

Media and Mediums in the Age of Transition (HCOL 185)

Instructor: Dr. Katie Gough

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Class: 3:30-4:20pm, MWF, Univ Heights N, Rm 016

Office: 301 Royall Tyler Theatre

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesday from 11am-12pm, or email for appointment



Course Description

For over two millennia, “media,” as a way of connecting representation and social reality, has been key to understanding what it means to be human – the being-in-the-medium of a human being. Depending on the context, media in the arts can be a means of communication (like social media), or a physical object, a medium: newspaper, television, film, radio, photograph, painting, smartphone, iPad, or theatrical stage. In *Ars Poetica*, the Roman rhetorician, Horace, coined the phrase *in media res* to describe the ideal epic poet, who, “hurries to the action, and snatches the listener *into the middle of things*,” using language that aptly describes the job of a stage actor.

What does it mean to stay in the middle of things? To be the archetype of connection and transition? As you are now living through an era that is defined by transition of all sorts (political, ecological, cultural, spiritual), with many among you navigating the transition between youth and adulthood, you are well placed to reflect upon these questions. In this seminar we will run “into the middle of things” to explore a variety of media and mediums from three historical moments of seismic technological change that help to contextualize our early digital age: the late medieval period (11th-14th century), the fin de siècle (1890-1920), and the Atomic Age (post-1945). Using case studies from each period we will explore what it means to be an archetype of transition – to live between realities – and identify such archetypes from the past and present. In addition, we will think creatively and critically about what we can learn about our human experience – our archetypal journey –as we reflect on the ways humans and technology co-evolve.

Learning Objectives

- Introduce and define key terms for engaging interdisciplinary theories of media and performance;
- Explore, research, and analyze several of the major archetypes, media forms, artworks and artists in the three transitional epochs under investigation;
- Understand the major components that help to define these three historical moments as transitional and liminal;
- Compare and contrast the form and content of art (eg. music, image, body, text) across mediums;
- Demonstrate an ability to put forward research materials clearly and effectively in class presentations, short assignments, and a final research essay.

Assignment Breakdown

• Classroom attendance & participation	20%
• Three in-class tests at the end of each unit (3 X 10%)	30%
• Student-led discussion/presentations (3 X 5%)	15%
• Research Paper (15-20 pgs)	35%
○ Proposal (5%)	
○ In-class presentation of research (10%)	
○ Final essay (20%)	
TOTAL	100%

Student Led Discussion/Presentations

There are several days during the semester when small groups of students (approx. 3 students) will be responsible for leading class discussion. For these days marked on the syllabus, student groups should come prepared having read the texts with extra care, and select topics or themes that emerge from the reading that they want to discuss in more detail with their peers. In some cases this can include aspects of the readings that require further clarification, or things that the group did not quite understand. In other cases it should be a jumping off point for a larger conversation about the ideas the author is discussing.

In all cases, the group needs to refer to passages from the text. That is, class discussion should be anchored in the readings and student discussion leaders should avoid vague generalizations. It might sometimes be helpful to present your own theory or idea about what a reading might be suggesting, or something it inspired in you, and use that as a way to open a discussion with the class.

In class tests

The in-class tests at the end of each unit will be comprised of four questions that students should be able to answer in 50 minutes. Three of these questions will be based on your readings, asking you to summarize arguments, or asking you questions about the reading to demonstrate your comprehension of the materials. The final question in each test will be a “connection” question – asking students to make critical creative connections between some of the art forms we explored in the unit.

Research Paper

More information will be distributed during the semester. In general terms, the research paper is the culmination of your thinking over the course of the semester. While we will study three historical “transitional” eras where radical technological and cultural change produce paradigm shifts in human consciousness, in your final research paper you will explore some of the ways that we see these earlier eras present into today’s contemporary world, or ways that past transitional time periods might “rhyme” with the present. While you will be able to select your subject matter, you will do so in consultation with me during your individual meetings in Week 10.

Bibliography:

Note: all texts available on BB unless marked with an *

Brooks, Daphne. “Nina Simone’s Triple Play,” *Callaloo*. 34.1 (Winter 2011): 176-197.

Carruthers & Ziolkowski, “The Guidonian Hand,” from *The Medieval Craft of Memory*

Corbin, Henry. “Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal” on <https://www.amiscorbin.com/en/bibliography/mundus-imaginalis-or-the-imaginary-and-the-imaginal/>

Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*. Trans. Jane Marie Todd. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995 (not required).

Federman, M. (2004, July 23). “What is the Meaning of the Medium is the Message?” Retrieved <July 15, 2019> from http://individual.utoronto.ca/markfederman/article_mediumisthemessage.htm

Goldman, Jonathan Goldman. 1992. *Healing Sounds: The Power of Harmonics*. Rochester, VT: Healing Arts Press.

Higgins, Hannah. “Notation,” in *The Grid Book*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009. pps. 99-123

Kraus, Rosalind. “Grids,” *October*, 9 (Summer 1979): 50-64.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1964. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Ontario, CN: Signet Books.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body*. Trans. Sarah Clift, Pascale-Anne Brault & Michael Naas. New York: Fordham University Press, 1998.

*Solnit, Rebecca. *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West*. NY: Penguin, 2004.

Wertheim, M. "Physical Space" from *The Pearly Gates of Cyber Space: The History of Space from Dante to the Internet*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2000.

Week	Date	Assigned readings, class meetings	Assignments Due
1	08/26	Living in the Middle: The Mediatrix Archetype & Course Overview	
	08/28	Keywords: Media and Mediums Considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marshal McLuhan "The Medium is the Message" (BB) + • Federman "What is the meaning of the Medium is the Messages?" (BB)
	08/30	Medi(ev)al Archetype #1: Guidonian Hand lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carruthers & Ziolkowski, "The Guidonian Hand," from <i>The Medieval Craft of Memory</i>
2	09/02	Labor Day Holiday	Labor Day Holiday
	09/04	Singing & Thinking On and Off the Grid: reading & discussion	Student Led Group Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higgins, Hannah, "Notation," from <i>The Grid Book</i>
	09/06	Listening to the Hand: Harmonics Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goldman, "Harmonics and Meditation: Listening as Transformation" from <i>Healing Sounds</i>
3	09/09	Medi(ev)al Case Study: <i>Noli me tangere</i> Listening to Images Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excerpts from Jean-Luc Nancy's <i>Noli me tangere</i>
	09/11	Immersive Realities in Art & Science:	Student Led Group Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wertheim, M. "Physical Space" from <i>The Pearly Gates of Cyber Space: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet</i>

Week	Date	Assigned readings, class meetings	Assignments Due
	09/13	On & Off the Sonic Grid: <i>Noli me tangere</i> Workshop Exploration	
4	09/16	The Imaginary and The Imaginal: Ways of Knowing Discussion	Student Led Group Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Henry Corbin's "Mundus Imaginalis"
	09/18	<i>The Incredulity of St. Thomas</i> : The 'other' way of knowing Lecture & Discussion	
	09/20	Afterlife & Sound: Guidonian Hand, <i>Noli me tangere</i> , and <i>Incredulity of St. Thomas</i> in conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conversation about the medi(ev)al world Review for test on Monday
5	09/23	In Class Test (Late Medieval)	In Class Test (Late Medieval)
	09/25	Fin de siècle Archetype #1: The Medium	Hilma af Klint (1862-1944): https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/checklist/who-was-hilma-af-klint-at-the-guggenheim-paintings-by-an-artist-ahead-of-her-time
	09/27	Female Technology	Student Led Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Turning into the female medium" in <i>The Sympathetic Medium</i>
	09/29	John Holland Psychic Medium at Main Street Landing (Sunday)	
6	09/30	Technologies of the in-between: Edeaward Muybridge's stop motion photography	Student Led Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Solnit, R. <i>Muybridge and the Technological Wild West</i> https://exhibits.stanford.edu/muybridge/catalog/jf437nt9771
	10/02	Stopping and Speeding Up Time: Spiritualism and Technology	Student Led Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Solnit, R. <i>Muybridge and the Technological Wild West</i>

Week	Date	Assigned readings, class meetings	Assignments Due
	10/04	Technology, Nature & Genocide: Photographing disappearance	Student Led Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Solnit, R. <i>Muybridge and the Technological Wild West</i>
7	10/07	Missing bodies: between theatre and film during WWI	Group Exercises: Reading Eleanora Duse's letters (distributed in class)
	10/09	Muybridge's mixed media ancestors: a counter narrative	Group Exercises: In advance of class read/view the following and think about each in relation to Muybridge's stop motion photography. In what way can you say he influenced these artistic "ancestors"? Marcel Duchamp <i>Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2</i> : https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/wwi-dada/dada1/a/marcel-duchamp-nude-descending-a-staircase-no-2 & https://baswaramursyid.wordpress.com/2015/01/03/art-of-movement-iii/ Sol LeWitt: https://wcmawilliams.edu/sol-lewitt-the-well-tempered-grid/ 4D-Views: https://www.4dviews.com/volumetric-video-showreel
	10/11	Late Medieval and Fin de siècle in conversation	Review for class test
8	10/14	Fall Recess	Fall Recess
	10/16	In Class Test (fin de siècle)	In Class Test (fin de siècle)
	10/18	Open Discussion – Research Project Assignment	Open Discussion – Research Project Assignment

Week	Date	Assigned readings, class meetings	Assignments Due
9	10/21	Atomic Age Archetype #1: Japanese Butoh	Readings TBA
	10/23	Butoh Lecture/Demonstration	Butoh workshop with Julian Barnett
	10/25	Butoh & Minimalism	Readings TBA
10	10/28	Individual Meetings with Students	Individual Meetings with Students
	10/30	Individual Meetings with Students	Individual Meetings with Students
	11/01	Case Study #1: Simone Weil's Decreation and Attention	Student Led Discussion Weil, Simone. "Decreation" + "Attention" from <i>Gravity and Grace</i> .
11	11/04	Case Study #2: Modernist Grid	Student Led Discussion Kraus, Rosalind. "Grids," <i>October</i> , 9 (Summer 1979): 50-64
	11/06	Case Study #3: John Cage's 4' 33"	Student Led Discussion Reading TBA
	11/08	Case Study #4: Nina Simone's <i>Mississippi God Damn</i>	Student Led Discussion Brooks, Daphne. "Nina Simone's Triple Play," <i>Callaloo</i> . 34.1 (Winter 2011): 176-197.
12	11/11	In Class Test (Atomic Age)	In Class Test (Atomic Age)
	11/13	Open Discussion – Ages of Transition Then & Now	
	11/15	Open Discussion – Ages of Transition Then & Now	Research Proposals Due
13	11/18	In-Class Research Presentations	In-Class Research Presentations
	11/20	In-Class Research Presentations	In-Class Research Presentations
	11/22	In-Class Research Presentations	In-Class Research Presentations
14	11/25	Thanksgiving Break	Thanksgiving Break

Week	Date	Assigned readings, class meetings	Assignments Due
	11/27	Thanksgiving Break	Thanksgiving Break
	11/29	Thanksgiving Break	Thanksgiving Break
15	12/02	<u>Draft of Research Project Due:</u> Editorial Workshops	<u>Draft of Research Project Due:</u> Editorial Workshops
	12/04	Citation Workshop	Citation Workshop
	12/06	Course Evals & Final Essay Due	Course Evals & Final Essay Due

Attendance and Participation:

- This course is based on in-class discussion and participation; therefore attendance is mandatory. Attendance will be taken throughout the term and missing more than 3 classes will affect your participation grade. Missing more than 6 classes will result in an automatic “F” for the course based on attendance alone. I realize that things happen that are outside your control so please contact me (preferably before) in these situations.
- It is also necessary that you come to class prepared. You are expected to have completed all of the readings the day that they are due. Please bring the readings with you to class. You are responsible for all materials covered in class (changes to the syllabus, scheduling, or assignments) whether you are present or not. Check with classmates or on Blackboard if you miss class to see if there are new announcements. The writing deadlines are absolute. No late work will be accepted. No changes in exam schedules are permitted.
- All phones must be set to silent before class begins

Religious Holidays

Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Each semester students should submit in writing to their instructors by the end of the second full week of classes their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester. Faculty must permit students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance to make up this work.

Academic Integrity

The principal objective of the Academic Integrity Code is to promote an intellectual climate and support the academic integrity of the University of Vermont. Academic dishonesty or an offense against academic honesty includes acts that may subvert or compromise the integrity of the educational process. Such acts are serious offenses that insult the integrity of the entire academic community.

Each student is responsible for knowing and observing this code. Please review the Code of Academic Integrity on the following link: <https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/acadintegrity.pdf>

Plagiarism Policy

"The word *plagiarism*, which derives from the Latin word for 'kidnapping,' refers to the unacknowledged use of another's words, ideas, or information. Students sometimes get into trouble because they mistakenly assume that plagiarizing occurs only when another writer's exact words are used without acknowledgement. In fact, plagiarism applies to ideas and statistics as well. So keep in mind that you must indicate the source of any ideas or information you use in your research for a paper, whether you have paraphrased, summarized, or quoted directly from the source." *from The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*. ** I TAKE THIS VERY SERIOUSLY! BE CAREFUL WHEN DOCUMENTING YOUR WORK.

Student Learning and Accommodations

In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS). SAS works with students and faculty to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations via an accommodation letter to faculty with approved accommodations as early as possible each semester. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty to discuss the accommodations they plan to use in each course. Contact SAS: A170 Living/Learning Center; 802-656-7753; access@uvm.edu; <http://www.uvm.edu/access> UVM's policy on disability certification and student support: <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/disability.pdf>