

## Theories of Media Arts and Practice

Professor: Vicki Callahan, Ph.D.

IML 604 | 4 units

Spring 2016

Wednesday 1:00 – 3:50 pm

SCI L106

IML 604: *Theories of Media Arts and Practice* offers an overview of the major trends in critical theory, helping to introduce the seminal ideas, terms and theories of the last century, applying them to the practice of media art understood broadly. The survey begins with an introduction to the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, and then moves on to address structuralism, post-structuralism, postmodernism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, feminist theory, queer theory and theories of race. Woven into this broad overview is a second survey focusing on the foundational theories and concepts related to new media, with the goal of providing a productive vocabulary and historical context. The final segment of the class examines network and interface theory, with a focus on emerging terms and paradigms for a disciplinary area that remains in transition.

The goals of the course include the following: 1) to sketch the terrain of theory as it has impacted more than 50 years of media production; 2) to build a critical vocabulary useful for the informed production of media art works and their interpretation; and 3) to model one pathway through several histories – those of literary theory, political theory, and cultural studies – as a means for crafting one's own sense of intellectual context. The course does not pretend to present *the* theory of media arts and practice but instead recognizes the interdisciplinary nature of the field and of the iMAP program, and the concomitant need for students to assemble their own hybrid network of thinkers most useful to their own work.

The course will also examine an array of examples of media-rich scholarly communication in preparation for the final project, which will make a scholarly argument, with a thesis and justification, though a media form best suited to it.

**Required book** (please purchase via Amazon, need week 2 for readings in Week 3)  
Robert Dale Parker, *Critical Theory, A reader for Literary and Cultural Studies*  
Oxford University Press, 2012

**All other readings will be available via the course wiki**



## **COURSE PROJECTS and GRADING**

**50% Writing | Note-taking | Synthesis: Ongoing**

**25% Mini Lit | Media Review: Due Week 8** The literature review is fundamental to traditional scholarly practice and often constitutes a first step in the production of a dissertation. It is also incredibly useful in the creation of fields for the qualifying exam. You'll be asked to write a brief literature or media review, due mid-semester.

### **25% Final Project Proposal Due Week 11: Presented Final Class Session**

The final project will be a seminar paper that performs transmedia analysis, applying a chosen theoretical framework to three forms of related media that remain distinct with regard to format. Further details will be distributed in class well before the project proposal due date.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **Week 1, Jan 13: Why Theory?**

Introduction to the Course

View: Ayoka Chenzira, "Revel in the Physical" :

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKAPya4IF\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKAPya4IF_M)

Theory Toolkit Workshop: Theses on Writing

Plato: selection from Phaedrus <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/plato/phaedrus.htm>

Raymond Williams: "The Multiplicity of Writing"

Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa,"

<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy2.usc.edu/stable/pdf/3173239.pdf?acceptTC=true>

*for week 2 read:*

*Hannah Arendt, selection from The Human Condition, from section 5, "Action"*

[http://sduk.us/afterwork/arendt\\_the\\_human\\_condition.pdf](http://sduk.us/afterwork/arendt_the_human_condition.pdf)

*Henry Giroux, "The Politics of Theory, Practice and Clarity"*

<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy2.usc.edu/stable/pdf/30188711.pdf?acceptTC=true>

*(via USC library access)*

#### **Week 2, Jan 20: Praxis as Method**

Discuss Arendt and Giroux

View work of Adrian Piper and Allan Sekula

*For Week 3:*

*Read (all in Parker, Critical Theory)*

*Karl Marx, Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*

*Marx, The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof*

*Max Horkheimer and Theodo Adorno, The Culture Industry*

*Louis Althusser, Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses*

**Week 3, Jan 27: On the Origins of Critical Theory**

Discuss Marx, Horkheimer|Adorno, Althusser

View:

Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera*

Clips from Jean Luc Godard's, *Tout va bien* and *Film Socialisme*

Photomontage work of Heartfield, Hock, Rosler, Carrie Mae Weems

*For next week read:*

*Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in Mechanical Reproduction" (in Parker)*

*Marshall McLuhan, selection from Understanding Media*

*Lev Manovich, "New Media from Borges to HTML"*

**Week 4, Feb 3: Media**

Discuss Benjamin, McLuhan, Manovich

View:

Doug Engelbart SRI presentation | 1968

Godard's *Histoire Du Cinéma*

Jenny Holzer, "For 7 World Trade" and "Redaction Paintings"

*For week 5 read,*

*Ferdinand de Saussure, selection from Course in General Linguistics (in Parker)*

*Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image"*

*Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive"*

**Week 5, Feb 1: Image, Part I**

Discuss Saussure, Barthes, Sekula

View:

Photography by August Sanders, Walker Evans

*For week 6 read*

*Bertolt Brecht, "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting which produces an Alienation Effect" (Parker)*

*Jacques Derrida, "The end of the book and the beginning of writing" (in Parker)*

*Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text" (In Parker)*

**Week 6, Feb 17: Image, Part 2**

Discuss Brecht, Derrida, and Barthes

View:

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Stills*

View clips from

Douglas Sirk, *All that Heaven Allows*  
Todd Haynes, *Far From Heaven*  
Mark Rappaport, *Rock Hudson's Home Movies*

*For week 7 read:*

Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on the Purloined Letter" (in Parker)  
Frederick Jameson "Cognitive Mapping" (in Parker)  
Jean-François Lyotard, selection from *The Postmodern Condition*

### **Week 7, Feb 24: The Postmodern Condition**

Discuss Lacan, Jameson, Lyotard

Listen to

Myra Davies, "Burroughs Bunker"

Meira Asher, "Refuse: military.01"

View clips from:

Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*

David Lynch, *Blue Velvet*

Laurie Anderson, *Home of the Brave*

*for Week 8 read:*

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, selection from *The Railway Journey*

Michel De Certeau, selection from *The Practice of Everyday Life*

Gloria Anzaldúa, selection from *Borderlands (in Parker)*

J. Halberstam, "Queer Temporalities and Postmodern Geographies"

### **Week 8, March 2 Time and Space: (Lit review due)**

Discuss Schivelbusch, De Certeau, Anzaldúa, and Halberstam

*For Week 9 read:*

Michel Foucault, selection from *Discipline and Punish ("The Panopticon")*

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, selection from *A Thousand Plateaus*

### **Week 9, March 9: Surveillance and Control Societies**

Discuss Foucault, Deleuze & Guattari

*For week 10, read*

Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author (Parker)*

Henry Jenkins, "The Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling"

*Helen DeMichel and Patricia Zimmerman, "The Open Space Project: Towards a Collaborative and Relational Theory and Practice of Documentary"*

### **March 14-20 Spring Break**

#### **Week 10, March 23: Transmedia**

Discuss Barthes, Jenkins, DeMichel

View:

*Question Bridge, Chris Johnson, Hank Willis Thomas, Bayett Ross Smith, Kamal Sinclair Through a Lens Darkly, Thomas Allen Harris Triangle Fire Open Archive*

*For Week 11 read:*

*Roy Ascott, selection from The Telematic Embrace*

*Alex Galloway and Eugene Thacker, The Exploit: A Theory of Networks (excerpts)*

#### **Week 11, March 30 Networks: (Work Online Week) Final Project Proposal Due**

*for Week 12 :*

*Judith Butler, selection from Gender Trouble (Parker)*

*N. Katherine Hayles, "Virtual Bodies and Flickering Signifiers," from How We Became Posthuman*

*Michele White, "Introduction," The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship*

#### **Week 12, April 6: Embodiment**

Discuss Butler, Hayles, White

View work of Lynn Hershman Leeson

*For Week 13*

Read for next week:

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (in Parker)

Judith Halberstam, "Automating Gender: Postmodern Feminism in the Age of the Intelligent Machine"

Jennifer Gonzalez, "The Appended Subject: Race and Identity as Digital Assemblage"

Lisa Nakamura and Peter A. Chow-White, "Race and Digital Technology: Code, the Color Line, and the Information Society"

#### **Week 13, April 13: Gender, Race, and Media**

Discuss Mulvey, Halberstam, Gonzalez

*Read for Week 14*

*Florian Cramer, selection from Word Made Flesh: Code, Culture, Imagination*

<http://www.netzliteratur.net/cramer/wordsmadefleshpdf.pdf>

*Rita Raley, "Code.surface || Code.depth"*

<http://www.dichtung-digital.de/2006/01/Raley/index.htm>

*Michael Mateas and Nick Montfort, "A Box, Darkly: Obfuscation, Weird Languages, and Code Aesthetics"* [http://nickm.com/cis/a\\_box\\_darkly.pdf](http://nickm.com/cis/a_box_darkly.pdf)

### **Week 14, April 20: Code**

Discuss Cramer, Raley, Mateas and Montfort

### **Week, 15, April 27: Present Final Assignments in Class**

## **Course Policies**

### **Fair Use**

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. The iMAP program seeks to apply a reasonable working definition of fair use that will enable students and instructors to develop multimedia projects without seeking authorization for non-commercial, educational uses. In keeping with section 107 of the Copyright Act we recognize four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

### **Citation Guidelines**

All projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. The style we use is APA 5th edition and you may refer to these guidelines:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

### **Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work

as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

**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 to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.