

DMST3900: Digital Cinema, Theory and Practice

<http://www.du.edu/~treddell/3900-01/>

Spring 2009 | Mon & Wed 2:00-3:50pm

Sturm Hall 434

contact

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office hours

Mon & Wed
11am-1:30pm
and by appt.

DIGITAL CINEMA, THEORY AND PRACTICE will introduce several forms of emerging cinematic practices and processes. Students will work in a combination of video and audio mixing environments and acquire skills ranging from non-linear and multitrack editing to patch programming and modular software device development. Students will produce work in three formats: networked video remixes and cinemashups; live cinema and VJ performance; and visual music, ambient video and sonic visualization.

The class will incorporate reading and discussion of several critical texts and documentation of digital cinematic theory, process and practices. We will screen and discuss examples of digital cinema.

Finally, we will have periodic workshops, exercises, and auditions and critiques of class members' work.

This class fulfills a DMS Technical / Production requirement.

Course Objectives

- Employ the personal computer as a studio for cinematic expression.
- Develop skills in content manipulation; non-linear and multitrack editing; live mixing and effects processing; synthesis of sound and image; patch design and programming; and audio/video mastering.
- Present, perform and distribute your original digital cinema works via the web, in live performance, and time-based projection or screening.
- Critically discuss the genres, practitioners, theories, and processes of digital cinema and some of its media ancestries, and apply this discussion to the processes and potential meanings of your own works.
- Present and discuss the theoretical aspects of your own productions, as well as situate them in historical, artistic, social, and commercial contexts.

Required Books

Paul Spinrad, The VJ Book (Feral 2005)

Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema (Dutton 1970) – online download via class website

Recommended Texts

D-Fuse, VJ: Audio-Visual Art + VJ Culture (Laurence King 2006)

New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative, Ed. Martin Rieser, Andrea Zapp (BFI 2002)

Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film, Ed. Jeffrey Shaw, Peter Weibel (MIT 2003)

COURSE CALENDAR

Remixes and Cinemashups

Mon Mar 23 | Introductions

introductions

a preview of coming attractions ...

a video miscellany from the PBS archives

forms of digital cinema

expanded cinema

future cinema

personal cinema

live cinema

hypercinema

soft cinema

machinema

immersive cinema

introductions | review syllabus | lab regulations and forms | forms of digital cinema, pt. 1

Wed Mar 25 | Pre-History of Digital Cinema | Personal Cinema Practices in Intermedia Environments

readings online:

* various web sites on early cinema

* Lev Manovich, "What Is Digital Cinema?" (1995)

* from Youngblood, "Part One: The Audience and the Myth of Entertainment" (1970: 54-65)

forms of digital cinema, pt. 2 | features of the video editor | file formats and conversion | web-based video resources | sampling techniques and issues in the age of digital copying and file-sharing | melkwegmixer patch

Mon Mar 30 | Video Remixes and Cinemashups 1

reading online:

* from Youngblood, "Part Five: Television as a Creative Medium" (257-336)

video collage | trailer remixes | vegas creative processes (video layers; audio)

Wed Apr 01 | Video Remixes and Cinemashups 2

melkwegmixer | small group check-ins

Mon Apr 06 | Personal Media

readings online:

* from Youngblood, "Part Two: Synaesthetic Cinema: The End of Drama" (1970: 75-7, 87-91, 128-34)

* Dziga Vertov, "We: Variant of a Manifesto" (1922); "On the Significance of Nonacted Cinema" (1923); "The Birth of Kino-Eye" (1924)

video distribution | vlogs | video podcasts

Wed Apr 08 | Project 1 Demos

screening of project 1: Remixes and Cinemashups (15%); submit Project Report / Reading & Media Response 1

Mon Apr 13 | Live Cinema 1

Wed Apr 15 | Workshop

Mon Apr 20 | VJ Cultures 1

melkwegmixer session | VJ mixing software | resolume session

Wed Apr 22 | VJ Cultures 2

sound design | native instruments | audiomulch | audio-video synchronization

Mon Apr 27 | Cosmic Cinema

reading online:

* Youngblood, "Part Three: Toward Cosmic Consciousness" (1970: 135-77)

screening space | concrete video | macrocosmixer

Wed Apr 29 | Visual Music

visual music exercise using the mixing environment of your choice

Mon May 04 | Project 2 Demos

Performance (35%); submit Project Report / Reading & Media Response 2

Wed May 06 | Ambient Video 1

reading online + hand-out:

* Youngblood, "Part Four: Cybernetic Cinema and Computer Films" (1970: 179-256)

* from Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Painting, Photography, Film (1925)

resolume in the studio | sonic visualization | abstract video | video painting | computer-generated video and studio systems

Mon May 11 | The Intermedia Dream Projection Network

reading online:

* Youngblood, "Part Six: Intermedia" (1970: 345-397)

mixermod exercise

Wed May 13 | Mixermods Workshop

Mon May 18 | Ambient Video 2

screened ambient video | video projection

Wed May 20 | Workshop

Mon May 25 | Memorial Day (no class session)

Wed May 27 | Project 3 Demos

Time-Based (35%); submit Project Report / Reading & Media Response 3

Mon Jun 01 | Final Portfolio and Reflective Statements Due (2pm, Sturm 434)

ASSIGNMENTS

1) Remixes and Cinemashups (15%)

produce a 30-second to one-minute video in the format of a news segment or movie trailer, remixing a single news clip, single movie or combining elements of multiple sources (e.g., one video track w/ another audio track) into a new blend

submit Project Report / Reading & Media Response 1

2) Performance: Live Cinema or VJing (35%)

prepare, perform, and document an 8-10 minute live cinema or VJ set

submit Project Report / Reading & Media Response 2

3) Time-Based: Visual Music or Ambient Video (35%)

create a 5-8 minute video work in the genre of visual music, ambient video, video painting, or sonic visualizer for screened or projected space

submit Project Report / Reading & Media Response 3

4) Project Report / Reading & Media Responses

For each assignment, you are required to submit a **3-4 page, double-spaced response (approx. 950 words)** using the following form:

PRODUCTION: What specific techniques and production strategies interest you at this point? Discuss one specific work or artist that served as a role-model for you?

CONTEXTS: What are you learning from our readings? What kind of theoretical or cultural contexts discussed by these writers and artists could help you make sense of your own digital cinema productions? Discuss one specific writer, work or artist that served as a role-model for you in terms of how you manage conceptual development?

CRITICAL: I've asked you to read, view and consider some unusual forms of production for this class. Discuss one article or work that you've experienced that has communicated something to you and/or evoked a strong emotion?

5) Reflective Statements (15%)

Building on your three short reports, this statement provides you the opportunity to discuss the technical production of your work; to contextualize your work theoretically and culturally; and to

assess your own work critically. The statement should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced (approx. 1,800 words).

1. **ASSIGNMENT:** Briefly describe each of the assignments in your own words. What do you understand to be the most important goals of the assignment?

2. **PRODUCTION:** How did you meet the goals of the assignments in your work? What specific techniques and production strategies did you use to fulfill or surpass these goals? What works or artists served as role-models for you?

3. **CONTEXTS:** How would you position your work in larger theoretical, cultural, or historical contexts? Your response here could touch on the content of your work (e.g., a theme or abstract concept); theories of production and technology (e.g., issues related to sampling); or both (e.g., genre-placement). What works or artists served as role-models for you?

4. **SELF-EXPRESSION:** What did you hope to communicate or express in your work? Explain what you learned along the way that may give people greater understanding of your finished work, the processes involved in its completion, and yourself as the creator of this work.

GENERAL POLICIES

Attendance

I will keep track of attendance. Failure to have work ready by its due date or a screening date may result in failure of the project. I also expect you to be ready and willing to discuss reading material and media content assigned before class or presented in class. Falling asleep in class constitutes an absence. After two unexcused absences, your final grade will drop one full letter grade for each additional absence.

Peripheral Devices

I prefer to keep the classroom, lab and lecture hall free from distractions, so please do not use your cellphones, instant messaging services, PDAs, or laptops in the class unless you are working with software used in our class. You should keep a journal, log or sketchbook for class notes.

Grading

I will grade and comment on all of your work produced during the quarter, twice early enough that you will have a realistic sense of your progress before the final assignment is due. I expect all assignments to represent the outcomes of your own production efforts.

A = generally, this grade is reserved for those works that surpass expectations.

The grade recognizes:

- > sophisticated production skills
- > a strong desire to experiment with different techniques with consistently excellent results
- > outstanding use of source materials and/or synthesis of own content
- > written work contributes considerably to understanding and experiencing your productions
- > significant and substantial contributions to projects, discussions, and other assignments

B = meets and in some areas exceeds expectations and criteria. The grade recognizes:

- > very solid production skills
- > a willingness to experiment with different techniques, usually with very good outcomes
- > original use of source materials and synthesis of own content
- > written work contributes to understanding and experiencing your productions
- > substantial contributions to class projects, discussions, and other assignments

C = fulfills all requirements. The grade recognizes:

- > satisfactory production skills
- > a tendency to stick to familiar techniques
- > a reliance on untreated source materials; little synthesis of own content
- > written work states the obvious, and while it clarifies the production process, it neglects theoretical issues
- > rushed and unpolished contributions to class collaborations and discussions, but keeps up with the schedule

D = fails to fulfill some requirements. The grade recognizes:

- > less than satisfactory production skills
- > sticks to familiar techniques
- > a reliance on untreated source materials: no synthesis of own content
- > written work is insubstantial and fails to clarify the production process and never addresses theoretical issues
- > rushed and unpolished contributions to collaborations and discussions, and some inability to keep up with the schedule

F = fails all requirements. The grade recognizes:

- > an inability to master anything more than basic production skills
- > an unwillingness to experiment with new strategies
- > an over reliance on source materials
- > little or no written work is completed
- > unfinished contributions to class projects and discussions, and failure to keep up with schedule

TECHNOLOGY POLICIES

While you are not required to purchase the software that you may use for this class, not having the software is no excuse for failing to complete your projects. It is your responsibility to work out times when you can use the DMS lab or to make other arrangements for doing your work. Please do not download and/or install trial versions of software onto campus computers.

All of the computers in Sturm Hall 434 and the 211 lab have SoundForge, Acid, Vegas, Native Instruments Komplete, Audiomulch, and Ableton Live. All stations have the UC-33 Controller. The MIDI lab includes an additional MIDI keyboard, two computers with course software, desktop monitors, and a multi-channel mixing deck. Please schedule time for this space.

Lab Rules

It is your responsibility to adhere to all rules regarding the use of the DMS labs and equipment. You will be given a sheet stating all rules.

Back up your work

I recommend that you get an external hard-drive for backing up your projects. When working in the labs, you should always store projects in your own folder, which you should create within the general "Student Work" folder. If any of your work is lost or damaged and you do not have a backup copy, you will be held responsible.

Always use CAUTION when monitoring with headphones