

# Introduction to Cinema and Media Studies

Course Number: CAMS 101-01

Term: Fall 2014

Credit: 1, graded

Date & Time: MTh 11:10-12:20PM (class) & M 7:00-9:00PM (screening)

Location: Pendleton West 212 (class) & Collins Cinema (screening)

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

Office Hours: M 3-5PM or by appointment

## Course Description

CAMS 101 introduces students to the study of audio-visual media, including oral, print, photographic, cinematic, broadcast, and digital media forms and practices. Using a case study approach, we will explore the nature of audio-visual communication/representation in historical, cultural, disciplinary, and media-specific contexts, and examine different theoretical and critical perspectives on the role and power of media to influence our social values, political beliefs, identities, and behaviors. We will also consider how consumers of media representations can and do contest and unsettle their embedded messages. Our emphasis will be on developing the research and analytical tools, modes of reading, and forms of critical practice that can help us to negotiate the increasingly mediated world in which we live.

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, and so on).

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.

## 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 short papers (4-5 pages each)
- 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 Requirements

This class meets three times a week: on Mondays and Thursdays from 11:10-12:20, and on Monday evenings for a film screening (scheduled to go from 7-9, but I would like to go until 9:30 some nights). Attendance at the screenings is required, and I expect you to be present at all classes. All assignments must be submitted on time.

### Participation: (10%)

The importance of the works under discussion lies not in the works themselves, but rather in their interrelationship with our discussions and other media that you and I encounter in our lives. Thus class participation is vital to the success of this course. Simply attending class will not be enough to earn full participation credit; instead, you must be an *active* participant, someone who comes prepared and engages with all aspects of the class.

### Short Written and Do Assignments: (30%)

I will ask you to do a number of short written and production assignments over the course of the semester. The written assignments will be no longer than two pages long, and the “Do” production assignments should take the same amount of time to complete. More details of these assignments will be provided during the semester. These assignments will be graded in terms of a check-minus (insufficient attention to the guidelines of the assignment), check (sufficient attention to the guidelines of the assignment), and check-plus (outstanding commentary in all respects).

### Short Papers: (30%)

I will ask you to write two short papers of four to five pages in length that explore course topics in some detail. Both papers will focus on film analysis. These assignments will be graded on a letter-grade scale. More details regarding the assignments will be provided during the semester.

### Final Exam: (30%)

The final exam will be comprehensive and will cover all aspects of the course. It will include short answers and a longer essay question. More information will be provided near the end of the course.

## 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% |
| F =  | 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 on time a less-than-perfect assignment rather than a slightly-closer-to-perfect late one.

### Cold Calling

If I see that you are not participating much in class, I may decide to cold call on you. It thus is important to be prepared to speak at every class session, and to participate regularly. This will produce a class environ-

ment that fosters your own learning, as well as that of your fellow students. Your opinions and comments matter.

## **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!

## **Feedback and Comments**

I will provide varying levels of feedback on your assignments during the semester. For shorter assignments, this may come in the form of a few short phrases or words. For longer assignments I will provide more extensive comments, not only on content but also on form and mechanics. This feedback might appear at times to be rather direct; know, however, that whenever I provide feedback it is in the service of making you a better writer, a better thinker, a better maker. I am of course more than willing to discuss my feedback with you in person.

## **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. In making this commitment, I am accountable to the community and dedicate myself to a life of honor.” 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.

# THE IMAGE IS NOT REALITY

## Week 1: What is Media? What is a Medium? What is Mediation?

### September 14

Introduction to the course, to media, and to mediation.

Over the weekend: watch Kibwe Tavares, *Robots of Brixton* (2011), Short Film, <https://vimeo.com/25092596>.

## Week 2: Media and Mediation from Cinema to the Database

### September 8

Maurice Berger, "In Ferguson, Photographs as Powerful Agents," August 20, 2014, accessed September 3, 2014, <http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/08/20/in-ferguson-photographs-as-powerful-agents/>.

Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, trans. Kevin O'Brien (University of California Press, 1985), "We: Variant of a Manifesto", 5-9.

### Screening

Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Film.

### September 11

Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, trans. Kevin O'Brien (University of California Press, 1985), "From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye", 85-92.

Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (The MIT Press, 2001), "Prologue: Vertov's Dataset", xiv-xxxvi.

## Week 3: The Constructedness of Life through Media

### September 15

Sherry Turkle, "Always-on/Always-On-You: The Tethered Self," in *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies*, ed. James E. Katz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 121-137, <http://0-site.ebrary.com.luna.wellesley.edu/lib/wellesley/Doc?id=10229587>.

**Write:** on your “inner history” of a device

### **Screening**

Charlie Brooker, *Black Mirror: Season One* (2011), Television, “The National Anthem” (S01E01).

Charlie Brooker, *Black Mirror: Season Two* (2013), Television, “Be Right Back”, (S02E02).

### **September 18**

W. J. T. Mitchell, “Image,” in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2010), 35-48.

Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course In General Linguistics* (McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 1965), “Nature of the Linguistic Sign”, 65-78.

## **LANGUAGES OF IMAGES**

### **Week 4: Photography**

#### **September 22**

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Hill / Wang, 2010), Part I.

#### **Screening**

Jennifer Baichwal, *Manufactured Landscapes* (2006), Film.

**Attend:** LTS Training session on Video Production on September 23 or September 25 from 12:30-1:20 (tentative)

#### **September 25**

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Hill / Wang, 2010), Part II.

### **Week 5: Cinematography**

#### **September 29**

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film art: an introduction*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), “Chapter 5: The Shot: Cinematography”.



## Screening

Abbas Kiarostami, *Close-Up (Nema-ye Nazdik)* (1990), Film

**Do:** Photo assignment

**Attend:** LTS Training session on Audio Production on September 30 or October 2 from 12:30-1:20 (tentative)

## October 2

Hamid Naficy, “*Close-up* (1989): Questioning Reality, Realism, and Neorealism,” in *Film Analysis: A Norton Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Geiger and R. L. Rutsky (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005).

## Week 6: Film Editing

### October 6

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film art: an introduction*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), “Chapter 6: The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing”.

**Do:** Lumière Shot

## Screening

Ye Lou, *Suzhou River (Suzhou he)* (2000), Film.

### October 9

Damion Searls, “Suzhou River (review),” *Film Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2001): 55-60.

## Week 7: Mise-en-Scène

### October 13

No class, fall break. Enjoy!

Over break, please watch: Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, *City of God (Cidade de Deus)* (2002), Film.

### October 16

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film art: an introduction*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), “Chapter 4: The Shot: Mise-en-Scene”.

**Do:** Kuleshov Effect

## Week 8: Film Sound

### October 20

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film art: an introduction*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), "Chapter 7: Sound in the Cinema".

### Screening

Francis Ford Coppola, *The Conversation* (1974), Film.

### October 23

Dennis Turner, "The Subject of *The Conversation*," *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 4 (1985): 4-22.

**Do:** Sound assignment

## MEDIA TOPICS

## Week 9: Representations of Women in Film and Art

### October 27

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972), Chapter 3.

### Screening

Alfred Hitchcock, *Rear Window* (1954), Film.

**Paper #1:** In-depth analysis of a scene in terms of the four aspects of cinema.

### October 30

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989 [1975]), 14-26.

## Week 10: Propaganda/Advertising

### November 3

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002 [1988]), "A Propaganda Model", 1-35, "Introduction", xii-xix

## Screening

Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room* (2004), Film.

## November 6

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972), Chapter 7.

## Week 11: Technological Determinism

### November 10

Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: an Inventory of Effects* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2001).

## Screening

Ousmane Sembene, *Moolaadé* (2004), Film.

### November 13

Gerise Herndon, "The Antenna and the Mosque: Liberatory Mass Media in *Moolaadé*," in *Facts, Fiction, and African Creative Imaginations*, ed. Toyin Falola and Fallou Ngom (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 151-160.

## Week 12: Mechanical Reproduction

### November 17

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972), Chapter 1.

**Do:** Détournement assignment

## Screening

Pankaj Rishi Kumar, *Kumar Talkies* (2000), Film.

### November 20

Ravi Sundaram, "Revisiting the Pirate Kingdom," *Third Text* 23, no. 3 (2009): 335-345.

Brian Larkin, "Degraded Images, Distorted Sounds: Nigerian Video and the Infrastructure of Piracy," *Public Culture* 16, no. 2 (2004): 289-314, eprint: <http://publicculture.dukejournals.org/cgi/reprint/16/2/289.pdf>.

## **Week 13: Surveillance**

Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage Books, 1977 [1975]), “Panopticism”, 195-228.

### **Screening**

Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, *The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen)* (2006), Film.

### **November 27**

Thanksgiving! Enjoy!

## **Week 14: The Body and its Others in Media**

### **December 1**

Bernadette Wegenstein, “Body,” in Mitchell and Hansen, *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, 19-34.

### **Screening**

Mamoru Oshii, *Ghost in the Shell (Kôkaku Kidôtai)* (1995), Film.

**Paper #2:** In-depth analysis of a scene in terms of the four aspects of cinema.

### **December 4**

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (MIT Press, 2006), “Orienting the Future”, 171-245.

## **Week 15: The Body and its Others in Media, continued**

### **December 8**

Mocke Jansen van Veuren, “Tooth and nail: anxious bodies in Neill Blomkamp’s *District 9*,” *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* 26, no. 4 (2012): 570-586.

Final thoughts and discussion.

### **Screening**

Neill Blomkamp, *District 9* (2009), Film.