EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION
ART HISTORY
School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design
Department of Visual Art Art History
FA / ARTH 3999 3.0 SECTION M
NEW MEDIA ART: DUCHAMP TO POSTDIGITAL
FALL 2020 / WINTER 2021

Last Modified Date: 08/04/2020

COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

This course examines the history of new media art with the goal of providing students with a wide ranging, yet in-depth survey of key figures, artworks, and texts from the last seventy years. The course begins by theoretically interrogating the notions of medium, media, and new media, looking to key figures such as Walter Benjamin, Marshall McLuhan, and Clement Greenberg, before taking a thematic rather than strictly chronological tour through new media art history. Classes consist of a blend of slide lectures, video screenings, student presentations, and group discussion. Classes are organized thematically with weekly topics that will include combinations of the following topics: print, performance, photography, television, cinema, video, animation, systems, networks, surveillance, the body, games and play, social media, virtual worlds, simulation, ecologies, digital decay, and the postdigital. To support this topical breadth this course draws readings from a variety of disciplines that include art history, cinema and media studies, game studies, anthropology, and environmental criticism. By the end of this course students will have gained a broad understanding of the many fluid theoretical relationships between contemporary art and technology, as well as a more specific historical knowledge of key figures and objects with the new media art canon. Open to non-majors.

INSTRUCTOR(S)
TBD

SPECIAL FEATURES

TIME / LOCATION: ACW 204/Zoom (see COVID information below), Monday, 8:30 to 11:30 am.
COURSE DIRECTOR: Andrew Bailey, PhD Candidate
CONTACT: andrewrb@yorku.ca
OFFICE HOURS: I will be holding office hours every week after our scheduled Monday morning classes, from 11:30am-12:30pm. Please let me know if you are wanting to take advantage of this time as early as possible so that I can schedule accordingly. If you cannot meet during this time please contact me to either discuss any potential issues/questions via email or to schedule a meeting for another date/time.

NOTES ON COVID-19: This course was originally meant to be an in-person lecture that you would attend on campus, however due to the restrictions put into place by COVID-19 I have worked to convert it into being an online course with prerecorded lectures that will be posted to Moodle and classes that take place via Zoom meetings. Should the restrictions be lifted by the winter semester when this course is scheduled, it will follow the same structure as described in this syllabus except that instead of prerecorded video lectures and Zoom meetings we will be meeting as a class on campus (in ACW 204, Monday, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m) as originally intended.

REQUIRED READINGS: There is no textbook or course reader that students are required to purchase in taking this course. The readings for this course will include journal articles, book chapters, and online editorials from recognized artists, curators, and scholars from the fields of digital and new media art. All required readings will be made available online as external links or downloadable PDF files through the course Moodle page. Both Moodle and York’s online library resources require students to use their York Passport Account.
WEEK 11 - MAR 22

DARK ECOLOGIES: Digital Debris, Bio Art, Environmental Art, and Art During the Anthropocene

Assignments: Week 10 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Mar 22) before 12pm/noon. Remember that the Week 11 Quiz and Reading Response are both due by next Monday (Mar 29) before 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 11 readings will be presented today (Mar 22) during class. Take-home exam questions will be posted on Moodle today (Mar 22) before the start of class. Remember that you have two weeks to complete the exam and that you must submit your file via Turnitin before 12pm/noon on Monday, April 05.


Key Concepts: bio art, genetic art, biology, environmental art, land art, ecology, the anthropocene, the chthulucene, media archeology, new materialism, humans and non-humans, plants, animals, space, minerals, digital debris, e-waste, junk, trash, garbage, pollution, environmental criticism, climate change, activism

WEEK 12 - MAR 29

THE END: Post Internet Art, Post-Digital Art and Art During the Pandemic

Assignments: Week 11 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Mar 29) before 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 12 readings will be presented today (Mar 29) during class. There is no Reading Response or Quiz due for this final week’s readings, but please make sure to read the assigned texts as there are Take-Home Exam questions that have been made in reference to them. Also please remember that the Take-Home Exam (or Research Essay if you chose that option) is due next week via Turnitin on Monday (April 05) before 12pm/noon.

Readings: Jennifer Chan. “Notes on Post-Internet Art.” in You Are Here: Art After the Internet, edited by Omar Kholeif, Cornerhouse (Manchester, UK), 2014, pp.106-123 (17 pages)
Hito Steyerl. “Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?” e-flux journal, Number 49, November 2013 (online article).

Key Concepts: internet art, post-internet art, post-digital art, the new aesthetic, materiality, medium specificity, digital, analog, distribution networks, communication networks, social media, streaming services, the art market, digital marketplaces, capitalism, resistance, oppositionality, complicity, circulationism, online exhibits, digital curation, contemporaneity, novelty, trends, platform economies, gig economies.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

WEEKLY READINGS & CLASS SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1 - JAN 11

MEDIUM AND MEDIA: Introduction to the Histories of Technology and Contemporary Art

Assignments: Nothing due today, but remember that the Week 1 Reading Response and Multiple Choice Quiz are both due next Monday (Jan 18) at 12pm/noon. Also, please remember to make a post introducing yourself in the Week 1 Introduction thread within the course’s Moodle forum. This introduction post is not a formally required assignment but doing so will contribute positively toward your Participation mark. For whichever students are assigned to present on the Week 2 readings please make sure that you start preparing your presentation right away.


The MIT Media Lab. “How the Medium Shapes the Message.” Youtube. 20 Feb 2019 (3 minutes).

Key Concepts: New media art, medium specificity, mass media, visual culture, popular culture, art and technology, media studies, multimedia, transmedia, intermedia, video art, moving image, formalism, postmodernism, internet art, post internet art, post-media, post-digital, art worlds

WEEK 2 - JAN 18

THE SOUND OF MUSIC: Intermedia, Sonic Art, Video Art Music, and Music Videos

Assignments: Week 1 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Jan 18) at 12pm/noon. Remember that the Week 2 Quiz and Reading Response are both due by next Monday (Jan 25) at 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 2 readings will be presented today (Jan 18) during class.


Andrew R Chow. “‘There’s a Wide-Open Horizon of Possibility.’ Musicians Are Using AI to Create Otherwise Impossible New Songs” TIME, Feb. 05, 2020 (online article).

Key Concepts: multimedia, transmedia, sound art, synesthesia, danger music, action music, happenings, Fluxus, performance art, field recordings, artist composers, artist musicians, algorithmic music, AI-generated music

WEEK 3 - JAN 25

THE MOVING IMAGE I: Film, TV, Expanded Cinema, and Video Art

Assignments: Week 2 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Jan 25) at 12pm/noon. Remember that the Week 3 Quiz and Reading Response are both due by next Monday (Feb 1) before 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 3 readings will be presented today (Jan 25) during class.


Alina Cohen. “Why Video Art is Having a Moment.” Artsy, Nov 27, 2019 (online article).

Key Concepts: medium specificity, film, video, cinema, theatre, materiality, preservation, conservation, installation, psychoanalysis, reproducibility, the art market, collecting, archives, narrative, time, immersion

WEEK 4 - FEB 1

THE MOVING IMAGE II: Experimental Animation, 3D Modelling, Cartoons, and Stop Motion

Assignments: Week 3 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Feb 1) before 12pm/noon. Remember that the Week 4 Quiz and Reading Response are both due by next Monday (Feb 8) before 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 4 readings will be presented today (Feb 1) during class.


Key Concepts: experimental animation, traditional animation, synesthesia, aesthetics, style, commercial animation, animation festivals, computer graphics, special effects, cartooning, comics, clay-mation, stop-motion, game engines, asset libraries, 3D modelling

WEEK 5 - FEB 8

DRAWING MACHINES: Computer Art, Algorithmic Art, AI Art, and Digital Painting.
Assignments: Week 4 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Feb 8) before 12pm/noon. Remember that you have an extra week for the Week 5 Quiz and Reading Response and that they are both due the Monday after Reading Week (Feb 22) before 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 5 readings will be presented today (Feb 8) during class.


Key Concepts: computer graphics, early computer art, algorithmic art, Bell Labs, artificial intelligence, procedural generation, machine learning, authenticity, deepfakes, generative adversarial networks, ASCII art, Photoshop

WEEK 6 - FEB 15 READING WEEK: No Class, Readings, or Assignments due

ASSIGNMENTS / READINGS: There will be no class, lecture, or assigned readings for this week. Also please remember that you have an extra week to complete the Week 5 Reading Response and Quiz and that they are both due before 12pm/noon next Monday (Feb 22)

WEEK 7 - FEB 22
ELECTRIC SHEEP: Robotic Art, Puppetry, Kinetic Art, and Mechanical Animals.
Assignments: Week 5 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Feb 22) before 12pm/noon.
Remember that the Week 7 Quiz and Reading Response are both due by next Monday (Feb 29) before 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 7 readings will be presented today (Feb 22) during class.

Key Concepts: robotic art, kinetic art, puppetry, moving sculpture, humans and non-humans, simulated life, automatons, androids, science fiction, machines, the uncanny valley, mechanical turks, authenticity

WEEK 8 - MAR 01
NETWORKS OF CONTROL: Systems Aesthetics, Communication Technology, and Net Art
Assignments: Week 7 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Mar 01) before 12pm/noon.
Remember that the Week 8 Quiz and Reading Response are both due by next Monday (Mar 08) before 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 8 readings will be presented today (Mar 01) during class.
Brad Troemel. “Art After Social Media” in You Are Here: Art After the Internet, edited by Omar Kholeif, Cornerhouse (Manchester, UK), 2014, pp.36-43 (7 pages)
Key Concepts: systems, networks, the internet, web design, net art, internet art, databases, archives, information technology, bureaucracy, telepresence, telecommunication, radio art, live streaming, mobile phones, telephones, mail art, email art, fax art, social media, GPS, satellite networks, Google Maps, mapping, circulationism.

WEEK 9 - MAR 08

THE MAGIC CIRCLE: Game Art, Role-Play, Alternate Realities, and Virtual Worlds

Assignments: Week 8 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Mar 08) before 12pm/noon.

Remember that the Week 9 Quiz and Reading Response are both due by next Monday (Mar 15) before 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 9 readings will be presented today (Mar 08) during class.


Elisabeth Lapensee. “Call It a Vision Quest: Machinima in a First Nations context.” in Understanding machinima: essays on filmmaking in virtual worlds, edited by Jenna Ng, Bloomsbury Academic (New York City, NY) pp 216-235 (20 pages)


Dorothy S Santos. “From Pixels to Text: Articulations of the Body in Digital Landscapes and Imagined Space(s).” Art Journal, Volume 79, Issue 2, pp. 87-94 (7 pages)

Key Concepts: artist’s games, game art, art games, videogame art, MMORPGs, role-playing, board games, alternate reality games, virtual reality, world-building, Indigenous Futurism, feminist game design, media archeology, internet art, machinima,

WEEK 10 - MAR 15

CYBORG ASSEMBLAGES: Experimental Fashion, Body Art, Remixes, and Collage.

Assignments: Week 9 Quiz and Reading Response are both due today (Mar 15) before 12pm/noon.

Remember that the Week 10 Quiz and Reading Response are both due by next Monday (Mar 22) before 12pm/noon. Group presentation of Week 10 readings will be presented today (Mar 15) during class.


Key Concepts: the body, corporeality, new materialism, assemblage theory, posthumanism, transhumanism, cyborg humans and non-humans, feminism, afrofuturism, costume, clothing, garments, experimental fashion, remixing, collage

GRADED ASSESSMENT

GRADED ASSESSMENT: You will be assessed in this course based on a combination of ten written weekly reading response assignments (20%), ten weekly multiple choice quizzes taken through the Moodle platform (20%), a single group presentation conducted during our weekly scheduled classes (15%), a single final essay OR take-home exam (30%), and finally your ongoing participation during class and through the Moodle forum (15%). These assignments are designed to not only get students to engage deeply with each week’s lectures and assigned readings, but to also utilize their peers as a potential network for scholarly research and/or artistic inspiration.

Weekly Reading Responses (10 x 2% each) 20% - Due every Monday before 12pm/noon

Throughout the course students will write ten short written responses (approximately 250-300 words each) to one of the assigned readings from each week. Students are required to choose one article from each week’s readings that they will then critically respond to. In these Reading Responses students will be expected to select a single work of digital/new media art and attempt to relate it directly to a specific theory or concept from their selection from the respective week’s course readings. These Reading Responses will then be posted by students in the Moodle forum within the respective week’s Weekly Reading Response thread.
Posts should include at least one image of the artwork you are referencing. In addition to acting as a discussion prompt within the Moodle forum, these Reading Responses will also be periodically used within small group activities during our weekly classes. As these are meant to be short writing exercises all submitted Reading Responses should have minimal to no use of direct quotations.

These ten Reading Response assignments will be due every week on Monday before 12pm/noon (except for Week 1 and Reading Week). In addition to posting these within the Moodle forum students will also be required to submit their Reading Responses for assessment and feedback via Turnitin. Grades and feedback from the course instructor for each of these Reading Responses will typically be sent out within a week of submission.

Weekly Moodle Quizzes (10 x 2% each) 20% - Due every Monday before 12pm/noon Students will answer a weekly online quiz consisting of a set of multiple choice questions on the Moodle platform. Each week’s quiz can be accessed through a link I will include within each week’s respective Moodle section. The questions will be based on a combination of the most recent week’s lecture and reading content. The goal of these quizzes will be to help ensure that students are aware of the key concepts and information from each week’s lecture content and assigned readings.

These ten weekly Moodle quizzes will be due every week on Monday before noon (except for Week 1 and Reading Week). Please remember that the quizzes will only be available during the week that corresponds to the readings and lectures that they have been made in reference to. The window to take the quiz will be from Monday at noon to the following Monday at 11:59am so please plan accordingly. As these quizzes are multiple choice their grading will be automated through Moodle and marks will be made available to students immediately upon quiz completion.

Group Presentation 15% - Due during class on your group’s assigned presentation week

At the beginning of the course students will be organized into ten groups (of 3-4 people depending on total class size) and assigned a week in which they briefly present (approximately 10 minutes) a summary of some of the major themes, figures, and chronologies from that week’s assigned readings. There are no set structures for how these presentations should be arranged so feel free to be creative. You may adhere strictly to covering the readings themselves or use them as an initial prompt to discuss other artists, curators, artwork, or popular culture that you think are significantly related to them. As part of the conclusion to these presentations each of the groups will be also required to create 2-3 questions to help prompt class discussion afterwards. The class will then be broken up into their ten presentation groups to discuss these questions for approximately 5-10 minutes. During this time the course instructor will speak with the currently presenting group and ask them some questions regarding their presentation and that week’s assigned readings. Following this group discussion period, the class will reconvene and each group will briefly present their answers to the presenting group’s question to the rest of the class.

Presentations will be graded based on how well the presenting students demonstrate their understanding of the concepts, theories, and histories being referenced within the selected texts as well any effort and/or creativity applied in constructing their slides and delivering their presentation. On the day of their presentation, groups are required to email their slide file(s) and a copy of their script/notes to me and I will then add them to that week’s Moodle section as review resources for the rest of the class. A grade and feedback will be sent to the group within a week of their presentations.

Take-Home Exam OR Research Essay 30% - Due a week after the last class on April 05

The final assignment is a Take-Home Exam that consists of a series of comparative short answer questions (answers should be between 250-350 words) as well as a list of short essay questions (essay answers should be approximately 750-1000 words) that students must choose one from to answer. Exam questions will be based on a combination of lecture and reading content from throughout the entire course.

For those interested, there is also the option of writing a Research Essay instead of the Take-Home Exam final. Both will have the same required length of words/pages (total of approximately 2000 words), but the Research Essay will just allow a bit more creativity in terms of choice of topic and writing style. If you are interested in writing the Research Essay instead of the Take-Home Exam, please make sure to send me an email as soon as possible to let them know your proposed topic, thesis, research sources, etc.

In both cases, students will be submitting this final assignment via a Turnitin link. Students will also be expected to reference and properly cite all external sources they use regardless of if they choose the exam or the essay. Citations should be formatted according to a standard academic style guide of their choice (MLA, APA, Chicago). The exam questions will be posted on Moodle before the start of class on Week 11 (Mar 22)
and students will have until April 05 (one week after the last class) to submit it through Turnitin. Feedback and grades for the final assignment will be posted approximately 2-3 weeks after the April 05 due date.

Participation 15% - Assessed consistently throughout the course

Your Participation grade is not only based on class attendance but also how consistently you are asking and answering questions, providing helpful feedback for other student’s presentations, and actively engaging during group activities. You will also be assessed based on your participation via comments, replies, and posts within the online Moodle forum (the required ten Reading Response posts described above do not count toward participation).

As participation is an ongoing process rather than a singular assignment, feedback will be a bit harder to concretely give out at regular intervals. However, during the third week (the last week that you can drop the course without receiving a final grade) of the course I will provide each student with their current participation grade and if necessary some general feedback on how they might improve it. This initial mark will reflect approximately a quarter of the total Participation portion (15%) of your final grade.

SUBMITTING WORK / LATENESS:

As is described above, all of the Reading Response assignments all need to be both posted in each of the respective weekly Moodle forum sections and submitted via Turnitin for feedback and assessment. The slide files and script/presentation notes for each group’s presentations should be emailed directly to me after class on each group’s respective presentation dates. The Take-Home Exam OR Research Essay (see above for more information) will be submitted through Turnitin for assessment. The Weekly Quizzes are taken online through Moodle so there is no need to worry about submitting or emailing in any files.

If for some reason you do not think that you will be able to make any of the assignment deadlines please contact me as soon as possible and we can try to arrange an extension or make-up assignment depending on your particular circumstances. If you are a student with a disability and need accommodations or if there is a scheduling conflict due to a religious holiday please let me know and also take a look at the relevant resource links I have included at the bottom of this syllabus. If there is no sufficient reason for an accommodation, extension, or make-up assignment to be provided a late penalty of 5% per day will be applied to any assignment that is not submitted on time.

DROPPING THE COURSE:

The last date to drop a course from the Winter (W) semester without receiving a final grade is February 5, 2021.

Prior to this date you will be provided 15% of your overall grade in order to better help you make this decision. After this date you can still withdraw from a course using the registration and enrolment system until the last day of class for the term associated with the course. When you withdraw from a course, the course remains on your transcript without a grade and is notated as ‘W’. The withdrawal will not affect your grade point average or count towards the credits required for your degree. For more information please see Undergraduate Fall/Winter Important Dates.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Here are some helpful links to information on York’s various academic procedures and policies. If you have any questions about anything related to these links please do not hesitate to contact me and I will do my best to assist you.

- Senate Academic Policies, Procedures and Regulations Page: General page of the York Senate’s many academic policies.
- SPARK Academic Integrity Web site: Extremely helpful resource for helping you to make sure you are citing your work properly and not accidentally plagiarizing anything.
- Ethics Review Process for Research Involving Human Participants: Probably not applicable to this class but if you ever are researching other people you need to be aware of how to do so under York’s ethics guidelines.
- Religious Observance Accommodation: Information on getting religious observance accommodation for assignment and/or exam deadlines.
Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.

Moodle @ York University