

HUMA 16000: Media Aesthetics: Image

Fall 2020

Instructor:

Email:

Writing Intern:

Office Hours:

Meeting time:

(INSTRUCTORS MAY EDIT DESCRIPTION AND KEY QUESTIONS AS THEY SEE FIT)

Course Description

The Media Aesthetics sequence teaches skills of analyzing and interpreting images, texts, and sound; it also considers the philosophical and methodological questions raised when we seek to understand the effects of these media. In the Winter quarter, we focus on textual representation, and on the medium of writing in particular. Our readings and discussion will be organized around a number of key themes and questions:

Writing, Materiality, Textuality: What is a text? How do texts mean, and what else do they do? What is the difference between a written text and spoken discourse? In what ways does writing shore up, shape, or unsettle our sense of self? In what ways does writing aid memory, or corrupt it? How and when does writing serve as an instrument of power or discipline, and how might it open avenues of resistance, freedom, or play?

Reading and Interpretation: What does it mean to read a text? When and how is interpretation called for, or constricted? What makes one interpretation “better” than another? Are there criteria for valid interpretations, and can these be shared? Are there different ways of reading and can we articulate their various pleasures, purposes, or values?

Course Texts (at Seminary Coop)

Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Arden) ISBN 1408133474

Plato, *Phaedrus* (Hackett); ISBN 9780872202207

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (Mariner Books); ISBN: 978-0618871711

Film

Akira Kurosawa, dir., *Rashomon* available to watch online at:

<https://uchicago-kanopy-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/video/rashomon>

Course Requirements and Policies

Papers

You'll write three formal papers for this course.

[end of week 3]: 750 words

[end of week 7]: 1000 words

[after week 10]: 1500 words

In order to prepare these papers, you will be divided into seminar groups in which you will meet regularly with [WRITING INTERN], who will help you to devise drafts and workshop papers before and after final submission. **These sessions are mandatory.**

Reading Period

March 12-13 is Reading Period; no class sessions or due dates may fall on these days.

SAMPLE COURSE POLICIES -- YOU MAY IMPLEMENT POLICIES AT YOUR DISCRETION

Grading

Attendance & Participation: 15%

Short Assignments: 20%

Paper One (750 ww.): 20%

Paper Two (1000 ww.): 20%

Paper Three (1500 ww.): 25%

Class Participation

Participation in this course consists of contributing to discussions, arriving on time and fully prepared, and actively listening to your peers.

Short Assignments

I will frequently assign short assignments to be completed in conjunction with your reading. Assignments may include brief responses to questions, close reading of a sentence or image, outlining an argument, and so on.

Writing seminars

You will be divided into seminar groups in which you will meet regularly with your writing intern, who will help you to devise drafts and workshop papers before and after final submission. These sessions are mandatory; missing a session is grounds for failing.

Papers

You'll write three papers for this course, due X/XX (1000 words), X/XX (1000 words), and X/XX (1500 words). Formatting and citation: Papers should only make reference to works on the syllabus. Papers must be formatted as follows: Word Document format, 1-inch margins, Times typeface, double spaced, pages numbered, a header on the first page with your name, the professor's name, the name of the course, and the date. Papers must have titles. MLA or Chicago Style citation should be used with every piece of writing you turn in.

Attendance

You may miss one class. If you miss more than one class, your final grade will drop a half grade (e.g. B to B-) for each class missed. If you miss more than three classes, you may be given an incomplete.

Late work/extensions

Late work will be marked down. I will give extensions when warranted but you need to ask at least a day in advance of the deadline.

Life events

Communicate with me immediately if something is going on that prevents you from fully engaging with this class. I am willing to make exceptions to policies under appropriate circumstances.

Accessibility

I am committed to ensuring that all students can fully participate in class. If you have a documented disability and require accommodation for this course, please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by the Student Disability Service office) so that we can begin discussing how you can best thrive through this course. If your disability is not registered but you have, or believe you may have, a disability, contact the office at 773-702-6000/TTY 773-795-1186 or disabilities@uchicago.edu, or visit the website at disabilities.uchicago.edu. If you need help navigating these services, please let me know.

If you have a documented disability, I encourage you to register with Student Disability Services. If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. Here is their contact information:

Address: 5501 S. Ellis Avenue
Chicago, IL 60637
Phone: (773) 702-6000
Email: disabilities@uchicago.edu
Web: <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/>

Academic dishonesty and plagiarism

It is your responsibility to ensure that all of your written work conforms to accepted standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is not only copying others' work; any improperly documented use of ideas can constitute plagiarism. Please consult the discussion of plagiarism and academic honesty in *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success*, which you will be given by your writing intern. It is crucial that you are familiar with these standards, and it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with them. If these standards are in any way unclear to you, please consult with me. **Academic dishonesty is a very serious offense, even if it is unintentional. Any form of academic dishonesty may result in immediate failure of this course and disciplinary action.**

Class Schedule

Week 1 What is a Sign? Convention, Arbitrariness, and Difference

[Recommended activity: check in with students to find out main concepts/ideas they gleaned from Fall; perhaps make concept map on board in day 1]

A Magritte, *The Treachery of Images*
Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*

Alternative:

Frank O'Hara, "Why I am Not a Painter" with Mike Goldberg, *Oranges*

B Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*: 1) "The Object of Linguistics"; 2) "Nature of the Linguistic Sign"; 3) "Linguistic Value"; 4) "Syntagmatic and Associative Relations"

Week 2 Translation and Poetics

NB - MLK DAY FOR M/W CLASSES

A Genesis Chapter 11
R. Crumb, "Genesis 11" *The Illustrated Book of Genesis*
Jorges-Luis Borges, "The Tower of Babel"
The Rosetta Stone
Joseph Kosuth, *Ex Libris J.-F. Champollion*

B Shklovksy, "Art as Technique"
Faoud Laroui, "Dislocation"

Week 3 Interpretation and Authorship

A Options:
Unit on Dadaism, surrealism, and literary experiments
Paradise Lost, Lines 1-82
Ronald Johnson, from *Radi Os*
Tom Philips, *A Humument*, pp. 1-75
William Burroughs, "The Cut Up Method"
Tristan Tzara, "To Make a Dadaist Poem"

Unit on close reading and authorial intention

John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"
Cleanth Brooks, "History Without Footnotes"

B Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author"

Week 4 Persuasive speech; Writing as technology

A Plato, *Phaedrus*

B Plato, *Phaedrus*

Week 5 Oral literature and the ethics of transcription

A Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (selections)
Folk song recordings made by Hurston
<https://www.loc.gov/collections/florida-folklife-from-the-works-progress-administration/about-this-collection>
<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/guides/Hurston.html>

Optional: Franz Boas, “On Alternating Sounds”

B Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (selections)

Week 6 Speech Acts and Performative Utterances

A J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (selections)

B Judith Butler, “On Linguistic Vulnerability” pp. 1-5, from *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*

6B Alternatives:

Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” *Limited Inc.*, pp. 1-21

Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”

Culler, “Apostrophe”

Declaration of Independence

Week 7 *The Tempest*

A Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

B Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Week 8 Narrative, truth-telling, and the language of film

A Kurosawa, *Rashomon*

Optional:

Akutagawa, “In a Grove” and “Rashomon”

Parker Tyler, “Rashomon as Modern Art”

B Kurosawa, *Rashomon*

Week 9 Text and Image

A Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*

B Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*

HUMA 16000: Media Aesthetics: Image**Fall 2020****Instructor:****Email:****Writing Intern:****Office Hours:****Meeting time:**

The Media Aesthetics sequence teaches skills of analyzing and interpreting images, texts, and sound; it also considers the philosophical and methodological questions raised when we seek to understand the effects of these media. In the fall quarter, we concentrate on visual images –like paintings, photographs, and films–as well as writings about images and the visual arts. We will reflect on the particular kinds of knowledge and experience that visual media generate. One of the questions posed by the artifacts we study this quarter is whether images are better understood to reflect and imitate the real world, or to instantiate something new and transform the world in which they appear. To this end, our class will ask not only how visual media work but also why the relation between creating and copying, and between reality and imitation, has long occupied a central place in western culture. Our goals are to develop skills as spectators of visual media, readers of philosophical arguments, writers of sharp critical prose, and discussants of complex matters of representation; meanwhile, we'll also seek to continue growing as analytical thinkers.

Course Texts (at the Seminary Coop)Plato, *Republic*, trans/ed. Reeve, ISBN 0872207366 (you must purchase this edition)Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, ISBN XXXXXAristotle, *Poetics*

All other readings available on Box

Events outside class timeFriday, Oct. 7, 3-5pm – Screening of *Close Up* at Doc Films, Ida Noyes Hall, 1212 E 59th StFriday, Nov. 4, 3-5pm Screening of *Vertigo* at Doc Films, Ida Noyes Hall, 1212 E 59th St

Film links for students who cannot or do not wish to attend screenings:

Vertigo: <https://digitalcampus-swankmp-net.proxy.uchicago.edu/uchicago371202/play/09b8c45a13ad68cf>*Close-Up*: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/uchicago/video/127217>SAMPLE COURSE POLICIES -- YOU MAY IMPLEMENT POLICIES AT YOU

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Course Schedule

Week 1

Introduction: Image and Medium

A Diego Velazquez, *Las Meninas*
Kerry James Marshall, *School of Beauty, School of Culture*

B Foucault, "Las Meninas"

Week 2

The Ethical Problem of Images

A Plato, *Republic*, Book 7 (pp. 208-214)
OPTION: Ovid, echo and narcissus

B Plato, *Republic*, Book 2 (p. 56-end), 3 (through p. 86) and 10 (all)

Optional/in class:
Motion Picture Production Code

10/9 3-5pm -- SCREENING OF *CLOSE UP* AT DOC FILMS, Ida Noyes Hall, 1212 E 59th St

Week 3 **Images and the Real**

- A *Close Up*
Aristotle, *Poetics*
- B *Close Up*

END OF WEEK 3: Paper 1 due

Week 4 **Photography and the Promise of Images**

- A Andre Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image”
Charles Baudelaire “Modern Public and Photography”
- Optional:
Poe, “The Daguerrotype”
Holmes, “The Stereoscope” (pairs well with special collections
stereoscopes)

- B **Coco Fusco, “Racial Time, Racial Marks, Racial Metaphors”**
Angélica Dass, *Humanae*

Adrienne B notes that we need a lot of examples to make the Fusco work well

Optional:
Omar Diop, *Diaspora*

Week 5

- A Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological
Reproducibility”
- B Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological
Reproducibility”

Week 6 **Technological Mediations of the Image**

- A Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”
Possible material to teach alongside Benjamin:
Text:
Vertov, “WE: Variant of a Manifesto”
Eisenstein, “Montage of Attractions”
Gunning, “The Cinema of Attraction”
- Film/image:
Early cinema clips
Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera*, excerpt (in class)
Eisenstein, *Que viva Mexico*, excerpt (in class)
Sergei Parajanov, *The Color of Pomegranates*, excerpt (in class)
Greenaway, *Eisenstein in Guanajuato*, excerpt (in class)
Mickey Mouse
first ten minutes of *Modern Times*
Lascaux cave paintings
Riefenstahl, clips from *Triumph of the Will*
Svankmajer, *Down under the Cellar*

- B Discussion and workshop on how to write about a text like “The Work of Art...”

XX/X 3-5pm SCREENING OF *VERTIGO* AT DOC FILMS, Ida Noyes Hall, 1212 E 59th St

Week 7 Looking and the gaze I

- A Alfred Hitchcock, *Vertigo*
Laura Mulvey “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”
- B Hitchcock, *Vertigo*

END OF WEEK 7: Paper 2 Due

Week 8 Looking and the gaze II

- A Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
(Some instructors may opt to continue teaching Suzan-Lori Parks, *Venus*)
Optional/background: Hartman, *Venus in Two acts*
- B Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
(Some instructors may opt to continue teaching Suzan-Lori Parks, *Venus*)

THANKSGIVING WEEK**Week 9**

A

Wrap-up

In-class writing discussion and workshop

B

Open class/wrap-up

End of Week 10: Paper 3 due

SOUND – SKELETON SYLLABUS

HUMA 16200: Media Aesthetics: Sound

Instructor:
Writing Intern:
Office:
Office Hours:

Course Description:

This course will extend our discussions of mediation and representation from the fall and winter quarters, but it will locate these broader discussions within issues that are specific to sound. Although music will be a significant part of our discussions, we will begin with a couple of simple questions: what, specifically, is sound? How can we describe and discuss sound as an object, and how can we think about listening as a unique sensory and cognitive activity? From there, our discussions will move in several different directions: to the voice, to the histories of (and histories within) sound and music, to sound technology within film and recording, and to the specificity of our own practices of listening and consumption in the MP3 and the album.

Course Texts (available at the Seminary Coop)

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Penguin) ISBN 9780140189988

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (Vintage) ISBN 9780394703695

All other readings will be in the course reader (available for pick-up in the Humanities Copy Room in the basement of Walker) and on the course's Canvas site.

Special Events

SAMPLE POLICIES – INSTRUCTORS MAY SET THESE AS DESIRED

Grading:

Paper 1: 20%

Paper 2: 25%

Paper 3: 25%

Listening Exercise: 5%

Canvas posts: 5%

Participation: 20%

Writing seminars:

Every student will attend three small-group writing seminars over the course of the quarter. **Attendance at the seminars is mandatory to receive credit for the writing seminars. If you miss a writing seminar, or if you fail to submit a draft for your seminar, you will receive an automatic 10% reduction in your grade for that essay.**

Papers:

Paper prompts will be distributed in class and posted on Canvas. Due dates and times will

be strictly observed (a paper due at 5pm and turned in at 7pm will be late, for example). However, realistic extensions will be granted if requested at least 24 hours in advance of the due date. Late work will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day past the due date.

All papers should be double-spaced and printed in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font, with numbered pages and one-inch margins.

Canvas posts:

Each Friday, I will distribute a prompt for that week's Canvas post via e-mail. Responses will be 250-300 words, and will be posted in the Discussion Board on the Canvas website by noon on Monday.

Listening Exercises:

More than the image and text quarters, this course requires active, attentive listening, and we will devote a part of every class to developing that skill. For weeks 1-4, I will lead the listening exercises. After that, you will be responsible for leading one listening exercise and leading a short discussion as a part of a small group. These presentations will be graded, and the grade will account for 5% of your final grade.

Attendance:

Attendance is **mandatory**. Everyone will be allowed two unexcused absences over the course of the quarter. Any further unexcused absences will result in a lowered final grade.

Reminder: Preparation is a part of attendance: in order to be present in class, and in order to participate, you need that day's assigned text!

Film Screenings:

This course will have one film screening on Wednesday, May 3.

Laptop policy:

Laptops, phones, tablets, etc. are not allowed in class. If you need to use a laptop in class because of a special need, please talk to me during the first week of class.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense. The University's official plagiarism policy is online:

<https://college.uchicago.edu/policies-regulations/academic-integrity-student-conduct>

In this course, plagiarized work in essays or in assignments for writing seminars will result in a zero for the assignment and a referral to the Dean of Students for the appropriate disciplinary response.

Schedule

1 What is Sound?

- A: Luciano Berio, *Sequenza No. 3 for Voice* (with score)
Emily Dickinson, "To Hear an Oriole Sing," "Split the Lark"
- B: Luigi Russolo, "Art of Noises"
Friedrich Kittler, "Gramophone" (pp.21-38), from *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*

2 Silence, Sound, and Technology / Noises and Soundscapes

- A: John Cage, 4'33"
Cage, "The Future of Music,"
Cage, "Experimental Music"
- B: Pierre Schaffer, "Acousmatics"
Steve Reich: "Music as a Gradual Process"
Steve Reich, *Come Out* (recording)

3 The Voice as Medium

- A: Roland Barthes "The Grain of the Voice"
- B: Dolar, "Linguistics of the Voice"
AND/OR Farah Jasmine Griffin, "When Malindy Sings"

PAPER 1 DUE

4 The Power of Sound: Nietzsche

- A: Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Sections 1-15)
- B: Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Sections 16-25)

5 The Power of Sound: Du Bois

- A: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*
- B: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*

6 Film, Sound, and Music

- A: *Gimme Shelter* (Albert and David Maysles, dirs.)
- B: *Gimme Shelter*

7 Songs or Image and Sound

- A: TBD – Instructors have taught William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*
- B: TBD

8 Recording, Remixing, and Listening

A: Jonathan Sterne, "The MP3 as Cultural Artifact"

B: TBD

9 The Album

A: Album – Often as voted on by students

B: Album

Suggestions:

Michael Jackson, Thriller

Prince, Purple Rain

Bjork, Biophilia

Fleetwood Mac, Rumors

Janelle Monae

Pink Floyd, Dark Side of the Moon

Final Essay Due