

## **DC233-501 Cinema & Art**

WINTER 2015

Tu/Th 10:10-11:40AM 14East 801, Loop

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Office Hours: Classroom Tu/Th 9:25-10:10AM

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This course will provide an overview of avant-garde film, video, animation and installation, and the relationship of these cinematic forms to Modern and Contemporary art. Students will be introduced to the major styles and themes of alternative and experimental moving image work from the past hundred years. Cinema & Art places emphasis on moving image work that is not usually included in a survey of mainstream cinema or film history. A major concern for the class is first-hand exposure to these original sources, and an examination of the relationship of these works to mainstream cinema and other types of popular culture. Topics covered in the class include the avant-garde and kitsch, Surrealism, experimental film, abstract animation, video art, camp, and video installation. In addition to lectures by visiting artists and viewing films, videos, and installation work, students will produce a short creative work in the style of their choice that responds to the work studied during the quarter.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, students will be expected to do the following:

- identify major styles and themes of historical avant-garde film and video work
- analyze the aesthetic, cultural and social significances of these types of movies
- be able to discuss the work of major artists and directors working outside of Hollywood and mainstream movie cultures
- identify elements of avant-garde film and video art that have influenced popular culture

### **Learning Domain Description**

DC233 Cinema & Art is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts by developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning and through critical and/or creative activity to come to experience art with greater openness, insight, and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of literature, art, theatre, or music as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Students

who take course in this domain choose three courses from such choices as literature, the visual arts, media arts, music, and theater. No more than two courses can be chosen from one department or program.

### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will be able to explain, in well-written prose, what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced.
2. Students will be able to comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
3. Students will be able to assess the formal aspects of their subject and put those qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings.
4. Students will be able to contextualize a work of art. They will be able to do so with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre. They will also be able to contextualize a work of art in terms of contemporaneous aesthetic, social, or political concerns, discussing how these might shape the work's reception and how that reception might differ amongst various peoples and historical periods.

### **How Learning Outcomes Will Be Met**

1. Students will read about the history and theory of avant-garde cinema in the class text "Visionary Film" by Sitney and other supplemental theory texts. The class text "Air Guitar" by Hickey will provide a larger cultural context for these ideas. Along with class screenings these materials will be the basis of lectures and class discussion that will pursue a sophisticated understanding of these topics.
2. In the Screening Programming Paper students will research art films and videos in an effort to plan an imagined film-screening program. The purpose of this assignment is to expose students to the media materials at the heart of the course in a self-directed way and then to organize a body of these materials under a critical thesis that asserts a specific interpretive understanding of a curated group of films.
3. In the Research Paper students will investigate a particular film artist and film/video work via academic research and will assert a well-argued critical argument about the paper subject.
4. In the Final Project for the course students will produce a short moving image artwork in response to an historical reference taken from the class material. Additionally a short paper will be written that explains the formal, conceptual, and critical relationships between the piece produced by the student and the historical reference.

## **Writing Expectations**

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of 8-13 pages of writing for this course.

## **How Writing Expectations Will Be Met**

The basic page count expectations for the primary assignments in the course will be as follows:

1. Screening Programming Paper: 2-4 pages
2. Research Paper: 4-6 pages
3. Final Project paper section: 2-3 pages

## **Class Assignments**

Since the primary focus of this course is direct exposure to independent and alternative moving image work, the most important assignment is to view all work presented in class. Much of the work screened is difficult to obtain, and this class is a unique opportunity to see important but rare films and videos. Because of this, *class attendance is extremely important*. If a student misses three classes (two class meetings), the final grade will be reduced by one full letter. A fourth absence will result in a failing grade. The accumulation of two or more tardy arrivals to class (more than 20 minutes after the start of class) or two or more departures before class is formally dismissed may count as a full absence. *Attendance is taken very seriously in this class*.

Work representing a large number of artists and filmmakers will be included in this class. Many of these artists create short-duration (under ten-minute) work, and others create extremely long-duration (over three hour) pieces. The majority of these artists do not create work within feature-length timeframes. We will usually be able to watch short works in their entirety, and key passages will be excerpted from longer-format pieces in order to convey a sense of the film's aesthetics and content. Each week additional screenings to be viewed via the web will be assigned.

In addition to viewing all screened work, students will also be expected to maintain a rigorous reading schedule – **around fifty pages per week**. Students are expected to engage with serious critical and theoretical texts that will at times be challenging in both syntax and content. Weekly readings will be assigned from two textbooks and from supplemental essays. Required texts are explained below. Reading questions will accompany the assigned essays in order to help students focus on the main ideas.

Two quizzes will be given during the quarter. These quizzes will ask students to be familiar with the filmmakers, films and concepts discussed in class and course readings.

### **Course Work**

Students will submit one analytical paper, four to five pages in length, during the quarter. This will be an historical and critical research paper, in which students perform an in-depth examination of one film, director or artist discussed in class. Papers will be submitted as docx files via D2L. Previous to the research paper students will complete a shorter writing assignment, this is a creative project that asks students to program an imagined film screening.

The final project for the class will be a video, animation or video installation project, based on an artist or topic covered in class. Students will identify an artist or idea from the curriculum that most interests them, and create a video in that style. In keeping with the theory-supported work discussed during the quarter, each student must also submit a two-page paper with background information on the artist whose work to which they are responding, and the aesthetic and conceptual strategies employed by that artist.

This project will require only a very basic technical knowledge of video cameras and editing software. It is important to remember that many of the artists studied in *Cinema & Art* approach film and video from a non-professional background, and consequently a variety of homemade aesthetics will be seen. Because of this, students will be able to explore the creative side of the artistic concepts discussed in class in this video project, and do so without an extensive technical background in shooting and editing.

### **Grade Distribution**

Class participation 10%  
Reading questions & quizzes 20%  
Screening Programming Paper 10%  
Research Paper 30%  
Final project 30%

### **Required Texts**

P. Adams Sitney, **Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000**. Oxford University Press, 2002.

Dave Hickey, **Air Guitar: Essays on Art & Democracy** Art Issues Press, 1997.

### **Additional readings, supplied by instructor:**

"*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*" Walter Benjamin  
"*Avant-garde and Kitsch*" Clement Greenberg  
"*Notes on Camp*" Susan Sontag  
"*Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*" Fredric Jameson

Excerpts from “Experimental Animation: Origins of a New Art” Robert Russett and Cecile Starr, Da Capo Press, 1988. (out of print)  
+ More may be assigned at instructor discretion.

| Date    | Important Deadlines--- SUBJECT TO CHANGE, UPDATES ON COLWEB  |
|---------|--|
| 1.27 Tu | <b><i>Screening Programming Paper due</i></b>  |
| 2.3 Tu  | <b><i>Quiz #1 Take home due</i></b>  |
| 2.19 Th | <b><i>Research Paper due</i></b>   |
| 3.3 Tu  | <b><i>Quiz #2 Take home due</i></b>  |
| 3.17 Tu | <b>FINALS WEEK MEETING 8.45-11.40AM – <i>Final Project</i>– screening &amp; critique MANDATORY</b> |

## Course Policies

### Late Work

Assignments and exercises must be completed by the due date provided. Late work will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

### Laptops

This class has a no-laptop policy during normally scheduled lecture and screening class sessions. Please do not bring a laptop to class. Please do not use any devices with keyboards & screens (iPhones, Blackberrys, whatever) to take notes in class.

### Class Discussion

Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day’s topic. Participation allows the instructor to “hear” the student’s voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

### Attitude

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another’s opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

### Civil Discourse

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be [Socially Responsible Leaders](#). It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student’s ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

## **Changes to Syllabus**

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted on D2L and sent via email.

## **College Policies**

### **Online Course Evaluations**

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

### **Academic Policies**

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: [cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment](http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment).

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).  
Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.  
Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544  
TTY: (773)325.7296