

**Penn State University – School of Visual Arts
Fall 2017**

ART 211Y: Introduction to Digital Art and Design Criticism

Professor: Eduardo Navas (ean13@psu.edu)

Tuesday and Thursday 12:05 PM – 1:20 PM

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday , 10 AM – 11 AM, 206 Arts Cottage

Course Description

Art 211Y focuses on developing a critical, theoretical, and historical understanding of media art and design. Participants will learn to do research and write effectively on contemporary media art and design practice, while also developing a project of their own in response to the material discussed throughout the class. Participants will attain an intimate understanding of how image, sound and text are redefined by emerging media and deployed in material and virtual space to communicate ideas. To achieve this, participants will examine the conventions, language, practices, and aesthetics used by media artists and designers in direct relation to the social and cultural implications that creative production has in society, politics, philosophy, economics, race, gender, and technological development.

The class is specifically focused on developing conceptual skills that will enable students to create engaging experiences with greater depth and intellectual rigor when using still images, video footage, text, sound, code, and any form of binary information. The main purpose of the class is to prepare students to learn how to perform effective research for the successful production of advanced projects according to their own interests in future classes as well as beyond the classroom.

Emphasis of Class:

The class will focus on international media art and design. To accomplish this, students will make use of online resources and databases including Rhizome.org, Turbulence.org, Furtherfield.org, Digicult.it, and Media Arts Net, among others. Participants will go over selected works from these online resources to learn about the history and cultural questions that inform contemporary media art and design practice. Participants will also implement cultural analytic methodologies in order to analyze works effectively. This means that students will learn the principles of data visualization to implement them as part of major projects and class presentations. The class will use three texts, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* by Raymond Williams, *Mythologies* by Roland Barthes, and *Media Art Histories* edited by Oliver Grau. We will be studying in depth the writing approaches by the authors in order to attain a concrete understanding of the research and writing process that each of them went through for their respective publications. Participants will apply their understanding of the authors' writing processes to their own research, writing and project development.

Class Structure

Class sections for the most part will be divided as follows: One of the days in the week (mostly Tuesdays) will consist of discussion and lectures on material being researched for assignments. The other day of class (mostly Thursdays) will be a day of work and research; it may also be a day of brief review to make sure students are up to date on all material covered to that point in class. These days will fluctuate in relation to the schedule of classes around holidays. Students will be enhancing their writing, research as well as technical skills according to their respective projects. Students will meet with the instructor individually as needed. The students will turn in a total of three projects.

Project 1: Analysis of new media art/design project

Project 2: Analysis of second new media art/design project

Project 3: Production of new media art/design project (by students)

Details on each project will be announced at least two weeks prior to the due date.

Learning Outcomes:

1. To understand how content and form may potentially change in meaning from medium to medium, and making the most of this difference to enhance the possibilities of communication of ideas as artists, designers, or cultural producers.
2. To understand the history and theory relevant to an interdisciplinary practice in art and design that crosses over to other fields of specialization.
3. To acquire an advanced understanding of conceptual models that are essential for interdisciplinary production.
4. To gain research skills that will carefully inform the choice of technical tools and technology used to develop interdisciplinary and transmedia work.
5. To produce projects that communicate messages effectively and are critically invested.

A Note on Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. A student who commits plagiarism will be reported to the office of the visual arts. The student's behavior will be taken very seriously and dealt with according to the guidelines provided by Penn State University – School of Visual Arts. To avoid plagiarism, please cite your sources when appropriate.

Academic Integrity Statement

University Policies and Rules Guidelines states that academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to acts such as cheating on exams or assignments; plagiarizing the words or ideas of another; fabricating information or citations; facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others; claiming authorship of work done by another person; submitting work completed in previous classes; and/or submitting the same work to multiple classes in which a student is enrolled simultaneously.

Accessibility Statement

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. The Office for Disability Services (ODS) Web

site provides contact information for every Penn State campus: <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/dcl>. For further information, please visit the Office for Disability Services Web site: <http://equity.psu.edu/ods>.

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Safety Information

Students in the School of Visual Arts may find themselves working in the shop or in their studios or classrooms using a variety of power and hand held equipment, which may cause injury. Students should use the shop only after having received an orientation in the use of such equipment and when supervised by faculty or shop personnel. Should any injuries occur, in the shop, studios, or classrooms in the School of Visual Arts please report them to Matt Olson, Shop Supervisor, Room 108-A Visual Arts Building, Phone: 814-865-3962, email: mjo5165@psu.edu.

Required Books

Available at the PSU Bookstore:

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2012.

Oliver Grau, Ed. *Media Art Histories*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007.

Online Resources:

We will be analyzing work by contemporary artists. Many of them will be found in the following online resources (in no particular order):

<http://rhizome.org>

<http://turbulence.org>

<http://furtherfield.org>

<http://digicult.it>

<http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/Artport>

<http://netartreview.net>

<http://newmediafix.net>

<http://netart.org.uy/latino/>

<http://norient.com/en/>

<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/mediaartnet/>

Recommended Books

You are not required to buy the following books. They are included because they will be useful in helping you engage with contemporary new media and digital art:

Paul, Christiane. *Digital Art*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015.

Rush, Michael. *New Media in Art*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999.
Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Requirements

Please note that final grades are dependent upon consistent performance in all course requirements.

- **Attend every class session.** (See attendance below for more details.)
- **Participate in class exercises, as well as lab time.** Class participation will also include in-class exercises.
- **There are a total of 3 projects.** The point breakdown is below.
- **There are no make-ups.** Please check with me for possible exceptions. Not consulting with me prior to the dates when assignments are due will lead to an automatic F.
- **Final projects cannot be late**—no exceptions.

Grading

- Attendance and Class Participation 10%
- Weekly online forum participation: 15%
- Class Discussion Lead: 15%
- Major/Minor Project 1: Analysis of new media art/design project, 15%
- Major/Minor Project 2: Analysis of second new media art/design project, 20%
- Major/Minor Project 3: Production of new media art/design project, 25%

Total 100%

Grade Scale

- 94-100 = A
- 90-93 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 84-86 = B
- 80-83 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 74-76 = C
- 70-73 = C-
- 60-69 = D
- 0-59 = F

Attendance

- Three Absences = F, Three tardies (15 minutes late or early departure) = one absence.
- One Absence will take away 1.5% from attendance grade and 1.5% from class participation.
- There are no excused absences unless it is an extreme case. Please check with me for exceptions.

Semester Schedule

Lectures on history and theory will shift according to the students' needs to gain practical knowledge from week to week.

Week 1:

Tuesday, August 22, 2017

- Introduction to Class
- Lecture on History of Art, Media, and Design
- Discussion Forum Sign-Up Board (Canvas) – Select which Forum you would like to lead. Due by Friday.

Thursday, August 24, 2017

- Lecture on History of Art, Media and Design, Part 2: Discussion of semiotics, structuralism, post-structuralism in relation to art and design
- Go over selected works of media art and design
- Begin online discussion on Canvas forums

Week 2:

Tuesday, August 29, 2017

- **Guidelines for Project 1 released, due on September 28**
- **Release of First Weekly Assignment due on September 14 in preparation for Project 1**
- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," pp. 215 – 274

Thursday, August 31, 2017

- Go over selected works of media art and design
- Lab day: post comments on Canvas forums | Work on weekly assignment.

Week 3:

Tuesday, September 5, 2017

- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - Roland Barthes "The Writer on Vacation," 22 – 25, "Criticism Blind and Dumb," 29 – 31

Thursday, September 7, 2017

- Go over selected works of media art and design
- Lab day: post comments on Canvas forums | Work on weekly assignment.

Week 4:

Tuesday, September 12, 2017

- **Minor Project 1 due**
- online critique of weekly assignment
- Go over selected works of media art and design

- Lab day: post comments on Canvas forums.

Thursday, September 14, 2017

- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - “Introduction,” Oliver Grau, “The Coming and Going of Images,” Rudolf Arnheim, in *Media Art Histories*, 1 – 18

Week 5:

Tuesday, September 19, 2017

- In class discussion of material from September 14, 2017
- Go over selected works of media art and design
- Lab day: post comments on Canvas forums

Thursday, September 21, 2017

- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - “Historizing Art and Technology,” Edward A. Shanken, in *Media Art Histories*, 43 – 70
- Work on analysis of new media art/design project due on September 28.

Week 6:

Tuesday, September 26, 2017

- **Due: Major Project 1, Analysis of new media art/design project 20%**
- In class project critique

Thursday, September 28, 2017

- **Guidelines for Major Project 2 released, due on October 26**
- **Release of Minor project 2 due October 12**
- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - “The Myth of Immateriality,” Christiane Paul in *Media Art Histories*, pp. 251 – 274
 - Introduction to Data Analytics and Data Visualization
- Go over selected works of media art and design

Week 7:

Tuesday, October 3, 2017

- Lab day work on Weekly Analytics Project
- Post comments on Canvas forums

Thursday, October 5, 2017

- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - “Image, Process, Performance, Machine Aspects of an Aesthetics of the Machinic,” Andreas Broeckmann, in *Media Art Histories*, pp. 193 – 206

Week 8:

Tuesday, October 10, 2017

- Lab day, work on Weekly Analytics Project
- Post comments on Canvas forums
- Go over selected works of media art and design.

Thursday, October 12, 2017

- **Minor Project 2 Due on Data Analytics due**
- Online critique of Minor Project
- Go over selected works of media art and design.

Week 9:

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - “It is Forbidden Not To Touch,” Peter Weibel, in *Media Art Histories*, pp. 21 – 42
- Go over selected works of media art and design.

Thursday, October 19, 2017

- Lab day, work on Second new media art/design project due on Monday, October 26
- Post on Angel forums

Week 10:

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

- **Due: Major Project 2, Analysis of second new media art/design project, 25%**
- Class Critique

Thursday, October 26, 2017

- **Minor Project 3 released, due on Monday, November 16**
- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - “Making Studies in New Media Art Critical,” Timothy Lenoir in *Media Art Histories*, pp. 355 – 380
- Go over selected works of media art and design.

Week 11:

Tuesday, October 31, 2017

- **Guidelines for Project 3 released: Production of new media art/design project (by students)**
- In class discussion of material from October 28
- Lab day, work on Third Weekly Assignment due on Monday, November 16
- Post on Angel forums.

Thursday, November 2, 2017

- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - “There are no Visual Media,” W. J. T. Mitchell in *Media Art Histories*, pp. 395 - 406

- Go over selected works of media art and design.

Week 12:

Tuesday, November 7, 2017

- Lab day, work on Third Weekly Assignment due on Monday, November 16
- Post on Angel forums.

Thursday, November 9, 2017

- **Read and be ready to discuss:**
 - “Abstraction and Complexity,” Lev Manovich in Media Art Histories, pp. 339 - 354
- Go over selected works of media art and design.

Week 13:

Tuesday, November 14, 2017

- **Due: Minor Project 3**
- Online critique of Minor Project 3
- Go over selected works of media art and design.

Thursday, November 16, 2017

Due: Proposal for Final project

- Lab day work on Project 3
- Post comments on Angel forums

Week 14:

Tuesday, November 21 2017

Thanksgiving

Thursday, November 23, 2017

Thanksgiving

Week 15:

Tuesday, November 28, 2017

- Lab day work on final project

Thursday, November 30, 2017

- Lab day work on final project

Week 16:

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

- **Due: Major Project 3, Production of new media art/design project (by students), 35%**
- In class Presentation, part 1

Thursday, December 7, 2017

- **Project 3 in class presentation, Part 2**
- Make adjustments to final project and prepare for final submission, due on December 16.

Week 17:

December 12, 2017

- **Due: Final Project.**