**SPRING 2015: THE DIALECTICAL IMAGE**

Film & Media Studies 90: Senior Capstone

Swarthmore College

TTh 2:40-3:55 pm, McCabe 306

Screening: Monday 7-10 pm, LPAC 101

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Office Hours - TTh 4:30-5:30 pm and by appt.

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Office Hours – Monday 11-2 pm; TTH 9-11 am

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

As the culminating experience in the Film and Media Studies major and minor, the team-taught capstone course brings together the senior class for sustained critical and creative work, both collaborative and individual. Through readings, screenings, production exercises, critiques, and a final film project, students link their inquiries and productions to important historical precedents, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and styles in film and media art and scholarship.

Spring 2015’s capstone explores the dialectical image, a concept introduced by Walter Benjamin in his ambitious, unrealized Arcades Project, which looked for utopian dreams of an unrealized future embedded in the material traces of 19th  Parisian culture.  "Ambiguity is the figurative appearance of the dialectic, the law of the dialectic at a standstill. This standstill is Utopia, and the dialectical image therefore a dream image," read one of his notes. We will take advantage of the ambiguity of the concept itself, lifting the dialectical image from its conceptual basis in German Jewish Marxist theories of history to illuminate postmodern image culture. In particular, we will use it to combine ideas of embodied perception and cultural encounter, the simultaneity of events widely separated in history and the copresence of objects that are spatially distant. Our projects will be dialectical images that bring critical theory and imagination to bear on each other.

Student work will use the essay form--of which Benjamin himself was a master--to give shape to these concepts without sacrificing their subjective significance for the maker or viewer of artworks. Our assignments will explore and expand the essay form, encompassing the experimental documentary tradition exemplified in the work of Chris Marker and Trinh T. Minh-ha and working with the emerging method of videographic moving image studies highlighted in the new online journal [[in]Transition](http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/).

Students will produce individual video essays (illustrated arguments about theories and texts using existing footage) with an emphasis on critical analysis, and a final essay film, loosely defined as a response in audiovisual form to a phenomenon or concept that engages an audience while retaining a subjective point of view.

**VISITING ARTISTS AND FILMMAKERS**Philadelphia photographer Zoe Strauss and Argentine video artist Leticia Obeid will be on campus as part of the TriCollege Artist-in-Residence program and students will have the opportunity to work with them.

**BOOKS (available at Swarthmore Bookstore)**

* Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida : Reflections on Photograph* (Hill and Wang, 1981)
* Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Harvard UP, 2002)
* Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (MIT Press, 1991)
* Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film* (Oxford UP, 2013)
* Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Duke UP, 2000), required
* Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *Critical Visions in Film Theory* (Bedford St Martins, 2011) - reference

**POLICIES**  
You are expected to attend class meetings, screenings, and occasional outside talks, prepare for class by reading assigned read texts and posts carefully, bring your readings to class and participate in discussion in an informed and productive way. Assignments should be completed on time, and full participation in collaborative projects and the final exhibition is expected.

**DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS STATEMENT**

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services (Parrish 113) or email [lhempli1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:lhempli1@swarthmore.edu) to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, she will issue students with documented disabilities a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact her as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the Student Disability Service website at <http://www.swarthmore.edu/student-life/academic-advising-and-support/student-disability-service.xml>. You are also welcome to contact us, Professor Cho and Professor White, privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged through Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services.   
  
Note that some material covered in this course may have challenging content (e.g., depictions of violence). If you have a disability related to the viewing of materials with specific content, take steps to arrange an appointment and Accommodations Letter with the Office of Student Disability Services.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Tumblr (http://the-dialectical-image.tumblr.com/)

Introduce yourself as artist/thinker through words and images / DUE: Week 2

Production Projects: (60%)  
Each documentary film project will be formally presented and critiqued in the class. These are +/- of each project letter grade, so attendance is critical. Your group’s performance is evaluated by how well you prepare and by your ability to listen to and engage constructive feedback.

* 20% - *Video Essay* that takes inspiration from Arcades Project (5 min.)
* 30% - *Short Film* (Essay Film or Narrative, 10 min.)
* 5% - Director’s Lookbook and Pre-production Book
* 5% - Completed Production Booklet

Written Assignments: (15%)

* 10% - Response Papers (2) posted on scheduled rotation
* 5% - Response Paper on outside screening

Attendance and Participation: (15%)

* Participation includes short assignments (Discussion, Tumblr assignment, Written Proposals, Peer feedback, and Production Workshop Exercises)
* More than three absences will lower your grade significantly. Missing 6 classes or more will be grounds for a failing grade in this course.

Work Ethic: (10%)

* Responsibility, Resourcefulness, Collaboration, Positive Attitude
* Regular tardiness will count as absences.
* You will receive credit for late work submissions, but the grade will be marked down by a +/- Letter Grade for each day it’s late.

**FMST 90: THE DIALECTICAL IMAGE / Spring 2015 Schedule**

# **Week 1** TUE 1.20 Introduction to the Course

* Assign: Tumblr   
  http://the-dialectical-image.tumblr.com/
* Introduce: Video Essay and Final Project
* *Modern Times* (dir. Charlie Chaplin, 1936)
* Ghosts Before Breakfast (dir. Hans Richter, 1928, Germany, 9 min.)
* Catherine Grant,  “Touching the Film Object”
* Of the Sea (dir. Jane Jin Kaisen, South Korea/Denmark, 2014, 2.5 min)

# [WED 1.21 Special Screening @ I-House, Philadelphia, 6 pm

* *Mother of George* (Andrew Dosunnu, 2013) with cinematographer Bradford Young]

THU 1.22 The Dialectical Image

* Walter Benjamin, “Paris, Capital of the 19th Century” and excerpts from *The Arcades Project*
* Susan Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing -* excerpts
* Assign: Arcades Project Moodle Post

FRI 1.23 Haverford College, WCC Gallery, 4:30 pm

* Exhibition Opening: Zoe Strauss’ *Sea Change*  *­­­*­­­­­

**Week 2** MON 1.26 Screening, LPAC Cinema, 7 pm

* Raoul Ruiz, *Marcel Proust’s Time Regained* (1999, 169 min.)
* **DUE: Arcades Project Moodle Post**

TUE 1.27 Editing Workshop [White out of town]

* **DUE: Individual Tumblr page**
* Workshop: Editing Found Footage

THU 1.29 Visiting Artist: Zoe Strauss

* *Zoe Strauss: 10 Years* (On Reserve at McCabe)
* Class followed by public reception!

**Week 3** MON 2.02 Screening, LPAC Cinema, 7 pm

* *They Live By Night* (Nicholas Ray, 1948, 95 min.)

TUE 2.03 The Video Essay

* **Due on Moodle: Post a link to an example of a video essay**
* Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*
* Adrian Martin, “The Inward/Outward Turn”

THU 2.05 The Video Essay

* Catherine Grant, “The Audiovisual Essay: My Favorite Things”
* Assign: Video Essay

**Week 4** MON 2.10 Screening, LPAC Cinema, 7 pm

* *Bontoc Eulogy* (Marlon Fuentes, 1995, 60 min.)
* *Lumumba: Death of a Prophet* (Raoul Peck, 1990, 60 min.)
* *History and Memory* (Rea Tajiri, 1992, 32 min.)

TUE 2.11 Touching Cinema

* **Due on Moodle, 9 am: Response Papers (Group 1)**
* Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film –* Intro & Ch. 1
* Gilles Deleuze, Excerpts from *Cinema 1 & Cinema 2*

TUE 2.13 Touching Cinema

* **Due on Moodle, 9 am: Response Papers (Group 2)**
* Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film –* Ch. 2 & 3

**Week 5** MON 2.16 Screening, LPAC Cinema, 7 pm

* *Sans Soleil* (Chris Marker, 1983, 100 min.)
* *Image of the World and the Inscription of War*

(Harun Farocki, 1989, 73 min.)

TUE 2.17 Essay Film Form

* **Due on Moodle, 9 am: Response Papers (Group 3)**
* Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film* - Ch. 1-3, 6
* Assign: Final Project (Essay Film or Narrative)

[WED 2.18 Harun Farocki Screening/Discussion @ Haverford]

THU 2.19 Critique – Video Essay, extended class past 4 pm

* **Due: Video Essay**
* [Visiting Artist Zoe Strauss on campus]

[FRI 2.20 Olga Zhevchenko Talk, 2 pm]

[SAT 2.21 Irina Leimbacher with James Benning, *Landscape Suicide,* International House, Philadelphia]

**Week 6** MON 2.23 Screening, LPAC Cinema, 7 pm

* + - * + *On Cannibalism* (Fatimah Tobing Rony, 1994, 6 min.)
        + *Araya* (Margot Benacerraf, 1959, 82 min.)

TUE 2.24 Ethnographic Encounters

* **Due on Moodle, 9 am: Response Papers (Group 1)**
* Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye*
* Michel de Montaigne, “Of Cannibals”  (optional)

THU 2.26 Returning the Gaze [Cho out of town]

* **Due on Moodle, 9 am: Response Papers (Group 2)**
* Jamaica Kincaid, “A Small Place”

**Week 7** MON 3.02 Screening, LPAC Cinema, 7 pm

* *Still Life* (Jia Zhang-ke, 2006, China, 111 min.)

TUE 3.03 Slow Cinema

* **Due on Moodle, 9 am: Response Papers (Group 3)**
* James Tweedie, from *The Age of New Wave*

THU 3.05        TBA [Cho out of town]

* **Due on Moodle: Midterm Reflection Paper**

\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\*

**Week 8** MON 3.16 Short Film Screening, LPAC Cinema, 7 pm

* *Tord and Tord* (dir. Niki Lindroth von Bahr, 2010, 11 min.)
* Tomorrow Everything Will be Alright  
  (dir. Akram Zaatari, 2010, Lebanon, 7 min.)
* *Mondial* (dir. Roy Dib, 2010, Lebanon, 20 min.)
* *Historia Del Desierto* (dir. Celia Gala Julve, UK, 2003, 6 min.)
* *Televisnu* (dir. Prithi Gowda, India, 2010, 15 min.)
* More shorts: TBA

TUE 3.17 Film Proposals / Visual Research

* **Due: Final Project Short Proposals (2 ideas)**
* Workshop: Lookbooks
* Workshop in Small Groups: 2 proposals

THU 3.19 Production Techniques

* **Due: Final Proposal (1 idea)**
* Workshop: Camera Options

**Week 9** TUE 3.23 No Screening

* Use this time for your visual research and pre-production

TUE 3.24 Production Techniques

* Workshop: Green Screen

THU 3.26 Final Project Presentations with Zoe Strauss

* **Director’s Lookbook and Pre-production Booklet**
* Presentations with Zoe Strauss

**Week 10** MON 3.30 No Screening – Attend one of the *Strange Truth* events

TUE 3.31 Editing Workshop with Leticia Obeid [Location TBD]

[WED 4.1 Special Screening, Bryn Mawr Film Institute, 7pm

* *Sweetgrass* with producer/directors Lisa Barbash and Lucien Castaing-Taylor]

THU 4.02 Post-production Techniques

* Workshop: Green Screen & Color Key in After Effects

[Screening, Sharpless Auditorium @ Haverford, 7pm

* *Leviathan* with director Lucien Castaing-Taylor/]

**Week 11** MON 4.06 Presentation, LPAC Cinema, 7 pm

* Leticia Obeid (to be confirmed)

TUE 4.07 Post-production Techniques

* Workshop: Finishing

THU 4.09 Post-production

* Open Studio *or*
* [Re: Humanities Conference]

**Week 12** TUE 4.14 Final Project: Post-production

* **Due: Rough Cut (1/2 class)**

THU 4.16 Final Project: Post-production

* **Due: Rough Cut (1/2 class)**
* [Zoe Strauss on campus, possible exhibition]

**Week 13** TUE 4.21 Final Project: Critique

* **Due: Final Cut (1/2 class)**

THU 4.23 Final Project: Critique

* **Due: Final Cut (1/2 class)**

**Week 14** MON 4.27 Final Project Exhibition Copy Upload, 9 am

* **Due as Vimeo Link & on Server**

TUE 4.28 Course Wrap-Up

THU 4.30 Final Screening, LPAC Cinema, 7 pm (Midterm & Final)

**Finals Week** THU 5.07 Tri-Co Film Festival