

MEDIA STUDIES: ARCHIVES & REPERTOIRES

FSCP 81000 / THEA 81500

Wednesdays, 11:45 am – 2:45 pm, Room C-419

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Office hours: Wednesday 3-4 pm, Room 3403

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Archives & Repertoires is a graduate-level seminar about the structures, uses, and performances of archives. Topics under consideration will include, but are not limited to: the film as archive, the body as archive, and where those may intersect; repertoires, or embodied knowledge, and how they are transformed by documentation; the circulation of moving images, the particular metadata produced by that circulation, and the lives of copies apart from their originals; the paradoxes of preserving variable media; what happens to political films that outlive the movements that produced them; and the ethical questions around the use of video archives in human rights activism, ownership of testimony, re-use and re-mixing. We will likely take at least one trip to a working media archive to observe current practices in the field. Students will be required to complete weekly readings, to lead and participate in classroom discussion of those readings, to produce one 5-page creative or critical text in response to readings and class presentations, and to produce one 15-page final paper based on independent archival research. A final creative project of equal depth and commitment may be substituted for the paper with prior approval from the instructor. Students will be given wide latitude for independent exploration in their coursework, but will also be responsible for bringing a great deal of thought and preparation to the classroom each week.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required and recommended reading for each week is indicated in the schedule in an abbreviated form. I have compiled a PDF course reader for you that contains all the reading for the semester, and lists all the reading in long form in the table of contents. I may occasionally change the schedule of the reading to reflect the flow of class discussion, or add another recommended reading. If I do, I will distribute the new schedule and/or reading in class, by email, or on Blackboard. If the reading is distributed in class and you are not present, it is your responsibility to obtain a copy. Further resources for your projects are also listed in the course reader: http://www.mariamghani.com/docs/AR_CourseReader_e.pdf (36 MB PDF)

Each of you will be responsible for leading the discussion of one reading during the semester (possibly in collaboration with another student). If you are the discussion leader for the week, you should not only read the text closely, but also prepare do some research on its original context. When and where was it first written, by whom, and for what audience? How does that context inflect the writing? Most importantly, you should prepare some prompts for classroom discussion: questions either directly related to the text, or stemming from your own response to it.

You should also be reading/listening to/looking at the news on an ongoing basis – whether on Facebook, Twitter, feed readers, radio, a particular news site, etc. etc. - and keeping a file of stories that strike you as relevant to the course. We will generally begin class each week by asking if anyone has an item to share.

For your midterm, you are required to produce a 5-page text in response to the readings, films, and other material covered in the course up to that point. Please note that “response” does not mean “summary.” Find something generative in a text, and unpack it; or find the links and/or gaps between different texts; or connect readings to films or archival material in a new way. You should be taking notes on the reading on an ongoing basis to prepare for classroom discussions; go back to those notes to prepare your own text. Each of you will be asked to submit a two-sentence abstract outlining your idea for the midterm text before beginning to write. If you wish to produce a creative rather than a critical text, you must also describe the form of your text and tell me why it is the right form for your content.

For your final, you are required to produce a 15-page paper based on independent archival research, meaning primary source materials. You may produce a creative project of equal depth and commitment, also based on independent archival research, if I approve the substitution. We will discuss appropriate archives and source materials for the paper in class, after which you will each have to submit a written proposal for the final outlining your research topic and methods. You will be able to meet with me individually to discuss your proposals before beginning work, and you will also be able to present work-in-progress on the final to your classmates for feedback before the end of the semester.

If you are producing a creative project for the final, you may collaborate on your project (either with someone in the class, or with someone outside it) but if your collaborator is also in the class, each of you will have to submit a written evaluation of the other's contributions to the project, so that I can grade your work fairly.

All texts required for this course should be typed, with 12-point font, 1.5 line height, and margins of at least 1 inch. Critical texts and research papers should use parenthetical citation (MLA rules) and works cited lists. If you want to use footnotes for a specific reason, please include that reason in your abstract. Please DO NOT go over the page limits.

ASSESSMENT & GRADING

Final paper/project	50%
Midterm text	20%
Class participation	30%

I assess writing based on coherence, clarity, concision, quality of ideas, and demonstrated understanding of the material to which you are responding, with extra points for style. I grade syntax and structure according to the Strunk & White (*The Elements of Style*) rules.

I assess work on projects based on quality of ideas, artistic integrity of work, willingness to experiment, relationship to course themes, ability to explain your thought process, and success of execution.

I assess participation based on your attendance, your preparation for and participation in class discussions, your work as discussion leader, and your effective balance of generosity of spirit, critical inquiry, and creative problem-solving in critiques.

This course is graded on a graduate-level scale:

- A = 4.0 Student has demonstrated consistent **outstanding** performance in all course requirements—above and beyond expectations.
- A- = 3.7 Consistently **outstanding** performance but slight room for improvement in one aspect of the

- course (class participation, being on time).
- B+ = 3.3 Consistently **above average** performance in all course requirements.
- B = 3.0 Consistent **satisfactory** performance at the expected level in all course requirements. Baseline “good grade” for graduate students.
- B- = 2.7 **Satisfactory** performance in all but one of the course requirements (absence or chronic tardiness, insufficient participation, late assignments).
- C+ = 2.3 **Warning** grade. As a midterm grade, this indicates that the student needs to improve performance significantly or is in danger of failing the class. Student should meet with professor to find out how to improve.
- C = 2.0 **Lowest passing grade** for graduate students. There is no C minus.
- F = 0 **Failure.** The student has failed to meet the minimum standards for the course.

Work handed in late without an official excuse (i.e. note from the doctor or administration) will automatically be docked from A to A- after three days, A- to B+ after five days, B+ to B after a week, and so on.

Unexcused absences, latenesses, early departures or cuts will directly affect your grade. Students are expected to attend all classes. **Three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.**

I will not change any grades unless you hand in substantially revised work. I am happy to meet with you to suggest revisions, but I will not, under any circumstances, argue with you about your grade.

If you have to take an Incomplete in the course for medical or family reasons, please email or call me to work out a schedule for meetings and assignment submission in the summer; I will be traveling quite a lot so it would be best to schedule in advance.

COURSE POLICIES + PHILOSOPHY

All students must adhere to university-wide policies regarding plagiarism, academic integrity, computer and network use, health and safety, and students with disabilities. A note about academic integrity: please remember that all work must be your own. When working with archival materials, the source should be cited and documented appropriately. We will discuss fair use, appropriation, and the role/presentation of sources in research-based practices as part of our coursework.

During the course of this semester you may be given readings or shown artworks that include nudity, expressions of sexuality, strong language, religious imagery, or other material that you may find personally difficult or offensive. If you anticipate that any particular material will present a problem for you, please let me know at the beginning of the semester, and I will try to notify you before you encounter such material.

Education is cooperation. In this classroom we are all responsible for each other. All of you will be asked to both teach and learn from each other. This is also a course where you will have the scope to pursue independent research and develop your ideas over time. You can request additional feedback from me or from your peers at any stage in the process, or you can bring ideas and/or work in for critique only at pre-scheduled moments. Please think of this course as a flexible space that can adjust as we get to know each other's strengths and needs.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*Please remember that the course schedule may change. If the schedule is changed, a new version will be distributed in class or via email. If you are not in class, it is your responsibility to make sure you have the latest version of the schedule.

Wednesday 2/3

WEEK 1: FIELD TRIP 1

Self-directed field trip to see the Laura Poitras exhibition at the Whitney (opening 2/5) or the Coco Fusco show at Alexander Gray (already open), anytime before the next class meeting on 2/10

(<http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/LauraPoitras>, alexandergray.com)

Reading due 2/10: Foucault, Agamben

Recommended: "Field Notes"

Wednesday 2/10

WEEK 2: INTRODUCTIONS

Syllabus, course format, project, field trips, discussion schedule

Reading discussion: Foucault, Agamben

Screening: Laura Poitras, *Citizenfour*; Rithy Panh, *The Missing Picture*

Reading due 2/24: Benjamin, Derrida, Sekula

Recommended: Enwezor, Foster

Wednesday 2/17

WEEK 3: FIELD TRIP 2

Visit one archive from the list distributed in class (please take note of where prior appointments are necessary). Explore the available primary source documents and talk to the archivists about their methods of conservation, categorization, and description. Take notes to share in class.

Recommended: one of these three panels from the Radical Archives conference:

<https://pad.ma/DYJ/player>, <https://pad.ma/DYM/player>, or <https://pad.ma/DYO/player>

Wednesday 2/24

WEEK 4: ARCHIVE/ARKHE

Field trip report back

Reading discussion: Benjamin, Derrida, Sekula

Look: *Archive Fever*, *Deep Storage* exhibitions

Screening: Hollis Frampton, *Nostalgia*; Susan Meiselas, *Pictures from a Revolution*

Reading due 3/2: Reason, LeRoy, Monson, Michelson, Young

Recommended: *Anthology* roundtable, Tolentino/Hart/Levine talk at <https://pad.ma/DYP/info>

Wednesday 3/2

WEEK 5: PERFORMANCE/TRANSMISSION

Look: Clifford Owens, *Anthology*; Sarah Michelson, *Devotion*; Julie Tolentino, *The Sky Remains the Same*; Jennifer Monson, *Live Dancing Archive*; Xavier LeRoy, *Retrospective*; Boris Charmatz, *Musée de la Danse: Expo Zéro*

Screening: Jill Godmilow, *Lear '87*; *Interpreters' Archive* (NYCB repertory coaching docs)

Reading due 3/9: Pad.ma, Taylor, Cvetkovich

Recommended: Cvetkovich talk at <https://pad.ma/DYU/player>

Wednesday 3/9

WEEK 6: REPERTOIRE/RESISTANCE

Reading discussion: Taylor, Pad.ma, Cvetkovich

Look: Pad.ma, AIF, Ulrike Muller, Henrik Olesen, Carlos Motta, Paul Chan, H.I.J.O.S., Bouchra Khalili

Screening: *CAMP*, *Al Jaar Qubla al Daar*; Akram Zaatari, *Dance to the End of Love*; Jen Liu, *The Machinist's Lament / The Pink Detachment*

Reading due 3/16: Steyerl (both texts), Soullelis

Recommended: Downey

Email MG a 1-paragraph abstract for your midterm text

Wednesday 3/16

WEEK 7: CIRCULATION/TRANSLATION

Reading discussion: Steyerl

Look: Maryam Jafri, Kristen Gallagher, Mircea Cantor, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *The Incidental Insurgents*

Screening: Johan Grimont, *DIAL H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*; Naeem Mohaiemen, *United Red Army (The Young Man Was, Part 1)*

Reminder: midterm text due 3/30

Wednesday 3/23

No Wednesday classes

Wednesday 3/30

WEEK 8: PRESENTATIONS

Critical/creative text due

Texts presented in class

Due 4/6: proposals for final research papers (15 pages) or creative projects (1 page max)

Wednesday 4/6

WEEK 9: MEETINGS

Final proposals due

Individual meetings

Screening: Alan Resnais, *You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet* / Leos Carax, *Holy Motors*

Due 4/13: revised proposals

Reading due 4/13: Lewis, MoMA Media Conservation series, "Warm Data"

Recommended: Zaatari, "Save As"

Wednesday 4/13

WEEK 10: DATABASE/INTERFACE

Revised proposals due; research methods

Reading discussion: warm/cold data, analog/digital, database forms, content/form, collection navigation

Look: MoMA Digital Vault; Rhizome ArtBase; XFR Station; Guggenheim Variable Media Questionnaire

Screening: Akram Zaatari, "On Photography, People, and Modern Times"; Rheim Alkhadi

Start working on final papers/projects

Wednesday 4/20

WEEK 11: PRESERVATION/DESCRIPTION

Field trip/guest lecture TBA

In-progress critiques of finals on 5/11

Wednesday 4/27
No class – college closed

Wednesday 5/4
No class - talk/screening TBA

Wednesday 5/11
WEEK 13: CRITS
In-progress critiques of final projects

Wednesday 5/18
WEEK 14 – last class meeting
FINALS DUE