Experimental Film and Video
Film 136A: Summer 2020

Instructor: Elia Vargas; ecvargas@ucsc.edu
TAs: Courtney Coulson; ccoulson@ucsc.edu
Lecture: Monday and Wednesday, 9am-12:30pm Online
Office hours: Instructor: Wednesday 1-3pm by Zoom
TA: Monday 12:30-2:30pm by Zoom
Units: 5

Course description
This course is a broad survey of film, video, and other media practices in defense of experimentation. What does it mean to experiment? Why is it essential? What do we get from it? How does it propel us forward? Experimental film and video are lively mediums with active and historical cultures. Contemporary practices reveal distinct community commitments to form, practice, and process that deviate from conventional media use, while the historical Avant Garde offers an alternative account to cinema and video histories. This course examines the practice, theory, and history of experimental film and video in which individuals or communities have pushed the boundaries of form and content. What is experimental film and video in the contemporary climate of internet culture? Furthermore, how can we think critically about experimentation that resists institutional context in favor of alternative practices from within an academic institution that favors periodization, tradition, and categorization?

Learning outcomes
Together, we will build a foundational knowledge of concepts developed by experimental filmmakers, video artists, and theorists. Students will develop discipline-specific vocabulary and will be able to think with prevailing theory in experimental film, video, and other media. This course will equip students to critically engage with practices and methods of experimental film and video. Students in this course will learn ways of integrating creative practice as forms of knowledge production.
Expectations
Students are expected to:
- Be on time for lectures;
- Attend all lectures;
- Read the assigned readings before lectures;
- Be prepared to engage in thoughtful and critical discussion of the material with peers and instructor;
- Turn assignments in on time;
- Treat one another with courtesy and respect.

Readings
Readings and other course materials will be provided on Canvas, in the weekly Modules and under the “Files” tab. All readings will be made available online to minimize printing, paper use, and expense to you. The reading schedule will correspond to the lectures and discussions on the date with which they are listed. Please finish the readings in preparation for that day’s class.

A number of other media documents relating to the subject matter of the course will also be available in the “Readings” section. You are encouraged (not required) to read/watch/browse them as well.

Assignments
Upload all assignments online via Canvas prior to class on the date due.

1. Four weekly 1-page reading response (250 words)
2. Short analysis paper (750 words)
3. Final paper or project (1500 words), including a brief proposal (300 words)

Grading
- 30% Participation (Four 1-page reading responses, attendance and active discussion and participation in class)
- 15% Short analysis paper
- 30% Final paper or project (including proposal)
- 25% Final exam
Class policies

UCSC Principles of Community
In this class, we abide by the UCSC Principles of Community, so please familiarize yourself. [http://www.ucsc.edu/about/principles-community.html](http://www.ucsc.edu/about/principles-community.html).

Unauthorized distribution of course notes
Please note that selling, preparing, or distributing for any commercial purpose course lecture notes or video or audio recordings of any course is explicitly forbidden by campus policy, unless authorized by the University in advance - for instance, by the Disability Resource Center, which can assign students who need one a notetaker with a laptop or other recording device - and explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. (DRC notetaking accommodations should, and usually will, be announced to the instructor in advance in formal communication from the DRC.)

Lateness policy
All papers are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated. Extensions can only be granted in exceptional circumstances and only with the prior permission. Essays submitted late without an extension will be accepted only at the discretion of your TA; if accepted, they will be subject to a penalty of one grade step per day (i.e., a B paper would become a B- if submitted one day late, a C+ if submitted two days late, and a C if submitted three days late).

Statement on difficult materials
In Film and Digital Media courses you will often be assigned films or other material that could contain difficult ideas, uncomfortable language, or graphic depictions of sex or violence. You will be asked to treat these portrayals critically, to consider what is being expressed by the maker, or to examine the potential social impact, and to evaluate the works in a given context. Instructors are always happy to speak with you about your work and might direct you to CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) at (831) 459-2628 or the Disability Resource Center ([drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu)) or (831) 459-2089) should you need additional support in order to do your best work.

Important Summer Session Remote 2020 Deadlines:

Session 1:
Drop: Monday, June 29
Request for “W”: Friday, July 10
Session 2:
Drop: Monday, August 3
Request for “W”: Friday, August 14

8-Week:
Drop: Monday, July 6
Request for “W”: Friday, July 24

10-Week:
Drop: Monday, July 6
Request for “W”: Friday, July 24

Summer is unique. **You will not be dropped for non-attendance or non-payment.** You must drop yourself. Dropping before the deadline results in a full-tuition reversal/refund. Withdraw posts a W for the grade and full tuition is charged (no refund).

For all dates and deadlines, including ‘change of grade option’ (P/NP) and grades due, here is the summer academic calendar: [https://summer.ucsc.edu/studentlife/index.html](https://summer.ucsc.edu/studentlife/index.html)

For questions about dropping, requesting a W grade for a course, or withdrawing from the summer quarter, email summer@ucsc.edu.

**DRC Remote Accommodations:**

The Disability Resources Center reduces barriers to inclusion and full participation for students with disabilities by providing support to individually determine reasonable academic accommodations. Operations continue via remote appointments. If you have questions or concerns about exam accommodations or any other disability-related matter, email the DRC Schedulers at drc@ucsc.edu for an appointment.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Academic integrity is the cornerstone of a university education. Academic dishonesty diminishes the university as an institution and all members of the university community. It tarnishes the value of a UCSC degree. All members of the UCSC community
have an explicit responsibility to foster an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. All members of the university community are expected to present as their original work only that which is truly their own. All members of the community are expected to report observed instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty in order to ensure that the integrity of scholarship is valued and preserved at UCSC.

In the event a student is found in violation of the UCSC Academic Integrity policy, he or she may face both academic sanctions imposed by the instructor of record and disciplinary sanctions imposed either by the provost of his or her college or the Academic Tribunal convened to hear the case. Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student’s transcript.

For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the Academic Integrity page at the Division of Undergraduate Education.

**Title IX:**

The university cherishes the free and open exchange of ideas and enlargement of knowledge. To maintain this freedom and openness requires objectivity, mutual trust, and confidence; it requires the absence of coercion, intimidation, or exploitation. The principal responsibility for maintaining these conditions must rest upon those members of the university community who exercise most authority and leadership: faculty, managers, and supervisors.

The university has therefore instituted a number of measures designed to protect its community from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and other related prohibited conduct. Information about the Title IX Office, the online reporting link, applicable campus resources, reporting responsibilities, the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment, and the UC Santa Cruz Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment can be found at titleix.ucsc.edu.

The Title IX Office is actively responding to reports and requests for consultation. If you are not currently working with someone in the office and want to make a re-
port/request a consult, you can expect the fastest response by using our online reporting link.

For more information please visit the Title IX Operations under Covid-19 page.

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## Course schedule

### Week 1: Introduction: In Defense of Experimentation

**Monday, July 27th**

**DISCUSS**

Introductions / class overview / administrative / readings / assignments / what is experimentation?

**WATCH**


**Assignment**

**Watch for next class:** “What is Contemporary?” Hito Steyerl conversation with MOCA curator

**Response #1**

**Wednesday, July 29th**

**READING DUE**

Camper, “Naming, and Defining, Avant-Garde or Experimental Film”; O’Pray, “The Avant-Garde Film: Definitions” (p1-8) in Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes, Passions”; 15. Cybernated Art Nam June Paik, 1966 (New Media Reader, p227-229); TV as a Creative Medium exhibition Catalogue; “Video Vortex Reader 3, Introduction” (8-17), Geert Lovink & Andreas Treske; Jonas Mekas, “Anti-100 Years of Cinema Manifesto”

**DISCUSS**

Discuss (and resist) definitions. Finding a starting point for this course. TV as a Creative Medium Exhibition. TV everywhere in 2020: weissensee.tv, MSP TV, The Wrong TV.

**WATCH**

“Yes to Life // Call Me Maybe”, Louisa Minkin, 2013; Continuation from Monday + Excerpts of work from TV as a creative Medium exhibition.

### Week 2: Starting Somewhere, Resonating Out: Expanded Cinema, TV, and The Rise of Experimental Video

**Monday, August 3rd**

**READING DUE**
- Steyerl, “The Spam of the Earth: Withdrawl from Representation” (p160-175); Enns, “Structural Digital Video”;
- Sitney, “Structural Film” in Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde”;
- Gidal, “Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film”
- Youngblood, “Synaesthetic Cinema” (p75-80), “Television as a Creative Medium” and “The Videosphere” (257-265);
- “Survey”, (p12-38 of “Art and Electronic Media”), Edward Shanken;
- Rosalind Krauss, “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism”

**DISCUSS**
Different cultures of experimentation, art and moving-image-making technology, media as art practice.

**WATCH**
- Michael Snow, “Wavelength” 1967; “Andy Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable”, 1966; Yoko Ono, “Four (Bottoms)”, 1966; WBGH-TV Boston, Nam June Pike, “The Medium is The Medium” (excerpt); “Gene Youngblood at SAIC” (excerpts)

**Watch for Next class:** “Dog Star Man: A Prelude” (1961-64)

**Assignment**
- Response #2:
- Short analysis paper

**DUE**
- **Response #1**

**Wednesday, August 5th**

**READING DUE**
- Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation;
- Raymond Williams, “The Technology and the Society” (NMR) (p289-300);
- Frampton, “A Lecture”;
- Youngblood, “Metaphysical Structuralism”;
- Maya Deren, “Cinema as an art Form”;
- Brakhage, “Metaphors on Vision”;
- Joshua Light Show 1967-68;

**DISCUSS**
Lyrical Film, Maya Daren, Cinema as an art form, American experimental film, light and expanded cinema, Video art, Visual music,

**WATCH**

**READ**
- Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation;
- Raymond Williams, “The Technology and the Society” (NMR) (p289-300);
- Frampton, “A Lecture”;
- Youngblood, “Metaphysical Structuralism”;
- Maya Deren, “Cinema as an art Form”;
- Brakhage, “Metaphors on Vision”;
- Joshua Light Show 1967-68;
| Assignment | **Watch for Next class:** Akosua Adoma Owusu New Voices of African Cinema (start at minute 16:30); Black Quantum Futurism at Gray Area Festival 2017; |

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<th><strong>Week 3: Beyond the Fortress: Alternate Modernities and Non-Western Trajectories of Experimentation</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Monday, August 10</strong>th</td>
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| **READING DUE**                 | Williams “Entering and Leaving Modernity: Utopia and Dystopia in Mambety’s Touki Bouki and Hyenas”;
|                                | Gutai Art Manifesto; Gutai Outdoor Exhibition Practices |
| **DISCUSS**                    | An all too brief dive into non-Euro-American experimental traditions: |
| **Watch for Next Class:**      | “Talleres: Experimental Women Filmmakers from Latin America”, |
| **ASSIGNMENT**                 | Response #3 |
| **Due**                        | **Response #2** |

| **Wednesday, August 12**th      |
| **READING DUE**                | Lisa Nakamura, “Indigenous Circuits”;
|                                | Cynthia Tompkins, Introduction “Experimental Latin American Cinema: History and Aesthetics”;
| **DISCUSS**                    | Experimental Latin American Cinema; Cinema Tropical Platform; Experimental Latin American Woman Filmmakers |
| **WATCH**                      | Leticia Parente (Brazil), “Marca Registrada”, 1975;
|                                | Ana Mendieta (Cuba), “Selected Works (1972-81); |
| **Watch for Next Class:**      | Patricio Guzmán (Chile), “Nostalgia for the Light”, 2010 |
### Assignment
- **Final paper or project**

### Due
- **Short analysis paper**

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### Week 4: Always Located in a Place: Where does experimental work happen?

#### Monday, August 17th

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<tr>
<th>READING DUE</th>
<th>Allan Kaprow, “Happenings” in the New York Scene (NMR); Ute Holl, “Media Theory (or, and, despite) a theory of cultural techniques”;</th>
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| DISCUSS | Guest Speaker, Surabhi Saraf experimental media artist. Where does experimental work happen today? What sort of spaces support it? Nearby institutions: SF Cinematheque, The Lab, Artist Television Access (Other Cinema), Shapeshifter Cinema, Aggregate Space, Living Room Light Exchange, Black Hole Cinema, Soundwave, Lost Landscapes, Live Cinema, MSP.tv, Heavy Breathing, B4BEL4B, |

| WATCH | Selections by Surabhi Saraf |

#### Assignment
- **Response #4**

| DUE | **Response #3** |

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#### Wednesday, August 19th

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<tr>
<th>READING DUE</th>
<th>Vertov, “WE: Variant of a Manifesto” and “The Council of Three”; Zryd, “Found Footage Film as Discursive Metahistory: Craig Baldwin’s Tribulation 99”; Bethany Nowviskie, “Speculative Collections”; skim the Orphan film symposium.</th>
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| DISCUSS | Media Archeology, Archives, Orphan Films, Canyon Cinema, Prelinger Library, Pacific Film Archive, Archive.org, |


#### Assignment
- **Watch for Next Class: Lyn Hershman Leeson, “Conceiving Ada”, 1997**
# Week 5: Speculating Beyond: Where to go, from when?

**Monday, August 24th**

**READING DUE**
Lev Manovich, “New Media From Borges to HTML”; Claire Bishop, “Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media”; Ceci Moss, “Expanded Internet Art” Intro and Chapter 1; Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek, “Accelerationist Manifesto”

**DISCUSS**
Discuss the future of film, video, and new media experimentations; debate the practices and ideas that distinguish new media (definitions, materiality, equity, contemporary cultural spaces <rhizome, Eyebeam, New Museum, Pioneer Works, upstream.gallery, Panther Modern, Signal Culture, Squeaky Wheels, Wave Farm,

**WATCH**

**LISTEN**
Pauline Oliveros, “Deep Listening”; Lucky Dragons; Music of the Magnetosphere, Moor Mother; Drexia;

**DUE**
*Response #4*

**Wednesday, August 26th**

**READING DUE**

**DISCUSS**
Guest Speaker Barry Threw, Executive Director of Gray Area: Wrap up; Final Exam review;

**WATCH**
Selections by Barry Threw

Due
Final paper or project

Assignment
*Final Exam*

**Friday, August 28th**

Final Exam Due at 6pm