

CIN 3630 EXPERIMENTAL FILMMAKING (4 credits) Fall 2018 CRN 44744
Oakland University, College of Arts and Sciences, Cinema Studies, Department of English

Class Meeting Time: Tuesdays, 5:00-8:20 pm

Editing lab and classroom: 228 VAR; additional lab 231 HH; studio: 112 VAR

Professor: Andrea Eis

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Office Hours: Thursdays, noon-12:45 pm; Tuesdays, 4-5 pm; and by appointment

OU/CIN webpage: oakland.edu/english/academic-programs/cinemastudies

Facebook (OU.Cinema.Studies); Twitter (OUCinemaStudies); Instagram (@oucinemastudies)

CIN 3630 Catalog Description

Range of experimental film techniques, with a focus on aesthetic practices that fall outside of mainstream commercial filmmaking. (Formerly CIN 368) Prerequisite: CIN 1600.

Course Description and Overview

Learning Objectives—Students will

- critically analyze and evaluate historic and contemporary experimental short films
- develop proficiency in a range of digital processes and techniques of experimental film
- identify and investigate techniques for conducting aesthetic research
- develop conceptual and aesthetic strategies for use in experimental film
- experiment with the grammar of cinematic language
- create micro and short-form films in a variety of aesthetic and conceptual modes

Experimental films are notoriously hard to define and categorize, but usually they present personal visions and expressive interests that break with traditional rules and styles of commercial filmmaking. In recent years, experimental and art film forms, styles and techniques have found their way into the Hollywood mindset, as filmmakers push traditional boundaries. The experimental approaches you will see and create in this class will give you rich expressive options to use in other kinds of filmmaking as well, both narrative and documentary. The challenge will be in using these techniques in ways that are conceptually valid, rather than just stylistically interesting.

Watching and analyzing experimental art films will develop your understanding of the reasoning behind techniques and structures. The process for each film you make will start with an exploratory creative research phase, which should be a combination of curiosity-based and traditional research to gather and create images and sound. I will be giving you informal critiques as you work, to help you develop conceptual and aesthetic strength in your work.

Experimental films are often created as much in editing and other post-production processes as in the research, planning, and filming. You will be experimenting with the grammar of cinematic language. Remaining open to change in the process is essential for the filmmaking done in this class. To imagine the possibilities of film as art, your mind must be engaged along with your technical knowledge and aesthetic skills.

Class critiques will help you analyze and understand other conceptual and aesthetic structures, and give you practice in constructive criticism, which tends to be more challenging with experimental films.

Micro films—for our purposes, films with running times of 120 seconds or less—have become a popular format for art films. The micro films you will make in this class will require tight crystallization of your concepts, and extensive work. It can be very complex to make a quality film in a short running time.

This course is divided into lectures, screenings, technical workshops, studio time and critiques. In-class studio time is an integral part of the class structure, but not all work for the class can be completed during class sessions.

Required Reading:

No textbook. Writings by and interviews with experimental filmmakers are assigned.

Equipment and Lab:

Students will have access to checking out Cinema Studies digital film equipment and editing lab. The student under whose name equipment is signed out is responsible for the timely return of the equipment and its condition upon return. We are tight on equipment this semester, so careful planning will be necessary. We will be using Adobe CC applications for editing, effects and illustration work (Premiere, After Effects, Illustrator, Photoshop). Editing will be done in 228 VAR, and if you want to work during times when other classes are scheduled, you can now work in 231 Hannah Hall, which also has iMacs, Adobe CC, and access to the same server. Your Grizz ID will give you access to both labs. Students with their own laptops with appropriate software may use them instead. Since many sessions include in-class studio work, students who want to work on their own laptops will be required to bring them to class for all studio days.

Class Requirements, Points, and Grade Distribution

100	Found Footage (micro film, 1-2 min)
100	Abstract (micro film, 1-2 min)
100	Structuralist (micro film, 1-2 min)
250	Film Poem/Poetic Essay (short-form film, 3-5 min)
300	Special Effects/Animation/Surrealist (short-form film, 3-5 min)
100	Reading Response Papers, 5 at 20 pts each
50	Participation in critique and regular attendance

1,000 points TOTAL

Points	Grade	Equivalent	Points	Grade	Equivalent
960-1000	A	4.0	725-749	C+	2.3
900-959	A-	3.7	700-724	C	2.0
850-899	B+	3.3	650-699	C-	1.7
800-849	B	3.0	625-649	D+	1.3
750-799	B-	2.7	600-624	D	1.0

[Below 600 points, F, 0.0]

Late Work

Work received after the due date in class will be penalized 20 points. All late work must be in at the start of the next scheduled class meeting, or it will be eligible for no more than 70% of the grade. No work will be accepted after the final critique date (December 13). Barring extreme (documented) circumstances, there will be no make-ups for the quiz or assignments.

Attendance and Participation Policy

Consistent, on-time attendance is required for the success of our discussions, your understanding of important cinematic concepts, and your satisfactory completion of all assignments. You will be allowed 2 absences (excused and unexcused). Each subsequent absence in excess of 2 will lower your total participation grade by 15 points. Full and engaged participation is also part of your final grade.

Preferred Name Policy

If you do not identify with the name that is listed with the Registrar, please notify me so that I can amend my records. If you prefer to go by a different pronoun, please inform me.

Classroom Behavior

Respect and courtesy for your fellow classmates and professor are expected. If your conduct is deemed disruptive or disrespectful, you may be asked to leave the classroom, and your participation grade will be lowered. All electronic devices should be silent, and untouched during class time. Food and drink are not allowed near the computers.

Faculty Feedback

If you appear to be having significant problems with the class, or you are making unsatisfactory progress in this course, you will receive a Faculty Feedback email with information on the issues that I have noticed, and suggestions for how to move towards satisfactory progress. If you do receive a Feedback email, I highly recommend that you make an appointment with me to discuss your progress as soon as possible. This is your responsibility to arrange.

Academic Conduct Policy

The Oakland University policy on academic conduct will be strictly followed with no exceptions. See the catalog under Academic Policies and Procedures. Although use of copyrighted material (footage, audio/music tracks) is often allowed in an academic setting, I do not allow it in this class. In some cases, use of music tracks created by an acquaintance who has given you rights to use it may be acceptable, as is copyright free material available on line, but either must be cleared with me prior to use and must be properly credited.

Add/Drop

The University add/drop policy will be explicitly followed. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of University deadline dates for dropping the course.

Special Considerations

Upon request, the university provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Disability Student Services in room 103A NFH, 248-370-3266, TTY 248-370-3268. Hours M-F, 8 am – 5 pm. www.oakland.edu/dss

For academic help such as study and reading skills, contact The Tutoring Center, 103 NFH, 248-370-4215. For writing help, contact the Writing Center, 212 KL, 248-370-3120; for appointments: oakland.edu/ouwc/schedule/

WEEKLY SCHEDULE Note: the syllabus may change at the discretion of the professor.

WEEK ONE: SEPTEMBER 11

Thinking Experimentally: fractured narratives, abstracted imagery, found footage, image and sound disjunctions, form as meaning, poetic bases of form and movement

Screenings (links to course screenings are on Moodle):

- *Copy Shop*, Virgil Widrich, 2001 (12:06) (Oscar nominee for Best Live Action Short, 2001)
- *Trailer for The Atomic Café*, Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty, Pierce Rafferty, 1982/restored version 2018 (2:23)

Research: archive.org; Prelinger Archives; Ephemeral Films; Video Cellar, etc.

Reading Response #1 for next week: Read the “About,” “Identity,” and “Quotes” sections of Widrich’s Copy Shop website: https://www.widrichfilm.com/copyshop/core_en.html

WEEK TWO: SEPTEMBER 18

Screening and Discussion

- *A Movie*, Bruce Conner, 1958 (11:40)

Studio work: Found Footage Micro Film (archive.org)

Reading/response #2 for next week: Romney, Jonathan. “What Time Is It Where?” *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 21, Issue 5, May 2011, pp. 30-31.

WEEK THREE: SEPTEMBER 25

Screening and Discussion

- *The Clock*, Christian Marclay, 2010 (excerpt; 12:04 pm – 12:07 pm)

Studio work: Found Footage Micro Film

WEEK FOUR: OCTOBER 2

CRITIQUE: Found Footage Micro Film

Screenings and Discussion

- *Lichtspiel Opus 1, 2, 3, 4*, Walter Ruttmann, 1921 (excerpt)
- *Rhythmus 21*, Hans Richter, 1921 (3:00)
- *Symphonie Diagonale*, Viking Eggeling, 1924 (excerpt)

Studio work: Abstract Micro Film

Reading/response for next week: Richter, Hans. *College Art Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Winter 1951), pp. 157-161.

WEEK FIVE: OCTOBER 9

Studio work: Abstract Micro Film

Discussion: reading WEEK SIX: OCTOBER 16

CRITIQUE: Abstract Micro Film

Screening and Discussion

- *Wavelength*, Michael Snow, 1967 (excerpt)
- *WVLNT (Wavelength for those who don’t have the time)*, Michael Snow, 2003 (excerpt)

Studio work: Structural Micro Film

Reading/response for next week: Snow, Michael and Willie Varela. "Canada's Multimedia Master: An Email Interview with Michael Snow," *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol. 57, No. 1 / 2, Spring/Summer 2005, pp. 23-32.

WEEK SEVEN: OCTOBER 23

Studio work: Structural Micro Film

Discussion: screening and reading

WEEK EIGHT: OCTOBER 30

CRITIQUE: Structural Micro Film

Screening and Discussion

- *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Maya Deren, 1935 (14:00)
- *Number Seventeen*, Alfred Hitchcock, 1932 (excerpt)
- *American Beauty*, Sam Mendes, 1999 (excerpt)

Reading/response for next week:

Deren, Maya, "A Letter to James Card," in *Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology*, 1977, pp. 224-230, reprinted from *Film Culture*, no. 39, Winter 1965.

Millsapps, Jan L. "Maya Deren, Imagist," *Literature Film Quarterly*, Vol 14, Issue 1, 1986, pp. 22-31.

WEEK NINE: NOVEMBER 6

Studio work: Film Poem/Poetic Essay

Discussion: reading

WEEK TEN: NOVEMBER 13

Studio work: Film Poem/Poetic Essay

WEEK ELEVEN: NOVEMBER 20

CRITIQUE: Film Poem/Poetic Essay

Screening and Discussion

- *Ballet Mecanique*, Fernand Leger, 1924 (excerpt)
- *Lost Motion* (1999) and *Valeria Street* (2018), Janie Geiser, 1999 (excerpts)
- *Joe*, Jill Haras, 2002; *Impromptu*, Bruce Alcock, 2013; *The Man Who Stole Dreams*, Joyce Borensteinm, 1987; *Mindfork*, Catherine Dubeau, 2016 (National Film Board of Canada; excerpts for animation styles)

Studio work: Special Effects/Animation/Surrealist Short-Form Film

WEEKS TWELVE and THIRTEEN: NOVEMBER 27 and DECEMBER 4

Studio work: Special Effects/Animation/Surrealist Short-Form Film

WEEK FOURTEEN: DECEMBER 11 (Final Exam day; start time may be different)

CRITIQUE: Special Effects/Animation/Surrealist Short-Form Film
