

Intermediate Video: The Question of the Document FV4117

Mondays, 1:40 – 5:20

VAPA Kinoteca 1:40-3:20

Video Editing Lab, VAPA D204 3:40-5:20

*some weeks we may meet in the Lab for the entire class; please check the schedule before class

Faculty: Mariam Ghani

Email: mariamghani@bennington.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm or by appointment M-W, VAPA B207

prerequisites: Introduction to Video

4 credits; 1 semester; may not be repeated; maximum enrollment: 14.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Intermediate Video will build on technical skills introduced in Intro to Video through technical workshops, demos of intermediate to advanced equipment, and in-class collaborative exercises. Students will be expected to produce two short projects within constraints assigned by the instructor, and one final project completely of their own design. These three projects may be discrete or function as parts of a series. In addition, the thematic focus of Intermediate Video this term will be the question and current status of the document. What are the truth claims made by different genres and forms of film and video? How have artists sought to produce alternative forms of knowledge through work with embodied, indigenous, oral and fictionalized modes of transmission? How has this work been complicated by the current politicization of terms like “alternative facts” and “fake news”? And how has it been placed into question even within the art context by debates around who has the authority to address particular issues and histories? Our readings, screenings and discussions will turn around these questions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Supplies

*must be brought to every class

Notebook or note-taking app

A 16-32 GB USB flash drive

A Mac-formatted USB or USB-C drive, 500 GB+ (optional)

(I recommend a 1TB+ Glyph Blackbox, G-Tech Mobile, or LaCie Rugged if possible)

*If you are going to be working with longer-form videos or more complicated effects that require a lot of processing power, you may want to invest in an SSD as a working drive and get a cheaper USB drive as a backup. Internal SSDs cost less than external ones but are just as reliable if you get a hard storage case, and we have good drive docks you can check out from the Cave.

**please note that flash and portable drives can be borrowed from the Cave for class presentations, and you can also drop files in our class Google Drive folder up to an hour before class.

Moodle syllabus, readings, written responses, other course materials, and discussion

If reading is required for the week, it will be indicated that week on Moodle. To sign in to the course on Moodle, please go to moodle.bennington.edu, sign in with your Bennington College user ID and password, and search for Intermediate Video: The Question of the Document. You should be able to add yourself to the class at that point. If you run into problems, please contact IT, and let me know if they can't resolve the issue. You should check the course Moodle every week for updates, readings and assignment details. Required reading will either be posted as a PDF to be downloaded directly from Moodle, or it will indicate on Moodle that the reading is available as an e-reserve through the library.

If reading is the only thing due that week, I will usually ask you for a written response to the reading. It will always be noted in the Moodle syllabus whether a response is due along with the reading, so please check when you're accessing the reading! These responses can be quite short (1-2 paragraphs) but should be typed. Find something in the text that sticks with you, and write about why it interests you, or why you disagree with it, or how it resonates with your own work or ideas. We will use written responses as a springboard for classroom discussion and I will also collect them and read them, though I will not write comments on them – I'll just return them with a check, check plus or check minus on them depending on how well they reflect your understanding of and engagement with the reading. Even if a written response is not required that week, please do take notes on the reading and come to class prepared to discuss it.

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. Sometimes it is also useful, though obviously not required, to look at the recommended readings for that week, which can give you additional context for the ideas in the required reading. Feel free to deploy creative methods to provoke discussion.

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 as being relevant to our class themes. 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 may 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.

Exercises, assignments, final project, & final portfolio

You are required to complete two projects within constraints determined by me, and one final project entirely of your own design. These may be discrete or form part of a series. 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 dropped as a **well-labeled** subfolder in the class Google Drive folder. The final portfolio is useful for me to review your projects again before writing your end of semester evaluations, and also gives you a chance to revise projects after in-class critiques before they receive a final grade.

We will also work on collaborative exercises during in-class technical workshops. These are NOT projects. Don't overthink them! Just have some fun with them. Use them as a chance to experiment with form and technique, and do your real thinking on projects. Also, they are good laboratories for collaboration, which is encouraged on your projects as well. Your work on exercises will only be evaluated as part of your participation grade.

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 Intermediate Video grants you access to much of the equipment loaned out from the VAPA Cave, once it has been introduced in class. We will review the new checkout procedure with AV tech Colleen Murphy on the first day of class, and talk about which equipment you can check out and when. (See attendance policy below for details.) 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 the list doesn't have the same experience. Likewise, if you run into problems while using the editing lab, please report them immediately to Colleen or a lab monitor.

As you should know by now, you're responsible for backing up all your working and final files. Files are not guaranteed to remain on the networked server, the LaCie drives connected to lab computers, or on camera memory cards. The server and LaCies are wiped at the end of every semester and the cards are usually wiped by the next person to check them out. You should have at least a thumb drive, and preferably a 500 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, especially your Premiere project files (save them in at least two places – they're tiny so you can just email them to yourself, or drop them in Google Drive, at the end of every session). 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. And please do NOT work from the networked server; it will slow down your workflow considerably. Work from a local drive and only copy your files to the server if you need to move your project from one workstation or lab to another. Once you have completed your move, delete your files from the server to free up space for others to use.

Attendance policy

While I will make every attempt to accommodate different learning styles and needs with a mix of reading, watching, listening, free-ranging discussion, in-class labs that give you hands-on practice, and self-directed projects, video is a demanding medium. You do need a basic grounding in both the technical side of production and the language of editing in order to express yourselves fully through video. Our current department policy is that if you miss the technical workshop introducing a particular set of equipment, you will not be able to check out that equipment until you have had a demo from Colleen or AV techs at the Cave. This ensures that you will not lose valuable time to avoidable mistakes while using equipment for which you missed the training.

I also have very strong feelings about attendance on critique days. If you don't show up for critique, whether you're presenting that week or not, your participation grade will reflect that absence. Showing up for peer critique is fundamental to creating a supportive environment, and it is disrespectful to your peers to expect them to give you focused attention when you don't show up for them. **If you miss two or more critique days and multiple labs (that you do not make up with Colleen), you may be asked to withdraw from the course.** If you miss a screening/discussion class day, please check Moodle the next day, because I will usually update it with viewing links for whatever we watched (when available).

Also, please note that the course schedule is not fixed. Apart from the major milestones (tech workshops and project due dates), the schedule will very likely change to reflect the time needed for meaningful critiques, the introduction of new material, and your own contributions and requests. If you do not attend class, it is your responsibility to find out if a change was made.

What do I mean when I say critique? That's actually up to you.

Before the first critique of the semester we will talk together about what format(s) we would like critiques to follow in this course. Here are some resources to use when thinking about this question:

<https://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/131936/27297882/1476969700447/Observations+on+forms+and+patterns+of+critique.pdf?token=DQ68HmnLeCfRUAtwUMa6UzH97CY%3D>

http://carolinewoolard.com/static/uploads/texts/Critique_Menu_for_Students_2016.pdf

http://carolinewoolard.com/static/uploads/texts/Discussion_Wall_Activity_1.pdf

<https://vimeo.com/161259012> (The Room of Silence video made by RISD students)

ASSESSMENT & GRADING

Projects 1-2 **40%**

Final project **30%**

Class participation* **30%**

*includes presence, discussion leadership, and participation in discussions, workshops, critiques, field trips and guest lectures (including written responses when 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 will be evaluated along three axes: concept/content, form, and technique.

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.

If you collaborate with another student in the course on a project, I will ask each of you to write a paragraph describing your own and your partner's contributions to the project, so that I can assess whether the work was equitably distributed. If you collaborate with a student from outside the course, I will ask you to submit a brief statement describing your role and your collaborator's roles in production and post-production.

Projects that are submitted late will be docked 5 percentage points of the assignment grade for each week that they are late.

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, including written responses to reading; 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.

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, consistently experimenting	Always prepared for class, makes intelligent & considered contributions	Always present, work in on time
B	Good	Inquisitive, engaged	Good form & content, takes some risks	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

Academic accommodations + basic needs

Bennington College provides reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities when requested and necessary to ensure equal access. If you believe you are entitled to an accommodation, please speak with Katy Evans, the Academic Services and Accommodations Advisor, about your disability-related needs. If approved, you will receive a memo detailing your specific accommodations. Please come to my office to share this memo with me, so we can discuss how best to implement the accommodations. Please note that it is your responsibility to obtain and share the memo, and I will not be aware of your needs if you do not share it with me. The sooner we meet to discuss your needs, the better. If you are experiencing new and/or newly significant challenges, please talk to me, reach out to your faculty advisor, visit Academic Services, or connect with resources available through health and psychological services.

We also understand that basic needs (food, housing, and wellness) have a direct impact on the academic performance, health, development and success of our students. If you have a personal circumstance or need that will affect your learning or performance in this course, please let me or your faculty advisor know so that we can help find resources to support you during the term.

Ethics + inclusivity

All students must adhere to college-wide policies regarding original work, academic integrity, and computer and

network use. Academic and artistic 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. The general college policy can be found here: <https://www.bennington.edu/faculty/faculty-handbook/academic-policies-and-procedures/academic-and-artistic-ethics-policy> We can have more in-depth discussions of fair use, appropriation, and the role/presentation of sources as part of our coursework.

Bennington College is committed to fostering the intellectual growth of all students, and to creating a learning environment where human cultural diversity is valued and respected. We are also looking at, thinking about, and making work that takes strong and sometimes provocative positions on difficult issues. For example, during the course of this semester we may look at artworks that include nudity, expressions of sexuality, strong language, violence, religious imagery, political controversy, contested histories, or other material that you may find personally difficult or offensive. This can be a difficult balancing act and if at any point you feel that the environment of the course has become less than respectful, welcoming and inclusive, please come to me to share your concerns.

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 for any reason, please let me know (either in class or in office hours) at the beginning of the semester, and I will notify you before such material is shown. If you plan to present work of your own that may include difficult material, please let the class know beforehand and give us some context for discussion. Don't surprise us (even if you want a cold read).

Education is cooperation. In this classroom we are all responsible for each other, and all of us will be asked to both teach and learn from each other. In order to do that, we must respect each other's perspectives and contributions. 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. And please remember that the space of the course is not static or closed: it should also be responsive to the urgencies and emergencies of the larger world.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*You need to check Moodle every week for the most up-to-date version of assignments and readings. If you are not in class, it is **your responsibility** to make sure you know whether changes have been made to the schedule.

Monday 9/9 - CLASS 1: WHAT ESCAPES THE FRAME

Introductions & expectations, skill self-assessment, discussion leadership assignments

Screened in class: Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room* (DVD in library) - interview with her [here](#); Bryan Springer, *Spin*; Yael Hersonski, *A Film Unfinished* (streaming on Fandor) - more about it [here](#)

Also relevant: Hans Haacke's "Statement" (on Moodle); Jennifer Baichwal & Edward Burtynsky, *Manufactured Landscapes* (in library or streaming on [Amazon Prime](#)); Leni Riefenstahl, *Olympia* (on Criterion streaming or in library); [the Olympics collection on Criterion streaming](#); *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky & the Media* on [Kanopy](#)

Tech workshop #1: Demo Panasonic GH4 mirrorless DSLR. Camera setting basics & lightweight shooting accessories (monopod, shoulder rig, reflector, LCD). Also: equipment policies for the semester

Video Elements #1: Intro to Movement and Light: In groups of three, use a still camera to shoot a moving object, moving camera for a still object, moving object with moving camera, still object with still camera. What are the filmic precedents of each method, and their effects on the viewer? We will begin with the technical aspects of aperture, shutter speed, pulling focus, etc.

Monday 9/16 - CLASS 2: TRUTHINESS

Reading due: Harold Pinter, **Nobel Prize speech on art, truth and politics** (also available as a video [here](#))

Recommended: Oraib Toukan [interview on Vdrome](#) (p.s. you should all subscribe to Vdrome); Petra Costa's film *The Edge of Democracy* on Netflix (trailer [here](#))

Discussion: The problem of truth in art; when propaganda becomes real; unstable images; many-sided images

Screened in class: Oliver Laric, [Versions](#); Clío Barnard, *The Arbor* ([excerpt](#) - full film streaming on Amazon Prime) - more on the [verbatim theatre](#) strategy used in the film; Maxim Pozdorovkin, [Our New President](#); Deimantas Narkevičius interview [here](#) - see also his films [here](#) and [here](#)

Also relevant: [Clemens von Wedemeyer](#), especially the POV project, [Muster \(Rushes\)](#), [The Cast \(Procession\)](#), and [Afterimages](#)

SEPC elections

Tech workshop #2: Demo prime & zoom lens selection; adapters & crop factors; movement accessories including dollies, stabilizers

Video Elements #2: Prime lenses and complex movement. In groups of three, film a static subject, at the same distance from the subject, with different lenses; and a moving subject, tracked with different movement accessories. What effects and affect do different lens choices and different rigs produce?

Monday 9/23 - CLASS 3: EPHEMERA AS EVIDENCE

Reading & response due: José Esteban Muñoz, "Ephemera as Evidence"

Recommended: Forensic Architecture, *Forensis* (in library); Ariella Azoulay, "Potential History"; Grey Room post-election issue (both on Moodle)

Discussion: Reconstruction from traces, speculative archives, embodied knowledge, forensic

Screened in class: [Lawrence Abu Hamdan](#), *Earshot* and *Walled Unwalled* excerpts; Forensic Architecture and Amnesty International, [Sounds of Saydnaya](#); Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, [Alter Bahnhof Video Walk](#); Black Audio Film Collective, [Handsworth Songs](#) (excerpt)

Also relevant: Paul Chan, [The 7 Lights \(Lecture\)](#); Travis Wilkerson, *An Injury to One* (on [Ovid](#)); and especially, Isaac Julien, *Looking for Langston* [excerpt](#) and [interview](#)

Tech workshop #3: Demo new lighting kits: indoor vs outdoor lighting, portable LEDs

Video Elements #3: In groups of three, devise a simple scene / scenario and shoot it once indoors and once outdoors, with lights and without lights.

Monday 9/30 - CLASS 4: CRIT #1

Project #1 due for critique

REPETITION: Work solo on a short (1-2 minute) video, which embraces the concept of repetition. This could be as simple as shooting the same scene with different lighting setups or slightly different dialogue, or as complex as a more in-depth reimagining of an existing piece of moving history. You may use found footage, but a minimum of 1 minute must be your own footage shot specifically for this project.

Monday 10/7 - CLASS 5: THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN

Reading & response due: Eric Baudelaire, "Cinema of the Invisible"

Recommended: Solmaz Sharif, *LOOK* (on Moodle); [Sensate Journal #2, Sensing the Unseen](#)

Discussion: False memory in personal and political histories; Masao Adachi's landscape theory; the paradox of depicting the unrepresentable; visualizing blindness, mysteries without clues, and the power of nightmares

Screened in class: Eric Baudelaire, [The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years Without Images](#) (excerpt; the full film can be rented [here](#)); Masao Adachi, [AKA Serial Killer](#); James Benning, [Landscape Suicide](#); Eric Baudelaire, [\[sic\]](#); Melanie Crean, [The Luminists](#) (full film [here](#)).

Also relevant: [known unknowns and unknown unknowns](#); Joshua Craze, [A Grammar of Redaction](#); Kevin Young on "[shadow books](#)" and the black imagination; Penny Lane, [The Pain of Others](#) (Vimeo on Demand or Fandor streaming); Tran T. Kim-Trang, Blindness series (on DVD in library); Adam Curtis, [The Power of Nightmares](#) and [Hypernormalisation](#)

Tech workshop #4: Demo with microphones and other sound capture; creative uses of sound e.g. contact mics; sound sync for multi-source shoots; best practices for recording narration

Monday 10/14 - CLASS 6: THE EVIDENCE OF THE SENSES

Reading due: Sensate Journal Issue #5, Hearing Modernity (NB you can listen/watch to most of the "texts")

Recommended: [An object-oriented philosophy primer](#)

Discussion: The [Harvard Sensory Ethnography Lab](#) and "[sensible cinema](#)"

Screened in class: excerpts from *Leviathan* ([on Fandor](#)); *Sweetgrass* ([on Fandor](#)); *Single Stream* ([on Fandor](#))

Tech workshop #5: Demo GoPros & drone; app remote control for GH4s, gimbals, stabilizers; pico projectors

4:30-5:30: mixer with score and sound design for moving image classes

Monday 10/21 – NO CLASSES

Monday 10/28 - CLASS 7: CRIT #2

Project #2 due for critique - SEPC discussion - last 20 mins of class

SENSIBLE CINEMA: Make a 2-5 minute video that is either primarily driven by a sense other than vision, or starts from your imagination of a viewpoint that is non-human

Monday 11/4 - CLASS 8: IS HISTORY FICTION?

Reading & response due: Jacques Ranciere, "Is History a Form of Fiction?" from *The Politics of Aesthetics*

Recommended: Jeremy Deller, *The English Civil War, Part II*; [Lamia Joreige](#), [John Akomfrah](#) talks

Discussion: Re-enactment and other means of summoning the dead; fictional documentaries

Screened in class: Walid Raad, [The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs](#); excerpt from [Mike Figgis doc](#) about Jeremy Deller's [The Battle of Orgreave](#)

Also relevant: Lamia Joreige, [Here and Perhaps Elsewhere](#); John Akomfrah's [Vertigo Sea](#); Melanie Crean, Shaun Leonardo & Sable Elyse Smith, [Mirror/Echo/Tilt](#); Robert Greene, *Bisbee '17* on [Prime](#); Travis Wilkerson, *An Injury to One* on [Ovid](#); Matt McCormick, *The Great Northwest* on [Fandor](#); Craig Baldwin, *Tribulation 99* on [Fandor](#); Peter Watkins, *Evening Land* on [Fandor](#)

Tech workshop #6: Advanced Premiere / review; submit your questions/topics ahead of time

Project #2 crits day 2

Monday 11/11 – CLASS 9: TESTIMONY

Reading due: Giorgio Agamben, “Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive”

Recommended: Candice Breitz interview; Jimmie Durham, “A Certain Lack of Coherence” (on Moodle)

Discussion: The camera as witness; first-person testimony vs re-enactment; oral transmissions; video as evidence in the juridical space

Screened in class: Candice Breitz, [Love Story](#); Susan Schuppli, [Material Witness](#); Judy Radul, [World Rehearsal Court](#); Joshua Oppenheimer, [The Act of Killing](#) (excerpt)

Also relevant: Claude Lanzmann, *Four Sisters* and Wang Bing, *Dead Souls* (both on Ovid, see Liza for login); Joshua Oppenheimer, [The Look of Silence](#)

Monday 11/18 - CLASS 10

Final project (min 5 minutes, max 25 minutes, form and content open) proposals due

Individual meetings to discuss project proposals

Monday 11/25 – CLASS 11: DEPT OF CORRECTIONS

Reading due: Naeem Mohaiemen, “Prisoners of Shothik Itihash”

Watching due: Naeem Mohaiemen, [United Red Army](#)

Response due: to both text and film

Recommended: Oikonomia definition; Darby English, “Good Fences” from *Take it or Leave It*; Rasheed Araeen, “Rethinking History and Some Other Things” (all on Moodle)

Discussion: Iconoclasm and “correct history”

Monday 12/2 - CLASS 12

Final project in-progress critiques

Monday 12/9 - CLASS 13

Last day of classes – wrap-up

Final portfolios due by in-person USB transfer or FTP