Prospectus:

Life is more digital now than ever before: we see through Instagram and Snapchat, speak with Twitter and text messages, and move in a world of endless screens, pixels, and data. What impact do these media technologies have on contemporary art?

This course explores the formative relationship between new media technologies and the visual arts from the mid-twentieth century to the present. It asks: What are the aesthetics and politics of using advanced technologies like the television, the computer, and the Internet to create art? How have scientific ideas from fields as disparate as engineering and biology transformed traditional ways of thinking about the art object? We will consider the dramatic cultural and social impact of science and technology on the art world from the early Cold War to today’s so-called War on Terror. This course will provide both a chronological survey of the period, focused on selected case studies, and a thematic investigation of major debates and issues. At the end of the term, you will have a deep historical and theoretical understanding of the relationship between art, science, and technology in contemporary art today and in the recent past.

Topics include: art in the age of mechanical reproduction; cybernetics and systems theory as models for making art; the art-and-technology collaborations of the 1960s, and their utopian (and dystopian) visions of the future; the use of tools like the Xerox machine and the Portapak; feminist strategies of technological subversion and appropriation; computerization and early digital images; expanded cinema, experimental film, and immersive multimedia spaces; experiments in internet art and “hacktivism”; the culture of surveillance and technologies of observation; media parafictions, strategic deceptions, and the creation of artistic personae on social media platforms; and new ways to think about technology and new media in contemporary art.

We will use Los Angeles as our research laboratory throughout the semester. We will visit LACMA, L.A. MoCA, and the Getty Museum and Research Institute to see works of art in person and view archival material. During the first day of class we will discuss field trip logistics and scheduling.
Learning Objectives:

The goal of this course is to teach you how to:

* Describe images, works of art, and visual culture in spoken and written language.
* Articulate responses to discussion questions.
* Improve your writing at the college level.
* Choose a research topic of interest and conduct your own research.
* Assess the relevance of scholarship to a work of art or an intellectual debate.
* Engage with the ideas of your peers.
* Gain confidence in classroom speaking and presentations.

Prerequisites:

None.

Assignments and Grading:

Readings:
This course is intended to expose you to a wide range of texts, including primary documents—statements by artists, essays by critics, and key works of critical theory—as well as recent secondary scholarship and art criticism. Readings will be less than roughly 50 pages total per week. It is essential that you read before class; please give yourself the time necessary to finish reading before we meet. If there is too much to read, please let me know and we can discuss as a group and adjust the syllabus accordingly.

Texts will be available on Blackboard as PDFs (no book purchases necessary).

Engagement (15%):
Your goal is full attendance and engagement. I expect you to give your best. Engagement means completing readings before class, listening closely to your peers, and sharing your ideas collaboratively with the group. You should be comfortable asking both simple and more advanced questions. Respectful, generous, and supportive participation is expected from all students—we are all working together, so be mindful of everyone in the room.

In order to help us all stay focused, please do not use computers in the classroom—put away laptops, phones, and iPads. Instead, take out that archaic media technology: the notebook and pencil. It is too tempting to check email and social media while we should instead be engaging with each other.

Here is an explanation of why we will follow an “electronic etiquette policy”:
Leading Discussion (20%):
Each student will introduce the weekly readings once during the semester. This presentation should include a brief summary of the major themes, figures, and chronologies in our texts. You will pose critical questions for the group and will lead our initial discussion.

Short Response Papers (25%):
You will write three short papers (500-750 words) in response to a set of readings from three different weeks. These papers should not summarize the readings but instead engage critically with the key arguments and present your position on the author’s ideas.

Long Research Paper (40%):
You will write a longer (12-15 pages) research paper on a topic of your choice, based on consultation with me. Your topic can be inspired by a debate in our course readings, an artist we discuss or examine, or a work of art on view in the L.A. area, but it must have a thesis argument. I will help guide your research over the semester.

To begin your research paper, you will prepare a brief proposal (1-2 pages) explaining your topic. Your proposal must be accompanied by a few citations indicating the direction of your research; this proposal will allow me to provide concrete feedback early in the semester so that you are can develop your paper further. It will also get you thinking about the project sooner rather than later in the term.

You will also submit a first draft three weeks before the final paper deadline, and I will supply feedback the following week. My comments will allow you to make any necessary revisions before the deadline for the final paper. Your first draft can be rough but must contain your main arguments and indicate how you will complete your paper.

Grading Scale:

Final course grades will be determined using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Due Dates:

SHORT RESPONSE PAPERS: YOUR CHOICE
RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL: MONDAY, MARCH 6
RESEARCH PAPER FIRST DRAFT: MONDAY, APRIL 17
RESEARCH PAPER FINAL DRAFT: MONDAY, MAY 8, 5:00 PM

N.B.: All papers must be double-spaced with 1-inch margins and in a standard, 12-point font. Short response papers, research paper proposal, and research paper first draft are due at the start of class in hardcopy. Final research paper is due at my office (THH 355-H) in hardcopy.

Possible Research Topics:

This course is an opportunity for you to pursue your interests. These ideas will give you a place to start:

* Modern art on TV in the 1950s
* The politics of the Vietnam War and the relationship between science, technology, and military power in art of the 1960s
* Interest in the arts among scientific pioneers like A. Michael Noll and Billy Klüver; experiments with early computer graphics and the work of Lillian Schwartz
* NASA’s art collection and the visual culture of the space race
* Representing the atomic bomb and the technological sublime
* Gender, identity, and technology: Carolee Schneemann, Lynn Hershman Leeson, and Laurie Anderson
* Expanded cinema and experimental film; techniques of visual immersion and media surrounds, from Stan Vanderbeek’s Movie Drome to USCO’s psychedelic media art
* Kinetic art, the politics of movement, and the science of optical illusions
* Bio Art and the use of genetic manipulation in the early 2000s
* Race and surveillance technologies
* Postmodernism, virtual reality, and cyberspace
* Art and terrorism; hacking and cyber-warfare as artistic strategies

Availability:

I am eager to help you with readings, assignments, and course content. I am generally available via email and will try to respond within 24 hours of your message. I may not be able to respond during weekends or the night before an assignment is due—please plan accordingly. I am available in person at my office hours on Wednesdays, 3.00-5.00 PM, or by appointment. Just send me an email to schedule a visit.
A Note on Course Content:

During the semester we will look at many works of art, some of which may be challenging. The goal is never to intentionally shock or traumatize, but to discuss difficult, important, and complicated art. I will try to let you know before we encounter such material. If you do have difficulty with a particular image or discussion, please feel free to raise the issue in class or instead step out of the room. I am always happy to talk about these concerns further in office hours.

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” https://policy.usc.edu/student/scamps/part-b. 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, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office http://equity.usc.edu and/or to the Department of Public Safety http://dps.usc.edu. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage http://sarc.usc.edu fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp provides 24/7 confidential support.

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://ali.usc.edu, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://dsp.usc.edu 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.
THE SYLLABUS (Draft as of 10/2016)

Week 1 (January 9):

Week 2 (January 16):
NO CLASS. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

–Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail, 1963

Week 3 (January 23):
Medium vs. Media vs. New Media


Week 4 (January 30):
Cybernetics, Systems, Networks


**Week 5 (February 6):**  
**Kinetic Art, Op Art, Techniques of Movement**


**Week 6 (February 13):**  
**Media Immersion, Media Surrounds, Multimedia, Expanded Cinema**


**Week 7 (February 20):**  
**NO CLASS. President’s Day.**

**Week 8 (February 27):**  
**Art and Technology Collaborations**


**Saturday, March 4 (Tentative—we will schedule so it fits everyone’s calendar)**
**FIELD TRIP**
**Visit to LACMA**

We will meet at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where we will view Random International’s “Rain Room” (2012) and tour the exhibition “Moholy-Nagy: Future Present.”

In advance of our field trip, please read the following short texts:

Scott, Felicity D. “Limits of Control: The Rain Room and Immersive Environments.” *Artforum* 52, no. 1 (September 2013): 350-357.


**Week 9 (March 6):**
**TV and Video Art**

**RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**


Week 10 (March 13):
NO CLASS. Spring Recess.

Week 11 (March 20):
New Tools: The Computer and the Xerox Machine


View:
Selection of films by John and James Whitney (10 minutes)

Week 12 (March 27):
Art and the Internet: Net.Art, Hacktivism, Tactical Media


Visit:
Selection of net.art sites (links TBD)

Week 13 (April 3):
Media Parafictions, Social Media Avatars, Role-Playing


Visit:
http://www.nytimes-se.com/

Special guest Monica Steinberg, USC Postdoctoral Fellow, will visit our class to share her research on artists, avatars, and social media.

**Week 14 (April 10):**
**Surveillance**


**Week 15 (April 17):**
**Bio-Art and Bio-Hacking * * * Art after “New Media” Part I: The Digital Canon?**

**RESEARCH PAPER FIRST DRAFT DUE**


* * *


**Week 16 (April 24):**
**Art after “New Media” Part II: Post-Digital, Post-Internet, “New Aesthetic”**


**MONDAY, MAY 8, 5.00 PM: RESEARCH PAPER DUE at my office (THH 355-H)**