

Introduction to Cinema and Media Studies

Course Number: CAMS 101-01

Credit: 1, graded

Date & Time: MTh 11:10-12:20PM (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 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 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 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%)

We 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%)

We will ask you to write two short papers of four to five pages in length that explore course topics in some detail. One paper will focus on film analysis, the second will focus on web advertisements. 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 involve not only short answers and short essay questions, but also an analysis of a film sequence. 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 environment 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: Media and Mediation from Cinema to the Database

January 27

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

January 28: Screening

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

January 30

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, "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 2: The Constructedness of Life through Media

February 3

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

February 4: 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).

February 6

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 3: Photography

February 10

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

Write: on the constructedness of the image

February 11: Screening

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

Attend: LTS Training session on Video Production on February 11 or February 13 from 12:30-1:20.

February 13

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

Week 4: Cinematography

February 17

No class: President's Day!

February 18: Screening

Michelangelo Antonioni, *Blow-up* (1966), Film.

Do: Photo assignment

Attend: LTS Training session on Audio Production on February 18 or February 20 from 12:30-1:20.

February 20

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

Week 5: Film Editing

February 24

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

February 25: Screening

Jean-Luc Goddard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, *Tout Va Bien* (1972), Film.

February 27

Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1976 [1867]), Chapter 1, “The Commodity”, 125-131, 163-177.

Week 6: Mise-en-Scène

March 3

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

March 4: Screening

Peter Greenaway, *The Draughtsman’s Contract* (1982), Film.

March 6

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972), Chapter 5.

Week 7: Film Sound

March 10

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

Do: Sound assignment

March 11: Screening

Su Friedrich, *First Comes Love* (1991), Film.

Maya Deren and Alexander Hamid, *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), Film.

Caroline Martel, *Phantom of the Operator* (2004), Film.

March 13

Luigi Russolo, *The Art of Noise*, trans. Robert Filliou (Something Else Press, 1967 [1913]), <http://www.ubu.com/historical/russolo/index.html>.

John Cage, "The Future of Music: Credo," in *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 3-6.

Pauline Oliveros, "Some Sound Observations," in *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde, 1966-1973*, ed. Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 134-137.

MEDIA TOPICS**Week 8: Propaganda****March 17**

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 .

March 18: Screening

Adam Curtis, *The Century of the Self* (2002), Television, <http://archive.org/details/CenturyOfTheSelf1-4>.

March 20

No class: spring break begins!

Watch on your own over break: Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room* (2004), Film.

Week 9: Technological Determinism**March 31**

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

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

April 1: Screening

Brian Knappenberger, *We Are Legion: The Story of the Hacktivists* (2012), Film.

April 3

Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (Routledge, 1974), "The Technology and the Society", 9-31.

Week 10: Media Resistances

April 7

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

April 8: Screening

Andy Bichlbaum, Mike Bonanno, and Kurt Engfehr, *The Yes Men Fix the World* (2009), Film.

April 10

Mark Dery, "Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing and Sniping in the Empire of Signs," 1993, accessed January 14, 2014, http://project.cyberpunk.ru/idb/culture_jamming.html.

Week 11: Mechanical Reproduction

April 14

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

Do: Détournement assignment

April 15: Screening

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

April 17

Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (The MIT Press, 2008), "New Media Users", 59-86.

Week 12: Representations of Women in Film and Art

April 21

No class: Patriot's Day!

April 22

Substitute class session.

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

April 22: Screening

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

April 24

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

Week 13: Body in/as Media

April 28

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

April 29: Screening

Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Conceiving Ada* (1997), Film.

May 1

Sadie Plant, "The Future Looms: Weaving Women and Cybernetics," *Body & Society* 1, nos. 3-4 (1995): 45-64.

Week 14: Media's Others

May 5

Coco Fusco, "At your Service: Latin Women in the Global Information Network," in *the bodies that were not ours: and other writings* (New York, NY, USA: Routledge, 2001), 186-201

May 6: Screening

Alex Rivera, *Sleep Dealer* (2008), Film.

May 8

Final thoughts and discussion.

Paper #2: Analysis of a web ad