

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

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

**WINTER 2018
Jan. 08 – April 13 (Excluding February 20th and 22nd)**

**Lecture, Thur. 15:30 – 17:20
Lab Tu. 15:30 – 18:15**

Instructor: Ryan Pierson
Office: SS 214
Office Phone: 220-6720
E-Mail: ryan.pierson@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: <http://D2L>
Office Hours: T/Th, 2:00 – 3:00 pm

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.

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

Textbooks and Readings

For weeks 2-5, the videos will be compiled to a playlist on Vimeo. You will be emailed a link to this playlist.

All readings will be available on D2L.

Assignments and Evaluation

Class Participation (ongoing), 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 presentations. (Where necessary, special accommodations may be arranged.)

Screening notes (ongoing), 10%

During the first half of the course, you will be expected to screen a number of video essays privately each week, ready to analyze one in detail with your small group. In preparation for this, 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 5-10 lines of notes.

Reading worksheets (ongoing), 10%

During the second half of the course, we will be discussing written essays in detail, in small groups and as a class. Thus, you will need to come to class knowing the major argumentative, structural, and stylistic points of each reading. For this, you will need to fill out given questions on a worksheet, which you will turn in at the end of the discussion day. Worksheets will be available on D2L.

Video exercises, 20%

In order to familiarize you with the editing software (Adobe Premiere), four of the first five Tuesdays of the course will be spent in the Computer Lab doing brief exercises. You will be given a strict set of formal parameters, within which you will need to complete the exercise before the end of class.

If you miss a day in Lab, please submit your exercise on a flash drive, within one week of your absence.

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

Project pitch (due Mar 1), 15%

By Week 8, 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.

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

Video Essay, due Apr 3, 30%

A video essay on a topic of your choice (cleared by the instructor), 5-10 minutes in length.

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 hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework 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) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in

advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.

- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades, and letter grades will be used for all assignments. The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will 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. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

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. 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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

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>

Schedule of Activities and Readings

Week 1

Introductions: What is an audiovisual essay?

Tu Jan 9, SS202: screen videos in class:

Jessica McGoff, *Andrea Arnold's Landscapes*

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

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

Kogonada, *What Is Neorealism?*

Christian Keathley, *Pass the Salt*

Joost Broeren, *Man//Woman//Mirror*

Catherine Grant, *Un/Contained*

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

Th Jan 11, TI: discuss videos and readings

Read: Christian Keathley, "La Camera-Stylo"

Tom McWhirter, "Film Criticism, Film Scholarship, and the Video Essay"

UNIT 1. SKILL BUILDING

Week 2

Editing

Tu Jan 16, Computer Lab: PechaKucha exercise

Th Jan 18, TI: screen & discuss PechaKuchas, discuss videos:

Ashley Wertz, *Quiet in Moonlight*

Adrian Martin & Cristina Alvarez Lopez, *Bela Tarr's Repulsion:*

Fragments of a Lost Remake

Christian Marclay, *Telephones*

Jacob Bricca, *Pure*

Steven Boone, *Feeling Lucky*

Week 3

Sound

Tu Jan 23, Computer lab: sound PechaKucha exercise

Th Jan 25, TI: screen & discuss sound PechaKuchas, discuss videos:

Tony Zhou, *Coen Brothers: Shot/Reverse Shot*

Jessica Phillips, *The Sensitive Side of Men in Magic Mike XXL*

Kogonada, *Sounds of Aronofsky*

Hannah Frank, *It's a Wonderful Face*

Kevin B. Lee, *Five Ways to Read Leviathan*

Week 4

Image: effects, graphics and text, multiple screens

Tu Jan 30, Computer lab: video epigraph exercise

Th Feb 1, TI: screen & discuss epigraphs, discuss videos:

Steven Boone, *Low Budget Eye Candy*
Kevin B. Lee, *Steadicam Progress*
Catherine Grant, *Carnal Locomotion*
Jessica McGoff, *Cruel Optimism*
Jop Leuven, *Raging Bull – And Cut*

Week 5

Structure & narrative

Tu Feb 6, Computer lab: alternative trailer exercise

Th Feb 8, TI: screen & discuss trailers, discuss videos:

Tony Zhou, F for Fake – *How to Structure a Video Essay*

Adrian Martin & Cristina Alvarez Lopez, *Shapes of Rage*

Kevin B. Lee, *Transformers – the Premake*

Jessica McGoff, *Women's Time-Image*

Paul Malcolm, *Notes for a project on Citizen Kane*

UNIT 2. PROJECT PITCHES

Week 6

Pitch rehearsals

Tu Feb 13, Computer lab: final project preliminary work

Th Feb 15, TI: project presentation w/clip and written pitch in small groups

Week 7 – MIDTERM BREAK

Week 8

Pitches

Tu Feb 27, Computer lab: final project preliminary work

Th Mar 1, TI: project presentation w/clip to class

Week 9

Pitches, cont'd

Tu Mar 6, Computer lab: final project preliminary work

Th Mar 8, TI: project presentation w/clip to class, cont'd

UNIT 3. THEORIZING AUDIOVISUAL WORK

Week 10

Audiovisual Essay as Text

Tu Mar 13, Computer lab: final project work

Th Mar 15, TI: discuss readings:

Cristina Alvarez Lopez & Adrian Martin, "The One and the Many"

Roland Barthes, "From the Work to the Text"

Week 11

Audiovisual Essay as Perception

Tu Mar 20, Computer lab: final project work

Th Mar 22, TI: discuss readings:

Laura Mulvey, "The Pensive Spectator"

Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Device"

Week 12

Issues in Analysis

Tu Mar 27, Computer lab: final project work

Th Mar 29, TI: discuss reading:

Raymond Bellour, "The Unattainable text"

Week 13

Final Projects

Tu Apr 3, Computer lab: final project work

Th Apr 5, TI: TBA

Week 14

Final Projects, cont'd

Tu Apr 10, Computer lab: TBA

****video essay due**

Th Apr 12, TI: screen final projects