

IML456 Nature, Design and Media

Spring 2016 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: TBA

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 invites 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 facilitates 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 moves 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, sustainable land-use, architecture and agriculture.

Statements of Intent (“SI’s”) are due for each of the three projects on January 27, March 2, and April 6, 2016. SI’s must be rooted in the foundational Wiki readings provided by faculty according to the class schedule. See form at end of syllabus for a sample. SI’s should be uploaded to the course Wiki, along with your “Image Bank” by 9am on these dates.

Image Banks are the first media prototypes of each project. They are visual resources (links, photographs, or other media) that provide the visual foundation for each of your three projects. They should be uploaded to the course Wiki according to the assignment schedule.

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://scacommunity.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* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. 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/departement/departement-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).

15%: evidence of synergy among discussions, critiques and class Wiki readings/viewings during in-class discussions and in Project 1-3 assignments

25% Project 1 Statements of Intent, Image Bank, Prototype, and Final Project

25% Project 2 Statements of Intent, Image Bank, Prototype, and Final Projects

25% Project 3 Statement of Intent, Image Bank, Prototype, and Final Project

10%: Overall Class Participation

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 13** –Course overview, introductions, sample work
Assignment: readings on Wiki: Dowrick, Louf, hale, Doczi, Hemenway, Das, Bayda, Kabat-Zinn, and Haskell
2. **January 20** –Project 1 faculty lecture, demonstration, discussion; first assigned readings due
Assignment: create Project 1 (see P1 description on page#2) Statement of Intent & Image Bank to be viewed and discussed at next class
3. **January 27** –**Project 1 SI Due** “Image Bank” presentations, discussion
Assignment: create first prototype of P1 according to description on p 2
4. **Feb 3**–Project 1 View and discuss first prototype of P1
Assignment: final P1 due next week
5. **Feb 10** –Project 1 final presentations and in-class discussion
Assignment: readings on guest artists (past guests have included: Steve Fisher, digital journalist; Chad Wright, designer; Sonia Rensch, still life artist; Peggy Weil, media designer; Genesis Boulanger, combined media artist; Jean-Pierre Hebert, digital artist)
6. **Feb 17** – guest artists in-class and via Skype (TBA)
Assignments: readings/viewings on Wiki: poets.org and MOMA on Exquisite Corpse; Deviant Art; T. Monk; NYC Subway Project
7. **Feb 24** –Project 2 faculty lecture; second assigned readings due
Assignment: create Project 2 (see description on page#2) Statement of Intent & Image Bank to be viewed and discussed at next class
8. **March 2** –**Project 2 SI Due** “Image Bank” presentations, discussion
Assignment: create first prototype of P2 according to description on p 2
9. **March 9** – Project 2 View and discuss first prototype of P2
Assignment: final P2 due next week

SPRING BREAK

10. **March 23** – Project 2 final presentations and in-class discussion
Assignments: readings/viewings on Wiki: Ehrenreich; global warming; sustainability; permaculture; tiny houses; Film: *The Island President*

11. **March 30** – Project 3 faculty lecture; third assigned readings due
Assignment: create Project 3 (see P3 description on page#2) Statement of Intent & Image Bank to be viewed and discussed at next class
12. **April 6** –**Project 3 SI DUE** “Image Bank” presentations, discussion
Assignment: create first prototype of P3 according to description on p 2
13. **April 13** – View and discuss first prototype of P3
Assignment: First iteration of P3 due next week
14. **April 20** –View and discuss first iteration of P3
Assignment: final P3 due next week
15. **April 27** — Project 3 final presentations and in-class discussion
Assignment: prepare final presentation
16. **FINAL** –in a spoken and visual presentation, relate the chronology of your Projects 1-3 (SI’s, Image banks, prototypes, iterations & final work) to the Wiki readings, faculty lectures, and in-class discussions

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Doczi, Gyorgy, **The Power of Limits: Proportional Harmonies in Nature, Art & Architecture**, Shambhala, Boston & London (2005)

Ghyka, Matila, **The Geometry of Art and Life**, Dover, NY (1977)

Hanh, Thich Nhat, **Love Letter to the Earth**, Parallax, Berkeley (2013)

Hemenway, Priya, **Divine Proportion: Phi in Art, Nature and Science**, Sterling, NY (2005)

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

MacDonald, **The Garden in the Machine: a field guide to independent films about place**, UC Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles (2001)

McKibben, Bill and Al Gore, **American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau**, Library of America (2008)

Wilber, Ken, **The Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality**, Shambhala, Boston (2000)

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

<http://earthjustice.org/features/ourwork/down-to-earth-with-bill-mckibben?gclid=CKnB2Lnq3boCFStp7AodgEkAmQ>

Michael Telling: UBUNTU

PARTY <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFo0khKqvX4>

ART INSTALLATION <http://jamesturrell.com/>

IMAGE/INSTALLATION: Politicians discuss Global Warming

<http://miseddit.com/p/2f43bm/>

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

LA Sustainability Video: <http://www.upworthy.com/see-how-one-couple-in-los-angeles-squeezes-an-entire-farm-into-a-small-city-home?c=tkp1>

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/>

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)