

Georgia Institute of Technology
School of Literature, Media, and Communication
Fall 2012

LMC 3259 L: Experimental Film and Media

MWF 2:05-2:55, Skiles 368

Screenings: Wednesdays, 5pm (unless otherwise noted), Skiles 371.

Professor Gregory Zinman (gregory.zinman@lmc.gatech.edu)
Office Hours: M/W, 12noon-1pm, Skiles 328, (and by appointment)

Course Website: www.exfm12.com

Course Description

This course provides an overview of experimental moving images from the European "city symphonies" and abstract films of the 1920s to the flowering of the American postwar avant-garde; from the advent of video art in the 1960s to the online viral videos and digital gallery installations of today. The class thus surveys the artists, institutions, and viewers that have fostered moving image art throughout the history of film, and asks students to consider the historical, social, and institutional forces that have engendered oppositional, political, and aesthetically radical cinemas. A central premise of the course is that technological developments such as video and new media are not historical ruptures, but rather, part of an ongoing tradition of moving-image art making. Other core topics will include the consideration of the meaning and use-value of the avant-garde, the issue of "artists' film and video" as opposed to "experimental film," and the thorny relationship between avant-garde and commercial filmmaking.

Course Objectives:

- To survey the varieties of experimental moving images produced by a variety of technologies, including film, video, and digital media.
- To learn to analyze these works in terms of form, content, and context.
- To explore the relationships between past and present experimental media forms and practices.
- To investigate the relationships between experimental and commercial cinema.

Required texts:

Available at the Engineer's Bookstore and online:

Michael O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions*. (London and New York: Wallflower, 2003).

A. L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video* (London: British Film Institute, 2011)

Chris Meigh-Andrews: *A History of Video Art: The Development of Form and Function* (New York, Berg Publishers, 2004)

P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde, 1943-2000*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

All other reading will be available as .pdf files or web links on the course website.
Password for readings: experiment!

Course Requirements:

Attendance, Punctuality, and Late/Incomplete Assignments

You need to be on time to class every week and stay the entire period. Attendance to all lectures and screenings is mandatory. We will take attendance in each class and screening. Absences and tardiness will be penalized, so make attendance a top priority.

You are allowed three excused absences. Beginning with the fourth absence, your overall course grade will be lowered by a full letter grade (e.g. A to B) for each unexcused absence. This means that if you miss more than six classes, you will fail the course.

Please be respectful to your fellow students and arrive on time. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, you will be considered absent for that class. If you absolutely must miss a class meeting, please contact me at least 24 hours in advance in order to make alternate arrangements.

All written work must be handed in/posted on time except in the case of serious illness, medical emergency, or some other compelling mitigating circumstance. Should you submit an assignment after the due date, your grade for that assignment will decrease by a full letter grade for each day that it is late. Should you fail to submit an assignment entirely, you will receive an F on that assignment and, consequently, you will receive a lower grade for the course.

Lectures, Screenings, and Discussions:

Please silence your phone. Please do not text, IM, tweet, or read the internet during lectures or screenings. The use of laptops must be restricted to taking notes only.

- In addition to the weekly feature screenings, many screenings will take place in class and/or will be posted online.
- Discussions of the weekly feature screenings will occur on Fridays.
- Some of the films screened in class may be considered objectionable.

You do not have to talk all of the time in class (nor should you), but you absolutely must speak up on a regular basis in order to receive an excellent participation grade. This goes for your participation online as well. Be a good colleague and engage with your fellow students—the idea is to learn from one another.

Reading Assignments

Because of the rapid pace of the schedule, it is absolutely essential that you stay on top of the reading assignments and complete them before the start of each class. Unless otherwise noted, readings should be completed before class on Monday. Reading assignments are assessed through classroom participation, as well as the occasional quiz.

In addition, I will be suggesting additional readings every week on the class website.

Writing Assignments

You will be completing a number of blog posts of approximately 300-400 words throughout the semester, in response to prompts provided by the professor. All blog posts will be assessed on an A-F scale, according to the criteria included below.

A weekly blogging schedule will be established in the second week of class.

Each week, blogging will be structured by *roles*:

First Readers: These students are responsible for posting initial questions and insights about the week's material (readings/screenings). These must be posted to the class blog by noon on Thursday.

Respondents: Students in this group will build upon, disagree with, or clarify the first readers' posts. These must be posted to the class blog by 11:59pm on Thursday night.

Searchers: Students in this group find and share at least one relevant online resource (an article, a video, etc.). In addition to linking to or embedding the resource, the searchers provide a short evaluation of the resource, highlighting what makes it worthwhile, unusual, or, if appropriate, problematic. These must be posted to the class blog by 11:59pm on Thursday night.

The fourth group has the week off in terms of blogging.

You are expected to take your blog posts seriously. Pick interesting clips and topics, and be creative, insightful, nuanced, and clear in your thinking and writing. You are encouraged to post more often than is required for your grade. Such additional participation will be duly noted and factored into your final grade.

You will also be writing two essays: one midterm essay (5-7 pages), and one final essay (10-12 pages). More detailed information about the essay assignments will be distributed at least one week before the deadline.

- Papers are due as specified on the syllabus.
- In lieu of writing a final paper, students may also elect to complete their own experimental media project, in consultation with the professor. The project must be accompanied by an artist's statement
- Weekly blogging will be suspended on weeks when papers are due.
- The final paper or project is due on the date and time of the scheduled final exam: Wednesday, December 12th, at 11:30am.

Grading

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

- Participation and quizzes: 20%
- Blog posts: 25%
- Midterm essay: 25%
- Final essay: 30%

All assignments will be graded on an A-F scale.

When calculating final grades, I convert letter grades to a simplified 4.0 scale:

A = 4 B = 3 C = 2 D = 1 F = 0

If you are curious about the criteria I employ when grading blog posts, please refer to this chart developed by Professor Mark Sample of George Mason University:

GRADE	CHARACTERISTICS
A	Exceptional. The blog entry is focused and coherently integrates examples with explanations or analysis. The entry demonstrates awareness of its own limitations or implications, and it considers multiple perspectives when appropriate. The entry reflects in-depth engagement with the topic.
B	Satisfactory. The blog entry is reasonably focused, and explanations or analysis are mostly based on examples or other evidence. Fewer connections are made between ideas, and though new insights are offered, they are not fully developed. The entry reflects moderate engagement with the topic.
C	Underdeveloped. The blog entry is mostly description or summary, without consideration of alternative perspectives, and few connections are made between ideas. The entry reflects passing engagement with the topic.
D	Limited. The blog entry is unfocused, or simply rehashes previous comments, and displays no evidence of student engagement with the topic.
F	No Credit. The blog entry is missing or consists of one or two disconnected sentences.

Academic integrity:

Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty is not allowed in any form. Plagiarism (quoting, presenting, or paraphrasing someone else's ideas as if they were your own without appropriate footnote and bibliographic citation) is a serious academic offence and will result in a grade of F. Do not submit material found on websites or from online sources as your own – you *will* receive an **F**. Discussing and sharing your ideas with your classmates, peers, friends, etc. (live or online) is highly recommended; the work you turn in, however, must be of your own creation. If you do not know how to properly cite sources in an academic paper, speak with your professor and/or a college librarian. In addition, any identified case of academic dishonesty will immediately be reported to the University.

For more information, please refer to the definition of “academic misconduct” included in the Georgia Tech honor code, available online at:

<http://www.honor.gatech.edu/>

Writing Support

As of last year, the Georgia Tech communication center, CommLab, is now open for undergraduate (and graduate) use. At CommLab, professional and peer tutors are available to work with you to improve your writing skills. More information, including instructions for how to set up an appointment via the website, is available here:

Clough Learning Commons

Phone: (404) 894-3805

Email: commlab@gatech.edu

<http://www.lmc.gatech.edu/writingcomm/commcenter/>

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should self-report to the Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) at:

Smithgall Student Services Building, Suite 220

Phone: (404) 894-2564

TTD: (404) 894-1664

Email: adaptsinfo@gatech.edu

<http://adapts.gatech.edu/>

Syllabus:
(readings and screenings subject to change)

Week 1 (August 20/22/24): What is Experimental Film and Media?

Readings:

Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction(s): Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in Wanda Strauven, ed., *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 381-388.

Fred Camper, "Naming, and Defining, Avant-Garde or Experimental Film."

O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 1-7 (available as a .pdf file on the course website).

Screenings:

Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony (Zhang Yimou, 2008)

Olympia (Leni Riefenstahl, 1938)

The Jump (Jack Goldstein, 1978)

Méliès shorts

A Colour Box (Len Lye, 1935)

Duck Amuck (Chuck Jones, 1953)

Monster Movie (Takeshi Murata, 2005)

Somebodies: A YouTube Orchestra (Gotye, various, 2012)

Feature:

No feature screening this week.

UNIT I: The Original Avant-Garde

Week 2 (August 27/29/31): Cinema, the Avant-Garde, and the Art World

Readings:

Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, 1-49.

O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 8-25.

Jean Epstein, "The Essence of Cinema," and "For a New Avant-Garde," in P. Adams Sitney, ed., *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism* (New York: NYU Press, 1978), 24-30.

Germaine Dulac, "The Essence of Cinema: The Visual Ideal," and "The Avant-Garde Cinema," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, 36-48.

Screenings:

Retour à Reason (Man Ray, 1923)

Entr'acte (René Clair, 1924)

Ballet mécanique (Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, 1924)

Anemic Cinema (Marcel Duchamp, 1926)

Feature:

La Coquille et le Clergyman / The Seashell and the Clergyman (Germaine Dulac, 1926)
La Glace à Trois Faces (Jean Epstein, 1927),
Un Chien Andalou (Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali, 1929)

Week 3 (September 3/5/7): Cinematic Abstraction

NO CLASS MEETING ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

Readings:

Hans Richter, "The Film as an Original Art Form," in *Film Culture Reader*, 15-20.

O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 44-47.

Sitney, "Absolute Animation," in *Visionary Cinema*, 231-267.

Screenings:

Opus I (Walther Ruttmann, 1921)
Rhythmus 21 (Hans Richter, 1921/1923)
Reflektorische Farblichtspiele (Kurt Schwertfeger, 1922/1966)
Symphonie Diagonale (Viking Eggeling, 1924)
Studie no. 7 (Oskar Fischinger, 1930-31)
"By a Waterfall" from *Footlight Parade* (Lloyd Bacon, Busby Berkeley, 1933)
Komposition in Blau (Oskar Fischinger, 1935)
Rainbow Dance (Len Lye, 1936)
Trade Tattoo (Len Lye, 1937)
Tarantella (Mary Ellen Bute, 1940)
Early Abstractions (Harry Smith, 1946-1947)
Begone Dull Care (Norman McLaren, Evelyn Lambart, 1949)

Feature:

Abstract animated shorts

Week 4 (September 10/12/14): The City Symphony/Cinematic Modernism

NO CLASS MEETING ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Readings:

O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 26-37.

Dziga Vertov, "Selected Writings," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism* 1-13.

Sergei Eisenstein, "On the Question of a Materialist Approach to Form," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism* 15-21.

Screenings:

Battleship Potemkin, (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)

Berlin: Symphony of a Great City (Walther Ruttmann, 1927)

Feature:

Man With a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929)

UNIT II: Post-War Experiments

Week 5 (September 17/19/21): American Dreams + Visions

Readings:

Maya Deren, "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1978), 60-73.

Stan Brakhage, "from Metaphors on Vision", in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1978), 120-128.

Sitney, "Meshes of the Afternoon," in *Visionary Film*, 3-15.

O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 48-57.

Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, 59-67.

Screenings:

1941 (Francis Lee, 1941)

John and James Whitney, Five Film Exercises (1940-45)

Meshes of the Afternoon (Maya Deren, Alexander Hammid, 1943)

Fireworks (Kenneth Anger, 1947)

Motion Painting no. 1 (Oskar Fischinger, 1947)

Film no. 3: Interwoven (Harry Smith, 1947-49)

The Lead Shoes (Sidney Peterson, 1949)

Eaux d'Artifice (Kenneth Anger, 1953)

Feature:

TBA

Week 6 (September 24/26/28): Personal Filmmaking/Personal Mythmaking

Readings:

O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 58-68.

Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, 67-75.

Jonas Mekas, "Notes on the New American Cinema," in *Film Culture Reader*, 87-107.

Juan A. Suarez, "Pop, Queer, or Fascist? The Ambiguity of Mass Culture in Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*," in *Experimental Cinema, The Film Reader*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (New York: Routledge, 2002), 115-137.

David E. James, "Stan Brakhage: Filmmaker as Poet," in *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 29-57.

Screenings:

Venom and Eternity (Isidore Isou, 1951)
The End (Christopher Maclaine, 1953)
Shadows (John Cassavetes, 1959)
Flaming Creatures (Jack Smith, 1963)
A Man and His Dog Out for Air (Robert Breer, 1957)
Eyewash (Robert Breer, 1959)
Scorpio Rising (Kenneth Anger, 1963)
Mario Banana (No. 1) (Andy Warhol, 1964)
Oh Dem Watermelons (Robert Nelson, 1965)
All My Life (Bruce Baille, 1966)
Fuses (Carolee Schneemann, 1967)

Feature:

Window Water Baby Moving (Stan Brakhage, 1959)
Dog Star Man – excerpts (Stan Brakhage, 1961-1964)

Week 7 (October 1/3/5): Psychedelia/Expanded Cinema/Computer Movies

Jackie Hatfield, "Expanded Cinema and its Relationship to the Avant-Garde." *Millennium Film Journal*, nos. 39/40 (Winter 2003): 51-65.

Gene Youngblood, "Part 3: Towards Cosmic Consciousness," in *Expanded Cinema* (New York: P. Dutton & Co., 1970), 135-178.

Sitney, "The Magus" in *Visionary Film*, 83-119.

Screenings:

Allures (Jordan Belson, 1961)
Poemfields (Stan Vanderbeek, 1966)
Permutations (John Whitney, 1968)
7362 (Pat O'Neill, 1967)
Invocation of My Demon Brother (Kenneth Anger, 1969)

Feature:

The Holy Mountain (Alejandro Jodorowsky, 1973)

Week 8 (October 8/10/12): Crossing Over/Selling Out

Readings:

No readings this week

Midterm essay due Monday, October 8th before class, via email to Professor Zinman.

Screenings:

Oskar Fischinger, Muratti cigarettes commercial (1934)

Norman McLaren, *Dollar Dance*, NFB Canada war bond ad (1943)

Alfred Hitchcock/Salvador Dali, *Spellbound* (1945) (clip)

John Whitney/Saul Bass, *Vertigo* title sequence (1958)

Joshua Light Show/John Schlesinger *Midnight Cowboy* (1968) (clip)

Paul Thomas Anderson/Jeremy Blake *Punch Drunk Love* (2002) (clip)

Jeremy Blake, "Round the Bend" music video for Beck (2002)

Jordan Belson, f/x work on *The Right Stuff* (Philip Kaufman, 1983)

Feature:

Bob Rafelson, *Head* (1968)

Week 9 (October 15/17/19): Structural Film/Materiality

Sitney, "Structural Film," in *Visionary Film*, 347-370

Opray, *Avant-Garde Film*, 96-106.

Hollis Frampton, "Notes on (*nostalgia*)," in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 224.

Screenings:

Mothlight (Stan Brakhage, 1963)

José Antonio Sistiaga, *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...*, (1968-1970) (clip)

T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G (Paul Sharits, 1969)

Berlin Horse (Malcom Le Grice, 1970)

Synchromy (Norman McLaren 1971)

(*nostalgia*) (Hollis Frampton, 1971)

Feature:

Zorn's Lemma (Hollis Frampton, 1970)

UNIT III: Video Art and the Move to the Gallery/Museum

Week 10 (October 22/24/26): Video Art: Performance/Politics/Aesthetics

Readings:

Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art*, 5-18, 59-88.

Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, 96-102.

Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism" in *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John Hanhardt. Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986, 179-191.

Screenings:

Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square

(Bruce Nauman, 1967-68)

Vertical Roll (Joan Jonas, 1972)

William Wegman, selected videos (1972)

Semiotics of the Kitchen (Martha Rosler, 1975)

John Baldessari Sings LeWitt (John Baldessari, 1972)

Boomerang (Richard Serra, 1974)

Six Colorful Inside Jobs (John Baldessari 1977)

Feature:

No feature screening this week.

Week 11 (October 29/31/November 2) Video Art II: Image Processing/Synthesis

Readings:

Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art: 111-146*.

Screenings:

Space in the Brain (Ture Sjölander, 1969)

Three Transitions (Peter Campus, 1973)

Global Groove (Nam June Paik, 1973)

Union (Steve Beck, Jordan Belson, 1974)

Art of Memory (Woody Vasulka, 1987)

Feature:

No feature screening this week

Week 12 (November 5/7/9): The Cinematic Avant-Garde goes to the Gallery

Readings:

Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, 133-142.

Wayne Koestenbaum, "Situation Hacker: the Art of Ryan Trecartin." *Artforum* vol 47, no. 10 (Summer 2009), 272-279.

Michael Fried and Tim Griffin, "Absorbed in the Action: Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno's *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait*," *Artforum* (September 2006).

Screenings:

Sibling Topics (section a) (Ryan Trecartin, 2009)

Bill Viola, selections

Omer Fast, selections

Lasso (Salla Tykkä, 2001)

The Seven Lights (Paul Chan, 2008)
24-Hour Psycho (Douglas Gordon, 1993)
Fragment of a Crucifixion (After Francis Bacon) (Paul Pfeiffer, 1999)
Cremaster 3 (Matthew Barney, 2002)

Feature:

Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait (Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, 2006)

UNIT IV: Experimental Media Off/Online: The Archive, Crowdsourcing, and IP

Week 13 (November 12/14/16): The Archive/Appropriations

NO CLASS MEETING ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Reading:

Lev Manovich, "Prologue: Vertov's Dataset," in *The Language of New Media*, 1-20.

Ryan Tebo, "What is an Archive, What Does It Do, and What/Who is It Good For?"
Incite: Journal of Experimental Media number 2, (Spring-Fall 2010).

Devin Orgeron and Marsha Orgeron, et al. "Experimental / Avant-Garde Moving Images and the Archive: A Virtual Roundtable," *The Moving Image*, Volume 12, Number 1 (Spring 2012). 87-104.

Screenings:

A MOVIE (Bruce Conner, 1958)
Technology/Transformations (Dana Birnbaum, 1976)
Histoire(s) du Cinema (Jean-Luc Godard, 1989) (clip)
Martin Arnold, *Passage à l'acte* (1993)
Monster Movie (Takeshi Murata, 2005)
Frank Film (Frank Mouris, 1973)
Tarnation (Jonathan Caouette, 2003)
Man With a Movie Camera remix project (2007-ongoing)
Untitled (*The Birds without the birds, or give us today our daily terror*) (Martijn Hendrik, 2007)
Decasia (Bill Morrison, 2002)

Feature:

Rip: A Remix Manifesto (Brett Gaylor, 2009)

Week 14 (November 19/21/23): Piracy/Property

NO CLASS MEETING OR SCREENING ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21

NO CLASS MEETING ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Reading:

Thomas Doherty, "Certified Copyright: Piracy, property rights, and the digital revolution," *Moving Image Source*, August 10, 2012.

Screening:

Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story (Todd Haynes, 1987)

Feature:

No feature screening this week.

Week 15 (November 26/28/30): Experimental Media Online

Reading:

Excerpts from Lawrence Lessig, *Remix* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008) and *Free Culture* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).

Tom McCormack, "Compilation Nation: The History and Rise of the Supercut," *Moving Image Source*, April 25, 2011.

Alexander R. Galloway, "Countergaming," in *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 107-126.

Screenings:

I'm Not Here to Make Friends (richfofo, 2008)

Guitar Solo Threeway (John Michael Boling, 2008)

In Bb 2.0 (2010)

STS, *Rolling Stones* (2009)

Yacht Rock, episode 1, "What a Fool Belives" (JD Ryznar, 2005)

The Shining mash up trailer (PS 260, 2005)

Artist Looking At Camera (Guthrie Lonergan, 2006)

Valentine for Perfect Strangers (Ben Cooley, 2007)

You're Not My Father (Paul Slocum, 2007)

Dock Ellis and the LSD No-No (James Blagden, 2009)

JODI game hacks

Super Mario Clouds (Cory Arcangel, 2002)

Downfall mashups

Zidane headbutt gifs

Class selections

Feature:

No feature screening this week.

Week 16 (December 3/5/7): WPFE: Writing conferences with Professor Zinman

Final Essay/Project Due:

Wednesday, December 12 by 11:30am via email to Professor Zinman