

CCA Spring 2013 . SPONTANEOUS CINEMA FOR DESIGN RESEARCH

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CCA Media Center, SF Campus
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catalog description

course section number DESGN-614-03, GELCT-620-03

credits 3.00

meets Tuesdays noon - 3, Main SF Building, Room E2

start and end 22 January 2012 - 07 May 2012

course description Observational cinema has an affinity with the designer's aptitude for discerning relationships among phenomena and imparting structures to experience, for dwelling in the alternating currents of ambiguity, for making sense through association, combinatorial play, and projective construction. This video production course invites you to experiment with moviemaking as a process of design research. Our approach comes to grips with the paradoxical nature of cinema—that cinema operates at once as both a record and a language. Can you walk without watching your step? Do you mean what you see? Given that the cinema of observation involves a manner of revealing more than a language of telling, how may we define its rules of practice, codes of representation, principles of structure, and elements of style? While using your eyes and ears to respond to emerging patterns in the situation, and moving the point of view to account for dynamic conditions, this exploration involves not only the subject of your observation and the act of observing, but also it is systematically guided by the language of cinematic construction. We might say that it exercises your sensory-motor and narrative systems of intelligence simultaneously.

grading 35% attendance, collaboration in others' projects, contribution to class discussion and critique of fellow students' work.
45% video production assignments 1-5.
20% final video research project.

week 1 class meets 22 January.

title **THE VERB FOR WHAT ONE DOES WITH A MOVIE CAMERA (HOW TO WALK WITHOUT WATCHING YOUR STEP 1)**

students present themselves.

Rachel presents tools and techniques of spontaneous cinematography.

more examples *How to Fold a Shirt, Ghosts Before Breakfast* by Hans Richter, clips from Rachel's *AM Manual*.

in-class exercise **"ALL RIGHT, MR. DEMILLE, I'M READY FOR MY CLOSEUP" A TAG TEAM MOVIE:**
Each person in turn introduces herself with a simple quick self-expressive gesture. The gesture and its cinematography are designed to reveal a camera's view of some part of herself or surroundings that human eyes would not naturally see. Then the actor takes the camera for her turn capturing the next person's closeup. Also choreograph the handoff and record it as a separate transitional shot.

reading assigned Strickland chapter in *Design Research*, Panasonic HDC-HS700 manual, equipment and production checklists, check, check.

production assigned **object lesson** (in camera edit).

week 2 class meets 29 January. Last add/drop date is 01 February.

title **ACTUALITIES**

students present **object lesson.** Discussion about “How to Walk Without Watching Your Step” by Rachel Strickland.

Rachel presents Glimmers of form and technique in experiments from early cinema. Truth and fantasy in cinematic representation. Techniques of spontaneous cinematography.

more examples early short films by Georges Méliès and frères Lumière.

reading assigned “Let There Be Lumière” chapter in *For Documentary: Twelve Essays* by Dai Vaughan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

The Filmmaker’s Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age by Steve Ascher and Edward Pincus (Plume, 2008): chapter 9 section on Composition and Shot Selection.

production assigned **acoustic movie.**

week 3 class meets 05 February. First day to withdraw from classes is 04 February.

title **SOUND MAKES THE DISTANCE OF THE IMAGE POSSIBLE**

students present **acoustic movie** (camera selects or preliminary edit). Discussion about “Let There Be Lumière” by Dai Vaughan.

Rachel presents sound recording science and techniques.

more examples *Ear to the Ground* by Sanborn, Fitzgerald and Van Tieghem; *Playtime* by Jacques Tati; *Pather Panchali* by Satyajit Ray.

readings assigned *The Filmmaker’s Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age* by Steve Ascher and Edward Pincus (Plume, 2008): chapter 10 - Sound Recording Systems, chapter 11 - Sound Recording Techniques.

The Theory of the Film by Béla Balász, 1952: chapter 16 - Sound.

week 4 class meets 12 February.

title **(HOW TO WALK WITHOUT WATCHING YOUR STEP 2)**

students present **acoustic movie** (finished edit). Discussion about *The Theory of the Film* by Béla Balász.

Rachel presents Spontaneous cinematography: finding, selecting, and composing. *H is for House* by Peter Greenaway, *The Gleaners and I* by Agnes Varda.

reading assigned “The Fate of the Cinema Subject” chapter in *Transcultural Cinema* by David MacDougall (Princeton University Press, 1998).

production assigned **portrait with point(s) of view.**

- week 5** class meets 19 February
- title **IS THERE MONTAGE IN DREAMS?**
- students present **portrait with point(s) of view** (in progress). Discussion about “The Fate of the Cinema Subject” by David MacDougall.
- Rachel presents Montage without narrative. Projective construction. *Backyard Transformations* by Rachel Strickland. Intro to editing with Adobe Premiere Pro.
- week 6** class meets 26 February. Midterm evaluations begin 04 March.
- title **DIARIES, NOTES, AND SKETCHES**
- students present **portrait with point(s) of view** (finished).
- Rachel presents Excerpts from *Walden* by Jonas Mekas.
- reading assigned “Taking Video Beyond ‘Hard Data’ in User Centred Design” by Jacob Buur, Thomas Binder, and Eva Brandt. *Proceedings of the Participatory Design Conference, New York, 2000*.
- production assigned previously unseen **map (of a place or a process)**.
- week 7** class meets 05 March.
- title **IN THE BEGINNING THERE WERE SCISSORS**
- students present **map** (in progress). Discussion about “Taking Video Beyond ‘Hard Data’ in User Centred Design” by Jacob Buur, Thomas Binder, and Eva Brandt. Discussion about students’ current design projects.
- Rachel presents In the Beginning There Were Scissors: Intimations of the User Interface in Motion Picture Editing.
- more examples *Man With a Movie Camera* by Dziga Vertov.
- week 8** class meets 12 March.
- title **WHO IS DESIGNING WHAT FOR WHOM?**
- students present **map** (finished).
- Rachel presents **ALTERNARRATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS 1) GENRES FOR DESIGN RESEARCH.** Does video solve design problems? Portraits, conversations, and ordinary days. *Portable Effects* by Rachel Strickland. *Recess: Incidents in the Playground* by Rachel Strickland; *Work Movies: The Everyday Lives of Java Developers* by Rachel Strickland; *Phoning a Deaf Person* in Salu Ylirisku’s DVD.
- reading assigned TBD

week 9 class meets 19 March.
 title **ALTERNARRATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS 2) SITE SPECIFICS AND GEOGRAPHICS**
 “Space is the time you need to go to someone else.”
 • Jean-Luc Godard, TV interview with Dick Cavett (1980)

Rachel presents Godard: mise-en-scène and montage in *Masculin Féminin*; *Fata Morgana* by Werner Herzog *Allons-y Alonzo* by Rachel Strickland. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* by William H. Whyte.

more examples

reading assigned selections concerning 1) database and narrative and 2) spatial montage in *The Language of New Media* by Lev Manovich (MIT Press, 2001).

2 productions assigned **superception** and **final project**.

week 10 Spring Break 25-29 March. No class.

week 11 class meets 02 April. Last day to withdraw 05 April.
 title **FORAYS IN POLYLINEAR CONSTRUCTION**

students present Discussion about readings in *The Language of New Media* by Lev Manovich.

Rachel presents many TV sets in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* by Nicholas Roeg; excerpts from *The Pillow Book* by Peter Greenaway; *Hotel* by Mike Figgis; *Crossed Words* by Nick Reid; *Emptiness Can Hold Things* by Rachel Strickland.

reading assigned “When Less is Less” chapter in *Transcultural Cinema* by David MacDougall (Princeton University Press, 1998).

week 12 class meets 09 April.
 title **ALTERNARRATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS 3) SITE SPECIFICS AND GEOGRAPHICS**
 “Cinema is far too rich and capable a medium to be merely left to the storytellers.”
 • Peter Greenaway (1986)

students present **superception** (in progress). Discussion of “When Less is Less” by David MacDougall.

Rachel presents experimental cinema structures: site specifics and geographics (continued).

more examples *Eaux d’artifice* by Kenneth Anger; *Last Year at Marienbad* by Alain Resnais and Alain Robbe-Grillet.

reading assigned TBD

week 13 class meets 16 April.

title **THE ENVIRONMENT IS INVISIBLE: CINEMATIC STRATEGIES FOR EXTRASENSORY INTELLIGENCE**

students present **superception** (finished).

guest filmmaker Jane Nisselson *Electromagnetic Spectrum*, fragrance launch series, skin process animations, examples from sensory visualization class at NYU.

more examples *Chronos* by Ron Fricke, *Muto* by Blu.

reading assigned "The Aesthetics of Ambiguity" chapter in *For Documentary: Twelve Essays* by Dai Vaughan. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

week 14 class meets 23 April.

title **DO YOU MEAN WHAT YOU SEE?**

students present **final projects** (in progress). Discussion of "The Aesthetics of Ambiguity" by Dai Vaughan.

Rachel presents Cinema vérité and direct cinema . Visual anthropology and the ethics of observation.

more examples *Happy Mothers Day* by Richard Leacock and Joyce Chopra; *Forest of Bliss* by Robert Gardner.

reading assigned TBD

week 15 class meets 30 April

title TBD

students present **final projects** (in progress).

Rachel presents *Rebuilding an Old Japanese House, Palladio Potatoes Piano Piano* by Rachel Strickland.

week 16 Last class meets 07 May. Spring classes end 10 May.

title **THE END, BUT NOT NECESSARILY IN THAT ORDER**

students present **final projects**.