

Media Aesthetics: Image
HUMA 16000
Autumn 2014

Lecture: MW 1:30–2:50 PM, Rosenwald Hall 432

Additional Screenings and Plenary Lectures: See course schedule below

Instructor: Ian Jones, Department of Cinema and Media Studies
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 Office Hours: W 3:00-5:00 (by appointment), Cobb Hall 324

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE COURSE

What are the different forms of copying and imitation? How do these forms relate to the medium in which they are rendered? Are some forms of reproduction valued more than others, considered more hazardous than others? If so why? Is it possible to ascertain how seemingly “natural” and/ or “mechanical” forms of representation are not as objective or universal as they seem to be? Does the visible always have some relation to the invisible, and if so, what? What is the relation of knowledge to duplication? Is representation based on a prior reality or is reality constituted through representation—or some of both? Are there copies with no originals? And is it possible that images can seem as or more real than life itself, and under what conditions? Why and how has Western culture focused to such a great extent on questions and issues of reproduction? If we find that there are opposed ideologies about the legitimacy of simulation, are there important contradictions that result? How do these reverberate socially and politically?

REAUURED MATERIALS

Plato, *Republic*, trans/ed. Reeve, ISBN 0872207366
 Aristotle, *Poetics* (Heath, Penguin Classics) ISBN 0140446362
 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ISBN 0199535981
 (All others will be available on Chalk.)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

September 29	Course introduction
October 1	Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message” W.J.T. Mitchell, “Addressing Media” OPTIONAL/RECOMMENDED: W.J.T. Mitchell, “Image”

Week 2

- October 6 Plato, *Republic*, Introduction by C. D. C. Reeve
Plato, *Republic*, Book 7
- October 8 Plato, *Republic*, Book 3 and 10
- October 10 Supplemental Screening of *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1983)
3PM, Doc Films (**Note: On a Friday!**)

Week 3

- October 13 in-class discussion of *Videodrome*
- October 15 Jorge Luis Borges, "On Exactitude in Science"
Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra"
First paper due in-class (3pp, 750 words)

Week 4

- October 20 Andre Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image"
Edgar Allan Poe, "The Daguerreotype"
in-class screening of clips:
Blow-Up (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966)
The Trouble with Harry (Alfred Hitchcock, 1955)
in-class discussion of spirit photography
- October 22 Charles Baudelaire, "Modern Public and Photography"
Cindy Sherman, "Untitled Film Stills" series (select photographs)

Week 5

- October 27 Aristotle, *Poetics*, pp xii-xv, 3-13, 20-24
- October 29 Alan Paskow, "What Is Aesthetic Catharsis"
in-class discussion of Brechtian theatrical aesthetics
in-class screening of clip:
Parsifal (Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, 1982)
in-class demonstration:
Façade (Matthew Mattias and Daniel Stern, 2005)

Week 6

- November 3 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological
Reproducibility"
- November 5 Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator,
and the Avant-Garde"

in-class screening of short films and clips:

Kinetoscope Films (Edison Company, 1894-1896)
Le Voyage dans la lune (Georges Méliès, 1902)
The Gay Shoe Clerk (Edwin S. Porter, 1903)
How a French Nobleman Got a Wife Through the New York Herald Personal Columns (Edison Company, 1904)
clip from *Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)
clip from *Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929)
clip from *Modern Times* (Charles Chapin, 1936)

Week 7

November 10

Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny”

in-class screening of clips:

clip from *Lost Highway* (David Lynch, 1997)
clip from *Pontypool* (Bruce McDonald, 2008)
clip from *Un chien andalou* (Louis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, 1929)

November 12

Mori Masahiro, “The Uncanny Valley”

in-class discussion of YouTube clips

Second paper due in-class (4pp, 1000 words)**Week 8**

November 17

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Preface-Chapter IX

November 19

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Chapters X-XX

November, 21

Supplemental Screening of *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)
3PM, Doc Films (**Note: On a Friday!**)**Week 9**

November 24

Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

November 24

Supplemental Plenary Lecture by Daniel Morgan on *Vertigo*
7PM, Kent 107

November 26

No class (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 10

December 1

Anita Sarkeesian, “Tropes vs. Women in Video Games: Women as Background Decoration, Pt 2” (video)

December 3

catching up on loose ends/wrap-up

Week 11

No class.

Final paper due via email and/or physical drop-off (6pp, 1500 words)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

- 1) Attendance and in-class participation. Unexcused absences at 2 or more class sessions will significantly lower your final grade. For more details on the screenings attendance policy for this class, see below. (20% of final grade)
- 2) Participation in discussion board threads that will be created in weeks 2 through 9 of the course. Eight threads will be created; students must participate in *six* of these threads (either in response to prompts, or as more free-form discussions, as indicated) in order to attain full credit. (25% of final grade)
- 3) Three written papers, of 3, 4, and 6 pages, the first two of which are due in-class, and the final of which will be due during week 11 after class sessions have ended (55% of final grade)

SCREENINGS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Due to the realization that student schedules will not necessarily line up with the timing that the Media Aesthetics instructors have set for the two screenings of the course, attendance at these screenings is not mandatory. However, given that *Videodrome* and *Vertigo* constitute texts in this course as vital as any of the reading assignments, students are required to have viewed the films in question by the next class meeting.

For students without scheduling conflicts, attendance at the public exhibitions of these films is strongly encouraged. Cinema is a medium designed for collective viewing on a large screen; when at all possible, *this* should be the mode of experience one engages a film with.

NOTES ON WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

- All page numbers above refer to double-spaced pages, *not* including bibliography or visual aids.
- All written papers should consistently include proper citations, following the guidelines of either the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) or MLA reference style. Either is fine, but pick one and be consistent within a given paper.
- Your papers must conform to the University's policies on academic honesty and plagiarism. If you have any questions regarding this requirement, please visit the University's guidelines at <http://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic/index.shtml>, or see me.

POLICY ON IN-CLASS COMPUTER USE

Many of this course's texts will be made available only in PDF form, and I wholeheartedly understand the desire to reduce the amount of printing that must be done simply to bring in a week's readings. With this in mind, my default is to allow the use of laptops and tablets within my classroom. However, if at any time it becomes obvious that a screen has become a distraction, students must comply with any request to put computers away. If problems persist, I reserve the right to alter my policy entirely, and forbid the usage of laptops and tablets within the classroom. It is your responsibility to ensure that problems do not emerge—or, at the very least, do not persist.

Under no circumstances is it permissible to have phones out in class.