INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO

SECTION 1

Meeting time and places:

Monday, 1:40 pm – 5:20 pm

Video Editing Lab, VAPA D204, or nearby, for workshops / VAPA Kinoteca, for critiques

Faculty: Mariam Ghani

Email: mariamghani@bennington.edu

Office hours: Mon 11 am – 12 pm, remote/VAPA B203, email/DM by Sunday night to confirm

Technical Instructor: John Crowe

Email: johncrowe@bennington.edu

Office hours: Wed 8-10 am in VAPA B207, Wed 1-3 pm in VAPA P112 (The Cave)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introduction to Video draws on the energy, intensity and criticality of avant-garde film and contemporary video art practices to introduce students to the fundamentals of working in video and the language of film form. A series of technical workshops and in-class exercises will teach students basic camera operations, sound recording, lighting, and post-postproduction using Adobe Creative Suite. The course will also include weekly screenings and discussions of films and videos, which serve to introduce students to the history of the medium and its critical concepts. Through the combination of in-class exercises and screenings, students will 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. Readings, which may be drawn from philosophy, critical theory, artist statements, or literature, will also be assigned periodically along with brief responses. Students will complete two short projects responding to prompts by the instructor, and one longer final project of their own design. Emphasis on technical instruction, formal experimentation, and critical vocabulary is balanced in order to give students a footing from which to find their own stakes.

prerequisite: none

4 credits; 1 semester; may not be repeated; maximum enrollment: 15

COURSE FORMAT

Instruction in person only for this section of Intro to Video. Remote students may enroll in Section 2.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Supplies - required

Notebook or note-taking app

Supplies - recommended

headphones

a 16-32 GB USB flash drive

a Mac or ExFAT formatted portable USB or USB-C drive, 500 GB+

VAPA FACILITIES AND EDIT LAB ACCESS/REMOTE ACCESS

If you are on campus this term, you will have key access to the Edit Lab as soon as you are added to the Campus Security list for the D204 key. It is as yet unclear whether VAPA will continue to be closed between midnight and 8 AM, but current VAPA facilities protocols can be found here. Please be mindful of the VAPA protocols, which need to be observed in order to ensure everyone's safety.

You will also continue to need to reserve workstations in advance. **Please read and bookmark the online Video and Animation Handbook, which will always contain links to the most current Edit Lab schedule and the online Scheduler that you need to use to reserve workstations in advance, as well as instructions on how to access both.** There will likely be monitored lab hours on the weekend, if you need help while working or run into issues, and John can also be reached via the #vapa-cave channel on the Visual Arts Slack.

If you are participating remotely or in temporary quarantine, you can access Edit Lab computers remotely in order to use their software and processing power using Splashtop Remote. Instructions for remote Lab access can be found here. Please let me/John/IT know if you need an invite to use Splashtop Remote. I do not recommend using Bennington network storage for your projects unless you really can't avoid it, because it slows down Premiere considerably. Our current recommendation is to use Google Drive to move your files from workstation to workstation, or from your personal computer to the remote lab workstation.

If you run into problems while using the lab in person, please report them to your lab monitor. If you run into problems while using the lab remotely, please report them to AV Technical Instructor John Crowe.

If you are going to be working with longer-form videos or more complicated effects that require a lot of processing power and time, you may want to invest in your own external drive. And a small, cheap 16-32 GB flash drive is great to have just for backups of your Premiere projects and final exports. You can also check out thumb drives like these temporarily from the Cave to facilitate in-class presentations or installations.

If you run into problems while using the lab in person, please report them to your lab monitor. If you run into problems while using the lab remotely, please report them to AV Technical Instructor John Crowe.

EQUIPMENT KITS & CHECKOUT

Enrollment in Intro Video grants you access to some, but not all, of the equipment loaned out from VAPA P112, which we call "The Cave," once we have covered how to use that equipment in our technical workshops. If you miss a technical workshop, you will not be able to check out the relevant equipment until you schedule a make-up session or study equivalent online materials. **Please review the online [Cave Hours and Policy](#), which also includes a form that you need to fill out in order to use the Cheqroom equipment reservation system.** AV tech John Crowe will also go over this information with you on the first day of class, and talk about which equipment you can check out and when, and how to clean it in between uses.

Please report any technical problems you may encounter with borrowed equipment to the Cave staff as soon as you encounter them, and bring malfunctioning equipment into the Cave to be fixed. Also, please report any lost or stolen items from the kit to the Cave staff as soon as they are lost or stolen. You can use the #vapa-cave channel on the [Visual Arts Slack](#) (which you should all join if you haven't already!) to send messages to the Cave staff.

SHARED SPACES + SHARED COMPUTERS/MEMORY CARDS

Part of our Commitment to Shared Responsibility on campus is taking joint responsibility for maintaining the safety of the spaces we all use in common. The Kinoteca and the Edit Lab are both spaces that we all need to help out with, by **cleaning anything we use in the lab or projection booth before and after we touch it.** Cleaning supplies will be provided for this purpose. Please let John, Liza, me or a lab monitor know if the cleaning supplies are running low, so that they can be restocked as soon as possible.

You are 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 use them. **Always copy all your files off any shared memory card BEFORE handing it over.** If you have an external drive, save to it early and often, 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). If at all possible, keep ALL files for each project until after the end of the semester. You can, for example, use your Bennington Google Drive storage for this purpose – just make sure to keep your folder structures intact when you move/copy them.

COURSE SLACK

We will be using Slack to facilitate group communications, responses, and syllabus updates. The course Slack workspace is IntroVideo2021, and I will invite you all to join before the first week of class. Please make sure you are added to all the necessary channels and receiving Slack notifications in your preferred format, so that you don't miss any important announcements. Required reading, viewing links, and other course resources will be posted to the #weekly-materials channel, usually as direct downloads/links. Please note that some reading/viewing links can only be opened on campus (for example Kanopy links, Docuseek links, or e-reserve library links) unless you log in with Bennington/Crossett credentials first.

Please note that the course schedule is not fixed. Apart from the major milestones (assignment 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. It is your responsibility to check the course Slack every week for syllabus updates, readings, viewing links, and assignment details. **Whatever is posted to the #weekly-materials channel in Slack will be the most up-to-date version of what is due that week.**

Any writing that I assign should also be posted through Slack. If for any reason you are unable to attend your group's in-person or synchronous class meeting, you should write a brief (1 paragraph max) response to the weekly materials and post it to the #responses channel in Slack. Find something in the material 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. Feel free to post a written response even if you don't miss class, but have something extra to say!

If you have questions about assignments, weekly materials, or anything else, you can of course email me, but **I will generally respond more quickly if you DM me through Slack.** If you haven't used Slack before, you can find [some tips here](#).

ASSIGNMENTS

You are required to complete two short projects assigned by me, and one longer final project of your own design. Before starting work on your final project, you will submit a one-paragraph proposal for the project, which we will then discuss in an individual meeting. Your projects are due for critique on the days indicated in the course schedule. **When a project is due for critique, it should be uploaded to [your section's Google Drive folder](#) at least an hour before class start time on the due date and preferably by midnight the night before class.** Please put your name in the filename of your video when you upload it (ex: MariamGhani_Proj1.mp4). Preferred export setting in Premiere: H.264 high quality, same settings as sequence.

You may revise your projects after critiques and replace the versions you previously uploaded to the Google Drive folder, but you are not required to do so. **The final versions of all your projects must be in the folder by December 12th** in order for me to review them before preparing final grades and evaluations.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Video is a demanding medium. You do need a basic grounding in both the technical aspects of production and the language of editing in order to express yourselves fully through video. Our equipment is also a shared resource, and has to be treated carefully. So, **if you miss a technical workshop during which equipment is introduced, you will not be able to check that equipment out until you review the recorded version and/or ask John Crowe for a make-up demo.** This is not punitive, but rather meant to ensure that everyone is able to use the equipment correctly, minimizing the chances of accidental damage to our shared resources.

This class is also a place where you can bring brand-new works, creative experiments, and as-yet-incomplete ideas to your peers, and develop them in a supportive environment. As such, it is largely dependent on your participation and generosity with each other to create that environment. If you don't show up for each other, and give each other honest but constructive critiques, you won't have the exchange of ideas that is fundamental to making projects better. All of which means: **please show up for critique days, even if your own work isn't finished** or you're not presenting that week. It's disrespectful to your peers to expect them to give your projects focused attention, if you don't show up for them.

However: we are all figuring out how to come together as a class under the crazy mixed-up circumstances of this term. The educational and medical and political context is changing all the time, and so are your situations, and my situation, within that context. As such, **I will not penalize anyone for absences or lateness caused by technological barriers and glitches, as long as you extend that same courtesy to me**. I also will not penalize anyone for situations where synchronous participation is made burdensome by factors out of their own control (including but not limited to illness, quarantine, family emergencies, and time zones). **All I ask is that you communicate the relevant details to me as soon as you can, and that you propose and fulfill a clear plan to demonstrate your engagement with the materials you missed.** If you miss a critique, for example, you could post comments on your peers' projects in the #projects Slack channel, and present your own work at a later time. If you know you will be missing a tech intensive, you can arrange for a make-up demo or ask for a recording to be provided. You should also post a response to the weekly materials to the #responses channel any time that you miss the synchronous meeting.

We can also decide as a class in advance if we want to record any portion of the course – for example, the online/hybrid editing instruction sessions – to make it easier for anyone who misses a class to catch up. I would like us to come to a group agreement on this in case anyone has privacy concerns.

Please note that on-campus students are expected to abide by the terms of the [Commitment of Shared Responsibility](#), which includes wearing masks and maintaining six feet of distance in the classroom. Students who do not observe these protocols will be asked to leave the classroom, and required to participate remotely, for the safety of the group.

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

https://media.carolinewoolard.com/texts/Critique_Menu_for_Students_2016.pdf

https://media.carolinewoolard.com/texts/WRITTEN_REFLECTION_critique_--_review_--_Woolard_1.pdf

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

ASSESSMENT & GRADING

In-class exercises   **10%**

Assignments 1-2   **40%**

Final project   **20%**

Class participation*   30%

**includes participation in synchronous discussions and tech workshops, participation in asynchronous Slack assignments and exchanges, preparation for class and use of time in class, and effective balance of generosity of spirit, critical inquiry, and creative problem-solving in critiques; please see notes above re: equivalents for asynchronous participation

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 any 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.

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.

I will not change any grades unless you hand in a substantially revised assignment. You can hand in a revised version of any assignment 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 (or equivalent), 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 (or equivalent), work in on time
C	**Average**	Just sufficient	Holds together, but unconvincing	Not always prepared, only able to make obligatory contributions	Misses some classes without making them up, work sometimes late
D	**Poor**	Limited, formulaic	Work thrown together just before class	Only makes very limited contributions	Excessive absences without equivalents, work late & incomplete
F	**Unsatisfactory**	Virtually none	Virtually none	Makes almost no contribution	Absent most of the time, no equivalents

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 share this memo with me, so we can set up a meeting to discuss how best to implement the accommodations. **Please note that I will not be aware of your needs if you do not share the memo 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.

TECH NEEDS

If you are consistently experiencing technological barriers to accessing course content and/or synchronous discussions, please let me know so that I can work with you to find alternative solutions**. If you are a remote student and you anticipate having specific tech needs for this class** – especially your final project -- that may be a particular challenge, **please reach out to me and John as soon as possible** so that we have some extra time to work with you to find creative ways to meet those challenges.

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. You can also reach out to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion if you feel that you can't talk to me for any reason.

We may also look at some videos that include formal effects (for example, strobe effects), that can cause problems for people with photosensitivity or seizure disorders. **If you anticipate that any particular material will present a problem for you for any reason, please let me know** (in office hours, by email, or via Slack DM) **at the beginning of the semester, and I will do my very best to notify you before such material is shown.** Every now and then something sneaks up on me too – if I haven't seen a film in several years, for example, and have forgotten that a particular scene or element was included. In that case, please feel free to leave class for as long as you need to, stop watching/participating until the film/discussion is over, or interrupt us if you feel it's important that we stop. **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. Try not to 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.

The Raqs Media Collective wrote in "How to Be an Artist by Night" (2009) that being an artist is no different from learning to become an artist, because as artists we are constantly remaking ourselves and our horizons, rediscovering what we want to do, to think about, and to inscribe on the attention of the world. The most important thing you will learn in the video program is not how to use a specific camera, because those keep changing, or a specific piece of software, because those change too, but how to think through and with technologies that change constantly; how to think like an artist, as Raqs wrote, constantly preparing for the unknown.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*You need to check Slack 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.

MON 9/6   CLASS 1 - SHOT   KINOTECA

Due this week: Read the syllabus and join the course Slack; bring in a memorable shot from a film or video, and be prepared to explain why you chose that shot (if this is an online link, please post it to Slack ahead of class)

Introductions and expectations, SEPC elections

Screening/discussion: The camera & its multiple positions; artist-viewer relationships and modes of address; composition & structure within the shot; types of shots; single-shot videos

Tech workshop #1: Cameras 101 - intro to cameras, tripods and checkout procedures; aperture, focal length, and shutter speed; cameras as phones

In-class group exercise:

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)

EACH GROUP MEMBER SHOULD SAVE THIS FOOTAGE for your first editing exercise

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MON 9/13   CLASS 2 - SEQUENCE   D204

Due this week: Dmytryk & Eisenstein readings and Slack response to either/both readings

Recommended reading: Hooks

Screening/discussion: structure from shot to shot, POV matches and the gaze, rhythmic and metric montage, non-narrative formal systems, structuring for infinite loops

Tech workshop #2: Editing with Adobe Premiere, part 1 - preferences, importing & exporting, organizing with bins, assembly vs. fine editing, compression / formats. (120 minutes)

In-class exercise:

Each member of the group, working individually, uses the footage from exercise #1 to cut a sequence of 30 seconds to 1 minute. Once finished, look at each other's sequences and compare how different editing choices affected the same raw material. If you have extra time, try downloading some public domain footage and cutting that into your sequences, to see what effect it has to mix original and appropriated footage.

MON 9/20   CLASS 3 - PROJECT #1 CRITS 1   KINOTECA

Due for critique: Project #1 (min 1 minute, max 5 minutes)

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.

Your video must be uploaded to the class/group Google Drive folder at least one hour before class starts, preferably by midnight the night before class. Please put your name in the filename!

MON 9/27   CLASS 4 - PROJECT #1 CRITS 2   KINOTECA

Critiques of Project #1, continued

Tech workshop 3: Sound - microphones, Zoom recorders, adapters, sync signals, room tone

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MON 10/4   CLASS 5 - PERFORMANCE/MEDIUM   KINOTECA

Due this week: Spielmann & Minh-Ha readings and Slack response to either/both readings

Recommended reading: Paglen, Krauss, Fusco

Screening/discussion: the camera and its multiple positions in the age of machine vision, medium-specificity and how it changes as the medium changes, performing the medium and performing social roles, performance and/as history, duration, narcissism, self-reflexivity, mise-en-scène; expanded cinema; diegetic vs non-diegetic sound, sound/image relationships and how sound affects our perception of images

Tech workshop 4: Lighting & FX: 3-point lighting, lighting for different moods and effects

In-class group exercise: lighting for chroma keying

SAVE FOOTAGE FROM THIS EXERCISE for Workshop 5

MON 10/11   CLASS 6 - STRUCTURE, FORM, GENRE   D204

Due this week: Schatz reading and Minh-Ha viewing

Recommended reading: Bordwell/Thompson, Doane

Screening/discussion: artist's takes on classic genres; narrative and non-narrative genres; treatment, script, shooting script and storyboard format for different genres; effects of sound on perceptions of the image, continued; video as/and language; sound/image relationships, continued

Tech workshop 5: Editing with Premiere, continued: multi-channel editing, audio sync, motion effects, masks, titles, color correction, audio mixing tools

In class FX editing exercise: chroma keying with footage from workshop 4

MON 10/18   NO CLASS, LONG WEEKEND

MON 10/25   CLASS 7 - ALLUDE/APPROPRIATE/ARCHIVE   KINO

Due this week: Steyerl reading and Slack response to reading

Recommended reading: Viola, Poitras, Al-Maria

Screening/discussion: allusion/appropriation, "poor images", generational loss, technological transformations, 'post-internet' and 'new aesthetic' approaches to appropriation

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MON 11/1   CLASS 8 - PROJECT #2 CRITS 1   KINOTECA

Project #2 (min 1 minute, max 3 minutes) due for critique

Shoot a video where either the use of light(s) or the use of diegetic sound 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.

Your video must be uploaded to the class/group Google Drive folder at least one hour before class starts, preferably by midnight the night before class. Please put your name in the filename!

Mid-term SEPC discussion

MON 11/8   CLASS 9 - PROJECT #2 CRITS 2   KINOTECA

Critiques of Project #2, continued

MON 11/15   CLASS 10 - INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS   REMOTE

Due: 1-paragraph proposal for your final project, posted to Slack by Tuesday night
This is your project to shape as you 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 project proposal to me that details the form, the content/concept, and why that form best expresses that content/concept.

Individual meetings to discuss proposals, sign up for a slot via Slack.

MON 11/22   CLASS 11 - IN-PROGRESS CRITS/LAB   D204

In-progress project critiques / lab to work on final projects with tech help

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MON 11/29   CLASS 12 - FINAL PROJECT CRITS 1   KINOTECA

Due this week for critique: final projects

MON 12/6   CLASS 12 - FINAL PROJECT CRITS 1   KINOTECA

Due this week for critique: final projects