

New York University | Fall 2012
MCC-UE 1200-005: 1900/2000: Media in Transition

Instructor: Melanie Kohnen

Email: mek8@nyu.edu
Office location: 411 Lafayette, Room 333
Office hours: Tuesday, 2:30-4:30pm and by
appointment

Course location: Tisch Hall LC 13
Course Time: W 4:55-7:25PM

Description:

This comparative course charts the rapid changes that took place in American society at the turns of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The development and transformation of media technologies serves as a lens through which the course investigates modernity and post-modernism; imperialism and globalization; urbanization and community formation. The course places analog and digital media in a conversation to facilitate a deeper understanding of the current social transformations brought about by digital technologies.

Discourses of sexuality and race are central to all of these themes and will consequently feature prominently in the readings. In order to bridge the turn of the centuries, the course also includes a consideration of the middle of the twentieth century to highlight the emergence of the computer and programming languages. Course materials draw on a wide range of sources including theoretical writings, novels, films, photography, and digital media.

Course Goals and Objectives:

1900/2000: Media in Transition has two main goals: one, to provide you with a broad historical and cultural context for the development of film, television, and digital media, and two, to foster a critical interrogation of the various histories chronicling the emergence of media technologies.

The juxtaposition of various media, genres, and time periods enables you to explore scholarly works that craft strong arguments based on interdisciplinary inquiries. Furthermore, the primary and secondary sources you will encounter throughout the semester emphasize a transnational perspective and encourage thinking across a variety of borders (for example, imagined borders between the "West and the rest," between "high" and "low" culture, between the past and present, between linearity and discontinuity, between humans and machines). This approach enables you to develop an understanding of the intersections among media technologies and their cultural contexts that is grounded both in theory and in history.

Requirements and Assignments:

Class Archive: <http://mitnyu.tumblr.com/>

Starting with Week 3, two students will collaborate on researching additional audio or visual primary sources to illustrate the week's thematic focus and accompany the assigned readings. You will introduce your findings at the beginning of each seminar and post a short report to the course website that includes descriptions, links to, and/or excerpts of the primary sources you have discovered. The accumulated reports function as a primary source archive that chronicles class discussions.

Participation:

This is a discussion-based seminar. Consequently, your participation in class is crucial to the overall success of the class. You are expected to keep up with the readings and come to class prepared for discussion. This means you should not only have completed the readings, but be ready to discuss and engage the reading's major arguments. During class discussions, I will frequently ask you to suggest passages that we should examine in more detail; you should be able to identify these passages quickly by either underlining, marking the page, or taking notes in advance of class.

Research Project:

During the course of the semester, you will complete an independent research project on a topic of your choice. The project can take the form of a traditional, written paper, or of a mixed media object, incl. video, photography, remix, website etc., that addresses the theoretical concerns of the course (if you decide on a mixed media project, you will also write a short project statement explaining your conceptualization).

To ensure that you are on track with your project, you need to submit a proposal and a draft (see Assignment Schedule for due dates). **You are welcome and encouraged to meet with me during office hours or make an appointment to discuss any aspects of your project.**

You will give a brief presentation of your research project during the last class meeting on December 12. Your presentation needs to include an audio-visual component in the form of a well-designed PowerPoint or [Prezi](#).

Assignment Schedule

If not specified otherwise, all assignments are due at 11:59PM on the due date.

| Assignment | Due Date | Points |
|------------------------------|----------|--------|
| Critical Reflection | 10/12 | 150 |
| Participation | Ongoing | 100 |
| Class Archive | Variable | 200 |
| Research Proposal | 10/25 | 50 |
| Research Project-first draft | 11/18 | 100 |
| Research Project-final draft | 12/07 | 300 |

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|-----------------------|----------|------|
| Research Presentation | 12/12/12 | 100 |
| Total | | 1000 |

You will receive details about evaluation and grading criteria with each assignment. In general, your assignments will be evaluated on the strength and originality of your arguments, your ability to integrate and demonstrate a secure grasp of course content, and your ability to express your ideas in writing and other media.

Grading Scale:

1,000 points = 100%

A = 94-100

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89

B = 84-86

B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79

C = 74-76

C- = 70-73

D+ = 67-69

D = 64-66

F = 63 and below

Required Texts:

- Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Urban Culture and the Making of a Gay Male World, 1890-1940*
- Delany, Samuel. *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*
- Puar, Jasbir K. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*
- Additional texts will be made available as PDFs

Course Policies:

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed one unexcused absence during the semester (if your unexcused absences exceed that limit, you put yourself at risk of failing the course). All other absences must be for valid, non-academic reasons, such as medical emergencies (confirmed by a doctor's note) or religious holidays.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the work we have done during class. Also note that showing up more than ten minutes late to class automatically translates into an unexcused absence for that class meeting.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and

acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you

- cheat on an exam,
- submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors,
- receive help on a takehome examination that calls for independent work, or
- plagiarize.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score, and/or other materials that are not your original work. You plagiarize when, *without proper attribution*, you do any of the following:

- copy verbatim from a book, an article, or other media;
- download documents from the Internet;
- purchase documents;
- report from other's oral work;
- paraphrase or restate someone else's facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; or
- copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

Please consult Steinhardt's policy for more information:

http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity

Student Resources:

Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](#), 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

Reading Schedule

09/05/12: Introduction and Overview

09/12/12: History and the Archive

- Foucault, Michel. Introduction; The Historical *a priori* and the Archive; Archaeology and the History of Ideas. In: *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972. (PDF)
- Plant, Sadie. *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + the New Technoculture*. New York, Doubleday, 1997. (PDF)

Week 3-6: 1880-1918

09/19/12: Early Cinema: Sensory Dislocations

- Gunning, Tom. "['Animated Pictures': Tales of Cinema's Forgotten Future](#)." *Michigan Quarterly* 34:4 (Fall 1995): 465-486. (Link provided through NYU libraries; you might need to be logged in to your NYU account to access it)
- Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attraction(s): Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde." In: Strauven, Wanda (ed). [The Cinema of Attractions](#)

[Reloaded](#). Amsterdam University Press, 2006: 381-389. (another NYU library link; you'll have to navigate to the chapter. I suggest using the OAPEN link because you can download a PDF of the book from there)

- Fuller, Kathryn. "Boundaries of Participation: The Problem of Film Spectatorship and American Film Audiences, 1905-1930." (PDF; 13 pages)

09/26/12: The Modern City

- Chauncey, George. Introduction, 1-23; Part II: The Making of a Gay Male World. In: *Gay New York: Urban Culture and the Making of a Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

10/03/12: American Empires

- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. Introduction; Part I: Markets, 13-38; Part II: Images, 100-139; Conclusion. in: *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000.

10/10/12: Intersections

- Somerville, Siobhan B. Introduction; Chapter 2; Conclusion. In: *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000. (PDF)

Week 7-9: Transitions: 1950-1970

10/17/12: Paragons of Conformity? Television and Suburbia

- Lipsitz, George. Chapters 1-4 of *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998. (PDF)
- Spigel, Lynn. Spigel, Lynn. "The Suburban Home Companion" and "From Domestic Space to Outer Space." In: *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (2001). (PDF)
- *I Love Lucy*, "Ricky's Life Story;" *I Dream of Jeannie*, "The Americanization of Jeannie"

10/24/12: New World Orders

- McPherson, Tara. "U.S. Operating Systems at Mid-Century: The Intertwining of Race and UNIX." in: Lisa Nakamura and Peter A. Chow-White. *Race After the Internet*. New York: Routledge, 2012. (PDF)
- Select clips focusing on the 1960s from the Prelinger Archive, which hosts a collection of ephemeral, that is, advertising, educational, industrial, and amateur, films

Week 9-14: 1980-Present

10/31/12: Infectious Communications

- Kohnen, Melanie. "Toward the Gay 90s: Redefining Queer Visibility Through the Lens of AIDS." (PDF)
- Dibbel, Julian. "Viruses Are Good For You." In: *Old Media, New Media*. Ed. by

- Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan (New York: Routledge, 2006). (PDF)
- Galloway, Alexander. "Tactical Media." In: *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004. (PDF)
- *ACT UP*. A film by James Wentzy. 2002.

11/07/12: Cyberpunk: The Internet's A Priori

- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. "Orienting the Future." In: *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiberoptics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006. (PDF)
- Gibson, William. *Neuromancer* (excerpt). New York: Ace Books, 1984. (PDF)
- Gibson, William. *Pattern Recognition* (excerpt). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2003. (PDF)
- *Blade Runner*. Directed by Ridley Scott (1982).

11/14/12: Globalization

- Delany, Samuel. Part 2: Three, Two, One, Contact: Times Square Red. In: *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. NYU Press, 2001.
- Sassen, Saskia. Part II: The Economic Order of the Global City. In: *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. 2nd edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001. (PDF)

11/21/12: No class.

11/28/12: After 9/11

- Puar, Jasbir K. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

12/05/12: Computing the Future

- Wilson, Willow G. *Alif the Unseen*. Grove Press, 2012.

12/12/12: Student Research Presentations