

Introduction to Cinema and Media Studies

Course Number: CAMS 101-02

Credit: 1, graded

Date & Time: MTh 2:50-4:00PM (class) & T 7:00-9:00PM (screening)

Location: Jewett Art Center 450 (class) & Collins Cinema (screening)

Instructor: Nicholas Knouf (nknouf@wellesley.edu; <http://zeitkunst.org>); Pendleton West 313, x2105

Office Hours: T 3-5PM or by appointment

Course Description

CAMS 101 is the required introduction to the Cinema and Media Studies major, but we think the material in this course is useful—no, even essential—to anyone who indulges in any form of media use in today's world. And who does not? Ours is a media saturated world, and it behooves us to ponder what that means.

We will do a lot of pondering in this course, as well as a lot of inspection of different forms of media. The CAMS program is currently a very film-centered program, and there are those who argue that digital media, to the extent that they come to us through a screen, have strong roots in film. We therefore take film as a kind of originary point in this course. Every week we will view a film—and every film that we have selected concerns itself with some aspect/form of media (social media, photography, television, sound...).

The course also has a make-it-yourself component: as we consider different forms of media, or different inventions or techniques, we will explore those techniques hands-on, so we can feel what a maker feels. This component reflects a central value of our Cinema and Media Studies Program: we expect all CAMS majors to know something about production, and something about the history, theory, and analysis of media.

Finally, we have a field trip scheduled! Save Friday, September 20, for an all-day bus trip to New York City to visit the wonderful Museum of the Moving Image.

Course Goals

- to gain exposure to, and perhaps develop a taste for, “a certain kind of film”
- to enjoy “the pleasures of the text”—how is a film or media text put together? What does analysis of these texts offer us?
- to gain some sense of the history and philosophy of media—how did we as human beings come to “mediate” our world? What does it mean that mediated forms stand between us and the world we inhabit?

- to gain familiarity with key words (and the concepts these words entail) that are associated with media criticism
- above all, to learn to think, ask questions, ponder the significance of mediation—to begin to think like a media theorist

Required Texts

- Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Hill / Wang, 2010) (an earlier edition is acceptable as well)
- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972)
- David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film art: an introduction*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013) (8th or 9th editions are acceptable as well)
- Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: an Inventory of Effects* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2001)
- Texts available in Sakai
- Online resources

Course Requirements

- Completion of all required reading
- Participation during class discussion
- Two Nano-papers
- Short production projects and written assignments
- Final exam

Teaching philosophy

I am of the belief that theory and practice are fundamentally intertwined. As such, we will do a lot of “hands-on” learning in this course, alongside our discussion of theoretical texts. Additionally, I am less interested in the rehearsal of the minute details of the texts under study and rather want to encourage you to think expansively about how media theory informs media practice, and vice versa. Finally, I want the classroom to be a space where challenging critique and conversation can take place; please be respectful of the opinions and comments of other students in class, and I will do the same.

How to Succeed in this Class

At the bare minimum you must complete the requirements for the course as outlined above. Beyond this you must be willing to take some risks, to challenge yourself to go further in your analysis of the works or in the production of small projects. See the grading rubric for more information.

Assignments and Grading

This class meets three times a week: on Mondays and Thursdays from 2:50-4:00PM, and on Tuesday evenings for a film screening (scheduled to go from 7-9, but we would like to go until 9:30 some nights). Attendance at the screenings is required, and we expect you to be present at all classes. All assignments must be submitted on time; we reserve the right to lower your grade for late submissions and/or for excessive absences.

Assignments will take various forms. Each week, expect to view something, read something, and make something: a short piece of writing, an image, a montage. Some weeks we might ask you to watch an additional film. Expect to spend 4-6 hours a week outside of class on homework for the course. In addition, there will be one or two nano- papers and one final exam for the course. The final exam will be on the last day of class, and will have two components: a written component (in the afternoon class), and a second written component in response to the evening screening that night.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

1. Attendance, participation, and general good citizenship: 20
2. Nano-papers: 30
3. "Do" projects and short written assignments: 20
4. Final exam: 30

To paraphrase Betty Davis in *All About Eve*, "Buckle your seatbelts, it's gonna be a heckuva ride!"

Grading

Grading rationale

A grade of "A" is given to students who meet with conspicuous excellence every demand which can fairly be made by the course.

A grade of "B" is given to those students who add to the minimum of satisfactory attainment excellence in not all, but some of the following: organization, accuracy, originality, understanding, insight.

A grade of "C" is given to those students who have attained a satisfactory familiarity with the content of a course and who have demonstrated ability to use this knowledge in a satisfactory manner.

A grade of "D" is a passing grade. There is no grade of D+ or D-.

This course complies with the Wellesley College policy (<http://www.wellesley.edu/registrar/grading/gradingpolicyfaq>). While that policy asks faculty to hold each 100- and 200-level course with 10 or more students to an average of no higher than 3.33, it does not require faculty to grade on a "curve." There is no arbitrary limit on the number of A's, B's, C's etc., and every student will be assigned the grade she earns and deserves according to the grading standards of the college.

Grading is non-competitive: helping your classmates will never harm your grade.

Grading breakdown

A = 4.0 = 92.5%+

A- =	3.67 =	89.5%-92.4%
B+ =	3.33 =	86.5%-89.4%
B =	3.00 =	82.5%-86.4%
B- =	2.67 =	79.5%-82.4%
C+ =	2.33 =	76.5%-79.4%
C =	2.0 =	72.5%-76.4%
C- =	1.67 =	69.5%-72.4%
D =	1.0 =	59.5%-69.4%
D =	0.0 =	<59.5%

Administrivia

Absence & Late policy

Absences are allowed in three circumstances: personal illness, family crisis, or college-sanctioned activity. In all three cases I ask to be informed as soon as possible in advance so that we can make proper arrangements for completing the missed work—knowing that in true crisis situations advance notice may not be possible. Excused absences are the only cases in which work can be turned in late without penalty. In all other cases, late work will result in a 10% decrease in your grade for each day it is late, and will be accepted up to one week after the due date. *Please do not turn in work late*: it is highly detrimental to your overall performance, makes it very easy to fall behind, is disruptive to the other students who completed the assignments on time, and adds an additional burden on me in terms of finding time to grade your assignment at a later date. It is oftentimes in your best interest to turn in an time a less-than-perfect assignment rather than a slightly-closer-to-perfect late one.

E-mail

Any questions of a non-personal nature regarding course content, assignments, etc., should be posted to the “General Discussion” Sakai forum, as it is likely other students in the course either have a similar question or can provide you with an answer! Personal questions can be discussed over e-mail, during office hours, or by appointment. I will try to respond to all e-mails within 24 hours. I generally reply to e-mails during business hours during the week, and rarely reply to e-mails on the weekends. Please send e-mail from your Wellesley account to ensure that it does not inadvertently end up in my spam folder.

One final note regarding e-mail: please use proper salutations and grammar in writing your e-mail. (This also goes for forum posts on Sakai.) It might seem like a minor point, but it goes a long way towards producing the environment that is conducive to our joint learning!

Grading concerns

Please take at least 24 hours to review my comments before contacting me regarding any grading concerns. I prefer to do this during office hours or a scheduled appointment, and not before or after class.

Honor code

I want to remind you of the honor code: “As a Wellesley College student, I will act with honesty, integrity, and respect.” I expect that you will act accordingly, and you can expect I will do the same.

The College and I take plagiarism seriously. Please be sure to reference any materials you quote or paraphrase, no matter the medium. Let me know if you have any questions regarding this issue.

Pronouns

If you have a preference as to which pronoun you would like me to use with you, please let me know.

Paper formatting and guidelines

Please turn in papers and summaries with proper grammar and spelling. If either detract from my ability to understand your argument, I reserve the right to decrease your grade accordingly.

Papers should be turned in electronically to Sakai, doubled-spaced using a standard serif font (Cambria, Garamond, Georgia, Palatino, Times New Roman, etc.) at a size of 12pt with 1in margins. Please do not try to increase your page count through creative combinations of font, font size, and margins: I’ve seen it all, I’ve even tried it myself (and have often failed), and your time would be better spent working on the substance of your paper.

Please be consistent in your choice of citation format; I do not care if you use Chicago, MLA, or APA. As with spelling and grammar, if your citations detract from my ability to understand your paper, I reserve the right to decrease your grade accordingly.

Social Media

It is my policy to not add students as friends on Facebook until they have graduated. I do have a public Twitter handle (@zeitkunst) and if Twitter is your thing and if you are interested, feel free to follow me there (although of course there is no obligation to do so). I have a public website at <http://zeitkunst.org>.

Students with disabilities

If you have a disability and need accommodations, please contact Jim Wice, Director of Disability Services, in Clapp Library 314 to arrange these accommodations. See <http://www.wellesley.edu/disability> for more information.

Schedule

This schedule is subject to change, but any changes will be announced in advance in class and posted to the Sakai site for the course.

Introduction: Busting Illusions

Week 1

Tuesday, September 3	Screening: <i>Man with a Movie Camera</i>
Thursday, September 5	Reading: Excerpts from Vertov

Week 2

Monday, September 9	Readings: 1) Stone, "Introduction: Sex, Death, and Machinery, or How I Fell in Love with My Prosthesis" (In Sakai Resources. Read just through p. 5—you can read more if you want but it's not required) 2) danah boyd, White Flight in Networked Publics	WRITE: your own "bad history" with "prosthesis." (instructions in Sakai, Resources, Week 1)
Tuesday, September 10	Screening: Two episodes from <i>Black Mirror</i> ; "The National Anthem" (S01E01), "Be Right Back" (S02E01)	
Thursday September 12	Reading: Kolker, Ch 1, "Image and Reality," from <i>Film, Form, and Culture</i> . In Sakai Resources, class readings folder.	WRITE: on the "artificiality of the image" and the Black Mirror episodes (instructions in Sakai Resources, Week 2)

Week 3

Monday, September 16	Reading: Winston, "How Are Media Born?" Sakai Resources...	WRITE: your personal history of cinema (assignment online)
Tuesday, September 17	Screening: Modern Times in 35mm; special lecture on the art of projection (Scott Norcross). Plan to stay until 9:30 tonight.	
Thursday September 19	TBD	
Friday, Septem- ber 20	Trip to NY: class meets at 6:00 AM in Davis Center Plaza, returns around 8:00 PM	

Unit 2: Media and the Medium

Week 4

Monday, September 23	Reading: Singer, "Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism," excerpt (class handout). If you are interested, the full Singer article is in the "For Those Who Wish 2 Know More" folder in Sakai.	DO: Mark terms you don't understand in Singer. WRITE: The Museum and Modernity: response to our museum trip
Tuesday, September 24	Screening: Adam Curtis, <i>The Century of the Self</i> (2002), DVD, http://archive.org/details/CenturyOfTheSelf1-4	
Thursday, September 26	Reading: McLuhan and Fiore, <i>The Medium is the Massage: an Inventory of Effects</i> , as much as you can, but at least through p. 79 ("The Stars are so big, the Earth is so small...")	Possible field trip this week, to see <i>Far from Vietnam</i> at the MFA in Boston, between Sept. 25 and Oct. 3.

Week 5

Monday, September 30	Reading: McLuhan and Fiore, <i>The Medium is the Massage: an Inventory of Effects</i> , to the end; Berger, <i>Ways of Seeing</i> , Chapter 7	DO: Create Barbara Kruger-like collage OR a <i>detournement</i> of an ad
Tuesday, Octo- ber 1	Screening: <i>A Scanner Darkly</i>	DO: Attend an LTS training session, either Tuesday, 10/1, 12:30-1:20, or Wednesday, 10/2, 12:30-1:20.
Thursday, Octo- ber 3	Reading: Herman and Chomsky, "A Propaganda Model" Sakai)	

Week 6

Monday, Octo- ber 7	Viewing due: Watch <i>Control Room</i> on your own	
Tuesday, Octo- ber 8	Screening: <i>Far from Afghanistan</i> , with visit by director, John Gianvito. Plan to stay until 9:30 tonight.	
Thursday, Octo- ber 10	Reading: Herman and Chomsky, "A Propaganda Model"	WRITE: Analysis of an ad from the web (Nano-paper #1)

Week 7

Monday, Octo- ber 14	Fall Break: No Class	DO: During break watch : <i>Everlasting Moments</i>
Tuesday, Octo- ber 15	Fall Break: No Class; however, for those who wish to see <i>Everlasting Moments</i> on a large screen, we'll have a film showing at 7.00	
Thursday, Octo- ber 17	Barthes, <i>Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography</i> , Part One	

Unit 3: The Moving Image**Week 8**

Monday, October 21	Barthes, <i>Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography</i> , Part Two	DO: Still photo
Tuesday, October 22	Screening: <i>Blow-Up</i>	
Thursday, October 24	Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, <i>Film art: an introduction</i> , Chapter 5, “The Short: Cinematography”	

Week 9

Monday, October 28	TBD	DO: Sound assignment
Tuesday, October 29	Screening: <i>Blow Out</i>	
Thursday, October 31	Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, <i>Film art: an introduction</i> , Chapter 7, Sound in Cinema	

Week 10

Monday, November 4	Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, <i>Film art: an introduction</i> , begin reading Chapter 6, on editing	DO: Lumière shot
Tuesday, November 5	Screening: <i>Tout Va Bien</i>	
Thursday, November 7	Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, <i>Film art: an introduction</i> , finish reading Chapter 6, on editing	

Week 11

Monday, November 11	Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, <i>Film art: an introduction</i> , begin reading Chapter 4, on Mise-en-Scene	DO: Tiny montage: link two shots
Tuesday, November 12	Screening: <i>The Draughtsman's Contract</i>	
Thursday, November 14	Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, <i>Film art: an introduction</i> , finish reading Chapter 4, on Mise-en-Scene	

Unit 4: Women and Difference

Week 12

Monday, November 18	Reading: Berger, <i>Ways of Seeing</i> , Chapters 3 & 5	
Tuesday, November 19	Screening: <i>Rear Window</i>	
Thursday, November 21	Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"	

Week 13: Thanksgiving Week

Monday, November 25	Class meets this afternoon to continue discussion of gender and the moving image.	DO: Analyze the four aspects of a sequence we provide (nano-paper 2)
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Tuesday,
November
26

No screening

Week 14

Monday, Decem-
ber 2

Reading: Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Chap-
ter 1, Ways of Seeing

Tuesday, De-
cember 3

Screening: *The Beaches of Agnes*

Thursday,
December 5

Reading: Blascovich, "Museum of Vir-
tual Media".

Week 15: The Last Waltz

Monday, Decem-
ber 9

In-class exam, part I

Tuesday, De-
cember 10

Screening: Mystery screening (exam,
part II)
