**

Participation: 25% of final grade

Discussion Platform Contributions & In-Class Presentations: 25%

Film/Video projects: 50%

**Policies and Guidelines:**

- **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.
- **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.
- **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 consultation with the instructor and may require documentation, such as a doctor's note following a medical visit. If you do miss class, please also check with the instructor or your peers to catch up on assignments and handouts—this will be your responsibility.

- **Breaks:** There will generally be a short break during class. 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.
- **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, students will be contacted in advance via email or a sign will be posted at the classroom.
- **Zoom Usage and Technology Needs:**
  - Remain engaged during lectures and discussions conducted via the Zoom video chat platform, and keep your webcam on as much as your situation permits.
  - When attending class via Zoom, please do your best to contribute to a positive and accepting learning environment. As much as possible, create a dedicated space for class time, with ample light. Find a comfortable position and physical posture, feel free to use a virtual background, and use your own best judgment regarding attire, etc.
  - Be prepared to take notes, whether using a desktop app or a notebook and pen/pencil.
  - Do not become distracted by other desktop windows or electronic devices. Please keep mobile phones in a separate location or ensure they are turned off.
  - Please adjust how your name displays on the Zoom interface to reflect how you would like to be addressed (including for example your preferred pronouns).
  - Keep track of your Zoom meeting links and passwords. It's helpful to store links in a calendar application with each class or meeting entered into the correct day/time.
  - If you encounter any issues with internet connectivity or computer performance, please quit any unnecessary applications or temporarily mute your webcam.
  - Please contact the instructor if you have any issues regarding access to the internet or a reliable computer in order to find a solution in coordination with Campus Technology Services (CTS): <https://www.purchase.edu/offices/cts/>
  - If any difficulties arise, don't hesitate to inform the instructor in order to discuss potential accommodations. We'll figure it out together.

### **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. These are free 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 website for more information: <https://www.purchase.edu/offices/learning-center/>.

### **Community Health During COVID-19:**

To ensure that each of us has a healthy and safe learning experience, all students are required to remain informed and follow Purchase College Policy and/or any departmental, local, state, or federal laws, rules or regulations for attending classes on campus and in a remote learning environment. Within courses that involve in-person contact, all students, faculty members, staff, and visitors are required to adhere to the expectations outlined on the College's COVID-19 website: <https://www.purchase.edu/live/blurbs/2689-social-distancing-and-face-covering-policy>. Failure to comply with requirements (e.g. wearing masks, maintaining social distancing) will result in the request to leave the classroom for that in-person class session. Students may also be referred to the Office of Community Standards: <https://www.purchase.edu/offices/community-standards/>.

### **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).

### **Counseling:**

Help is available at the Counseling Center on campus for difficulties with emotional wellbeing and psychological functioning. If distress is interfering in relationships, academics, work, or daily life, confidential support can be had right away. Contact the Counseling Center at (914) 251-6390 or [COU.counseling.center@purchase.edu](mailto:COU.counseling.center@purchase.edu) on M-F, 9 AM - 5 PM. The Counseling Center's website lists after hours emergency resources for mental health crises, sexual assault or interpersonal violence emergencies (Campus Advocacy Services), self-help, and additional coping resources. <https://www.purchase.edu/counseling-center>.

### **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 31): Course Overview: What is the avant-garde? What is it for you?**

Class format: Synchronous via Zoom (link provided at top of syllabus).

In-class screening: Joyce Wieland, Mengqi Zhang.

Read following screening: Jing Meng, “Documenting the past: performativity and inter-subjectivity in the memory project.”

Recommended reading: Yiman Wang, “The Amateur’s Lighting Rod: DV Documentary in Postsocialist China.”

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

**\* Discussion Platform: Complete first post within two days (Wednesday, September 2, 9 AM), and second post responding to another student by the end of the week (Friday, September 4, 9 AM).**

### **Week 2 (September 7): No class (Labor Day)**

**\* Schedule one-on-one meeting with instructor this week to discuss goals for the course and access to technology: <https://calendly.com/joelnanderson/office-hours>**

### **Week 3 (September 14): Cinema in Space**

Class format: Asynchronous (no class meeting via Zoom today).

Read by today: Douglas Crimp, “Action around the Edges.”

Watch by today: *Songdelay* (Joan Jonas, 1973); *Day’s End* (Gordon Matta-Clark, 1975).

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

**\* Discussion Platform: First post due today (9 AM), response post due within two days (Wednesday, 9 AM)**

### **Week 4 (September 21): Cinema and Landscape**

Class format: Synchronous via Zoom (link provided at top of syllabus).

Read by today: Yuriko Furuhashi, “Returning to actuality: *fukeiron* and the landscape film.”

Watch by today: *A.K.A. Serial Killer* (Masao Adachi, 1969).

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

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

### **Week 5 (September 28): Discussing “Fair Exchange”**

Class format: Synchronous via Zoom (link provided at top of syllabus).

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

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

### **Week 6 (October 5): Cinema Against Capital, Cinema Against Spectacle**

Class format: Asynchronous (no class meeting via Zoom today).

Read by today: Karl Marx (excerpts); Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (excerpts).

Watch by today: *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi, and 27 Years Without Images* (Eric Baudelaire, 2011).

**\* Discussion Platform: First post due today (9 AM), response post due within two days (Wednesday, 9 AM)**

### **Week 7 (October 12): Film Materiality, Cinema as Image and Language**

Class format: Synchronous via Zoom (link provided at top of syllabus).

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

Watch by today: *Window Water Baby Moving* (Stan Brakhage, 1959); *Fuses* (Carolee Schneemann, 1967).

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

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

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

**\* Reminder: Each student must post at least one recommendation (300 words minimum) of a moving image artist they are inspired by that is not on the syllabus (linking to a reading or viewing resource that introduces their work to the class) before the semester’s end. Start a new thread on the Discussion Platform.**

### **Week 8 (October 19): The Form of Radical Cinema**

Class format: Synchronous via Zoom (link provided at top of syllabus).

Read by today: 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.

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

**\* Introduction of Experimental Workshop Thesis Project and proposal and planning process (schedule individual meetings next week)**

### **Week 9 (October 26): Reassemblage**

Class format: Asynchronous (no class meeting via Zoom today).

Read by today: Trinh T. Minh-ha, “Documentary Is/Not a Name”; Nicholas Mirzoeff, *How to See the World* (excerpts).

Watch by today: *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, 1958) *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989).

Recommended viewing: Bruce Conner, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Caroline Monnet.

**\* Individual instructor meetings this week for the Experimental Workshop Thesis Project: Prepare draft/notes for written proposal, in addition to pre-production media such as stills, test or rough footage.**

**\* Discussion Platform: First post due today (9 AM), response post due within two days (Wednesday, 9 AM)**

### **Week 10 (November 2): Tara Najd Ahmadi Guest Filmmaker Visit**

Class format: Synchronous via Zoom (link provided at top of syllabus).

Read by today: Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”; Laura Rascaroli, *How the Essay Film Thinks* (2017) excerpt: “Introduction—Openings; Thinking Cinema.”

Watch by today: Selection of shorts.

**\* Watch and critique: Project #3: “Empty Portrait”**

**\* Introduction of Project #4: “First Person”**

### **Week 11 (November 9): Cinema as Essay**

Class format: Asynchronous (no class meeting via Zoom today).

Read by today: Harun Farocki selections; Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan, *Essays on the Essay Film* (excerpts).

Watch by today: Harun Farocki, Jonas Mekas, Jem Cohen, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Su Friedrich.

**\* Schedule individual meetings for Experimental Workshop Thesis Project to be held next week.**

**\* Discussion Platform: First post due today (9 AM), response post due within two days (Wednesday, 9 AM)**

### **Week 12 (November 16): A Thousand Suns**

Class format: Synchronous via Zoom (link provided at top of syllabus).

Read by today: 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.

Watch by today: 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).

In-class screening: Mati Diop.

### **Week 13 (November 23): Digital Materiality, Cinema as Data and Voice**

Class format: Asynchronous (no class meeting via Zoom today).

Read by today: Hito Steyerl (excerpts); Édouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation* (excerpts).

Watch by today: Hito Steyerl, Mounira Al Solh.

**\* Individual instructor 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.**

**\* Discussion Platform: First post due today (9 AM), response post due within two days (Wednesday, 9 AM)**

### **Week 14 (November 30): Cinema as Dance**

Class format: Synchronous via Zoom (link provided at top of syllabus).

Read by today: Édouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation* (excerpts).

Watch by today: Maya Deren, Nao Yoshigai selections.

\* **Presentation: Experimental Workshop Thesis Projects and Planning Outline**

**Week 15 (December 7): Class Screenings Part 1**

Class format: Asynchronous (no class meeting via Zoom today).

\* **Watch and critique: Project #4: “First Person”**

**Week 16 (December 14): Class Screenings Part 2**

Class format: Synchronous via Zoom (link provided at top of syllabus).

\* **Watch and critique: Project #4: “First Person”**