

**First-Year Seminar II**  
**Section 014: Avant-Garde Film and Video Art**  
**ENGLISH 1005-014 | Spring 2017**

**Thursday, 9:00 AM–12:00 PM, Spertus Building, Rm 313**

**Instructor:** Ian Bryce Jones, Department of Liberal Arts  
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**Office hours:** by appointment, at designated times during the semester  
 13<sup>th</sup> floor seating section of the MacLean Center Café

**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 experimental moving images. The work of analytical description of images moving in time already presents unique problems and opportunities for writers—how is this further complicated when one is working with highly abstract moving images, shorn free of the narrative trappings that usually govern commercial cinema? Arranged by topics, covering both the films themselves and prior writing about them, this course contains a broad survey primarily of U.S. avant-garde cinema, occasionally branching out into films from Canada, Mexico, Austria, and Japan, as well as including examples of video art. Throughout, one of the major concerns of the course will be how film critics have positioned the works they write about, and the various options open for essayists attempting to describe, analyze, and make persuasive arguments about their encounters with avant-garde moving-image works.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW**

- **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. (*Attendance is not included as a component of the course credit breakdown—it should be considered a separate rule set by which one can receive no credit in the course.*)
- **Six substantial posts** on the course’s discussion board, in response to prompts authored either by myself (in the early weeks of the course), or by your fellow students (in the later weeks). By substantial, I mean somewhere **in the range of 300-400 words**. Ideally, by the end of the course, this will tally up to somewhere around 2,100 words, or **the equivalent of six double-spaced pages**.
- **One blog post for the course**, of around 1,000 words, designed to animate class discussion around a film, reading, or some combination thereof. These will coincide with a short presentation and leading discussion during a portion of the relevant class session.
- **First written assignment**, a six-page (about 2,100 words) deep comparison-and-contrast analysis of two texts. **First draft** due **Friday, March 3th**, electronically. **Revised and final draft** due **Friday, March 17**, again electronically.
- **Second written assignment**, an eight-page research paper (about 2,700 words), to be written on one or more films shown in the course, with three written sources cited (including some outside of required course reading). **A first draft/outline/proposal** of this is due **Friday, April 21**, electronically. **Your final draft** is due **Friday, May 12**, again electronically.

See the *course credit breakdown* supplement for an exhaustive review of assessment policies, and how the exact division between credit/no credit will be managed.

## COURSE POLICIES: WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

- Page numbers for the two written assignments refer to **double-spaced** pages, in **12 point Times New Roman** font, with margins not exceeding **1.25 inches**. If you are at all confused as to what is expected, look to the word counts instead. The first paper should be around 2,100 words, and the second paper should be around 2,700 words. You can give-or-take around 200 words here.
- All writing should consistently include **proper citations**, following the guidelines of either MLA or the Chicago Manual of Style. References for proper citation will be provided for the course.
- All papers are due electronically, by 11:59 PM on the due date listed on the syllabus. **Preferred formats include .doc, .docx, and .rtf**. I discourage PDFs, as they are more difficult to add marginalia to. **Mac users:** Please convert .pages format files to a different standard before sending them. **Google Drive users:** Sharing a paper via Drive is great, but make sure that you share it in a way that allows me to comment on it. We'll troubleshoot this as necessary.

## ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

From the SAIC Student Handbook: Academic misconduct includes both plagiarism and cheating, and may consist of: the submission of the work of another as one's own; unauthorized assistance on a test or assignment; submission of the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all instructors; or the failure to properly cite texts or ideas from other sources.

Academic integrity is expected in all coursework, including online learning. It is assumed that the person receiving the credit for the course is the person completing the work. SAIC has processes in place, including LDAP authentication, to verify student identity.

A quick guide provided by the Flaxman library on how to avoid plagiarism is accessible here: [http://www.saic.edu/media/saic/pdfs/campusresources/academicadvising/plagiarism\\_quickGuide.pdf](http://www.saic.edu/media/saic/pdfs/campusresources/academicadvising/plagiarism_quickGuide.pdf)

A longer, more in-depth detailing of school policy is available here: [http://www.artic.edu/webspaces/portal/library/plagiarism\\_packet.pdf](http://www.artic.edu/webspaces/portal/library/plagiarism_packet.pdf)

## ACCOMMODATIONS STATEMENT

SAIC is committed to full compliance with all laws regarding equal opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with known or suspected disabilities, such as a Reading/Writing Disorder, ADD/ADHD, and/or a mental health condition who think they would benefit from assistance or accommodations should first contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) to schedule an appointment. DLRC staff will review your disability documentation and work with you to determine reasonable accommodations. They will then provide you with a letter outlining the approved accommodations for you to deliver to your instructors. This letter must be presented before any accommodations will be implemented. **You should contact the DLRC as early in the semester as possible.** The DLRC is located within the Wellness Center on the 13th floor of 116 S Michigan Ave. and can be reached via phone at 312.499.4278 or email at [dlrc@saic.edu](mailto:dlrc@saic.edu).

Please note that accommodations can **never be applied retroactively**. They must be submitted to the instructor as early as possible to ensure that they are taken into account when assessing students.

## **FURTHER ELABORATION ON THE SCHOOL'S ATTENDANCE POLICY**

SAIC policy states that students are expected to attend all classes regularly and on time. Students should miss class only with reasonable cause. If a student needs to miss class with reasonable cause, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to receive instruction for how to make up for the missed class. It is the instructor's responsibility to give this information to the student as his/her/their schedule permits. Missing class for other than a reasonable cause may jeopardize the student's academic standing in the class.

## **REQUIRED READING MATERIALS**

Students are not required to purchase any materials. All course readings will be posted on Canvas.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1, 2017-01-26**

#### **Introduction**

#### **Readings for week 1:**

None. We'll review the syllabus, and do a general course overview.

#### **In-class screening on 2017-01-26, for discussion Week 2:**

<i>Meshes of the Afternoon</i> (Maya Deren with Alexander Hackenschmied, USA, 1943)	15 min
<i>Fireworks</i> (Kenneth Anger, USA, 1947)	20 min

### **Week 2, 2017-02-02**

#### **What is an argument? (No, really)**

#### **Readings for week 2:**

Maya Deren, "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality" (1960)  
 P. Adams Sitney, "Ritual and Nature," from *Visionary Film* (1974)  
 Ara Osterweil, "America Year Zero" (2017)

#### **In-class screening on 2017-02-02, for discussion Week 3:**

<i>The Wold-Shadow</i> (Stan Brakhage, USA, 1972)	2 min
<i>Mothlight</i> (Stan Brakhage, USA, 1963)	4 min
<i>From: First Hymn to the Night—Novalis</i> (Stan Brakhage, USA, 1994)	3 min
<i>POPEYE SEES 3D</i> (Ken Jacobs, USA, 2016)	20 min

### **Week 3, 2017-02-09**

#### **Learning to see anew ... and figuring out what concepts to keep**

#### **Readings for week 3:**

John Ruskin, "Letter I: On First Practice," from *The Elements of Drawing* (1858)  
 Stan Brakhage, "Metaphors on Vision" and "The Camera Eye" from *Metaphors on Vision* (1963)  
 Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting" (1965)  
 Jonas Mekas, "On George Landow and Film Loops" (1965)

#### **Clips, viewed for immediate discussion:**

*Film in Which There Appear Edge Lettering, Sprocket Holes, Dirt Particles, Etc.* (George Landow, USA, 1965)

*Wavelength* (Michael Snow, USA/Canada, 1967)

*Back and Forth* (Michael Snow, USA/Canada, 1969)

#### **In-class screening on 2017-02-09, for discussion Week 4:**

<i>Take the 5:10 to Dreamland</i> (Bruce Conner, USA, 1976)	6 min
<i>The Exquisite Hour</i> (Phil Solomon, USA, 1994)	14 min
<i>Is This What You Were Born For?, pt 7: Mercy</i> (Abigail Child, USA, 1989)	10 min

**Week 4, 2017-02-16****Montage****Readings for Week 4:**

Lev Kuleshov, "Montage as the Foundation of Cinematography," from *The Art of Cinema* (1929)

Sergei Eisenstein, "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram" (1929)

Abigail Child, "Locales Interview (with Michael Amnasan)" (1989)

**In-class screening on 2017-02-16, for discussion Week 5:**

*Zorns Lemma* (Hollis Frampton, USA, 1970) 60 min

**Week 5, 2017-02-23****Contestable claims lead to productive arguments!****Readings for Week 5:**

P. Adams Sitney, "Structural Film," from *Visionary Film* (1974)

James Peterson, "Film That Insists on Its Shape: The Minimal Strain," from *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order* (1996)

**In-class screening on 2017-02-23, for immediate discussion:**

*T/O/U/C/H/I/N/G* (Paul Sharits, USA, 1968) 12 min

*Film That Rises to the Surface of Clarified Butter* (George Landow, USA, 1969) 9 min

*Serene Velocity* (Ernie Gehr, USA, 1970) 15 min

**Week 6, 2017-03-02****Arguments and essays (film, and otherwise)****Readings for Week 6:**

David Montero, "Introduction: The Thinking Form" (selections) and "Questions and Answers: Towards a Dialogical Understanding of the Essay Film" (selections), from *Thinking Images: The Essay Film as Dialogic Form in European Cinema* (2012)

**In-class screening on 2017-03-02, for immediate discussion:**

*The Other Side* (Bill Brown, USA, 2006) 43 min

**DUE ELECTRONICALLY: FRIDAY, MARCH 3rd:****First draft of written assignment 1****Week 7, 2017-03-09****Methodological conundrums: Biographical grounds****Readings for Week 7:**

Lauren Rabinovitz, "Joyce Wieland and the Ascendancy of Structural Film," from *Points of Resistance* (1991)

**In-class screening on 2017-03-09, for immediate discussion:**

*Patriotism* (Joyce Wieland, Canada, 1964) 4 min

*Rat Life and Diet in North America* (Joyce Wieland, Canada, 1968) 16 min

*Sink or Swim* (Su Friedrich, USA, 1990) 48 min

**Week 8, 2017-03-16****Beauty standards****Readings for Week 8:**

Christopher Eamon, "An Art of Temporality," from *Film and Video Art* (2009)

**In-class screening on 2017-03-16, for immediate discussion:**

<i>Kustom Kar Kommandos</i> (Kenneth Anger, USA, 1970)	3 min
<i>operculum</i> (Iran T. Kim-Trang, USA, 1993)	14 min
<i>Natural Instincts</i> (Ximena Cuevas, Mexico, 1999)	3 min

**Guest presentation:**

Nicole Morse on the videos of Zachary Drucker

**DUE ELECTRONICALLY, FRIDAY, MARCH 17:****Revised and final draft of written assignment 1****Week 9, 2017-03-23****SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS OR ASSIGNMENTS****Week 10, 2017-03-30****Sounding off****Readings for Week 10:**

Sergei Eisenstein, V.I. Pudovkin, and G.V. Alexandrov, "A Statement" (1928)

V.I. Pudovkin, "Asynchronism as a Principle of Sound Film" (1929)

William S. Burroughs, "The Cut-up Method of Brian Gysin," from *The Third Mind* (1978)

**In-class screening on 2017-03-30, for immediate discussion:**

clip from <i>Deserter</i> (V.I. Pudovkin, USSR, 1933)	
<i>My Name Is Oona</i> (Gunvor Nelson, Sweden/USA, 1969)	9 min
<i>Alone, Life Wastes Andy Hardy</i> (Martin Arnold, Austria, 1998)	15 min
<i>Turbulent</i> (Shirin Neshat, Iran/USA, 1998)	9 min

**Week 11, 2017-04-06****Alternative animation****Readings for Week 11:**

Maureen Furniss, "Issues of Representation," from *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics* (1998)

Cindy Keefer, "Visual Music's Influence on Contemporary Abstraction," from *Abstract Video: The Moving Image in Contemporary Art* (2015)

**In-class screening on 2017-04-06, for immediate discussion:**

<i>Abstronic</i> (Mary Ellen Bute with Ted Nemeth, USA, 1952)	6 min
<i>Recreation</i> (Robert Breer, USA, 1956)	2 min
<i>Peyote Queen</i> (Storm de Hirsch, USA, 1965)	9 min
<i>Fiji</i> (Robert Breer, USA, 1974)	8 min
<i>Unsubscribe #4: The Saddest Song in the World</i> (Jodie Mack, 2010)	3 min
<i>Night Hunter</i> (Stacey Steers, USA, 2011)	16 min

**Week 12, 2017-04-13****Aesthetic borders, boundary crossings, and subaltern images****Readings for Week 12:**

- T.J. Demos, "Exile, Diaspora, Nomads Refugees: A Genealogy of Art and Migration" and "Hito Steyerl's Traveling Images," from *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis* (2013)
- Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image" (2009)

**In-class screening on 2017-04-13, for immediate discussion:**

- Stranger Comes to Town* (Jacqueline Goss, USA, 2007) 29 min
- Lossless #2* (Rebecca Baron and Douglas Goodwin, USA, 2008) 3 min
- How Not to Be Seen* (Hito Steyerl, Germany, 2013) 16 min

**Week 13, 2017-04-20****Their own small world: Trash aesthetics****Readings for Week 13:**

- Walter Benjamin, "Old Forgotten Children's Books" (1924)
- J. Hoberman, "Bad Movies" (1980)
- Ara Osterweil, "Introduction" (selection), from *Flesh Cinema: The Corporeal Turn in American Avant-Garde Film* (2014)

**In-class screening on 2017-04-20, for immediate discussion:**

- Living Inside* (Sadie Benning, USA, 1989) 5 min
- Blonde Cobra* (Ken Jacobs, USA, 1963) 35 min

**DUE ELECTRONICALLY, FRIDAY, APRIL 21:****Draft/outline/proposal for written assignment 2****Week 14, 2017-04-27****Architectural kaleidoscopes****Readings for Week 14:**

- TBA (likely none—class will be spent reviewing drafts)

**In-class screening on 2017-04-27, for immediate discussion:**

- Castro Street* (Bruce Bailey, USA, 1966) 10 min
- Energy Country* (Deborah Stratman, USA, 2003) 14 min
- Go! Go! Go!* (Marie Menken, USA, 1964) 12 min
- Spacey* (Ito Takashi, Japan, 1981) 10 min

**Week 15, 2017-05-04****The personal is the political: Sex, family, identity****Readings for Week 14:**

- B. Ruby Rich, "Carolee Schneemann's *Fuse*," (1974), "A Woman's Declaration of Secession from the Avant-Garde" (1998), from *Chick Flicks*
- Scott MacDonald, "[Interview with] Carolee Schneemann," from *A Critical Cinema* (1988)
- Alexandra Juhasz, "[Interview with] Cheryl Dunye," from *Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film and Video* (2001)

**In-class screening on 2017-05-04, for immediate discussion:**

- Martina's Playhouse* (Peggy Ahwesh, USA, 1989) 19 min
- Vanilla Sex* (Cheryl Dunye, USA, 1992) 3 min
- Fuses* (Carolee Schneemann, USA, 1967) 22 min

**Week 16, 2017-05-11****Conclusion**

In-class presentations on final papers, wrap-up, student requested topics, makeup/overflow week

**DUE ELECTRONICALLY, FRIDAY, MAY 12:  
Revised and final draft of written assignment 2**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

**The Writing Center** provides one-on-one writing tutoring for students. It is located in the MacLean Center Basement, 112 S. Michigan Ave., B1-03

Fall and Spring Semester Hours:

Monday–Thursday 9:00 AM–7:15 PM, Friday 9:00 AM–5:15 PM  
4:15–7:15 PM are designated as walk-in hours.

Monday–Thursday SAIC offers free, hour-long writing tutorials at the Writing Center, which is located in the basement of MacLean. Tutors are available to assist all currently enrolled students with any stage of the writing process.

Appointments: To schedule an appointment with a Writing Center tutor, students first need to create an account through the online sign-up system: <https://www.supersaas.com/schedule/saic/WritingCenter>.

Once students have set up their own account, they may sign up for appointments. Weekly standing appointments are available upon request. When students come to their tutoring appointments, they should make sure to bring their assignments with them and have any work printed out.

Online schedule instructions are available outside of the Writing Center suite (in the hallway outside of the MacLean Center B1-03).

Contact Information:

Leila Wilson, Writing Center Coordinator: [lwilson@saic.edu](mailto:lwilson@saic.edu) or 312.345.3588

Writing Center Suite: 312.345.9131 (Call to see if there are any last-minute openings.)

## Course Credit Breakdown

### Assessment of Student Progress

Assessment of student progress toward learning outcomes will be given on a 100-point scale. Achieving **70 or more out of these 100 points** will result in students **receiving credit** for the course. Achieving **less than 70** out of these points will result in students **receiving no credit** for the course.

### Breakdown of the class's points

#### **1) Six substantial posts on the course's discussion board: 12 points**

12 of these points come from postings on the course's discussion board. Students are expected to post nine times throughout the course of the quarter, in response to prompts. Each post is worth 2 points. Posting six insightful posts, that address the topic of the prompt in 300-400 words, will net you all 12 of these points. Posting fewer posts, or shorter, less substantive posts, will net you fewer points, but still some.

#### **2) Discussion-animating blog post: 15 points**

Once in the semester, students will be required to take charge of animating class discussion about a film/films or reading/readings. These will be divvied up according to student preferences, and will likely see students working together in small groups, to ensure that everyone has a week to do this. Along with an in-class presentation, students will be expected to also author a short post (around 1,000 words) for the course blog. This post should ideally include some images, as well as some questions to prompt discussion among your fellow students.

#### **3) The first written assignment: 31 points**

31 of these points come from the class's first written assignment, a six-page (about 2,100 words) deep comparison-and-contrast analysis of two texts. This assignment will be assessed via a rubric, clearly laying out expectations and learning goals for the assignment, allowing students to clearly see which points they are receiving, which points they are not, and why. Two drafts of this assignment are due. When reviewing the first draft, I will indicate how many points would be earned by the assignment in its current state. Points will not actually be distributed, however, until the second draft is reviewed, so students will have a chance to fix problems and earn more points.

#### **4) The second written assignment: 42 points**

42 of these points come from the class's first second assignment, an eight-page research paper (about 2,700 words), to be written on one or more films shown in the course, with three written sources cited (including some outside of required course reading). Again, this assignment will be assessed via a rubric. (This rubric will be slightly different from the first assignment.) Although turning in an entire first draft can be helpful, this is a longer assignment, with more additional research needed, so I will understand if you do not feel ready to turn in a draft by April 21. If that is the case, however, I highly suggest that you turn in some sort of alternate document, such as an outline, or a general proposal. That will allow for any necessary course correction. Again, points will not actually be distributed until the due date of the final draft.

## Syllabus Addendum: Content Warnings

Please note the following content warnings for material in this course.

***Meshes of the Afternoon* (Maya Deren with Alexander Hackenschmied, USA, 1943)**

Suicidal themes.

***Fireworks* (Kenneth Anger, USA, 1947)**

BDSM fantasies of seemingly-non-consensual homophobic physical violence.

***Sink or Swim* (Su Friedrich, USA, 1990)**

Verbal recounting of abusive parenting.

***Blonde Cobra* (Ken Jacobs, USA, 1963)**

Verbal recounting of BDSM fantasies which contain coercive, abusive, or otherwise non-consensual sexual acts, some of which include minors. Intimations of violence, sexual and otherwise.

***Martina's Playhouse* (Peggy Ahwesh, USA, 1989)**

An exploration of child psychology, including childhood sexuality (includes child nudity).

***Fuses* (Carolee Schneemann, USA, 1967)**

Nudity and explicit depictions of consensual heterosexual sex.