

FILM 136C - Visual Culture and Technology: History of New Media

Summer Session 2, July 27-Aug 26, 2021
Tues & Thurs 9:00am-12:30pm

Class meetings via this [Zoom link](#) or,
Meeting ID: **95259864293**
Passcode: **824750**

Professor: Dr. Edward Shanken eshanken@ucsc.edu
Office hours by appointment
TA: Abram Stern aphid@ucsc.edu

FILM 136c explores the relationship between technology and change and surveys the history of various technologies of visual culture from print to computer-based imagery and the Internet.

We are producing and consuming media at a scale unprecedented in history. Most of us are likely to spend a great deal of our time collecting, organizing, processing, producing and/or distributing media and information. In the past, such activities were the province of specialized professionals. Today, with the advance of post-industrial service economies and the advent of social media, they comprise a central mode of both work and play for millions if not billions of people. As we use search engines and email, shop online, and participate in social media, our personal data is collected, processed, and distributed for profit and control. What we call "media" today is a process, not a static collection of technologies and forms, but rather an ever-broadening umbrella that includes industries, platforms, modes of representation, production, and reception practices and cultural activities that we participate in.

Technologies that enable the recording, creation, and dissemination of visual images have had a dramatic impact not just on the arts and visual culture but on economic markets and politics. The goal of this course is to establish that understanding the relationship between technology and visual culture is a crucial means of understanding the world in order to participate in it, to prepare you to critically analyze, understand, predict and engage in the future of media and visual culture.

This course is also a very brief introduction to the current media landscape, media criticism, media practice and media history. The field is vast and you might think of the course as a Smörgåsbord of ideas and approaches to media and visual culture. To provide you with a broad perspective on media, we will learn from a number of guest-lecturers, each of whom will share a unique vantage on the field. As we examine different media forms and media-related topics, we'll study and apply different critical and theoretical approaches. We will persistently address the following questions: a. What is the relationship of form and content? b. How have changes

in the means of production and distribution affected the perception and understanding of visual culture? c. How do ideological interests affect the ecology of new media and visual culture? What are the stakes and who are the winners and the losers?

In this iteration of FILM136c, we will pay special attention to the creation and use of technological media by visual artists whose work enables us to experience mediated information in novel ways. Our focus will be on examples of art and visual culture that offer a “psychic dress-rehearsal for the future” Such works model prospective futures of visual culture and give us a taste of them in the present.

COURSE BASICS

Readings and Viewings

Readings and viewings will be linked in the syllabus or provided on Canvas, under the "Files" tab. I've kept the readings digital to be friendly to the environment and to your wallets. At the same time, I do encourage you to reserve some of your book budget to print-out some of the readings. Print-outs offer relief from screen-time, are much easier to annotate, and many people (including myself) retain information better. A number of other media documents relating to the subject matter of the course will also be available in the Readings section. You are urged (not required) to read/watch/surf them as well.

Combined Synchronous and Asynchronous Class Meetings

The course will meet synchronously from 9:00 until approximately 11:30. The remainder of our class meeting will be fulfilled asynchronously through viewings of film and other media.

Class Discussion

In addition to lecture, each class meeting will include approximately 45 minutes of discussion section, following lecture. Students are expected to lead discussion, with the TA and professor facilitating. The class will be randomly divided into two sections and the TA and prof will alternate facilitating each group. Discussion sections will meet for a designated duration, then the class will reconvene as a whole to share the highlights of the individual discussions.

Email

Email Etiquette: Please follow these guidelines for email etiquette when contacting your TA or me: <https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087>

From students to TAs and Professor: If you have general questions about any aspect of readings, lectures or assignments, please first read the syllabus and prompts carefully before contacting your TA. If the issue remains unresolved after contacting your TA, please contact Professor Shanken. Allow for a 2 business day response time. If urgent, please put URGENT in the subject header for quicker response time if possible.

From Professor and TAs to students: We will use the class mailing list on Canvas to send out updates and announcements. This list only works with UCSC email addresses. If you regularly use another email account, please make sure to set your UCSC account to forward messages to it. Please check email regularly to keep up with any course-related announcements and correspondence.

Office Hours

Email isn't always the best venue for complicated discussions. Please use office hours for more complex discussions either by voice or video-chat about course material, assignments, lectures, projects and grades. Please email Abram or me (with proper email etiquette!) to set up an appointment to meet with us via Zoom.

Accessibility

I encourage any student with particular needs or anyone seeking disability accommodations to contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC): 831-459-2089; drc@ucsc.edu; <http://drc.ucsc.edu>. If you require an accommodation, please inform me and provide an accommodation letter from the DRC so that we have a shared understanding of your needs and can address them accordingly.

Zoom Classroom Etiquette

Please review and abide by the linked guidelines. Please inform me in advance about mitigating circumstances that require other arrangements.

[FILM136c Zoom Classroom Etiquette Guide](#)

Please arrive by the start of class and stay until its conclusion, unless you have made other arrangements in advance with the TA and professor.

EVALUATION AND GRADING OPPORTUNITIES

Final grade will be determined by performance in the following areas:

Attendance/Participation: 25%
Weekly 500-word journal entry 25%
Midterm exam 25%
Final exam 25%

Weekly Journal Entries

Your weekly journal entries (at least 500 words) should respond to one of the queries posed for discussion. Please include at least one relevant image/video of a work outside of course material to anchor your discussion in visual culture. Please make specific reference to artists, artworks, authors, readings, discussion, and lecture notes. Please write in full sentences with proper grammar, spelling, and citations. Graded on a scale of 10.

Rubrics for Evaluating Journal Entries:

We expect your journal entries to be more formal and to include proper citations following [Chicago Style Notes + Bibliography style](#)

-1 for not referencing anything from key materials (i.e. reading, lecture, and/or video) in service of response.

-1 for not answering all parts of the question.

-1 for excessive misspellings (stet) or grammatical errors

-1 for factual errors

Some resources for discovering new media artworks outside of course material:

Art and Electronic Media Online Companion <http://artelectronicmedia.com> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Rhizome <http://rhizome.org> ([Links to an external site.](#))

We Make Money Not Art <https://we-make-money-not-art.com/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

ZKM <https://zkm.de/en> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Ars Electronica <https://ars.electronica.art/news/en/>

Furtherfield <https://www.furtherfield.org/>

Neural <http://neural.it/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Leonardo Electronic Almanac <https://www.leoalmanac.org/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Whitney Artport - Whitney Museum's portal to Internet art and an online gallery space for commissions of net art and new media art: <https://whitney.org/artport>

POLICIES

Attendance and on-time arrival are key to the success of this class. More than three unexcused absences will result in failure of the class.

Lateness and early departure will be reflected in your grade.

Unexcused late submission of coursework will result in lowering your grade by 10% for each 24 hours of portion thereof for the assignment. In other words, if you submit an assignment that would have earned 90% (A-), you will receive 81% (B-) up to 24 hours late, 72% (C-) up to 48 hours late, and so on.

Grading Rubric

A: Excellent. Student exhibits exemplary conceptual, technical and perceptual abilities in writings and projects. Student demonstrates a close reading of required materials, and ability to successfully communicate ideas and processes to others. All work is lucid and engaging.

B: Good. Student completes assignments, and demonstrates a grasp of most of the main aspects of each lesson, but not all. Is able to communicate information, and step-by-step processes well. In exams, critical analysis is present. In projects, conceptual, perceptual, and technical skills are present.

C: Satisfactory. Student completes assignment but may lack enthusiasm or drive to push the work into a detailed perceptual, technical, and conceptual space. In exams, problems exist in student's work, or the work is underdeveloped.

D: Unsatisfactory. Student does not complete the work as assigned. Substantial problems exist in student's work.

F: Fail. Student does not submit work, or work is below a satisfactory level.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism and other violations of UCSC published policies on academic integrity are grave matters and will be handled as such. Please familiarize yourself with these policies, which appear on the Academic Integrity page of the Division of Undergraduate Education: http://undergraduate.ucsc.edu/acd_integrity. If after reviewing this page you remain uncertain about what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, consult your TA and/or the professor. Our working assumption is that all work you complete in or outside of class for any course-related assignment, quiz, or exam is entirely your own and produced for this course alone. Full and proper use of footnotes, endnotes, and/or a works cited list, for all sources used in any piece of writing you hand in – following an accepted scholarly citation method – is one way of demonstrating your understanding of this policy.

Plagiarism includes presenting or paraphrasing a phrase, sentence, or passage of a published work (including both offline and online material) in a paper or exam answer without quotation marks and attribution of the source, submitting the same original work of your own creation toward requirements in more than one class without the prior permission of the instructors, submitting a paper written by someone else, submitting as your own work any portion of a paper or research that you purchased from another person or commercial firm, and presenting in any other way the work, ideas, data, or words of someone else without attribution. You are encouraged to read additional texts and to discuss the issues of this course and your papers with others; but if you use ideas that come from others, you must acknowledge their help. It is better to err on the side of acknowledging other people than to fail to do so.

Anyone caught plagiarizing will fail the course. In addition, violations of academic integrity, including plagiarism, call for disciplinary action through the University.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

As a professor at UC Santa Cruz, I value equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic/cultural diversity. Be assured that I will promote a safe and conducive environment for learning. In accordance with University policy, I will not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual or gender orientation, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or a veteran of the Vietnam era. In addition to the University's policy, and within the bounds of the course, I do not discriminate on the basis of political or religious beliefs, and I also make every effort to avoid discrimination on the basis of class or income. This means that you do not have to agree with me or the assigned readings in order to do well in this course. You are, however, obligated to demonstrate an understanding of the course material. If there is something I can do to make the class more hospitable, please let me know.

SCHEDULE

July 27 Course Intro

Introductions / Administrivia / Readings / Assignments / Class Preview / AM/UA (ask me/us anything) / What is “Visual Culture”? and What is “New Media”?

In preparation for our first class, please read and be prepared to discuss the following:

Murray, “Inventing the Medium” 2003

Manovich, “New Media from Borges to HTML” 2003.

["New Media" Wikipedia entry](#)

["Visual Culture" Wikipedia entry](#)

In class viewing of video-essay, [“Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”](#) (9:29)

In class viewing of John Berger, [Ways of Seeing](#), part 1 (1972, 30 mins)

In class viewing of Lorna Mills, [Ways of Something](#), part 1 (2014, 30 mins)

July 29 Electronic Production and Reproduction

Read: Benjamin, “Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility” 1934

Read: Mitchell, “The Work of Art in the Age of Biocybernetic Reproduction” 2003.

Read: Shanken, Art and Electronic Media, pp 22-27; 72-95; 202-212.

View: Robert Longo, Dir., [Johnny Mnemonic](#), 1995, 1:36:00

View: Craig Baldwin, Dir., [Sonic Outlaws](#), 1995, 1:27:00.

Prepare for class discussion of the question: “How have changes in the means of production and reproduction affected the perception and understanding of visual culture since Benjamin wrote his iconic essay?”

Write: 500-word response to course material for the week addressing this week’s discussion question. Please embed at least one relevant image/video to anchor your discussion in visual culture. Please make specific reference to at least two of the following: Benjamin's essay, Mitchell's essay, Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, and Lorna Mills' *Ways of Something*. Please feel free to refer to additional visual culture material that excites you. Due Friday at 11:59pm.

Aug 3 Media Theory: Form and Content

Read:

Marshall McLuhan, “Two Selections by Marshall McLuhan” read just the Intro and pp 199-209.

Raymond Williams, “The Technology and the Society” intro p 289 only, 291-300;

Hans Magnus Enzensberger, [“Constituents of a Theory of Media”](#) (Excerpts)

View: *This Is Marshall McLuhan*, 1967. [Part 1](#) (23 min) [Part 2](#) (28 mins)

View James Bridle's talk, [“Waving at the Machines”](#) (50 mins)

Prepare for class discussion of the questions: a. What does McLuhan mean when he says, ‘the medium is the message?’ b. How do McLuhan and Williams conceive of the relationship

between the medium and the message (i.e. between form and content)? c. How is this related to technological determinism and social determinism? Please refer to the material that we've looked at together as examples.

Aug 5 Telematic Embrace and Telepresence

Read: "Networks, Surveillance, Culture Jamming" in Shanken, *Art and Electronic Media*, Documents, pp. 32-38; 120-39; 228-46.

Read: Roy Ascott, "Is There Love in the Telematic Embrace?" 1990.

Surf and view: artist [Eduardo Kac's website](#), esp. Video documentation of telepresence and telerobotic works.

View: Nam June Paik, [Bye Bye Kipling: Satellite Remix](#) (1986, 2004, 24 mins)

View: "[Roy Ascott Speaks](#)" lecture at PlugIn ICA, Winnipeg, 2013, 1:24:16.

Prepare for class discussion of the questions: "What is Ascott's theory of love in the telematic embrace?" and "What is the relationship between form and content in telematic art?"

Write: Using the theories of McLuhan, Williams, and Ascott, write a 500-word journal entry comparing and contrasting your experience of form and content in a specific example of networked visual culture and the experience of form and content in a specific example of meat-space visual culture (if you can remember it!) In other words, the emphasis should be placed not on the theories per se, but on applying them to the analysis of your experiences of specific examples of visual culture. Please include at least one relevant image/video for each example. Due Friday, 11:59pm.

Aug 10 Post-Internet Art, Museums, and Social Media

Read: Vierkant, "[The Image Object Post-Internet](#)"

Read: Blatman, "[Instagram: Art's New Playground](#)"

Read "[His Brain, No His Heart](#)" and view Brad Troemel's Instagram response

Surf: [The Jogging Tumblr](#)

Surf: Amalia Ulman *Excellences and Perfections* [article](#) and [archived documentation](#)

View: [Berger, Ways of Seeing, part 4: Fine Arts and Commerce](#), 1974, 31:21

View: [Instagram as an Artistic Medium](#) (Art Basel Salon Talk) 2015. Watch at least from 1:00 - 14:00.

View: Ben Grosser, *Order of Magnitude*, 2019, 47 mins.

Prepare for class discussion of the question: "With emphasis on the readings and viewings for today AND keeping in mind previous readings, viewings, and discussions about visual culture, media theory, and new media art practice, How have changes in the means of distribution affected the perception and understanding of art and visual culture?" In other words, how have new media technologies altered the ways in which visual culture objects are disseminated and how has that impacted visual culture? You may think about this in general terms with respect

to culture at large, in terms of smaller cultural or subcultural formation, and/or with respect to one's personal sense of identity in relation to visual culture. In any case, please have specific examples in mind from readings/viewings/lecture and/or your own personal experiences.

Aug 12 Surveillance Culture

Read: Devon Schiller, "[On the Basis of Face: Biometric Art as Critical Practice, its History and Politics](#)," 2020, and surf artworks mentioned in the essay.

View: Shalini Kantayya, Dir. [Coded Bias](#), 2020, 1:25:00.

View: [Lynn Hershman on Algorithmic Violence](#) 3:42.

View: Tega Brain and Sam Lavigne's project, "[The New Organs](#)" 10 min video and spend at least 10 minutes reading the collected stories on the site about experiences of being tracked in surveillance capitalism.

View: At least six videos of your choice from Dr. Shanken's Vimeo [Showcase of Surveillance Art](#) and/or from his YouTube [Surveillance Art Channel](#).

Surf: Julian Oliver, [artist website](#) (Links to an external site.); Adam Harvey, [CV Dazzle](#); Avital Meshi, [artist website](#); Lynn Hershman-Leeson, [artist website](#)

Optional reading: Moren, Lisa, "Algorithmic Pollution: Artists Working with Dataveillance and Societies of Control," 2017, and surf artworks and artists mentioned in Moren's essay.

View in class:

View: Monty Python, *How Not to Be Seen*, 2:36

View: Hito Steyerl, [How Not to Be Seen](#), 2013, 16 mins

Prepare for class discussion of the following question with respect to new media art and cultural practices: "What are you most concerned about with respect to technology and privacy?" Please be prepared to give specific examples from new media art and critical cultural practices.

Write: 500-word journal entry responding to one of the the following questions:

- a. "With emphasis on the readings and viewings for Tuesday AND keeping in mind previous readings, viewings, and discussions about visual culture, media theory, and new media art practice, How have changes in the means of distribution affected the perception and understanding of art and visual culture?" Please embed at least one relevant image/video to anchor your discussion in visual culture.
- b. "What are you most concerned about with respect to technology and privacy?" If you're not concerned, please explain why." Please embed at least one relevant image/video to anchor your discussion in visual culture.

Due Friday 11:59pm.

MIDTERM: Abram and I will help curate the student-generated midterm review that the class will create on the following Google Doc: [Crowd-Sourced Midterm Study Guide FILM136c Summer 21](#)

[Midterm Review Sample Questions](#)

Take-home, open-book, timed midterm exam via Canvas due Sunday, August 17 11:59pm.

Aug 17 Simulations and Simulacra - Guest artist Haoran Chang

Read: Oliver Grau, "Into the Belly of the Image" 1999.

Read: "Simulations and Simulacra" in Shanken, *Art and Electronic Media*, pp 42-52; 166-81; 256-65.

Read: Maria Lantin, "[Epistemology of Virtual Reality](#)" (2016)

View: Spike Jonez, Dir. [Her](#), 2013, 2:05:53.

View: David Cronenberg, Dir. [Existenz](#), 1999, 1:37:10.

Aug 19 Obsolescence, Residual, and Ephemeral Media

Read: Charles Acland, "Residual Media" *Introduction*, xiii-xxv

Read: Jenny Odell, [There is No Such Thing as a Free Watch](#)

View in class: Hito Steyerl, [In Free Fall](#), 31:52, 2010.

View in class: Rosa Menkman, [The Collapse of PAL](#), 13:37, 2010

Excerpt in class: Rebecca Baron, *Lossless*, 2009

View: Chris Wilcha, *The Target Shoots First*, 01:11:08, 1999

Aug 24 Bodies, Surrogates, Emergent Systems

Read "Bodies, Surrogates, Emergent Systems" in Shanken, *Art and Electronic Media*, pp 38-42; 140-164; 247-55.

Surf and View: Chico McMurtry: [Border Crossers](#), 2017-present

View: Lynn Hershman Leeson, Dir., [Teknolust](#), 2002.

View: [A Talk with Lynn Hershman](#) (at UC Berkeley, 2018) Watch artist's talk 5:30-47:00. Q&A optional.

View: Stelarc: [Zombies, Cyborgs, and Chimeras](#), artist's talk, 57 min.

Write: 500-word journal entry responding to the following question: "What impacts do you imagine that virtual technologies, AI, and biotech will have on human biology, on human perception and intelligence, and on human culture 50 to 100 years from now?" For an extra challenge, imagine the role of residual media. Please embed at least one relevant image/video to anchor your discussion in visual culture. Due Friday 11:59pm.

Aug 26 Deus ex Poiesis: The End of the World and the Future of New Media Art

Read: Jeong-han Kim, et al, "The BirdMan: Hybrid Perception" 2015

View: Donna Haraway, "[Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene](#)" lecture at SFAI, 2017, 1:31:14

View: Ricardo Dominguez "[Lines in the Sand Geo-Aesthetics \[\] Geo-Disturbances](#)" lecture at UCSC, 2016. 1:41:14

Write: 500-word journal entry responding to the following question: What do you see as the future of new media art? How will it be linked to the past? Please refer to course material and include and at least one relevant image/video to anchor your discussion in visual culture. Due before class.

FINAL EXAM: Abram and I will help curate the student-generated final exam review that the class will create on the following Google Doc: Crowd-Sourced Final Exam Study Guide FILM136c Su 2021([Links to an external site.](#))

Final Exam Review Sample Questions ([Links to an external site.](#))

Take-home, open-book, timed final exam via Canvas due Sunday, August 29 11:59pm.