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, poststructuralism, 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 media, with the goal of providing a productive vocabulary and historical context.

The goals of the course include the following: 1) to sketch the terrain of theory as it has affected 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 need for students to assemble their own hybrid network of thinkers most useful to their own work.

**Required book** (please purchase via Bookstore or Amazon; you will need as of 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**

**40% Writing | Dialogue:** weekly writing based on readings/viewings assigned and in class engaged conversation

**10% Media Praxis Exercise:** You will work through an idea or issue explored in class using medium/media of your choice
25%  Mini Lit | Media Review: Due Week 9  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 written essay that performs a cross media analysis, applying a chosen theoretical framework to three forms of related media that remain distinct with regard to format. Your written work will be 5-8 pages (1250 – 2000 words) and should be accompanied (on wiki or web platform like Scalar or Wordpress) by your 3 media “objects” under study. You may accompany your media objects with your text, but one version of the text should be a stand-alone document that you print out and hand in.

Course Schedule may be altered, please check course wiki for latest info.
Course Schedule:
Week 1, Jan 10: Why Theory?
Introduction to the Course
View: Ayoka Chenzira, “Revel in the Physical”:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKAPya4IF_M
Trinh T. Minh ha, Reassemblage

Theory Toolkit Workshop: Theses on Writing
Raymond Williams: “The Multiplicity of Writing”
Trinh T. Minh ha: Selection from Framer/Framed

for week 2 read:
Hannah Arendt, selection from The Human Condition, from section 5, “Action”
http://sduk.us/afterwork/arendt_the_human_condition.pdf

Antonio Gramsci, selection from The Prison Notebooks

Week 2, Jan 17: Praxis as Method
Discuss Arendt and Gramsci
View work of Adrian Piper, Allan Sekula, John Akomfrah

For Week 3:
Read
Karl Marx, Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Parker)
Marx, The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof (Parker)
Max Horkheimer and Theodo Adorno, The Culture Industry (Parker)
Louis Althusser, Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses (Parker)
Charles Mills, selection from Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race
W.E.B. Du Bois, selection from Black Reconstruction

**Week 3, Jan 24: 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
Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding” (Parker)
Lev Manovich, “New Media from Borges to HTML”

**Week 4, Jan 31: Media**
Discuss Benjamin, McLuhan, Hall, Manovich
View:
Jean Luc Godard Histoire Du Cinéma

Jenny Holzer, "For 7 World Trade" and "Redaction Paintings"
http://artblart.com/tag/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 7: 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” and “The Death of the Author” (Parker)
Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (in Parker)

**Week 6, Feb 14: Image, Part 2**
Discuss Brecht, Derrida, Barthes, Mulvey
View:
Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Stills*
View clips from:
Douglas Sirk, *All that Heaven Allows*
Todd Haynes, *Far From Heaven*

*For week 7 read:*
Frederick Jameson “Cognitive Mapping” (in Parker)
Jean-François Lyotard, selection from *The Postmodern Condition*
Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,”

**Week 7, Feb 21: The Postmodern Condition**
Discuss Lacan, Jameson, Lyotard, Cixous

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:*
Gaston Bachelard, Selection from the Poetics of Space
Michel De Certeau, selection from The Practice of Everyday Life
Gloria Anzaldúa, selection from Borderlands (in Parker)
J. Halberstam, “Queer Temporalities and Postmodern Geographies” (Parker)

**Week 8, Feb 28 Time and Space**
Discuss Bachelard, De Certeau, Anzaldúa, and Halberstam

**Week 9, March 7: LIT REVIEW DUE no other reading**
*For Week 10 read:*
Michel Foucault, selection from Discipline and Punish, “The Panopticon,” (Parker)
Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, selection from *A Thousand Plateaus*
March 14-20 Spring Break

Week 10, March 21: Surveillance and Control Societies
Discuss Foucault, Deleuze & Guattari

For week 11, read
Selection from Edmund Husserl’s Ideas
Selection from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception
Sara Ahmed, “Toward a Queer Phenomenology”

Week 11, March 28 Phenomenology
Discuss Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Ahmed
View:
Agnes Varda, The Gleaners and I, 2000
Chantal Akerman, Jeanne Dielman, 1975
Lynette Wallworth, Coral, 2012

For Week 12,
Judith Butler, selection from Gender Trouble (Parker)
Michele White, “Introduction,” The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship
Alexander G. Weheliye, selection from Habeas Viscus

Week 12, April 4: Embodiment
Final Project Proposal Due
Discuss Butler, White, Weheliye

for Week 13:
N. Katherine Hayles, “Virtual Bodies and Flickering Signifiers,” from How We Became Posthuman
Rosi Bradotti, selection from The Posthuman
David Roden, selection from Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the edge of the Human

Week 13, April 11: Posthuman
Discuss Bradotti, Hayles, Roden
View work of Lynn Hershman Leeson

For Week 14
Read for next week:
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, Introduction to Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet
Toni Dove, “Swimming in Time”

**Week 14, April 18: Gender, Race, Digital Media**  
Halberstam, Gonzalez, Dove

*Read for Week 15*  
Alexander Galloway, selection *The Interface Effect*  
Lev Manovich, selection from *Software Takes Command*  
Wendy Chun, selection from *Updating to Remain the Same*

**Week, 15, April 25: Software and Ideology**

**Exam Week: Present Final Assignments, May 2, 4:30-6:30**

**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. We will use MLA style, and you may refer to these guidelines: [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/)

**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/](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.