

**University of Calgary  
Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Film Studies FILM 409-L01  
Special Topics in Film Studies:  
THE AUDIOVISUAL ESSAY**

**FALL 2020  
Sept. 8 – Dec. 9 (excluding Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> and Nov. 09-13<sup>th</sup>)**

**Lecture, Thur. 15:30 – 17:20 (synchronous)**

**Lab, Tu. 15:30 – 18:15 (asynchronous)**

**IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR FALL 2020:**

This Fall 2020 course will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please read the outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate at the usual scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time). Synchronous course sessions will be hosted on Zoom, a video-conferencing program. To access scheduled Zoom course sessions, go to D2L, click on the COMMUNICATION tab, and select Zoom 5 or 10 minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

If you will not be able to participate in scheduled synchronous class sessions owing to time differences, then you should arrange to take this course when it is offered in person in the future.

Note that the time indicated on course outlines for all timed quizzes and exams in CMCL, COMS, and FILM courses includes 50% extra time to allow for technical difficulties.

**Instructor:** Ryan Pierson  
**Office Phone:** 220-6720  
**E-Mail:** ryan.pierson@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** <http://D2L>  
**Office Hours:** 11:00 – 12:00 T + Th and by appointment, on Zoom

**Course Description**

This course will explore a relatively new genre of film criticism and analysis called the audiovisual essay (sometimes also called videographic criticism or the academic film essay). We will interrogate how the visual essay makes arguments about film using the

formal components *of* film (cinematography, editing, sound). In aid of this, we will be performing four kinds of activities:

1. Composing short video exercises, to familiarize ourselves with the software and the possibilities of audiovisual manipulation.
2. Analyzing and discussing audiovisual essays, to see how other professional and academic video essayists have used the form.
3. Analyzing and discussing the theoretical literature on audiovisual essays, to discern how using picture and sound differs from using words on a page.
4. Composing one sustained video essay.

### **Additional Information**

The weekly schedule of topics can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L.

Please note that this is a hybrid course: Labs on Tuesdays will be asynchronous: you will be expected to be working on your video exercises and final project during this time. Discussions on Thursdays will be synchronous: we will meet on Zoom for the full class time. Before class, you will be expected to watch the week's videos and your peers' video exercises.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

### **Software and Computer Lab Information**

For this course, you will need access to editing software to complete your assignments. While a number of editing programs are available for free or purchase online, I *strongly* recommend you use Adobe Premiere. This will give everyone in the course a shared basis, and a chance for students to help each other out if problems are encountered.

You can choose to download editing software directly to your computer, or you may choose to use the Arts Computer Lab computers and their Adobe Premiere software. You can purchase Premiere online at a discount here:

[https://ucalgary.onthehub.com/WebStore/Security/Signin.aspx?rurl=%2fWebStore%2fShopperResources.aspx%3fcmi\\_cs%3d1%26cmi\\_mnuMain%3daf78cee8-686b-e911-8115-000d3af41938](https://ucalgary.onthehub.com/WebStore/Security/Signin.aspx?rurl=%2fWebStore%2fShopperResources.aspx%3fcmi_cs%3d1%26cmi_mnuMain%3daf78cee8-686b-e911-8115-000d3af41938).

Computer labs are closed to in-person access, but you can access the Arts lab computers remotely. You will have guaranteed remote access during our lab hours (Tuesdays 15:30-18:15); you will also be able to sign in beyond those hours, as long as it is not at a time when another class is booked. You can find the course schedules for the labs here:

[https://arts.ucalgary.ca/afclbooking/artsit\\_scheduler/view](https://arts.ucalgary.ca/afclbooking/artsit_scheduler/view)

Using your home computer, you can log in to the lab remotely by doing the following:

**Prerequisites:**

- You will need to setup the University's VPN service on your personal computer (PC or Mac) which you can do from the IT web site at [https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it?id=kb\\_article&sys\\_id=f7ca400d139962406f3afbb2e144b05f](https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it?id=kb_article&sys_id=f7ca400d139962406f3afbb2e144b05f)
- If you are using a Mac you will also need to install the Microsoft Remote Desktop software from the App Store (its free). Windows computers do not need to install anything as the software is built into Windows.

**Steps:**

Each time you want to connect to the lab computer:

1. You will first need to connect to the General VPN
2. Open your preferred web browser and go to <https://uclabstats.ucalgary.ca/arts.html>
3. Select an available computer by clicking Connect and copy the remote address
4. Go to <https://securelabs.ucalgary.ca> and login
5. Enter the remote address you copied earlier and click connect
6. You will then be prompted to connect to the computer. You may be asked to login again.
7. Please note, you may need to log in using your full university email address as your username

**Objectives of the Course**

1. To strengthen your knowledge of the basic elements of film language (mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, sound, narrative) and how they work together, through analyzing and manipulating audiovisual materials
2. To strengthen your ability to compose an argument or narrative, by composing a short-form video essay
3. To strengthen your skills of collaboration with peers, in small group work

**Readings and Videos**

All readings will be available on D2L.

All videos are either openly available on the internet (with links provided), or will be available on D2L. Please note that during weeks 2-5, you will be expected to screen the videos on your own time before discussion day.

**Learning Technologies and Requirements & Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices**

This is an online course. In order to complete online (or blended) courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone. If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact the university's IT department. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Instructors may arrange to record synchronous zoom class sessions for lesson capture; however, students are not to share recordings with others. Please carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

### *Class Participation (ongoing, Thursdays), 15%*

Because this course is based around workshopping and small group work, participation is essential. You will be expected to participate in group exercises, as well as group discussions. One in-class comment will get you 50% participation credit that day; two or more comments will get you full participation credit. (Where necessary, special accommodations may be arranged.)

If you miss a day of discussion, please submit a 300-word commentary on the week's material within 7 days of your absence.

### *Notes (ongoing, due Thursdays), 15%*

During the first half of the course, you will be expected to screen a number of video essays privately each week. You are expected to take notes on every video essay that you screen, paying particular attention to the formal trait relevant that week (editing, sound, etc.). Each video essay should have 8-10 lines of notes.

During the second half of the course, you are expected to take notes on the week's readings. Take about a page of notes (approx. 300 words) on each reading, noting key points of its argument, structure, and style. Quote where appropriate.

Submit each week's notes before class time on Thursdays.

### *Video exercises, 5% each*

In order to familiarize you with your video editing software, four of the first five Tuesdays of the course will be spent doing brief exercises. You will be given a strict set of formal parameters, within which you will need to complete the exercise before the due date (always the Wednesday of that week, by 12 p.m.). You will submit your exercise as an MPEG-4 to a shared folder on a Google Drive that will be shared by the instructor

**Do not** spend more than 2 and a half hours on each exercise. When you have finished your exercise, export it to a playable format and upload it to D2L.

If you miss repeated days in class, it is imperative that you nonetheless have completed all the exercises before Week 8.

*Project pitch (due Oct. 15), 10%*

By Week 6, you should have a firm enough idea for your final video essay that you can pitch the idea to the class, roughly in the manner of a paper proposal. There are two components: a presentation and a write-up.

The presentation should include a clip of the film material you want to analyze, your strategy for how you will analyze it (what structure it will follow, what techniques you will use), and what you hope to discover or achieve. It should be 7-10 minutes long.

The write-up should similarly lay out your strategy and expected outcomes. It should be 300 words in length.

*Rough cut (due Nov. 30), 10%*

In Week 12, you will upload a rough cut of your final project as an MPEG-4 to a shared file folder on a Google Drive that will be shared by the instructor. We will spend discussion day that week giving feedback on each submission.

*Video Essay, due Dec. 14, 30%*

A video essay on a topic of your choice (cleared by the instructor), roughly 3-5 minutes in length. You will submit your video as an MPEG-4 to a dropbox on D2L.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** No

All assignments and exams weighted more than 20% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

**Submission of Assignments**

Please submit video assignments to the designated D2L dropbox, unless otherwise designated. Written assignments should be emailed to the instructor. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

**Policy for Late Assignments**

For late assignments, one-third of a letter grade will be subtracted from the assignment for each 24-hour period.

### **Student Accommodations**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/). Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

### **Expectations for Writing**

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

### **Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale**

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades will be used for all components

<b>Grade Point Value</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Department grade scale equivalents</b>	<b>Letter grade % equivalent for calculations</b>
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent—superior performance, showing	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%

	comprehensive understanding of subject matter.			
<b>3.70</b>		<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>		<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>		<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>		<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>		<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>		<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	00 - 49.99%	0%

### Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people’s words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)

Research and Citation Resources at  
[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to [https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm\\_source=ssc&utm\\_medium=redirect&utm\\_campaign=redirect](https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect)

### **Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation**

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright ([www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf)) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

### **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### **Research Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

### **Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal**

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

## Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at [itsupport@ucalgary.ca](mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca) or by calling 403-220.5555.

## Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

### WEEK 1, INTRODUCTIONS

9/10: Discuss:

Jessica McGoff, Bronson: *A Subversion of the Conventions of the Prison*

*Film:*

<https://vimeo.com/118152112>

Jessica McGoff, Andrea Arnold's *Women in Landscapes*:

<https://vimeo.com/179961614>

Catherine Grant, *Un/Contained: A Video Essay on Andrea Arnold's 2009*

*Film Fish Tank*:

<https://vimeo.com/93840128>

Steven Boone, 1973: *Notes on the Greatest American Film of the 1970s*:

<https://vimeo.com/33268440>

Kogonada, *What Is Neorealism?*:

<https://vimeo.com/68514760>

Kevin B. Lee, *What Makes a Video Essay Great?*:

<https://vimeo.com/199577445>

### UNIT 1. SKILL BUILDING

#### WEEK 2, EDITING:

Editing exercise due Wednesday, Sept. 16 at 12 p.m.

9/17: Discuss exercises and:

Ashley Wertz, *Quiet in Moonlight*:

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/244685503>

Christian Marclay, *Telephones*:

<https://vimeo.com/176259496>

Jacob Bricca, *Pure*:

<https://vimeo.com/12133254>

Steven Boone, *Feeling Lucky*:

<https://vimeo.com/208415334>

WEEK 3, SOUND:

Sound exercise due Wednesday, Sept. 23 at 12 p.m.

9/24: Discuss exercises and:

Jessica Phillips, *The Sensitive Side of Men in MMXXL*:  
<https://vimeo.com/244695861>

Kogonada, *Sounds of Aronofsky*:  
<https://vimeo.com/42191484>

Kevin B. Lee, *Five Ways to Read Leviathan*:  
<https://vimeo.com/204440869>

Tony Zhou & Taylor Ramos, *Coen Brothers: Shot/Reverse Shot*:  
<https://vimeo.com/156455111>

WEEK 4, IMAGE:

Image exercise due Wednesday, Sept. 31 at 12 p.m.

10/1: Discuss exercises and:

Steven Boone, *Low Budget Eye Candy*:  
<https://vimeo.com/5980198>

Kevin B. Lee, *Steadicam Progress*:  
<https://vimeo.com/56335284>

Jessica McGoff, *Cruel Optimism/Fish Tank*:  
<https://vimeo.com/210616472>

Jop Leuven, *Raging Bull – And Cut*:  
<https://vimeo.com/229201995>

Katie Bird, *Feeling and Thought as They Take Form*:  
<http://mediacommons.org/intransition/feeling-and-thought-they-take-form-early-steadicam-labor-and-technology-1974-1985>

WEEK 5, STRUCTURE AND NARRATIVE:

Narrative exercise due Wednesday, Oct. 7 at 12 p.m.

10/8: Discuss exercises and:

LJ Frezza, *Nothing*:  
<https://vimeo.com/88077122>

Ryan Caughey, *Visualizing Masculinity (D2L)*

Tony Zhou & Taylor Ramos, *F for Fake – How to Structure a Video Essay*:  
<https://vimeo.com/123759973>

Christopher Anderson, *Cities and Cinema: Questions and Catharsis* (D2L)

**WEEKS 6-7, PITCHES**

10/15 + 10/22: Pitch video projects, discuss

**UNIT 2. THEORIZING AUDIOVISUAL WORK**

**WEEK 8**

10/29: Discuss reading:

Andrew McWhirter, “Film Criticism, Film Scholarship, and the Video Essay”

11/5: Discuss reading:

*In/Transition*, 6.1:

<http://mediacommons.org/intransition/journal-videographic-film-moving-image-studies-71-2020>

**WEEK 9, 11/10 and 11/12: FALL BREAK, NO CLASS**

**WEEK 10**

11/19: Discuss reading:

Christian Keathley, “La Camera-Stylo” (D2L)

**WEEK 11**

11/26: Discuss reading:

Laura Mulvey, “The Pensive Spectator” (D2L)

**WEEK 12**

Rough cut due Monday, Nov. 30 at 12 p.m.

12/3: Discuss rough cuts

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE DECEMBER 14 AT 4 P.M.**