

USC School of Cinematic Arts  
IML456 37449 Nature, Design and Media (v11/10/21)  
Spring 2022  
Tuesdays 1:00-3:50  
SCI L106

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Office Hours: by appt ON LINE Friday preferred

The well is within us, and if we dig deeply in the present moment, the water  
will spring forth. Thich Nhat Han (b. 1926-)

We are the land...It is not a matter of being "close to nature" ...the Earth is, in  
a very real sense, the same as our self (or selves).  
-Paula Gunn Allen (1939-2008)

What I want in my life is compassion, a flow between myself and others  
based on a mutual giving from the heart.  
-Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D. (1934-1015)

I live my life in widening circles  
That reach out across the world.  
I may not complete this last one  
But I give myself to it.

I circle around God, around the primordial tower.  
I've been circling for thousands of years  
And I still don't know: am I a falcon,  
A storm, or a great song?

-Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)  
Book of Hours, 12

Students will explore key existential questions through the creation of three media projects based on the stages of human development outlined in Ken Wilber's "A Theory of Everything" – the egocentric, ethnocentric & worldcentric; and other environmental, political, and spiritual writings, including Jon Kabat-Zinn, Dr. Cornel West, and Bill McKibben. Students will work in film, design/graphics, interactive media, immersive media, sound design, and/or installations

We 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 Google Drive: TBD

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 personal 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 – i.e. Jungian symbolism, Buddhism, mythologies, brainwave monitoring, meditation, or other integrated theory. We will examine Phidias, Plato, Euclid, Fibonacci, the Divine Proportion, the Golden Mean, sacred ratios, the shapes of spiraled shells, embryos, and plants, echoed in human observations and creations in geometry, painting, music, architecture, sculpture, and art.

**P2: The Shared Experience** facilitates ways of fostering human connection and 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-sourced poetry, music, installations, smart mobs, and interactions with others which employ indeterminacy and performance. Sample design-systems include the symbiotic, synergistic relationships in nature among plants and animals, and their parallels in human creativity, such as collaborations in musical improvisation, and the Surrealists' exquisite corpse. We will examine the work of John Cage, Marina Abramovic, and Aaron Koblin.

**P3: The Trades** moves outward P2 collaboration to the greater community to foster exchanges (trades, sales, bartering, public engagement) of goods, services and ideas in collaboration with nature. The projects are invited to address "meta- paradigms" with a commitment to living in harmony with the planet, reduce our carbon footprints, live more sustainably, and heighten public awareness. Design samples include: permaculture, landfill as resource, sustainable land-use, eco-architecture, and political activism.

Statements of Intent ("SI's") are due for each of the three projects on TBD.

SI's must be rooted in the foundational DRIVE 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 DRIVE, 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. Access is also available through MA+P.

To use SCA labs: 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](mailto:dlopez@cinema.usc.edu).

Office Hours are arranged with Frasoni by appointment and are preferred on Friday. You are requested to have at least one pre-production meeting with Frasoni 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. Due to current COVID-19 conditions in LA County, all projects must be vetted by faculty.

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> . If you have trouble accessing SCA Community, please advise Frasoni.

ABSENCE POLICY MA+P classes depend on group work and in-class critique, which makes attendance crucial. You are expected to be present for every scheduled class session. If you must miss a class, please be sure to get any notes and assignments from a classmate so you do not fall behind.

There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Tardiness or leaving class early for (0 to 15 minutes) will be considered 1/2 an absence. Missing more than 30 minutes of a class is considered an absence. After your second absence, each additional absence will lower your final grade by 5%.

Please note that the grading policy makes it nearly impossible to pass the course should you miss more than three classes in a semester. If you anticipate attendance issues, please notify your professor immediately.

Grade breakdown: Grading will be based upon student growth during the semester. It is required that all deadlines on the calendar are met.

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.

#### GRADING SCALE

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

A 95-100 A- 90-94 B+ 87-89 B 83-86 B- 80-82 C+ 77-79 C 73-76

#### MINIMUM PASSING GRADE FOR MEDIA ARTS + PRACTICE MAJORS

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

MINIMUM PASSING GRADE FOR USC: 59 and below

## COURSE OUTLINE:

1. January 11 –Course overview, introductions, sample work Assignment: readings on Wiki: Dowrick, Louf, Hale, Doczi, Hemenway, Das, Bayda, Kabat-Zinn, and Haskell

2. January 18–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 25 –Project 1 SI Due “Image Bank” presentations, discussion Assignment: create first prototype of P1 according to description on p 2

4. Feb 1–Project 1 View and discuss first prototype of P1 Assignment: final P1 due next week

5. Feb 8–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 15 –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

7. Feb 22–Project 2 SI Due “Image Bank” presentations, discussion

Assignment: create first prototype of P2 according to description on p 2

8. March 1 – Project 2 View and discuss first prototype of P2 Assignment: final P2 due next week

9. March 8 – Project 2 final presentations and in-class discussion

Assignments: readings/viewings on Wiki: Ehrenreich; global warming; sustainability; permaculture; tiny houses; Film: The Island President

## USC SPRING RECESS NO CLASSES MARCH 13-20

10. March 22– 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

11. March 29–Project 3 SI DUE “Image Bank” presentations, discussion Assignment: create first prototype of P3 according to description on p 2

12. April 5–View and discuss first prototype of P3 Assignment: 2<sup>nd</sup> prototype due next week

13. April 12--View and discuss 2<sup>nd</sup> prototype P3

14. April 19-Transmedia: Theory & Practice meet the Public: presentation and discussion

15. April 26-Project 3 final presentations and in-class discussion

Assignment: prepare final

FINAL –in a spoken and visual presentation, relate the chronology of your Projects 1-3 (SI's, Image banks, prototypes & final work) to the DRIVE 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, Scott, *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 –The Dream of Life <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-poetryproject-connects-nyers/>

P3

<https://earthjustice.org/about>

Michael Tellinger: UBUNTU PARTY <https://www.ubuntucontributionism.org/what-is-ubuntu>

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

IMAGE/INSTALLATION: Politicians discuss Global Warming

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

Small Housing: research a small house design on-line and select one that excites you. Share images and explain why.

LA Sustainability Video: <http://www.upworthy.com/see-how-one-couple-in-losangeles-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/>

Nature Needs Us to Act Now:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/03/partner-content-nature-needs-us-to-act-now/>

COVID-19: <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/coronavirus-covid-19-not-human-made-lab-genetic-analysis-nature>

## **ACADEMIC POLICIES**

Diversity Statement: 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](mailto:diversity@cinema.usc.edu). You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

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/scampus-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>.

Statement on Fair Use: Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. MA+P projects are produced with fair use doctrines in mind using its four pillars: (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. Generally speaking, this means you must only use as much of a copyrighted work as is necessary to make your point, and you must cite your sources accordingly.



Citation Guidelines: We assert that work produced in our classes is covered under the Doctrine of Fair Use. In order to make this claim, however, all projects must include academically appropriate citations in the form of a References section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The References section is either included in the project itself or as a separate document, as appropriate. We follow the Kairos Journal of Rhetoric, Technology and Pedagogy style guide for citation purposes; Kairos uses a modified APA format, whose general guidelines and specific examples may be found here: <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/styleguide.html#apa>

Computer Code: Computer code is often shared and reused. This is appropriate in a MA+P course unless otherwise directed by the assignment. If you do use code, you should attribute it. Please follow these protocols from MIT which call for placing a comment in one's code with a URL to the original source, a note if it was adapted, and the date of retrieval: <https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/writing-code>

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.

#### Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support) Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

USC Office of Student Accessibility Services - <https://osas.usc.edu/>  
213) 821-9620

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/ssa](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa) 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](https://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 Trojan Food Pantry

<https://campusactivities.usc.edu/trojan-food-pantry/> Any currently enrolled USC student who does not have a dining hall meal plan or whose plan's swipes have been fully used and is experiencing a food emergency/food insecurity qualify for the services of the Trojan Food Pantry.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call [dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu) Non-emergency assistance or information.

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NATURE, DESIGN & MEDIA Spring '22 STATEMENT OF INTENT (SI)

Name:

Project: P1, P2, P3 (circle)

Title:

Statement of Intent: (200 word max):

Nature Design elements/forms: (200 word max)

Digital media: (100 word max)