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MAR 442.01: Experimental Film

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COURSE SYLLABUS – AUTUMN 2014

MEDIA ARTS 442-01: EXPERIMENTAL FILM

Instructor: ANDREW SMITH
Wed 1:10am–4pm
McGill 227
Phone: 396-5052

Office/Hours: room 232
TH 11am- 1pm
or by appointment
andrew.smith@mso.umt.edu

Course Description:

Surveying a wide range of experimental and avant-garde cinema (film, video & mixed media) from 1923 to 2013, with a central focus being artistic practice in the context of historic, industrial and cultural concerns. Students will study, conduct independent research on, and create projects that explore film/video both as a form of personal expression and as an artistic medium, rather than as mass entertainment.

Course Expectations:

1. **Attendance** is mandatory. 3 unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.
2. There are **no make-up exams, or extensions** given for projects or written work. All written work must be turned in **on time**. **Emailed** versions of written work is accepted, as long as they are accompanied by a **hard copy**.
3. Late projects or assignments will result in a **loss of ½ letter grade** for that project/assignment per day late.

Course Requirements:

weight

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Attendance/Participation | 20% |
| 2. Journal of films | 10% |
| 3. Mid-Term Test | 15% |
| 4. Shooting/Processing/transfer 16mm | 15% |
| 5. Final film project | 25% |
| 6. Research presentation | 15% |

Film Journal

You will keep a notebook on the films in this class, as well as others you are watching on your own time. These notes will ultimately cohere into a written “manifesto” that you will turn in and present to the class— a personal and considered summary of your reactions and emotions (loves, hates, inspirations, repulsions). I’m particularly interested in unexpected jolts of recognition, ideas of dream capture, unforeseen pathways into your sense of self, new tools in your sense of cinematic possibility.

Research Presentation

Each of you will give a 10-minute presentation that links the film work you are doing to one of the filmmakers— or collectives— or film movements— that pertains to this class. The idea is to present your film (or work-in-progress) in the CONTEXT of the rich history of 100 years of experimental film work. More details on this forthcoming.

Film Project

Each of you will get to work in an “analog” medium; that is to say, you will load, shoot, and develop at least one 3-minute roll of 16mm film, which will be the basis of your experimental work. You are happily encouraged to shoot more rolls than that, and you are also encouraged to use mixed media (e.g., direct editing, video effects, animation, etc.) in combination with your cinema. But at least one of your works in this class will be grounded in actual film-making. You will transfer your film to digital format, and edit your film, as much as you need, in digital media (we do not have film editing equipment).

Grading Criteria for Experimental works

Experimental works, by their very nature, are extremely subjective, and therefore difficult to grade on an artistic basis. However, it's easy to detect lackluster effort and/or sloppy work, as well as work that is late or poorly planned and executed. You also will be expected to give a coherent & relevant presentation and short “manifesto” (written description) of your work.

The non-subjective criteria for grading your films is as follows:

Turned in on time and completed;

Ability to write about, discuss and justify process;

Ability to write about, discuss and justify goals and expectations;

Ability to write about, and justify content in a historical and cultural context.

Reading

I will present, via Xerox or email, chapters & excerpts from these, among other, texts:

“Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000,” P. Adams Sitney, 2002, Oxford University Press

“Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties,” David E. James, 1989, Princeton University Press

“Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-Garde Cinema,” James Peterson, 1994, Wayne St. University Press

“Avant-Garde Film: Motion Studies,” Scott MacDonald, 1993, Cambridge University Press.

*“Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945”—*edited by Jan-Christopher Horak.

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at www.umt.edu/SA/PSA/Index.cfm/page/1321.

Schedule of Topics— Experimental Film

I. Origins & Structures: 1919-1939

Tour a la Raison 1923, Man Ray

Ballet Mechanique 1924, Fernand Leger

Anemic Cinema 1926, Marcel Duchamp

Emak-Bakia (“***Leave Me Alone***”) 1926, Man Ray

L’Etoile De Mer 1928, Man Ray

The Fall of the House of Usher 1928, Watson & Webber

Un Chien Andalou 1929, Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali

Man With A Movie Camera 1929, Dziga Vertov

L’Age d’Or 1930, Luis Bunuel

Blood of a Poet 1930, Jean Cocteau

The Hearts of Age 1934, Orson Welles

II. Trances & Rituals: 1940-71

Meshes of the Afternoon 1943, Maya Daren

Fireworks 1947, Kenneth Anger

Scorpio Rising 1961, Kenneth Anger

Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome 1954, Kenneth Anger

Works of Stan Brakhage 1952-2003

Brakhage (1999, documentary by Jim Shedden)

Flaming Creatures 1963, Jack Smith

37 Fluxus Films 1963-66, Fluxus Group

Shadows, 1959, John Cassavetes

The Connection 1961, Shirley Clarke

Main Banana no. 1 1964, Andy Warhol

Wavelength 1967, Michael Snow

(nostalgia) 1971, Hollis Frampton

III. Handmade & Cut Up: 1947-67

Film No. 3: Interwoven (1947-49) Harry Smith

Rose Hobart (1945), ***By Night with Torch and Spear*** (1940?) Joseph Cornell

Odds & Ends (1959) Jane Belson Shimane

Aleph (1956-66) Wallace Berman

7362 (1967) Pat O’Neill

[Diaries, Notes, and Sketches]

Notes on the Circus (1966) Jonas Mekas

IV. Midnight & Beyond: 1969-1977

Midnight Movies Documentary

El Topo 1970, Alejandro Jodorowski

Pink Flamingos 1972, John Waters

The Harder They Come 1973, Perry Henzel

Short Films of David Lynch

Eraserhead 1977, David Lynch

Hold Me While I'm Naked George Kuchar

I, an Actress 1977, George Kuchar

It Came From Kuchar (documentary, Jennifer Kroot)

IV. Impulse & Influence: 1977-2013

Trapped in Canton (1973) William Eggleston

No More Workhorse Blues (2005), Harmony Korine

Human Remains (1994); *Smell of Burning Ants* (1998) Jay Rosenblatt

Alone: Life Wastes Andy Hardy, Martin Arnold

Wide Awake, (2006) Alan Berliner

Sweetgrass (2010); *Leviathan* (2013) Lucien Casting-Taylor

The Cremaster Trilogy, Matthew Barney

V. If Time Permits: but you need to be aware of:

ANDREJ TARKOVSKY

BILL VIOLA

NAM JUN PAIK— various works

TRINH T. MINH-HA

YVONNNE RAINER

JAMES BENNING

ERNIE GEHR

DAVID RUSSO— *Bringer of War*

WILLIAM GREAVES— *Psychosimbiotaxiplasm*

GUS VAN SANT— *Mala Noche*

JON JOST— *Belle Diamond, Sure Fire, Last Chants for a Slow Dance...*

JIM JARMUSCH— *Permanent Vacation*

RICHARD LINKLATER—

SLACKER, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO LEARN TO PLOW BY READING BOOKS

MICHEL GAGNE—*SENSOLOGY* (2010)

...And Films of your choosing/discovery/ warning...