

USC School of Cinematic Arts

Cinema and Media Division

CTCS 505 *Survey of Interactive Media*

Units: 2.0

Fall 2021: Tuesday, 10:00 – 13:50

Class: SCB 101

Instructor: Ella Klik, PhD

Student Office Hours: zoom by appointment

Contact Info: klik@usc.edu

(Please be mindful of working hours and weekends when contacting me)

Course Description

This course will examine the history, aesthetics, and cultural implications of interactivity through media. Pursuing a spectrum of interactive avenues—cinematic, literary, artistic, virtual, and communicative—we will consider the ways in which media work to mobilize creativity and extend individual and collective agency. Our exploration will involve critical analyses of media artifacts and of the cultural effects of these artifacts in cinematic, online, and exhibitory contexts, as well as a consideration of the material and physical properties of interaction. We will also experience, play, and debate interactive media works. Our goal is to both understand what interactivity is and at the same time continually expand its limits.

Learning Objectives

You will emerge from this course with

- an enhanced understanding of interactive media modalities and their function in cultural contexts.
- a grounding in media theory in the contexts of critical theory and art history.
- insight into the interactive affordances of digital artifacts and media in-use.
- familiarity with important interactive media applications in cinema, games, documentary, mixed-media/immersive storytelling, and installation/environmental art.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Readings PDFs and other materials are available on the course website blackboard.usc.edu.

Course Notes

Please allocate \$50 for expenses, which may include ticket purchases and event admissions.

Screening for This Course

For pre-class viewings go to scacommunity.usc.edu. Go to “SCA movie Library” – CTCS 505

General Streaming Resources through USC

[Here](#) you will find a list of databases free to USC students streaming thousands of titles (FYI Kanopy now includes Criterion Collection).

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	% of grade
Activity reports	15%
Mid-term paper	25%
Class lead	15%
Final project	35%
Participation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Participation (10%)

Grade will be based on the student's level of engagement with ideas and themes in the course, as demonstrated by thoughtful and constructive contributions to class discussion and questions posed to presenters and guest speakers. Students can also participate by responding to peer entries on the course blog, bringing to our attention to course-related events or resources, or anything else that will extend our understanding of interactive media.

Critical comments/activity reports (15%)

You are expected to have read/watched/played the assigned texts before each class. Over the course of the term, you will submit to the course website 5 activity reports on the week's screening or activity. The comments should analyze concepts/ideas from the week's readings in relation to the activity. These will be evaluated in terms of clarity and intellectual vigor.

Choose 5 out of the 8 possible activities (indicated in the syllabus). Reports should be 400-500 words and should be posted **by noon on the day before class** (i.e., Mondays). Post the reports on the blog section of the course website on blackboard.

! You cannot submit these reports late since we will reference the reports in class. If you cannot submit the assignments on time, please choose one of the other activities.

Class lead (15%)

Students will work alone or in pairs to design and deliver a half an hour presentation on a week/topic of their choosing. Choose only ONE reading from that week. Students may introduce further short viewings or media objects. This may take the form of a lecture, discussion, activity, workshop etc. Please sign up for a presentation on the sign-up sheet on blackboard.

Mid-term due on October 18 (25%)

1. Proposal (1 page)

Write a project proposal for an interactive piece / object / media. Considering the discussions we've had in class thus far (invoking themes such as power, agency, ideology, and trauma, for example), reflect on how the proposal's form and content may advance an ethical type of interaction. Be specific about the issue you would like to tackle in this project. Be sure to provide as much information as needed about the nature of your chosen project and how ethical questions fit in this framework.

2. Analysis (3 pages)

Draw on research in and outside the syllabus that describes, problematizes, extends, etc., the topic/concept you will be exploring in the proposed project. Remember, this is a speculative proposal which means you are not bound by your technical skills; nevertheless, it is on you to develop a critical and conceptual argument.

Final paper due on December 7 (35%)

The final project can take two forms:

1. Students may submit a (draft for) conference paper of 9-10 pages, offering a critical argument and analysis on a subject related to interactive media.
2. Alternatively, students may submit a work of interactive media and a statement (600-800 words) describing the work and its theoretical significance. Interactive works may be cinematic, game-based, theatrical, literary, etc. Students should consult me before deciding on subjects for the essay or interactive work.

We will have personal meetings November 23rd to discuss the projects further.

Both essays and creative works will be briefly presented and shared with the class on the last day of the course.

Additional Policies

Assignment Submission Policy

Since we are experiencing yet another complicated semester, each student is granted a total of 5 days of tardiness. This means that while the deadline for presentations and activity report cannot be extended, for your mid-term paper and final paper you gain automatic extension. You can use your five days of grace however you want. For instance, use two days for mid-term and 3 for the final, or choose to use all 5 days of an extension on the final paper. Late submission beyond this extension will be penalized half a letter grade per day late to a maximum of four days, at which point the assignment will receive an F. Please let me know in an email whenever you choose to use this extension.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory; if you need to miss class for medical reasons, please contact me.

You are allowed to miss up to 2 classes without a valid reason, after which missed classes will result in a 5% deduction from your participation mark. More than 5 missed classes puts you in risk failing the class. Participating synchronously over zoom is allowed should you need to isolate or are feeling unwell. Arriving late to and departing early from class is considered an absence. If we have a guest speaker scheduled, you must remain in class for their presentation and Q&A.

Tech Use

Laptops and tablets (but not phones) may be used during class for note-taking or course-related activities. I'll often ask you to put away all electronic devices, so be sure to have paper and pens with you, in case you need to take notes.

COVID Policies

- Students must be compliant with USC's vaccine policy to stay enrolled in classes. We reserve the right to ask for your valid Trojan Check display to participate in this class.
- Masks are mandatory and students must remain masked for the duration that they are in this classroom/theater. If you forget to bring your mask, please do not enter the classroom/theater until you are wearing one. Refusal to comply with the university's mandatory indoor masking policy is a disciplinary matter and will be referred to Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (SJACS) <https://sjacs.usc.edu/>. Refusal to leave the classroom if you are unmasked constitutes Disruptive Behavior and will lead to intervention by the Department of Public Safety <https://sjacs.usc.edu/disruptive-behavior/>
- Students who feel unwell or need to self-isolate should NOT come to class. A formal medical excuse is not required in such cases this term. I will practice flexibility to the extent possible in the

case of absences, in providing absent or remote students with continuity of education by means of shared notes and recordings of classes when possible and available. In the case of assignments or papers missed due to ill health, please contact me for additional or alternate readings, screenings and exercises. Other course activities may or may not be the sort of thing that can be made up.

- If they are not, students will be able to miss them without penalty. The grade value of those portions of the course will be folded into other portions of the course grade, or a suitable make-up will be designed.

Course Schedule

Readings are subject to change and activities may be adjusted in accordance with covid restrictions!

Week 1: August 24

Introduction: What Is Interaction? And What Are Interactive Media?

In-class screening	<i>All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace</i> , Episode 1: Love and Power (Adam Curtis, 2011). 60 mins.
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Week 2: August 31

Critical Theory & Media Studies

pre-class activity	Watch <i>Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World</i> (Werner Herzog, 2016) 93 mins. Available through scacomunity.usc.edu . Submit activity report
prepare	Manovich, Lev. "What is New Media?" <i>The Language of New Media</i> . MIT, 2001. 18-55. Hansen, Mark. "New Media." <i>Critical Terms for Media Studies</i> . MIT, 2010. 172-185. Chun, Wendy "Daemonic Interfaces, Empowering Obfuscations." <i>Programmed Visions: Software and Memory</i> . MIT, 2011. 59-89.

Week 3: September 7

The Hardware of Interaction: GUI, Touchscreen, Buttons

prepare	Strauven, Wanda. "Hands-on Screenology." <i>Touchscreen Archaeology: Tracing Histories of Hands-On Media Practices</i> . Meson press, 2021. 151-168. Plotnick, Rachel. "At the Interface: The Case of the Electric Push Button, 1880–1923." <i>Technology and Culture</i> . 53:4 (2012): 815- 845. Parisi, David. "Interface 4: Human-Machine Tactile Communication." <i>Archaeologies of Touch: Interfacing with Haptics from Electricity to Computing</i> . University of Minnesota of Press, 2018. 213-264.
activity	Academy Museum of Motion Pictures visit — <i>wait until opening</i> . Submit activity report

Week 4: September 14

Videogames and Play

pre-class activity	Watch <i>eXistenZ</i> (David Cronenberg, 1999) 90 min. Available through scacomunity.usc.edu . Submit activity report
prepare	Wardrip-Fruin, Noah. et al. "Agency Reconsidered." <i>Breaking New Ground: Innovation in Games, Play, Practice and Theory</i> . Proceedings of DiGRA, 2009. 1-9. Flanagan, Mary. "Critical Computer Games"; "Designing for Critical Play." <i>Critical Play Radical Game Design</i> . MIT, 2009. 223-262. Crogan, Patrick. "Other Players in Other Spaces: War and Online Games." <i>Gameplay Mode: War, Simulation, and Technoculture</i> . Minnesota University press, 2011. 111-134.

Week 5: September 21

Interactivity: Between Literature, Film and TV

prepare	Aarset, Espen J. "Nonlinearity and Literary Theory." <i>The New Media Reader</i> . MIT Press, 2003. 761-780. Daly, Kristen. "Cinema 3.0: The Interactive-Image." <i>Cinema Journal</i> , 50. 1 (2010): 81-98. McSweeney, Terence and Joy, Stuart. "Change Your Past, Your Present, Your Future? Interactive Narratives and Trauma in <i>Bandersnatch</i> ." <i>Through the Black Mirror</i> . Palgrave, 2019. 271-284.
in-class screening	<i>Kinoautomat</i> (Radúz Činčera, 1967) 61 min.

Week 6: September 28

Interactive Documentaries

pre-class activity	Explore: Hollow (Elaine McMillon 2013) http://hollowdocumentary.com/ OR Do Not Track (Brett Gaylor, 2015) https://donottrack-doc.com/en/intro/ Submit activity report.
prepare	Aston J and Odorico S. "The poetics and politics of polyphony: Towards a research method for interactive documentary." <i>Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media</i> , 15 (2018): 63-93. Nash, Kate. "What is interactivity for? The social dimension of web-documentary participation." <i>Continuum</i> , 28. 3 (2014): 383-395. O'Flynn, Siobhan. "Documentary's Metamorphic Form: Webdoc, Interactive, Transmedia, Participatory and Beyond." <i>Studies in Documentary Film</i> , 6, 2 (2012): 141- 157.

Week 7: October 5

When Interaction Cuts Both Ways: Trauma and Healing

Pre-class activity	Watch <i>Serious Games</i> (Harun Farocki, 2009-2010). Available here. Submit activity report
prepare	Pinchevski, Amit. "Screen Trauma." <i>Transferred Wounds: Media and the Mediation of Trauma</i> . Oxford University Press, 2019. 65-86. Brandt, Marisa. "Simulated War: Remediating Trauma Narratives in Military Psychotherapy." <i>Catalyst</i> . 2. 1 (2016): 1-42. Newton, Casey. "The Trauma Floor: The secret lives of Facebook moderators in America." <i>The Verge</i> , 2019.

Week 8: October 12

Interactive Art

Pre-class activity	Exhibition fieldtrip. Submit activity report.
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prepare	Krueger, Myron. "Responsive Environments." <i>The New Media Reader</i> . MIT Press, 2003. 378- Huhtamo, Erkki. "Twin–Touch–Test–Redux: Media Archaeological Approach to Art, Interactivity, and Tactility." <i>MediaArtHistories</i> . MIT Press, 2010. 72-101. Stiles, Kristine and Shanken, Edward. "Missing in Action: Agency and Meaning In Interactive Art." <i>Context Providers: Conditions of Meaning in Media Arts</i> . Margot Lovejoy, et al. eds. Intellect Books, 2014. 31-54.
Mid-term paper due on October 18	

Week 9: October 19

Sensing Interactivity: Maps and AR

prepare	Azuma, Ronald. "A Survey of Augmented Reality." <i>Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments</i> , 6, 4 (1997): 355-85. Mattern, Shannon. <i>Deep Mapping the Media City</i> . Minnesota Press, 2015. 21- 48.
guest lecture	TBD

Week 10: October 26

Playing with and in Tech: World Fair, Theme Parks and Arcades

Pre-class activity	Go to an arcade. <i>Suggested- Two Bit Circus</i> . Submit activity report
prepare	Shatnoff, Judith. "Expo 67: A Multiple Vision." <i>z</i> , 21, 1 (Autumn, 1967): 2-13. Freitag, Florian. "Critical Theme Parks: Dismaland, Disney and the Politics of Theming." <i>Continuum</i> . 31. 6 (2017): 923–32. Tobin, Samuel. "Hanging in the video arcade." <i>Journal of Games Criticism</i> , 3 (2016).

Week 11: November 2

VR and Posthumanism

prepare	Hayles, N. Katherine. "Toward Embodied Virtuality." <i>How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetic Literature and Informatics</i> . Chicago University Press, 1999. 1-24. Nakamura, Lisa. "Feeling good about Feeling Bad: Virtuous Virtual Reality and the Automation of Racial Empathy." <i>Journal of Visual Culture</i> . 19.1 (2020): 47-64. Frosh, Paul. "The Mouse, the Screen and the Holocaust Witness: Interface Aesthetics and Moral Response." <i>New Media & Society</i> . 20. 1 (2018): 351–368.
in-class activity	Field trip to the New Dimensions in Testimony, a collection of interactive biographies from USC Shoah Foundation that enable people to have conversations with pre-recorded video images of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses to genocide. Submit activity report

Week 12: November 9

AI, Voice Assistants and Chatbots

prepare	Humphry, Justine and Chesher, Chris. "Preparing for smart voice assistants: Cultural histories and media innovations." <i>New Media & Society</i> . 23, 7 (2021): 1971–1988. Woods, Suzanne. "Asking more of Siri and Alexa: feminine persona in service of surveillance capitalism." <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i> , 35, 4 (2018): 334–349. TBD
activity	Chosen by students

Week 13: November 16

The Environmental Cost of Interaction

prepare	Ensmenger, Nathan. "The Environmental History of Computing." <i>Technology and Culture</i> , 59, 4 (2018): S7-S33. Gabrys, Jennifer. "Powering the Digital: From Energy Ecologies to Electronic Environmentalism." <i>Media and the Ecological Crisis</i> . Routledge, 2014. 3-18.
guest talk	Anne Pasek, Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies and the School of the Environment, Trent University.

Week 14: November 23

NO CLASS, personal meetings over zoom

Week 15: November 30

Final Class

Brief project presentation Student's choice for discussion / activity
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FINAL PAPER due on December 7

Additional Information

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” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

Disruptive Student Behavior:

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.