Experimental Film and Video
Film 136A: Summer 2021

Instructor: Elia Vargas; ecvargas@ucsc.edu
TAs: Chisato Hughes; cuhughes@ucsc.edu
Lecture: Monday and Wednesday, 9am-12:30pm Online
Office hours: Instructor: Wednesday 1-3pm by Zoom
TA: Monday 1-3pm 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.)

Attendance
Attendance is required. This course prioritizes dialogue and addresses material you will not have an opportunity to easily discuss elsewhere. You have a responsibility to yourself and your peers to be present and participate. One class can be missed without penalty. If you miss three classes, you will lose all attendance points (10% of your grade).

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 2021 Info
For all dates and deadlines, including ‘change of grade option’ (P/NP) and grades due, see the “How summer works” link in the “Week 0: Introduction” module.

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 report/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.
## Course assignments calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignments due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction In Defense of experimentation</td>
<td>June 21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>June 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Rise of Experimental Video</td>
<td>June 28</td>
<td>Response #1. Guest Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>June 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Non-western Experimen- tations</td>
<td>July 5</td>
<td>Response #2. <strong>No Class. Holiday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>July 7</td>
<td>Short analysis paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Where Does Experimental Work Happen?</td>
<td>July 12</td>
<td>Response #3. Guest Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>July 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Speculating Beyond</td>
<td>July 19</td>
<td>Response #4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>July 21</td>
<td>Final paper or project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>July 23</td>
<td>Final Exam Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Course schedule

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

**Monday, June 21st**

**DISCUSS**

**Opening Exercise:** “Let’s Paint, Exercise, and Make Blended Drinks TV” John Kilduff, 2006;

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, June 23rd**

**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;

Jonas Mekas, “Anti-100 Years of Cinema Manifesto”

**DISCUSS**

**Opening Exercise:** Jean-Thomas Tremblay, “Breath/Measure/ Commons Heavy Breathing”

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, June 28th**

| DISCUSS | **Opening Exercise:** Orphan Drift, “Becoming Octopus Meditation 1” **Guest Speaker: Praba Pilar, Columbian performance/media artist** Different cultures of experimentation, art and moving-image-making technology, media as art practice. |
| Assignment | Response #2 Short analysis paper |
| DUE | Response #1 |
### Wednesday, June 30th

| READING DUE | Frampton, “A Lecture”;  
|             | Youngblood, “Metaphysical Structuralism”;  
|             | Maya Deren, “Cinema as an art Form”;  
|             | Brakhage, “Metaphors on Vision”;  
|             | **Optional Resources:**  
|             | Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation;  
|             | Raymond Williams, “The Technology and the Society” (NMR) (p289-300);  
|             | Joshua Light Show 1967-68;  
| DISCUSS | **Opening Exercise:** Bill T Jones  
| WATCH | Lyrical Film, Maya Daren, Cinema as an art form, American experimental film, light and expanded cinema, Video art, Visual music,  
| 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;  
|             | Talleres: Experimental Women Filmmakers from Latin America;  

---

### Week 3: Beyond the Fortress: Alternate Modernities and Non-Western Trajectories of Experimentation

| Monday, July 5th
| READING DUE |  
| DISCUSS | **No Class**!  
| WATCH |  

---

9
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>Response #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due</td>
<td>Response #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, July 7th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 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 | **Opening Exercise:** Anna Luisa Petrisko
An all too brief dive into non-Euro-American experimental traditions |
Leticia Parente (Brazil), “Marca Registrada”, 1975;
Ana Mendieta (Cuba), “Selected Works (1972-81);” |
| Assignment | Final paper or project |
| Due | **Short analysis paper** |

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

Monday, July 12th

| READING DUE | Allan Kaprow, “Happenings” in the New York Scene (NMR);
Ute Holl, “Media Theory (or, and, despite) a theory of cultural techniques”;
Pauline Oliveros, “Sonic Meditation (from Software for People)”;
| DISCUSS | **Opening Exercise:** Pauline Oliveros, “Deep Listening”
**Guest Speaker: Tanya Zimbardo Media Arts Curator SF MOMA**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WATCH</th>
<th><strong>Watch for Next Class:</strong> Craig Baldwin, “Tribulation 99”, 1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Response #4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DUE</strong></td>
<td><strong>Response #3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Wednesday, July 14th**

<table>
<thead>
<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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSS</td>
<td><strong>Opening Exercise:</strong> Museum of Walking (5 minute walk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATCH</td>
<td>Media Archeology, Archives, Orphan Films, Canyon Cinema, Prelinger Library, Pacific Film Archive, Archive.org.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Watch for Next Class:</strong> Lynn Hershman Leeson, “Conceiving Ada”, 1997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Week 5: Speculating Beyond: Where to go, from when?**

**Monday, July 19th**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING DUE</th>
<th>Lev Manovich, “New Media From Borges to HTML”; Claire Bishop, “Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media”; Alex Williams and Nick Smicek, “Accelerationist Manifesto”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSS</td>
<td><strong>Opening Exercise:</strong> UnearthU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATCH</td>
<td>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 &lt;rhizome, Eyebeam, New Museum, Pioneer Works, upstream.gallery, Panther Modern, Signal Culture, Squeaky Wheels, Wave Farm,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LISTEN</th>
<th>Lucky Dragons; Music of the Magnetosphere, Moor Mother; Drexiya;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DUE</td>
<td><strong>Response #4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, July 21st</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSS</td>
<td><strong>Opening Exercise:</strong> Student work Presentation of Student’s Final Project; Final Exam review;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATCH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due</td>
<td>Final paper or project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td><strong>Final Exam</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Friday, July 23rd Final Exam Due at 6pm**