

VIDEO I

FA 208-2

Tuesdays, 6:00-9:50 PM

Foundation Building Room 530/539

Professor: Mariam Ghani

Email: mghani@cooper.edu

prerequisites: none; 3 credits, one semester, may not be repeated

[download the PDF version of this syllabus at mariamghani.com/teaching](http://mariamghani.com/teaching)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Video I is an introduction to video art in theory, history, and practice. A series of technical workshops will teach students basic camera operations, sound recording, lighting, and post-production using Adobe Creative Suite. In class, we will also learn to recognize and control video's formal parameters of image, sound, shot, transition, and sequence, and understand how concepts and compositions can be developed in time as well as space. Students must deploy these skills to produce three short projects responding to prompts by the instructor, which demonstrate their grasp of how those techniques can be used for specific formal and conceptual ends. At the end of the semester, students will be able to produce longer final projects of their own design. Critiques of these assignments are crucial to the course; students will be expected to speak at length about the formal, technical, critical and historical dimensions of their own works. Readings, which may be drawn from philosophy, critical theory, artist statements, or literature, will also be assigned periodically. Students will rotate responsibility for leading in-class discussions of required readings. The course will also include weekly screenings and discussions of films and videos, which serve to introduce students to the history of video art and to develop a critical vocabulary with which to confront the nature, possibilities and limits of the medium.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Supplies

*must be brought to every class

Notebook or note-taking app

An external hard drive and/or a USB flash drive

(I recommend a Mac-formatted G-Tech USB drive, 500 GB+, AND a PC-compatible 16-32 GB thumb drive)

Reading, written responses, and discussion

If reading is required for the week, it will be indicated in the syllabus. All the required readings and technical resources are available online, and the URLs are listed in the syllabus at the foot of the course schedule. Please take notes on the reading and come to class prepared to discuss it. Find something in the text that sticks with you, and note why it interests you, or why you disagree with it, or how it resonates with your own work or ideas.

During the first week of class we will divide up the readings for the semester and each of you will be assigned to either lead or co-lead the discussion of one reading. Discussion leaders for the week should prepare a series of prompts for discussion – for example, questions about the text itself, larger questions that were raised by the text, thoughts about how the text connects to other texts we have read or works we have looked at, and so on. Sometimes it is useful to look up the original context (both time and place)

in which the text was published, or do a little research into the author's biography, when preparing to lead a discussion – it can give you extra insight.

You should also be reading/listening to/looking at the news on an ongoing basis – whether on Facebook, Twitter, radio, a particular news site, etc. etc. - and keeping a file of stories and images that catch your eye. We will occasionally start class by discussing what we've seen and heard out in the world that week, so bring something from your file and be prepared to explain its meaning or context to the rest of the class.

If we have a guest lecture or a field trip, you will be required to write a brief response to the lecture or field trip. This should be one page, and not a summary of but a critical reflection on the experience.

Occasionally, I may change the schedule to reflect the flow of discussion in the classroom or the time required for critiques. If you do not attend class, it is your responsibility to find out if a change was made.

Assignments, final project, & final portfolio

You are required to complete three projects assigned by me, and one final project of your own design. You must submit a written proposal for the final project, which we will discuss in an individual meeting before you start work on the final project. Assignments are due for critique in class on the dates indicated in the course schedule, and may be revised to incorporate comments from critique. If you are absent when a project is due, you may give your project to another student to hand in, or submit it electronically, or you must accompany your project the following week with documentation of an excused absence (illness or emergency).

At the end of the semester you need to hand in a final portfolio containing final versions of all of your assignments from the semester along with your final project. The portfolio can be transferred on the last day of class from your USB drive, or it can be sent to my email address as a Dropbox folder.

You are also expected to keep a physical or digital course notebook or sketchbook to develop ideas, document experiments and results, and take notes during critiques, discussions, demonstrations, and workshops.

Equipment checkout, lab & backup

Enrollment in Video I grants you access to equipment loaned out from the fifth floor. Please see fifth floor handouts for the complete equipment list. If you run into technical problems with any equipment you have checked out, please report those problems when returning the equipment, so the next student on this list doesn't have the same experience. Likewise, if you run into problems while using the editing lab, please report them immediately to the lab staff.

Students are responsible for backing up all working and final files. Files are not guaranteed to remain on lab computers or camera memory cards. You should have at least a thumb drive, and preferably a 250 GB USB drive, as an external drive. Save early and often to your external drive, and be sure to back up your most important files (save them in two places). Corrupt, lost, or overwritten files will not be accepted as a valid reason for missing a project due date. Keep ALL files for each project until after the end of the semester.

ASSESSMENT & GRADING

Assignments 1-3 **45%**

Final project **25%**

Class participation* **30%**

*includes attendance, punctuality, discussion leadership, and participation in discussions, workshops, critiques, field trips and guest lectures (including written responses if assigned)

All of your work in this course will be assessed for the following criteria: quality of ideas, quality of work executed and ability to articulate and explain your thought processes; understanding of the historical and theoretical material presented, and ability to relate that material to an overall understanding of the medium and other aspects of your own practice; willingness to explore and take genuine risks in your work as an artist; and the amount of time, effort, and thought given to coursework.

Your projects and exercises will be evaluated along three axes: concept/content, form, and technique. Exercises will be evaluated with an emphasis on form and technique, while projects will be evaluated with an emphasis on concept and form. A project that displays excellence in all three areas should meet the following criteria:

- 1) The project has an original, clearly communicated concept or an innovative, effective approach to an assigned or appropriated idea.
- 2) The project has the form most suited to its concept and content and vice versa.
- 3) The project has a well-defined structure and unified formal strategies.
- 4) The artist demonstrates an understanding of the medium and mastery of the techniques and tools employed.

Work that is submitted late without an official excuse (i.e. note from the doctor or administration) will lose half a letter grade for each week that it is late. If you don't show up for critique, whether you're presenting that week or not, both your assignment and your participation grade will reflect that absence. Please remember that participation in critique is the most important part of your participation in the course. Always show up for crits, even if your own work isn't finished.

The other components of your participation grade are your preparation for and participation in class discussions, your use of time during technical workshops and in-class exercises, and your effective balance of generosity of spirit, critical inquiry, and creative problem-solving in critiques.

Written responses to reading are evaluated for comprehension and criticality, with extra points for style. Project treatments are evaluated for completeness and effective communication of your project concept and form.

Unexcused absences, latenesses, early departures or cuts will directly affect your grade. Students are expected to attend all classes. **Cooper Union's policy on attendance mandates that more than two unexcused absences will have a serious impact on your grade. If you are absent more than three times you may be asked to withdraw from the course.**

I will not change any grades unless you hand in a substantially revised project. You can hand in a revised version of any project or exercise at any point, up to and including the final class of the semester. I am happy to meet with you to suggest revisions, but I will not, under any circumstances, argue with you about your grade.

GRADE	QUALITY	EXPLORATION	WORK	DISCUSSIONS	ATTENDANCE
A	Outstanding	Insightful, generous, energetic	Excellent form & content	Always prepared for class, makes intelligent & considered contributions	Always present, work in on time
B	Good	Inquisitive, engaged	Good form & content	Usually prepared for class, able to make interesting contributions	Always present, work in on time
C	Average	Just sufficient	Holds together, but unconvincing	Not always prepared, only able to make obligatory contributions	Misses some classes, work sometimes late
D	Poor	Limited, formulaic	Work thrown together just before class	Only makes very limited contributions	Excessive absences, work late & incomplete
F	Unsatisfactory	Virtually none	Virtually none	Makes almost no contribution	Absent most of the time

COURSE POLICIES + PHILOSOPHY

All students must adhere to college-wide policies regarding plagiarism, academic integrity, computer and network use, health and safety, and students with disabilities. Academic integrity can be confusing in the age of appropriation, but please remember that if work is not your own, the source should be cited and documented appropriately. We will discuss fair use, appropriation, and the role/presentation of sources as part of our coursework.

During the course of this semester you may be shown artworks that include nudity, expressions of sexuality, strong language, violence, religious imagery, political controversy, or other material that you may find personally difficult or offensive. We may also look at some videos that include formal effects (e.g. strobing) harmful to anyone with epilepsy, migraines, or similar conditions. 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 such material is shown.

Education is cooperation. In this classroom we are all responsible for each other, and all of you will be asked to both teach and learn from each other. You should feel free to bring your own thoughts and interests into the classroom, while understanding that others in the room may have very different thoughts and interests. 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.

Tuesday 1/24 - CLASS 1: ELECTRONIC LINGUISTICS

Introductions & expectations

Discussion: medium-specificity (and how it changes as the medium changes), video as/and language

Screening: Nam June Paik, *Global Groove*; Joan Jonas, *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*; Paul & Marlene Kos, *Lightning*; Nancy Holt & Richard Serra, *Boomerang*; Gary Hill, *Full Circle & Primarily Speaking*; Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*; Lynda Benglis, *Now*; Beryl Korot, *Text & Commentary*; Sophie Calle, *Double Blind* (excerpt); Mona Hatoum, *Measures of Distance*; Anthony Disenza; Lev Manovich & Andreas Kratsky, *Soft Cinema*; Jorge Macchi; Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller video walks; Hito Steyerl, *Strike II*; Pierre Huyghe, *Le Chateau de Turing*; Erika Vogt, *Darker Imposter*

Tuesday 1/31 - CLASS 2: THE SHOT

Reading & response due: Acconci/Serra/Sharp, Davies-Crook, Paglen

Also bring in: a memorable shot from a film or video; be prepared to explain why you chose the shot

Discussion: The camera & its multiple positions; the aerial view; artist-viewer relationships; composition & structure within the shot; types of shots

Screening: Alfonso Cuaron, *Children of Men* (excerpt); Vito Acconci, *Undertone*; Harun Farocki & Andrei Ujica, *Videograms of a Revolution* (excerpt); Bureau of Inverse Technology, *Suicide Box*; Jill Magid, *Evidence Locker*; Judy Radul, *World Rehearsal Court*; Jannane al-Ani, *Shadow Sites I*; Omer Fast, *5000 Feet is Best*

[Workshop #1: Introduction to Camera Operations HD \(70 min\)](#)

Tuesday 2/7 - CLASS 3: THE SEQUENCE

Reading due: Dmytryk, Eisenstein

Exercise #1 due to use in your technical workshop

Discussion: structure from shot to shot, storyboarding, transitions, formal systems, structuring for infinite loops

Screening: Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* (excerpt); Shirley Clarke, *Bridges-Go-Round*; Charles & Ray Eames, *Power of Ten*; James Benning, *One Way Boogie Woogie*; Maya Deren, *At Land*; Bill Viola, *Ancient of Days*; Peter Campus, *Three Transitions*; Aida Ruilova

[Workshop #2: Intro to Premiere \(120 min\)](#)

Tuesday 2/14 - CLASS 4: PERFORMANCE

Reading due: Krauss

Discussion: modes of address, duration, narcissism, self-reflexivity, mise-en-scène

Screening: John Baldessari; Dan Graham, *Performer, Audience, Mirror*; Alex Bag, *Untitled '95* (excerpt); Kate Gilmore; Kalup Linzy; Shannon Plumb; Rashaad Newsome; Xavier Cha; Guy Ben-Ner, *Moby Dick*; Mircea Cantor; Allora & Calzadilla, *Returning a Sound*; Coco Fusco, *Operation Atropos* (excerpt); Patty Chang; Marina Abramovic; Cliff Owens; Marilyn Minter

[Workshop #4: Acquiring Video Media, Encoding, Exporting \(60 min\)](#)

Tuesday 2/21 – CLASS 5

Project #1 crits

Tuesday 2/28 - CLASS 6

Mariam out of town

Workshop #3: Lighting and Sound, Green Screen Demo (120 min)

Workshop #5: Premiere FX+ (120 min)

Tuesday 3/7 - CLASS 7 – STRUCTURE, FORM, GENRE

Reading due: Peirce, Viola

Discussion: video language, syntaxes & structuralism, phenomenology/symbology, narrative genres

Screening: Marie Menken, *Go, Go, Go!*; Jonathas de Andrade, *4000 Shots*; Kurt Kren, *31/75 Asyl*; Hollis Frampton, *Zorns Lemma*; Bill Viola; Cecilia Condit, *Possibly in Michigan*; Jesper Just; Ragnar Kjartansson; Paul Chan, *Re: The Operation*; Hito Steyerl, *November*

Tuesday 3/14 – NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Tuesday 3/21 - CLASS 8

Project #2 crits

Tuesday 3/28 – CLASS 9 - ALLUSION, APPROPRIATION, ARCHIVE

Reading due: Steyerl, Olson, Bridle

Discussion: allusion/appropriation, “poor images”, generational loss, technological transformations, 'post-internet' and 'new aesthetic' approaches to appropriation

Screenings: Ant Farm, *The Eternal Frame*; Dara Birnbaum, *Wonder Woman: Technological Transformations*; Thom Andersen, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (excerpt); Johan Grimonprez, *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (excerpt); Christian Marclay, *Telephones*; Candice Breitz installations; Usama Alshaibi, *Bombshell*; Akram Zaatari, *Dance to the End of Love*; Trisha Baga, *Peacock*; Cory Arcangel, *Super Mario Clouds*; Oliver Laric, *787 Cliparts & Versions (2012)*, James Bridle, Josh Begley

Tuesday 4/4- CLASS 10

Project #3 crits

Tuesday 4/11- CLASS 11 – INSTALLATION

Mariam out of town, field trip TBA

Final project proposals due by email to Mariam

Tuesday 4/18 - CLASS 12

Field trip responses due by email to Mariam

Guest lecture TBC

Tuesday 4/25 – CLASS 13

Guest lecture TBC

Tuesday 5/2 - CLASS 14

In-progress critique: final projects

Tuesday 5/9 - CLASS 15

Final crits

Final portfolios due in class or by FTP

REQUIRED READING w/ links

Vito Acconci, "10 Point Plan for Video" (1975); Richard Serra, "Television Delivers People" (1973); and Willoughby Sharp, "The Heart of the Matter" (1976)
http://mariamghani.com/docs/acconci_serra_sharp.pdf

Susanna Davies-Crook, "Art in the Drone Age" (*Dazed & Confused*, June 2013)
<http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/16183/1/art-in-the-drone-age>

Edward Dmytryk's Rules of Editing (summarized by Peter Thompson from *On Film Editing*, Focal Press ed. 1984); **Sergei Eisenstein**, *The Film Sense*, chapter 1 (trans. Jay Leyda, HBJ ed. 1946), and storyboards for the Odessa Steps sequence in *Battleship Potemkin* (these are just visual aids for our class discussion).
http://mariamghani.com/docs/dmytryk_eisenstein.pdf
http://mariamghani.com/docs/eisenstein_storyboards.pdf

Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism" (*October*, 1976).
<http://mariamghani.com/docs/krauss.pdf>

Trevor Paglen, "Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)" (*The New Inquiry*, December 2016). <https://thenewinquiry.com/essays/invisible-images-your-pictures-are-looking-at-you/>

Charles Sanders Peirce, "What is a Sign?" (1894)
<http://marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/peirce1.htm>

Bill Viola, "Video Black – The Mortality of the Image" (1990) in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*; ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (UC Press ed. 1996).
<http://mariamghani.com/docs/viola.pdf>

Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image" (e-flux journal #10, November 2009).
<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>

Marisa Olson, "Post-Internet: Art After the Internet" (*Foam*, 2011).
http://www.academia.edu/26348232/POSTINTERNET_Art_After_the_Internet

James Bridle, "The New Aesthetic and Its Politics" (Booktwo, 2013).
<http://booktwo.org/notebook/new-aesthetic-politics/>

RECOMMENDED READING w/ links

Stephen Sarrazin, "A discussion with Gary Hill" in *Gary Hill: Surfing the Medium* (Chimaera, 1992)
<http://mariamghani.com/docs/hill.pdf>

Jacques Derrida, "Videor," in *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices*, ed Michael Renov & Erika Suderburg (UMN, 1996), pp 73-77 (available via Google Books).

"Divorce your metadata: a conversation between Laura Poitras & Kate Crawford" (Rhizome, June 2015)
<http://rhizome.org/editorial/2015/jun/9/divorce-your-metadata/>

Jonathan Lethem, "The ecstasy of influence: a plagiarism" (*Harper's*, February 2007).
<http://harpers.org/archive/2007/02/0081387>

Seth Price, *Dispersion* (2002-present)
<http://www.distributedhistory.com/Dispersion2016.pdf>

Artie Vierkant, "The Image Object Post-Internet" (2010)
http://jstchill.in/artie/pdf/The_Image_Object_Post-Internet_us.pdf

Lauren Cornell, "In the studio: Dara Birnbaum" (*Art in America*, May 2016)
<http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/in-the-studio-dara-birnbaum/>

Roman Jakobson, "The Time Factor in Language and in Literature" and "Time in the Framework of Signs" from *Dialogues* (trans. Christian Hubert, MIT Press ed. 1983)
<http://mariamghani.com/docs/jakobson.pdf>

Lev Manovich, "Database as Symbolic Form" (Millennium Film Journal #34, Fall 1999).
http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ34/Manovich_Database_FrameSet.html

Jon Dovey, "Notes Toward a Hypertextual Theory of Narrative" in *New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative*, eds. Martin Riesen & Andrea Zapp (BFI, 2002).
<http://mariamghani.com/docs/dovey.pdf>

John Belton, "Looking through Video: The Psychology of Video and Film" in *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices*, ed Michael Renov & Erika Suderburg (UMN, 1996).
<http://mariamghani.com/docs/belton.pdf>

David Clark, "The Ghost of an Exquisite Corpse" in *LUX: A Decade of Artists' Films and Videos*, ed. Steve Reinke & Tom Taylor (YYZ Books, 2000).
http://www.chemicalpictures.net/?page_id=122

Peter Weibel, "Expanded Cinema, Video & Virtual Environments" in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffery Shaw & Peter Weibel (MIT Press, 2003).
<http://mariamghani.com/docs/weibel.pdf>

Valie Export, "Expanded Cinema as Expanded Reality" (*Senses of Cinema*, 2003)
http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/peter-tscherkassky-the-austrian-avant-garde/expanded_cinema/

EXERCISES + PROJECTS w/ due dates

EXERCISE #1 (in-camera edits only, max 3 minutes) due 2/7

***Can be brought to class as raw camera output and used for your technical workshop.**

Choose one single subject (either a person, place or thing) and analyze him/her/it with the camera.

Be sure to include the following kinds of shots: Long Shot, Medium Shot, and Close-up.

Be sure to execute the following actions: Pan left and right, Tilt up and down, Zoom in and out.

Shoot a three-shot sequence from that subject's point of view.

Shoot a three-shot sequence that shows that subject moving from frame to frame (easy if it's a person, be creative if it is a place or a thing)

EXERCISE #2 (max 1 minute) – in workshop on 2/7

Take your footage from exercise #1 and cut that three-minute clip into a sequence of 30 seconds to one minute in duration. Next, try duplicating your sequence and recutting the same footage into a different short sequence. If you want to show your exercise(s) to the class, export them and bring them to class on 2/14 on a USB drive.

PROJECT #1 (min 1 minute, max 5 minutes) due 2/21

Make a video that is composed of only **one single take**, with no edits, no extra image or sound tracks, and only one in point and one out point. The video must be no more than five minutes long, and you must operate the camera. You could think about the relationship between the artist and the viewer, or the different positions that can be occupied by the camera, as possible points of departure.

PROJECT #2 (min 1 minute, max 3 minutes) due 3/21

Shoot a video where either the use of lights or the use of diegetic sound (recorded via microphone) is crucial to the development of your idea / story / formal structure. You can use in-camera edits, a single take or Premiere edits, as you see fit. Duration should be between one and three minutes.

PROJECT #3 (min 1 minute, max 6 minutes) due 4/4

Using your body or other bodies, stage a **performance** for the camera. The performance must be specific to the medium of video – not just film of a live performance – and the video **must incorporate edits** that are integral to its structure. (Shrinking or expanding time does count as editing in this regard.) You may use diegetic or non-diegetic sound, but if you must use pre-existing music, please try to avoid editing to the beat (i.e. don't make a boring music video). Significant edits to the sound, rather than the image, also count as edits for this project. You can use footage other than the performance footage in the video.

FINAL PROJECT (min 5 minutes, max 20 minutes) due 5/2 (in-progress), 5/9 (final)

This is your project to shape as wish, open to any approach to video art. The only limits are that the duration not exceed 20 minutes, and that you submit a written 1-page project proposal to me by email. I will send you comments on the proposals before you start work on the final projects.