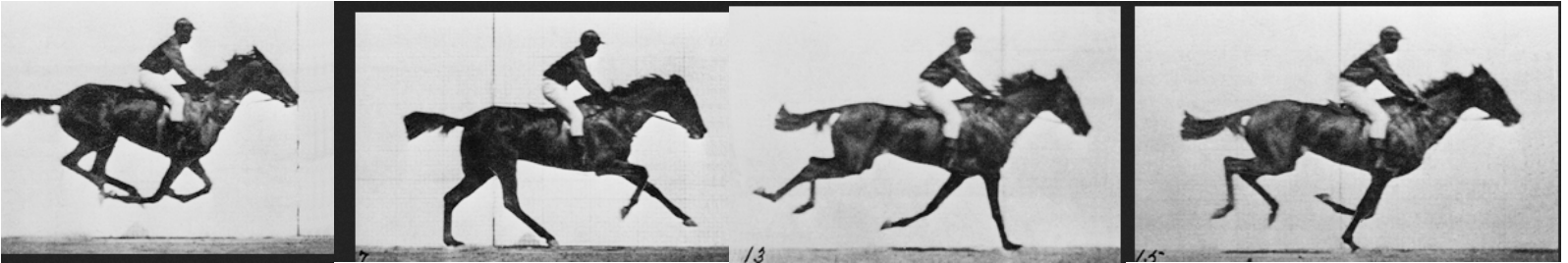


COMM 201
Media Theory & Criticism
Fall 2018



Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Coffman
Classroom: WTC, School of Communication, Room 013
Time: M/W/F; 12:35-1:25
Office: WTC, School of Communication, 219
Office Hours: Wed, 1:30-3:30, and by appointment

- Who is the audience for SNL? Who is the audience for Fox News?
- What are the ethics involved in shaping stories about body, experience and society?
- When is media criticism important?
- Where do you critique media? Only in class?
- Why do we need to understand design and patterns when discussing technology and media?
- How are moving images and sounds similar to consciousness? How are they different?

This course examines schools of thought surrounding the systematic operation and impact of media, particularly moving image media—film and television. Students will be introduced to the history of media theory, from the Frankfurt school to the public sphere, as well as to critical methods for designing, producing, and writing about media. Topics include truth and representation, design and impact, bias and attraction, story and argument.

Students will express their ideas about media with verbal insights, hypertextual or video essays, creative multimedia and by thinking through ethical contexts for media production, consumption and distribution.

Learning Outcomes:

Acquire critical, historical and technical vocabulary to describe, analyze and produce media
Appreciate the interdependency between media representations, narratives, information, and relationships to power
Improved critical thinking, writing and media skills

Texts & Screenings:

Kevin McDonald, *Film Theory: the Basics*, Taylor and Francis Press, 2016.

Media Articles on Sakai

Film Screenings--online or reserve. See <http://libguides.luc.edu/video>

Grade Scale:

Participation (5 questions/comments with links on Forums)	15%
Midterm Exam	30%
Multimedia Research/Video Essay Project/Presentation	35%
Reading Presentation (Group)	20%

Course Expectations:

Participation includes the value that the student adds to the discussions in class, and how prepared they are with readings outside of (and before) class. You will earn up to three points for each question/comment (up to 15 total post) that you pose to the Forum site AND copy to the Participation Assignment link. (Three before Midterms)

Questions/Comments can be posed before and after class (within one week of assignment). Question/comments should relate to the readings, supply relevant new links and will be graded according to their depth, relevance and whether you pose before the end of class. Questions may be more than one sentence long and include commentary/quotes. Something beyond, "What does this word mean?" You can use Wikipedia or Google Scholar for basic questions.

You will participate in one group **Presentation** (approx. 10 mins) of the class readings (groups of 3) during the semester. Find interesting examples, cover highlights of the readings and create a presentation. Please post presentations on Sakai for review. The presentations will help with the Midterm.

The **Midterm** exam will be completed online. You will have access to your notes, book and the web. You may work together. Questions will be drawn from readings, your presentations and your own questions.

You are required to complete either a **Multimedia Research Project** or **Video Essay** on a topic or subject of media criticism or theory. Create a theoretical/critical argument about a media topic related to or drawn from the materials of this class (films, film directors, television or related digital media topic). Both project choices are electronic and will include research and video links. The first multimedia option may be completed using Word, Powerpoint or an online web/blog. It will be 1500-1750 total words (about 6-7 double-spaced pgs of text) with additional images, links and research sources.

If you choose to complete a video essay, you must also submit your transcribed voiceover with references/bibliography in addition to your video link. Time length varies, but should be a minimum of three minutes of voiceover for individual piece. (Video link music/dialogue does not count for timing.) You may work in small groups (up to 2) for a video essay but you must each contribute to the voiceover. With groups, the video length will be longer. The video essay may include narrative, experimental, or documentary interview materials to support your critical inquiry. (Use your cell phones,

'borrow' footage from the web; record your desktop, etc.) You must have standard written endnotes and bibliography of your sources. Use MLA citation format. Your topic (with research list and bibliography) must be turned in after fall break.

Your final **research project topic** (one page or less) with research list, relevant media or web links, and bibliography must be turned in after fall break. You are also required to give an in-class, speed **presentation** (2 mins.) of your project in class before the end of the semester or screen the video essay. (You may make changes up until exam date.)

You will view additional media outside of class time.

If you are sick, we must have a note from the infirmary or a doctor. An appropriate confirmation of personal issues is also needed (obituaries, note from family member, etc.) If you have any kind of disability that requires accommodation, review these guidelines or speak with me privately. <http://www.luc.edu/sswd/index.shtml>

All work must be original and done for this class. Any evidence of plagiarism or duplication will result in an "F" for the class. Review these guidelines. http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. If you need help completing assignments, please see me or go to the Writing Center for outside help.

Course Schedule:

Readings and writings are due on day they are listed unless indicated.

Part One: Theory, Video Essays and Cinephilia

Week 1: August 27th Defining theory. Building systems. Transforming media.

Mon: Read/Watch: Watch in class: Kevin B. Lee's [Transformers: The Premake](#) and [That Spielberg Face; What is Theory?](#)

Wed: Read/Watch: McDonald's Introduction (posted on Sakai)

Fri: Read/Watch: ; [Theaster Gates \(How to Revive a Neighborhood\)](#), Beyonce's "[Formation](#)" and Vertov's [Man with a Movie Camera](#) (with score by Michael Nyman). What do these artists have in common? How are they different? Signifying differences! Building systems/patterns! Creating meaning via collage/montage of images and sounds...

Week 2: September 3rd Clues: Finding meaning in unexpected places

Mon: LABOR DAY NO CLASS

Wed: Read/Watch: Buster Keaton, [Sherlock Jr.](#); Tony Zhou [video essay](#) on Buster Keaton

Fri: Read/Watch Excerpt (pp 1-15) of Carlo Ginzburg's essay, "Clues: Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes"

Sign up for presentations

Week 3: September 10th The Congo, the Close-Up, and Cinephilia

Mon: Ginzburg finish; Video Essay discussion; [Delirium](#)

Wed: Presentation 1 Classical Hollywood Cinema and Continuity

Read/Watch McDonald, Early American Theorists and the Quest for Legitimacy; Lindsay's poem- "[The Congo](#)" words, him reading it "[The Congo](#)." Wikipedia on [Classical Hollywood Cinema](#)

Fri: Presentation 2— Surrealism and Defamiliarization

Read/Watch: McDonald, France, Film Culture and Photogenie; Keathley, "[The Use of an Illusion](#)" pp 1-3; [The Passion of Joan of Arc](#); [Un Chien Andalou](#)

Part Two: Soviet Montage & Conflict; the Frankfurt School & the Culture Industry

Week 4: September 17th Editing, Revolutions and Synthesis

Mon: Presentation 3—Dialectics, Montage, Attractions

Read: McDonald, "Soviet Russia and Montage Theory"; Peter Segal, "Montage: An Introduction" excerpt; **Watch** Eisenstein, "[Odessa Staircase](#) scene, "[Strike](#)"

Wed: Presentations 4—Hitler and the Frankfurt School

Read: McDonald, "Germany and the Frankfurt School"; Benjamin "Work of Art" excerpt; **Watch** Leni Riefenstahl excerpts—"Triumph of the Will," "Olympia, Diving Sequence" on Sakai

Fri: Charlottesville terrorism and Antifa

Read: "An Intimate History of Antifa" review, *New Yorker* magazine

Watch/Bring In --Any links to Antifa materials that interest you, Youtube, etc..

Part Three: Linguistic Signs, Realism and Destruction

Week 5: September 24th Post-war documentation

Mon: Presentation 5—Neo-realists, Cahiers du Cinema;

Read/Watch: McDonald, "Post-War France: from Neorealism to the New Wave"; Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie* opening; Da Sica's [Bicycle Thief](#) opening; [Umberto D.](#) dog scene

Wed: Presentation 6—If you like codes, sign here please

Read: McDonald, French Theory, 1949-1968, The Linguistic Turn; Marcel Danesi, "Messages, Signs, Meanings"—Find interesting examples of representing meaning via codes/signs/icons and bring to class.

Fri: NO CLASS ON THE 28TH

Week 6: October 1st Torture, Satire, Charlie Hebdo, SNL

Mon: Presentation 7—Warnings and Triggers

Read/Watch: Susan Sontag, “Regarding the Torture of Others”; Trigger Films, “Night and Fog,” New Yorker, “On Satire and Charlie Hebdo: **Look at Joe Sacco** [cartoons](#) on Charlie Hebdo murders.; “Joe Sacco Response to Charlie Hebdo”

Wed: Midterm Review

Fri: **MIDTERM EXAM** Online by 11:55 pm—No Class

Week 7: October 8th Presidents, audience and dialogues with history

Mon: Fall Break; No class

Wed: **Watch before this class:** Spielberg’s “Lincoln”; available in LUC library (streaming online at Youtube, Amazon, iTunes, Google Play, etc...for less than \$4.00.)

Fri: Presentation 8— Identity, presidents and film politics

Read: McDonald, “May 1968 and Afterward,” “Post-colonial Theory”; Janet Staiger’s “The significance of Steven Spielberg’s Old Mr. Lincoln: political emotions and intertextual knowledge”

Part Four: Making Lives Visible—Digital Selves; Digital Audiences

Week 8: October 15th Curves and Cameras

Mon: Presentation 9: Smile for the Camera

Read: McDonald, “Feminist Film Theory”; Jen Proctor et al. “*Woman with the movie camera redux:*”

Watch: “[Dangerous Curves](#)” by Merete Mueller (2016)

Wed: Presentation 10

Read: Nina Martin “Porn: it’s not just about sex anymore.”; “From Orgasms to Spankings: A Content Analysis”

Fri: Watch out of class (no in-class session): *CitizenFour*

Week 9: October 22nd Digital Politics, Public Space and Edward Snowden

Mon: Presentation 11—The Revolution will be Online

Read: Jurgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere”; Edward Snowden, Black Lives Matter web site and social media in Arab Spring

Wed: Library research presentation in class; bring your topics! Sign up with me for topic review

Fri: Meetings with me about final projects

Part Five: Constructing Realities—Postmodernism, Networks

Week 10: October 29th Competition Everywhere

Mon: Presentation 11— Games and Systems

Read/Watch: McDonald, Deleuze and the Return of Philosophy; Baudrillard, “Postmodernism”; Latest game innovations—bring examples to class

Wed: Continue Game discussion

What’s the problem with recording everything? What do you make of the interactive site [Copblock](#)?

Fri: Nov 2nd NO CLASS; Meetings with Coffman re final project

Week 11: November 5th The End of Cinema? Beginning of Interactivity..

Mon: Presentation 12—Where has meaning gone?

Read: “New Media and Post-film Theory”; William Uricchio, “The algorithmic turn: photosynth, augmented reality and the changing implications of the image.”

Final Project Topic, 1 page with research list

Wed: Presentation 13: Collaborative meaning-making

Read/Watch Sandra Gaudenzi, “The Interactive Documentary as a Living Documentary”; Interactive Picturing Sites—Last Hijack; High Rise

Fri: Discussion and Project Brain-storming

Week 12: November 12th

Mon: TBD Film screening

Wed: TBD Film screening

Fri: Open research class

Week 13: November 19th Thanksgiving

Mon: No class; Open office hours

Wed: No class

Week 14: Nov. 26th

Mon: **Due:** 5 min, in-class, presentations of final project

Wed: **Due:** 5 min, in-class, presentations of final project

Fri: **Due:** 5 min, in-class, presentations of final project

Week 15: December 3rd

Mon: **Due:** 5 min, in-class, presentations of final project

Wed: **Due:** 5 min, in-class, presentations of final project

Final Research Projects Due on Sakai by Dec. 9th, midnight