

First-Year Seminar

Section 18: The Moving and Interactive Image

ENGLISH 1001-018 | Fall 2015

Friday, 9:00 AM–12:00 PM, 116 S Michigan Ave Building, Rm 1427

Instructor: Ian Bryce Jones, Department of Liberal Arts
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Following the general mission of First Year Seminar, this course teaches English writing, close reading, and composition, with an eye towards the unique needs of writing about moving images. How can one proceed with the work of ekphrasis when dealing with images moving in time? What sort of claims can be made about how forms such as cinema operate rhetorically, and how does one go about making those claims? This course begins by building a vocabulary and set of tactics for talking about cinema, before stepping sideways and introducing the further complication of interactivity. Having written about cinema, how does one write about forms such as the videogame? In what way do the possibilities available to game developers differ from those available to filmmakers, and how does this affect the rhetorical possibilities of each? How does one account for space, time, and action in each medium? What aesthetic effects are open to games that are not open to cinema, and vice versa—and how can they best be critically examined?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

Although there are no final letter grades for this course, all assignments will be evaluated and assigned a letter grade, to be averaged by the end of the semester and converted into a basic “credit/no credit” designation, with a “C-” final grade in the course or below translating to “no credit.” To help students better understand this process, the exact breakdown of grade calculations will be as follows:

- 1) Attendance and class participation. Students are expected to attend all classes regularly and on time. Unexcused absences for more than **two** class sessions will put students in jeopardy of receiving no credit for the course. A string of unexcused and unexplained absences will be call for immediate failure of the course. While in class, students will be expected to participate in class discussion. This second requirement is more malleable; given different learning styles and levels comfort with public speaking, I am willing to allow regular participation via online discussion of course materials to substitute for this requirement. (20% of grade/course credit)
- 2) Short in-class vocabulary test, conducted week 4, Friday, September 25. (5% of grade/course credit)
- 3) First assignment, a 1-page descriptive/analytical paper, due week 3, Friday, September 18, with a revision due week 5, Friday, October 2 (10% of grade/course credit)
- 4) Second assignment, a 3-page descriptive/analytical paper, due the Monday following week 7, October 19, with a revision due week 9, Friday, October 30 (20% of grade/course credit)
- 5) Proposal for final assignment, due week 11, Friday, November 13 (5% of grade/course credit)
- 6) Third and final assignment, an 8-page analytical paper, due week 14, Friday, December 4, with a revision due week 16, Friday, December 18 (40% of grade/course credit)

REQUIRED READING MATERIALS

None. All course readings will be posted on Canvas.

OTHER REQUIRED MATERIALS

Blendo Games, *Thirty Flights of Loving* (2012). Available for Windows and Mac. \$4.99

Purchasing options:

Developer's Site: <http://blendogames.com/thirtyflightsoflovng/>

Steam: http://store.steampowered.com/app/214700/?snr=1_7_15_13

Tale of Tales, *The Path* (2009). Available for Windows and Mac. \$9.99

Purchasing options:

Developer's Site: <http://tale-of-tales.com/ThePath/buy.html>

Steam: http://store.steampowered.com/app/27000/?snr=1_7_15_13

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1, 2015-09-04

Moving images and words: ekphrasis, exegesis, and claims

Week 1 in-class screening:

Wavelength (Michael Snow, Canada/USA, 1967)

Week 2, 2015-09-11

The work of writing: the dance of description & claims

Readings for week 2:

Steve Reich, "*Wavelength* by Michael Snow"

Scott MacDonald, "Michael Snow: *Wavelength*"

Elizabeth Legge, "Room Zoom Sine Wave" and "Time and Space" (from *Michael Snow: Wavelength*)

Week 2 in-class screening:

clip from *Le Quattro Volte* (Michelangelo Frammartino, Italy, 2010)

Week 2 in-class writing exercise:

One paragraph of descriptive prose on *Le Quattro Volte*

Week 3, 2015-09-18

The vocabulary of moving images

Readings for week 3:

Sections entitled "Mise-en-scene" and "Cinematography" on the Yale Film Analysis website

Week 3 in-class screening:

Various clips (see Canvas for complete list/links)

Due: Assignment 1, 1-page paper

Week 4, 2015-09-25

Cinema's vocabulary and the critic's vocabulary

Readings for Week 4:

André Bazin, "Umberto D: A Great Work"

David Bordwell, "The Social Network: Faces Behind Facebook"

Wesley Morris, "Hump Day: The Utterly OMG *Magic Mike XXL*"

Week 4 in-class screening:

clip from *Umberto D* (Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1952)

clips from *The Social Network* (David Fincher, USA, 2010)

In-class vocabulary quiz

Week 5, 2015-10-02

How to do things with films (and with words about films)

Readings for Week 5:

Kristin Thompson, "PlayTime: Comedy on the Edge of Perception" (from *Breaking the Glass Armor*)

Pauline Kael, "Stanley Strangelove"

Sheila Petty, "Silence and Its Opposite: Expressions of Race in *Tongues Untied*"

Week 4 in-class screening:

clips from *PlayTime* (Jacques Tati, France, 1967)

clips from *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, UK, 1971)

clip from *Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs, USA, 1989)

Due: Revision of Assignment 1, 1-page paper

Week 6, 2015-10-09

Introducing interactivity

Plus: how to disagree without being disagreeable

Readings for Week 6:

George Fifiend, "Act/React"

selections from Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, "They Say / I Say": *The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*

Week 1 in-class interactive viewing/play session:

Music video for Arcade Fire's "The Wilderness Downtown" (Chris Milk and Google, USA, 2011)

Music video for Light Light's "Kilo" (a.k.a. *Do Not Touch*) (Moniker, The Netherlands, 2013)

Proteus (Ed Key and David Kanaga, UK/USA, 2013)

Week 7, 2015-10-16

No Class

Viewing assignment, in lieu of class meeting:

One of three complete films (to be assigned by group):

Pierrot le Fou (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1965)

Fallen Angels (Wong Kar Wai, China [Hong Kong], 1995)

A Hero Never Dies (Johnnie To, China [Hong Kong], 1998)

Play assignment, in lieu of class meeting:

Thirty Flights of Loving (Blendo Games, USA, 2012)

Due by Monday, 2015-10-19: Assignment 2, 3-page paper

Week 8, 2015-10-23

Writing about games: risks and rewards

Readings for Week 8:

Tom Bissell, “Headshots”

Leigh Alexander, “*Metal Gear Solid 3*, I Love You with All My Heart”

James Paul Gee, “Playing *Metal Gear Solid 4* Well: Being a Good Snake”

Week 8 in-class play session:

Resident Evil (Capcom, Japan, 1996)

various moments from the *Metal Gear Solid* franchise (Konami, Japan, 1998–)

Week 9, 2015-10-30

Difficulty, expertise, and skill (real and meditated)

Readings for Week 9:

James Paul Gee, “*Full Spectrum Warrior*, *Thief*, and *Riddick*” (from *Why Video Games Are Good for Your Soul*)
selections from Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art*

Week 9 in-class screening:

Piece Mandala / End War (Paul Sharits, USA, 1966)

clip from *Casino Royale* (2006, UK/USA, Martin Campbell)

clip from *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007, USA, Paul Greengrass)

Week 9 in-class play session:

Super Hexagon (Terry Cavanaugh, USA, 2012)

Uncharted 3: Drake’s Deception (Naughty Dog, USA, 2011)

Due: Revision of Assignment 2, 3-page paper

Week 10, 2015-11-06

Lack of skill, failure, and a trans-media look at physical comedy as a genre

Readings for Week 10:

Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (excerpts)

Noël Carroll, “Themes of *The General*” (excerpt from chapter) (from *Comedy Incarnate*)

Week 10 in-class screening:

clip from *The General* (Buster Keaton with Clyde Bruckman, USA, 1926)

clip from *College* (Buster Keaton with James W. Horne, USA, 1927)

Week 10 in-class play session:

Octodad (DePaul student team, USA, 2010)

QWOP (Bennett Foddy, UK, 2008)

Week 11, 2015-11-13

Emotion and identification across visual media

Readings for Week 11:

Adrienne Shaw, selections from *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*

Yi-fu Tuan, selections from *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*

Out-of-class viewing assignment:

portions of *Gerry* (Gus Van Sant, USA, 2002)

Out-of-class play assignment:

The Path (Tale of Tales, Belgium, 2009)

Due: Proposal for Assignment 3, 8-page paper

Week 12, 2015-11-20

Beyond moving images: how to do things with videogames (and with words about videogames)

Readings for Week 12:

Ian Bogost, “Art,” “Empathy” (from *How to Do Things with Videogames*)

Adrienne Shaw, selections from *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*

Anna Anthropy, “Mainichi”

Week 12 in-class play session:

Passage (Jason Roher, USA, 2007)

The Marriage (Rod Humble, USA, 2007)

Darfur Is Dying (Susana Ruiz, USA, 2006)

Mainichi (Mattie Brice, USA, 2012)

Lim (merritt kopas, USA, 2012)

Week 13, 2015-11-27

No Class (Thanksgiving break)

Week 14, 2015-12-04

Horrific views: a transmedia genre study

Due: Assignment 3, 8-page paper

Steve Neale, “*Halloween*: Suspense, Aggression and the Look”

Carol Clover, “Her Body, Himself” (excerpt from chapter) (from *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*)

Week 14 in-class screening:

clips from *Halloween* (1978, John Carpenter), and various other horror films TBA

Week 14 in-class play session:

Siren: Blood Curse (Sony Computer Entertainment Japan Studio, Japan, 2008)

Due: Assignment 3, 8-page paper

Week 15, 2015-12-11

Games and/as animation: visual pleasure and precarious images

Kristin Thompson, “The Concept of Cinematic Excess”

Steyerl Hito, “In Defense of the Poor Image”

Walter Benjamin, “Old Forgotten Children’s Books”

Week 15 in-class play session:

Botanica (Amanita Design, Czech Republic, 2012)

Week 15 in-class screening:

Inspektor se vratio kući (Valtroslav Mimica, Yugoslavia, 1958)

Crossroad (Phil Solomon and Mark LaPore, USA, 2005)

Rehearsals for Retirement (Phil Solomon, USA, 2007)

Week 16, 2015-12-18

And back again: Games’ influence on contemporary cinema

Kristen Thompson and David Bordwell, “*Inception*; or, Dream a Little Dream within a Dream with Me”

Kirk Hamilton, “*Inception*’s Usability Problem”

Week 16 in-class screening:

portions of *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, USA, 2010)

Due: Revision of Assignment 3, 8-page paper