

# Introduction to Cinema and Media Studies

Course Number: CAMS 101-01

Term: FALL 2017

Credit: 1, graded

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

Location: Collins Cinema (class & screening)

Instructor: Nicholas Knouf (nknouf@wellesley.edu; <http://zeitkunst.org>); JAC 357a, x2105

Office Hours: T 2-4PM 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. While CAMS has a broad focus in media—covering cinema, photography, television, the Internet, video games, and sound, among other types of media—we take film as a kind of originary point in this course given its importance to later forms of media. 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 body, 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, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film art: an introduction*, 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2017) (8th or 9th or 10th 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 Tuesdays and Fridays from 11:10-12:20, and on Tuesday 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 inter-relationship 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.

### Paper Grading Rubric

**NB:** This rubric comes from the “Introduction to Film Aesthetics and Analysis” course taught by Professors Patricia Zimmerman and Claudia Pederson at Ithaca College.

Thesis/Treatment of Formal Element:

- complex, nuanced grasp of element (A-4)
- clear, complex grasp of element (B-3)
- correct but unsophisticated grasp of element (C-2)
- unclear reference to element (D-1)
- does not refer to element, or is incorrect (F-0)

Range, Quality, and Use of Secondary Source Material:

- persuasive reasoning and effective quotation (A-4)
- appropriate evidence, clear major points (B-3)
- generalizations, unsupported claims (C-2)
- simplistic summary (D-1)
- no quotations, no sources (F-0)

Argumentation/Organization of Paper:

- strong, complex analysis with thorough support (A-4)
- analytical with convincing support (B-3)
- argument suggested with some support (C-2)
- somewhat argumentative, little support (D-1)
- no argument (F-0)

## Academic Writing Style:

- clear and memorable, with controlled stylistic flourishes (A-4)
- effective, readable, and precise (B-3)
- competent, simple, relatively free of errors (C-2)
- several errors, unclear (D-1)
- numerous errors, thoroughly unclear (F-o)

## Mechanics/Bibliographic Information:

- correct citation format, proofread, on time (A-4)
- some errors in citation or syntax, on time (B-3)
- several errors in citation or syntax, on time (C-2)
- rife with errors, not proofread, on time (D-1)
- rife with errors, not proofread, not on time (F-o)

## Corresponding Grade:

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A =	18 - 20 points
A- =	16 - 17 points
B+ =	15 points
B =	13 - 14 points
B- =	11 - 12 points
C+ =	10 points
C =	8 - 9 points
C- =	6 - 7 points
D+ =	5 points
D =	3 - 4 points
D- =	1 - 2 points
F =	0 points

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**Course Grade breakdown**


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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%

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## 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.

All students are allowed one unexcused absence. One unexcused absence beyond that will result in a zero (0) participation grade for the course. Further unexcused absences beyond that may result in an automatic F for the course.

### 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.

### Content

This is not a media/film/television appreciation course. As such, we are watching/viewing/listening to media that might be challenging in a wide variety of ways. Some of these challenges might be intellectual, but others might have to do with content. It is likely that there will be *some* content in this course that you find offensive, disturbing, or problematic in some way. Know that this is not done out of any desire on my part to offend: each piece of media I show you has some sort of pedagogical purpose.

I do not presume to know what your lives have been like outside of class, and thus I do not presume to know what kinds of material you might find challenging. Thus it is not my policy to provide warnings before we watch films, etc. Everything that we watch during the screenings is extensively discussed in print and online, and if you believe you might have issues with some material, I highly recommend reading the synopses of the films before attending the screening.

If you have a problem with the material, either during the screening or class, and you absolutely must leave, please do! I do ask, however, that you come and speak with me after class/screening or during office hours so that we can discuss what happened and how to address the situation.

I expect we are all adults and that we can have respectful conversations regarding challenging class material.

## **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.

## **Screening Behavior**

We gather on Tuesday nights to watch the screenings together, in front of a large screen with a proper projection and sound system. This kind of watching is very different from watching films on a small computer screen. Attendance at screenings is **mandatory**, unless otherwise excused. Regular absences will not be tolerated.

During the screenings I will expect you to take notes on the various aspects of cinema that we will be discussing and exploring in the course. Given the darkness of the theater, and the potential of bright screens to cause distractions, these notes need to be done using pen/pencil on paper, **not** on a laptop, tablet, or smartphone (unless you have a documented reason to require a computational device to take notes). Phones need to be silenced as well.

Watching these films is not like going to a multiplex, so I reserve the right to ask students to leave if they are talking, heckling, whistling, or engaging in other disruptive behaviors. We screen these films not simply for entertainment, but as a research and educational activity.

## **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

### September 5

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

### Screening

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

Charlie Brooker, *Black Mirror: Season Three* (2016), Netflix Streaming, “San Junipero” (S03E04), directed by Owen Harris.

### September 8

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>.

## Week 2: The Constructedness of Life through Media

### September 12

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.

### Screening

Denis Villeneuve, *Arrival* (2016), Film.

### September 15

Ted Chiang, *Stories of Your Life and Others* (New York: Vintage, 2016 [2002]), “Story of Your Life”, 91-145.

Thomas Leitch, *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), “Literature versus Literacy”, 1-21.

Antena, “Un manifiesto para la ultratraducción (A Manifesto for Ultratranslation),” 2014, <http://antena.antena.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ultratranslation.pdf>.

## LANGUAGES OF IMAGES

### Week 3: Photography

#### September 19

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

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

#### Screening

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

**Attend:** LTS Training session on Video Production on September 20 or 21 from 12:30-1:20 in Clapp 131

#### September 22

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

Carol Mavor, *Black and Blue: The Bruising Passion of Camera Lucida, La Jetée, Sans soleil, and Hiroshima mon amour* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), “Elegy of Milk, in *Black and Blue: The Bruising of La Chambre claire*”, 22-52.

### Week 4: Cinematography

#### September 26

David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film art: an introduction*, 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2017), “Chapter 5: The Shot: Cinematography”.

#### Screening

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

**Attend:** LTS Training session on Audio Production on September 27 or 28 from 12:30-1:20 in Clapp 131

**September 29**

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 5: Film Editing****October 3**

David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film art: an introduction*, 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2017), “Chapter 6: The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing”.

**Screening**

Special screening: Lynne Sachs, *Tip of My Tongue* (2016).

Watch on your own: Ye Lou, *Suzhou River (Suzhou he)* (2000), Film.

**Do:** Photo assignment

**October 6**

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

**Week 6: Mise-en-Scène****October 10**

NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

**Screening**

Over break, please watch: Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, *City of God (Cidade de Deus)* (2002), Film and read David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film art: an introduction*, 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2017), “Chapter 4: The Shot: Mise-en-Scene”.

**October 13**

NO CLASS, I will be away

**Do:** Lumière Shot

## Week 7: Mise-en-Scène, continued

### October 17

David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film art: an introduction*, 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2017), “Chapter 4: The Shot: Mise-en-Scene”

### Screening

Alexander Sokurov, *Russkii kovcheg (Russian Ark)* (2003), Film

### October 20

Lúcia Nagib, “Talking Bullets: The Language of Violence in *City of God*,” *Third Text* 18, no. 3 (2004): 239-250.

Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli, “Floating on the Borders of Europe: Sokurov’s *Russian Ark*,” *Film Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2005): 18-26, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/fq.2005.59.1.18>.

**Do:** Kuleshov Effect

## Week 8: Film Sound

### October 24

David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film art: an introduction*, 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2017), “Chapter 7: Sound in the Cinema”.

### Screening

Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Verena Paravel, *Leviathan* (2012), Film.

### October 27

Catherine Russell, “Leviathan and the Discourse of Sensory Ethnography: Spleen et idéal,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 31, no. 1 (2015): 27-34, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/var.12059>.

## MEDIA TOPICS

## Week 9: Mechanical Reproduction

### October 31

**NO CLASS:** Tanner conference

**Do:** Sound assignment

### **Screening**

Faiza Ahmed Khan, *Supermen of Malegaon* (2010), Film.

### **November 3**

#### **Visit to Book Arts Lab**

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

Nicholas A. Basbanes, *On Paper: The Everything of its Two-Thousand-Year History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), Preface and Chapter 1, "Common Bond".

Ishita Tiwary, "The Discrete Charm of Local Practices: Malegaon and the Politics of Locality," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 67-87, eprint: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0974927615586928>, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0974927615586928>.

## **Week 10: Propaganda/Advertising**

### **November 7**

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

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

### **Screening**

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

### **November 10**

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

## **Week 11 Technological Determinism**

### **November 14**

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 17**

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: Surveillance****November 21**

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

**Do:** Détournement assignment

**Screening**

Laura Poitras, *Citizenfour* (2014), Film.

**Week 13: Representations of Women in Film and Art****November 28**

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

**Screening**

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

**December 1**

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

**Week 14: The Body and its Others in Media****December 5**

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 8**

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 12**

Final discussion and review.

### **Screening**

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