

# Film 136A

## Experimental Film & Video

Film 136A Summer 2015 M W F 9-11:30am classroom (TBA), Session 2, July 27-August 28  
Bryan Konefsky [bkonefsky@gmail.com](mailto:bkonefsky@gmail.com) mobile 505-235-1852

The alternative screen is the fine arts and intellectual tradition in the movies. It's where we track the leading edge of moving image practice, both cultural and technological. It's where we see the most radical and inventive movies (film/video) ever made, movies that spring from artistic, cultural, and political desire, with monetary reward and popularity being secondary or negligible concerns. Not commodities for mass consumption, they are the true independents. – Gene Youngblood

**Course description:** Experimental film/video represent profound artifacts of human activity that are both expressions of radical imagination and barometers of the human condition.

This course will survey a wide range of experimental cinema (film/video) from the 1920's to the present with a central focus being artistic practice in the context of historic, cultural and political concerns.

The various histories of experimental film/video speak to a range of topics that are fundamental to the limits and possibilities of what a movie might be. And, within these topics issues such as whose voices are heard and who is represented within particular histories are central ideas that we will study.

The class will consist of screenings, readings, discussions, and lectures. Students will be evaluated through written assignments, exams, and class participation.

Note that the film/video screenings have not been arranged chronologically. Rather, in an attempt to establish more profound relationships, screenings/discussions for this course have been structured thematically.

**Attendance:** Attendance will be taken in every class.

\*\*Students who miss two or more classes will be automatically dropped from the course.

\*\*Important: Being late twice equals a single absence.

\*\*Every unexcused absence will lower your semester grade by 5%..

**Assignments:** There will be one in-class exam (see Schedule of Events) and two assigned papers (see due dates under Schedule of Events and attached description of paper assignment). Late papers will not be accepted and exams cannot be made up (unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor).

**Required readings:** A packet of photocopied readings will be the textbook for this summer session. Readings are available through the Professor Publishing Service at the Baytree Bookstore on campus. Note that each reading from the attached bibliography has been assigned a number. That number is listed on the particular date for which the reading is to be discussed in class.

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**Your semester grade** will be calculated as follows (assuming you do not miss more than two classes (see above):  
(Exam 1 + Essay Assignment #1 + Essay Assignment #2 + class participation)/4 = Semester Grade (adjusted per absences). Note that class assignments AND class participation are each worth 100 points.

## **Communicating with the instructor:**

Emailing is the most efficient way to contact the instructor. When emailing ALWAYS type the course name/number in the subject line or your mail will be automatically deleted. Be respectful in mailing the instructor. If your communication fails to follow these basic acts of civility, they will be interpreted as failures to participate in the course effectively and will adversely impact your semester grade.

## **Plagerism/Copyright Issues:**

When writing papers it is imperative that students either develop original ideas in their essays and/or cite ALL sources for material not their own. Note that using other peoples' ideas without acknowledging the source will result in a failing grade for that particular essay. Additionally, be advised that this kind of behavior can get you expelled from the university.

## **Classroom Etiquette:**

\*Cell phones MUST be turned off during class.

\*Text messaging – Students are NOT allowed to text message during class and if they are caught messaging they WILL be asked to leave the classroom.

## **Other Class Requirements:**

\*Students who do not submit all assignments will not pass this course.

\* You will be spending many hours outside of class working on projects... If you are not prepared to budget your time in an effective manner do not take this course.

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## Schedule of Events:

**M 7/27 Introduction:** screen *Basement Films studio tour*, 3 min, 2014, *Madame Winger Makes A Movie: A Survival Guide to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Helen Hill, 8 min, 2001, *Kiss* by Thomas Edison, 2 min, 1896, *Kiss* by Jaco Van Dormael, 1 min, 1998, *The Life and Death of 9413, A Hollywood Extra* by Robert Florey, 11 min, 1928, *Easy Rider* by Dennis Hopper 95 min (5 min clip), 1969, *2 Lane Blacktop* by Monte Hellman, 102 min (screen final sequence) 1971, *Persona* by Ingmar Bergman, 83 min (2 min clip), 1966, *The Muppet Movie* by James Frawley, 95 min (2 min clip) 1979. *Se7en* by David Fincher, 127 min (screen opening credits), 1995, screen "playground ad", 2 min, *4 More Years* by TVTV (10 min clip), 1972, 1960s, *Customers Wanted* (Kinetoscope) by Dave Fleischer, 7 min, 1935.

**W 7/29 A Sense of Place:** screen *A Man With A Movie Camera* by Dziga Vertov, (30 min clip) 63 min, 1929, *Strike* by Sergei Eisenstein, 82 min (screen 5 min clip), 1925, *Berlin: The Symphony of a Great City*, 65 min, 1927 (5 min clip), *Rien Que Les Heures* by Alberto Cavalcanti, 45min, 1926 France (clip), *The Gold Diggers of 1933* by Mervyn LeRoy (5 min clip), 96 min, 1933, *Manhatta* by Charles Sheeler/Paul Strand, 6 min, 1921, *Walking Under The Sun* by Diana Fonseca, 3 min, 2007, discuss readings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5a

**F 7/31 A Sense of Place II:** screen *Group Picture* by Nik Kern, 3 min, 2004, *Mothlight* by Stan Brakhage, 4 min, 1963, *This Is A History of New York* by Jem Cohen, 23 min, 2001, *Empire* by Andy Warhol, 8 hours (screen 5 min clip), 1966, *King Kong* by Merian Cooper, US (clip), 1933, *Heart of the World* by Guy Madden, 6 min, 2000, *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang (5 min clip), 115 min, 1926, *Three Legged* by Paul Harrison & John Wood, 3 min, 2000, *Celestial Subway Lines* by Ken Jacobs & John Zorn (10 min clip), 68 min, 2005, *Western Movie* by Lee Hyung Suk, Korea, 8 min, 2012, discuss reading 6, 7, 8, 10

**M 8/3 Surrealism and the Fantastic:** play Pixies "Debaser," screen *Blood of a Poet* by Jean Cocteau, 50 min (screen 20 min. clip), 1930, *Page of Madness* by Teinosuke Kinugasa, 60 min (screen 10 min clip from rescue sequence), 1926, *Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable* by Ronald Nameth, 18 min, 1966, *Science Friction* by Stan Vanderbeek, 10 min, 1959, *Stepping Stones* by Elias Romero, 30 min, 1968 (clip), *Un Chien Andalou* by Salvador Dali & Louis Bunuel, 16 min, 1929, *Sins of the Fleshapoids* by Mike Kuchar, (clip), 97min, 1965, discuss readings 11, 12, 13

**DISCUSS EXAM (next class)!!**

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**W 8/5 \*Exam (time limit – 2 hrs)** screen *Stairway At St. Paul's* by Jeroen Offerman, 8 min, 2002, *Living In A Violin* by Ernie Gusella, 7 min, 1983, *Please Don't Hate Me Because I'm Beautiful* by Kelly Hughes, 3 min, 1999, *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* by Captain Beefhart and the Magic Band, 2 min, 1970, *#4 (Bottoms)* by Yoko Ono, 5 min, *Energie* by Thorsten Fleisch 6 min, 2007, 1966, *Smells Like Teen Spirit/Patti Smith* by Jem Cohen, 5 min, 2007, *Kustom Kar Kommandos* by Kenneth Anger, 3 min, 1965, *Kustom Kamera Kommandos*, Bill Brown, 2005, 3 min, *Little Clips* by Julie Perini, 1 min, 2007, *The Saddest Song in the World*, Jodie Mack, 3 min, 2010.

**DISCUSS PAPER #1 (due 8/12) – NOTE FILMS STUDENTS CANNOT WRITE ABOUT.**

**F 8/7 Identity Politics/Looking At Ourselves #1 of 3:** screen *Birthday Suit* by Lisa Steele, 12 minutes, 1974, *Glass Jaw* by Michael O'Reilly, 17 min, 1992, *At Land* by Maya Deren, 15 min, 1944, *It Wasn't Love* by Sadie Benning, 20 min, 1992, *Screen Test: Dennis Hopper* by Andy Warhol, 4min, 1966, *Removed* by Naomi Uman, 6min, 1999, discuss reading 14, 14a, 15

**M 8/10 Identity Politics/Looking At Ourselves#2 of 3:** screen *God Bless America* by Tadasu Takamine, 9 min, 2002, *Stomach Song* by William Wegman, 2 min., 1970, *Tongues Untied* by Marlon Riggs, 60 min (screen 10 min clip), 1992, *Self Portrait* by Travis Wilkerson, 10 min, 1999, *Un Chant D'Amour* by Jean Genet, 25 min (clip), 1950, *Hell Hole Hostage* by George Kuchar, 19 min, 2005, *Cubic Trajedy* by Ming-Yuan Chuan, 3.5 min, 2005, discuss reading 15b

**RETURN EXAM TO STUDENTS (leave 15 minutes at end of class for discussion)**

**W 8/12 Identity Politics/Looking At Ourselves#3 of 3:** screen *Fireworks* by Kenneth Anger, 14 min, 1947, *The Art of Memory* by Woody Vasulka, 37 min, 1987, *Drink Deep* by Jem Cohen, 9 min, 1991, *L'Atalante* by Jean Vigo (5 min clip), 87 min, 1934, *All My Life* by Bruce Baillie, 5 minutes, 1966, discuss readings 9, 16, 17, 18

**PAPER #! DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS TODAY.**

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**F 8/14 Archival Apocalypse #1 of 2:** screen *Decasia* by Bill Morrison, 60 min, 2003, *A Movie* by Bruce Connor, 10 min, 1958, *A Movie* by Jen Proctor, 12min, 2010, *End of Reason* by David Byrne, 5 min, 2003, *The Cut Ups* by Antony Bach/William S. Burroughs, 19 min (screen 5 min clip), 1966, *Outer Space* by Peter Tscherkassky, 10 min, discuss readings 19, 20

**M 8/17 Archival Apocalypse #2 of 2:** screen *Spank* by Diane Nerwen, 8 min, 1998, *Http//ICT* by Ip Yuk Yiu, 5 min, 2005, *Psychos* by Ip Yuk-Yiu, 12 min, 2006, *Fast Film* by Virgil Widrich, 14 min, 2003, 1998, *Dubus* by Alexei Dmitiev, 4 min, 2005, *Tribulation 99* by Craig Baldwin, 48 min, 1991.

**RETURN PAPER #1 TO STUDENTS.**

**W 8/19 New Documentary #1 of 3:** screen *Mountain State* by Bill Brown, 18 min (5 min clip), 2003, *An Injury To One* by Travis Wilkerson, 53 min, 2002, discuss readings 21, 23a

**Write final assignment on blackboard – due in class 8/28 (SASE), 2 readings/2 films**

**F 8/21 New Documentary #2 of 3:** screen *The Subconscious Art of Graffiti Removal* by Matt McCormick, 16 minutes, 2001, *Nobody's Business* by Alen Berliner, 60 min, 1996, discuss reading 23.

**M 8/24 New Documentary #3 of 3:** screen *The Gleaners and I* by Agnes Varda, 82 min, 2000

**W 8/26 TBA**

**F 8/28 \* Essay Assignment#2 DUE\* (late papers will not be accepted)**

Screen *Usto Justo* by Coleman Miller, 15 min, 2005, *The Benefits of Looking Ahead* by Coronet Films, 10 min, 1950.

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## Bibliography

1. "We: Variant of a Manifesto" ( excerpt) by Dziga Vertov
2. "Filmdrama as the Opium of the Masses," by Malcom Le Grice, Abstract Film and Beyond.
3. "Art Worlding Experimental Film" by Fred Camper
4. "Hot Video Art Leaves Collectors Cold," by Alexander Peers from The Wall Street Journal
5. "Blown off the Screen," by Gene Youngblood, Taos Talking Picture Festival Program 1996.
- 5a. "The Amplification of Sound"
6. Interview with Jem Cohen
7. On Photography by Susan Sontag
8. "Metaphors on Vision (excerpt)," by Stan Brakhage, from Film Theory and Criticism.
9. A Critical Cinema 2 (interview with Bruce Baillie)
10. "Rage and a Haircut," by Dave Hickey, from Art Issues Sept., 1995
11. "The Art of Cinema" (excerpt) by Jean Cocteau
12. "First Manifesto of Surrealism" (excerpt) by Andre Breton
13. "Storytelling Animals" by David Hoppe from New Art Examiner
14. "Auto-ethnography: Journeys of the Self," Experimental Ethnography by Catherine Russell.
- 14a. "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema" by Laura Mulvey
15. "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality" by Maya Deren
- 15b. Everyman: His Own Historian by Carl Becker
16. Kenneth Anger reading
17. "The Politics of Video Memory: Electronic Erasures and Inscriptions" by Marita Sturken
18. "The New Epistemic Space," by Woody Vasulka, Illuminating Video.
19. "Archival Apocalypse: Found Footage as Ethnography," Ex. Ethnography by Catherine Russell.
20. A Movie (excerpts from Film Art)
21. "Telling Stories with Evidence and Arguments," by Bill Nichols, Representing Reality.
23. "Grandma's Story," by Trinh Minh Ha, Blasted Allegories
- 23a. Making Memories by Patricia Phillips

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### Essay Assignment #1: (essay assignment #2 – TBA)

**Due date:** see schedule of events... Late papers will NOT be accepted (unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor).

**Structure:** 3-4 pages, typed, 12 point, san serif (in other words - no Old English fonts), double spaced, single sided..... please make sure that your name and email is on each page.... Also I do not want footnotes... This is an essay assignment, so if you need to reference something please do so within the body of the paper.

**Assignment:** Choose any one movie (screened in class) and discuss it within the context of your experience of this course, the lectures, readings and discussions (a subjective response to the readings, movies, discussions)....

**Gentle Warning:** I will announce certain films/videos that you **CANNOT** write about!!!

**Important:** To contextualize your argument within the content of this course note that you must reference 2 relevant readings within the body of your essay. Also note that this is an essay assignment not a research paper – as such, please reference your sources (the readings) within the body of your paper – no footnotes are necessary.

**Format:**

Pick a specific moment in one of the movies we have screened in class. Describe the moment accurately (a moment may be a single line of dialogue, a specific group of images, or a specific relationship between sound and image etc... To be clarified in class).

As you carefully describe the moment you should discover that this exercise leads you to more general themes and ideas explored in the video you are writing about. In other words your "moment" should be exemplary in some way.

This will then become the jumping off point to relate your "moment" to meaning(s)/issues that are central to the entire movie. This relation may be direct or, it may be somewhat oblique...

Please relate the video to readings, lectures and/or discussions that intersect with the ideas/themes you are exploring. Integrate these observations/relations into your essay. Establish this relationship in a meaningful way that supports your writing. Do Not Use Footnotes...

**Important:** As you are writing the paper look critically at your own observations. Ask yourself why your paper is developing as it is? Do your ideas need more contextualizing and/or explaining? Did you casually gloss over an important point that, perhaps, needs to be expanded? Be careful not to generalize (broad, sweeping, unqualified remarks)... Be specific, concise and brilliant... Oh, and good luck and may your printer never run out of ink.