IML499 37439 Nature, Design and Media

Spring 2015 USC School of Cinematic Arts

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There is geometry in the humming of strings...
There is music in the spacing of the spheres.
–Pythagoras

To see a world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.
–William Blake

Make everything as simple as possible,
But not simpler.
–Albert Einstein

This course will explore the impact of patterns of order (and disorder) in nature on digital media design, including the relationships among chaos, harmony, beauty, proportion, spirituality, holistic systems, and shaped experience. Students will explore key design fundamentals common in nature, including: divine proportion, the golden section, pentagons, ratios, triangles, spirals, synergy, calendars, music, and rhythm, and apply these forms to the creation of three digital projects.

Each student will create work using a variety of media platforms and methodologies including filmmaking, interactive media, text, visual arts, immersive experiences, and installations. Each project will begin with a personal sketchbook, an “Image Bank,” of 25-40 of digital files (images, movies, observations, moments, etc.) that will help each student to define and narrow their response to each assignment. These will be stored on the class Wiki: http://xwiki.usc.edu/groups/iml49937439spring2015/

In the process of creating each project, the student will experience a narrowing of intent through consecutive iterations presented each week, and each exploration will culminate in final presentations of three projects according to the course outline.
The sequence of the three projects broadly follow the stages of human development from “me, to us, to all of us” –the egocentric, the ethnocentric, to the world-centric:

1) **The Inner Eye** – exploring the enrichment of private life,
2) **The Shared Experience** – facilitating engagement with others,
3) **The Trades** – reinventing commerce or barter.

P1: **The Inner Eye** will invite each student to explore their own emotional/ psychological/spiritual landscape to create media that encourages the same exploration in the viewers/participants. These projects begin with a chosen method of exploring inward consciousness – for example, Jungian symbolism, Buddhism, mythologies, brainwave monitoring, meditation, or other integrated theory. Design sources will include human, animal and plant forms, architecture, painting, sculpture, installations, and man-made landscapes.

P2: **The Shared Experience** will facilitate ways of fostering human empathy, the exchange of ideas, and synergy among two or more viewer/participants. These projects move outward from the self (creator/viewer/player) to engage and collaborate with others and may include games, crowd-sourcing, interactions with others which employ indeterminacy, performances and installations. Sample design-systems include the symbiotic, synergistic relationships in nature among plants and animals, and their parallels in human creativity, such as collaboration in musical improvisation, and the Surrealists’ exquisite corpse.

P3: **The Trades** project will move outward from collaboration to the greater community to foster exchanges (trades, sales or bartering) of goods, services and ideas in collaboration with nature. The projects are invited to address “meta-paradigms” with a commitment to reducing the carbon footprint, living more sustainably, reversing damage to the planet, and heightening public awareness. Design samples include: permaculture, landfill as resource, and sustainable land-use, architecture and agriculture.

**Statements of Intent (‘SI’s”)** are due for each of the three projects on January 28, March 4, and April 8. See form at end of syllabus. SOI’s should be uploaded to the course Wiki, along with your “Image Bank” by 9am on these dates.

Students are encouraged to use their own equipment for this course, including smartphones, tablets, and laptops and low-cost, or free, software including the Adobe Creative Cloud, SketchUp, FCP, or iMovie. Hardware and software access is also available through MA+P.

To log into the workstations in the SCI computer labs, the default username is your USC email username, and the default password is your 10-digit USC ID number. Once you enter this information, you will be prompted to choose a new password. *(Returning students can use their login information from last semester.)*
If you are having problems logging in to the wiki, or the labs, please contact Dave Lopez at dlopez@cinema.usc.edu.

Office Hours are arranged with Frasconi by appointment. You are required to have at least one pre-production meeting with Frasconi during the semester.

Safety is our highest priority during production. Hazardous Shooting Conditions forms and procedures are required IN ADVANCE for any hazardous shooting conditions, especially scenes involving: vehicles, weapons, violence (real, impending or implied), weapons, water, sand, electricity, minors, animals. Please contact us well in advance if you have any questions about how to shoot anything safely.

Permits: Check with the Student Production Office for the latest rules about shooting in L.A. Many locations do not allow filmmakers; many require permits or fees. In most cases if you are going to be visible by the public (on or off campus), you will need a permit. Many permits are free but are time-consuming.

PRODUCTION HANDBOOK AND SAFETY GUIDELINES are available at https://seacommunity.usc.edu/index.cfm

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or the TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open 8:30am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Conduct**
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the *Department of Public Safety* http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.
Support Systems
A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/ will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Grade breakdown:
Grading will be based upon student growth during the semester. It is required that all deadlines on the calendar are met. Incompletes or delays are only acceptable due to illness (Dr’s note required).

In classes exercises, assignments, and readings: 15%
Project 1 25%
Project 2 25%
Project 3 25%
Class Participation 10%

Incomplete Grade (IN) - Grades of incomplete (IN) are given when a student cannot complete the course requirements as a result of a documented illness or an emergency occurring after the twelfth week of the semester.
COURSE OUTLINE:

1. **January 14** – Course overview, introductions, sample work
2. **January 21** – Project 1 lecture, demonstration, discussion; first assigned readings due
3. **January 28** – Project 1 SI Due “Image Bank” presentations, discussion
4. **Feb 4** – Project 1 workshop, discussion
5. **Feb 11** – Project 1 final presentations
6. **Feb 18** – Guest artist TBA
7. **Feb 25** – Project 2 lecture & exercise; second assigned readings due
8. **March 4** – Project 2 SI Due “Image Bank” presentations, discussion
9. **March 11** – Project 2 workshop, discussion

SPRING BREAK

10. **March 25** – Project 2 final presentations
11. **APRIL 1** – Project 3 – lecture & exercise; third assigned readings due
12. **APRIL 8** – Project 3 SI DUE “Image Bank” presentations
13. **April 15** – Project 3 workshop, discussion
14. **April 22** – Project 3 workshop, discussion
15. **April 29** – Project 3 final presentations
16. **FINAL SESSION** – TBA-discussion & evaluation

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Lehner, Ernest and Johanna, *Folklore and Symbolism of Flowers, Plants and Trees*, Tudor (New York), 1960


WEBSITES:

P1
Alan Watts
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wU0PYcCsL6o

Ken Wilber / Integral Post
http://integrallife.com/node/37539
http://www.kenwilber.com/home/landing/index.html

Thich Nhat Hanh  http://plumvillage.org/

P2
Exquisite Corpse  http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5619

MOMA Exquisite Corpse http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1256

DeviantArt  http://theexquisitecorpse.deviantart.com/

NYC Subway Poetry Project  http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/subway-poetry-project-connects-nyers/

P3
EarthJustice

Michael Tellinger: UBUNTU PARTY https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFo0khKqvX4

ART INSTALLATION  http://jamesturrell.com/

IMAGE/INSTALLATION: Politicians discuss Global Warming http://misleddit.com/p/2f43bm/

Small Housing  http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/17/garden/square-feet-84-possessions-305.html?_r=0


Documentary on birth & humanity: http://microbirth.com/

Human extinction / Nick Bostrom
http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/03/were-underestimating-the-risk-of-human-extinction/253821/
STATEMENT OF INTENT (SI)

Name:

Project: P1, P2, P3 (circle)

Title:

Artist’s Statement: (200 word max):

Nature Design elements/forms: (200 word max)

Digital media: (100 word max)