The Video Essay (Fall 2017)

FILMSTUD 50Q: The Video Essay: Writing with Video about Film and Media
(Sophomore Seminar)

Seminar: Prof. Shane Denson
Tues 12:00-2:50pm   Office: McMurtry 318
Room: Oshman 012   Office Hours: TBD
(Group Edit Room)   shane.denson@stanford.edu

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Course Description:

In this seminar, we will explore what it means to "write with video," and we will learn to make effective and engaging video essays about historical and contemporary audiovisual media. Specifically, we will examine formal, aesthetic, and rhetorical strategies for communicating through video, and we will conduct hands-on exercises using digital video editing software to construct arguments, analyses, and interpretations of film, television, video games, and online media.

Compared with text, the video essay offers a remarkably direct mode of communicating critical and analytical ideas. Video essayists can simply show their viewers what they want them to see. This does not mean, however, that it is any easier than an essay composed with ink and paper. Like the written essay, the new technology introduces its own challenges and choices, including decisions about the organization of space and time, audiovisual materials, onscreen text, voiceover commentary, and visual effects.

By taking a hands-on approach, we will develop our skills with editing software such as Adobe Premiere Pro and Apple's Final Cut Pro while also cultivating our awareness of the formal and narrative techniques employed in films and other moving-image media. Through weekly assignments and group critique sessions, we will learn to express ourselves more effectively and creatively in audiovisual media. As a culmination of our efforts, we will assemble a group exhibition of our best video essays for public display on campus.

Please make sure you are registered for the class on Canvas. Handouts and additional course material will be posted there.

Required Textbooks, Software, Tutorials:

Required: Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*. 9th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2014.

Optional: Keathley, Christian, and Jason Mittell. *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound & Image*. Montreal: Caboose, 2016.

Recommended: Van den Berg, Thomas, and Miklós Kiss. *Film Studies in Motion: From Audiovisual Essay to Academic Research Video*. Open-access ebook: Scalar, 2016: http://scalar.usc.edu/works/film-studies-in-motion/index

Recommended: *The Audiovisual Essay: Practice and Theory of Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies*. Falmer: REFRAME. Online: http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/

Additional resources: *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies* "Resources" page: http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/resources

Additional readings (listed in the course schedule) will be made available via Canvas.

Students will also need access to nonlinear video editing software, such as Adobe Premiere Pro or Apple's Final Cut Pro X. Adobe software is available on a subscription basis, and a student discount is available. Final Cut Pro is available

for download from the Apple App Store, or as part of a discounted bundle for students: the Pro Apps Bundle for Education. Students are free to choose which software they will work with in the course.

Finally, students are directed to the software tutorials available on Lynda.com (free access for Stanford students with your SUID). You are encouraged to complete the tutorials for your editing software (Final Cut Pro or Premiere Pro) at your earliest convenience, ideally before the beginning of the quarter. Recommended milestones for completion are indicated in the course schedule (for the Final Cut Pro tutorial – a similar set of tutorials is available for Premiere Pro).

Course Requirements:

1. Regular attendance and preparation for class. Irregular attendance will negatively affect your final grade. Active participation will help improve your final grade. Readings, tutorials, and viewings are to be completed by the date listed on the syllabus.

2. Short written and/or videographic responses to the reading and viewing assignments each week. Questions or prompts will be announced in class the week prior. Please be prepared to present your text or video response in class. You are allowed no more than one missing assignment; late assignments (i.e. assignments received after class and up to 7 days afterwards) will count as half-complete (i.e., you are allowed no more than two late assignments). Assignments received more than 7 days late will not be accepted.

3. Final videographic assignment – **due by December 14, 2017, 3:15pm (electronic submission)**.

Students with Documented Disabilities:

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: **http://oae.stanford.edu**).

Grading:

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

10% Class participation and preparation

60% Weekly assignments

30% Final project

Course Schedule:

Week 1

09.26. Introduction: What Is a Video Essay?/Writing with Video
TEXTS: Timothy Corrigan, "Writing about the Movies" and "Beginning to Think, Preparing to Watch, and Starting to Write" (Chapters 1 and 2 of *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*)

Conor Bateman, "The Video Essay as Art: 11 Ways of Making a Video Essay" (online: http://norbateman.co/11-ways-to-make-a-video-essay/)

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VIDEOS: Please view the videos embedded in Bateman's article and bring one or two examples of any personal favorites.

Week 2

10.03.   Editing and/as Formal Analysis
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Shot/Scene Analysis (Excel table)

TEXTS: Timothy Corrigan, "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing" (Chapter 3 of *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*)

Roy Thompson, *Grammar of the Edit* (excerpt)

Blain Brown, *Cinematography: Theory and Practice* (excerpt)

TUTORIALS: Lynda.com Final Cut Pro X Essential Training: Introduction; Lesson 1 (Getting to Know the Editing Environment); Lesson 2 (Ingesting and Organizing Your Assets); Lesson 11 (Project and Media Management)

VIDEOS: Antonios Papantoniou, "Steven Spielberg Shot by Shot" (online: https://vimeo.com/117709159)

Week 3

10.10.   Re-Editing Found Footage/Mashups
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Shot/Reverse Shot Mashup (Video, 2 min.)

TEXTS: William C. Wees, "In the Domain of Montage: Compilation, Collage, Montage" (Chapter 4 of *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*)

Corey Creekmur, "On the Compilation and Found-Footage Film Traditions of the Video Essay" (online: http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2014/06/28/compilation-and-found-footage-traditions)

TUTORIALS: Lynda.com Final Cut Pro X Essential Training: Lesson 3 (Basic Editing: Laying the Foundation); Lesson 4 (Refining the Edit: Using Trimming Tools); Lesson 5 (Exploring Connected Clips and Secondary Storylines); Lesson 12 (Sharing and Exporting)

VIDEOS: Jen Proctor, "A Movie"; Kogonada, "Hands of Bresson"; Jason Livingston, "The End" (all curated in Corey Creekmur's article)

Bruce Conner, "A Movie"

Week 4

10.17.   Sound Editing
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Sound/Image Relations (Video, 2 min.)

TEXTS: Michel Chion, "Projections of Sound on Image" and "The Three Listening Modes" (Chapters 1 and 2 of *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*)

Shane Denson, "Ancillary to Another Purpose" (online: https://medieninitiative.wordpress.com/2015/02/05/ancillary-to-another-purpose/)

TUTORIALS: Lynda.com Final Cut Pro X Essential Training: Lesson 6 (Basic Audio Editing)

VIDEOS: Shane Denson, "Ancillary to Another Purpose"

Week 5

10.24.   Voiceover
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Voiceover Video Essay (Video, 3 min.)

TEXTS: Timothy Corrigan, "Six Approaches to Writing about Film" and "Style and Structure in Writing" (Chapters 4 and 5 of *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*)

Adrian Martin, "A Voice Too Much" (online: http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/reflections/adrian-martin-a-voice-too-much/)

Conor Bateman, "The Video Essay as Art: Finding Your Voiceover" (online: https://www.fandor.com/keyframe/the-video-essay-as-art-finding-your-voiceover)

TUTORIALS: Lynda.com Final Cut Pro X Essential Training: Lesson 7 (Additional Editing and Organizational Techniques)

VIDEOS: Ian Garwood, "The Place of Voiceover in Academic Audiovisual Film and Television Criticism" (in *Necsus: European Journal of Media Studies*, Autumn 2016: http://www.necsus-ejms.org/the-place-of-voiceover-in-audiovisual-film-and-television-criticism/)

Kogonada, "What Is Neorealism?" (online: http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2014/02/28/what-neorealism-kogonada)

Allison de Fren, "*Ex Machina*: Questioning the Human Machine" (online: https://vimeo.com/203960047)

Week 6

10.31.   Videographic Storytelling
ASSIGNMENT DUE: A Story (Video, 3 min.)

TUTORIALS: Lynda.com Final Cut Pro X Essential Training: Lesson 9 (Working with Effects)

VIDEOS: Christian Keathley, "Pass the Salt" (online: https://vimeo.com/23266798)

Storytelling exercises by Tracy Cox-Stanton, Liz Greene, Kristen Warner, and Melanie Kohnen, in the companion website to *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound and Image* ("Tell A Story": http://scalar.usc.edu/works/videographic-essay/videographic-voiceover-storytelling?)

Week 7

11.07.   Epigraphic Criticism
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Epigraphic Video Essay (Video, 3 min.)

TEXTS: Choose a scholarly article or book that will serve as the basis of your epigraphic video essay.

VIDEOS: Paul Malcolm, "Notes Toward a Project on Citizen Kane" (online: https://archive.org/details/NotesTowardsAProjectOnKane)

filmscalpel, "Notes on Pickpocket" (online: http://www.filmscalpel.com/notes-on-pickpocket/)

Catherine Grant, "Touching the Film Object?" (online: http://filmanalytical.blogspot.com/2011/08/touching-film-object-notes-on-haptic-in.html)

Shane Denson, "VHS Found Footage and the Material Horrors of Post-Cinematic Images" (online: http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2015/08/17/vhs-found-footage-and-material-horrors-post-cinematic-images)

Week 8

11.14.   Poetic Possibilities
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Free-Form Video Reflection (3 min.)

TEXTS: Catherine Grant, "Dissolves of Passion: Materially Thinking through Editing in Videographic Compilation" (in Keathley and Mittell, *The Videographic Essay*)

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VIDEOS: Kevin B. Lee, "The Essay Film – Some Thoughts of Discontent" (online: http://videos.criticalcommons.org/transcoded/http/www.criticalcommons.org/Members/mikissi/clips/the-essay-film-some-thoughts-of-discontent-by/video_file/mp4-high/the-essay-film-some-thoughts-of-discontent-mp4.mp4)

Catherine Grant, "Dissolves of Passion" (online: https://www.caboosebooks.net/node/150)

Thanksgiving Break

No Classes 11.20.-11.24.

Week 9

11.28.   Deformative Criticism
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Deformative Experiment (Video or other format)

TEXTS: Mark Sample, "Notes Toward a Deformed Humanities" (online: http://www.samplereality.com/2012/05/02/notes-towards-a-deformed-humanities/)

Kevin L. Ferguson, "Slices of Cinema: Digital Transformation as Research Strategy," *The Arclight Guide to Media History and the Digital Humanities*, eds. Charles R. Acland and Eric Hoyt. Falmer: REFRAME/Project Arclight, 2016. (online: http://projectarclight.org/book/)

Jason Mittell, "Videographic Deformations: PechaKuchas" (online: https://justtv.wordpress.com/2016/01/12/videographic-deformations-pechakuchas/)

Jason Mittell, "Videographic Deformations: 10/40/70" (online: https://justtv.wordpress.com/2016/01/14/videographic-deformations-104070/)

Jason Mittell, "Videographic Deformations: Equalized Pulse" (online: https://justtv.wordpress.com/2016/01/17/videographic-deformations-equalized-pulse/)

VIDEOS: Kevin L. Ferguson, "Volumetric Cinema" (online: http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/03/10/volumetric-cinema)

Shane Denson, "Participatory Poverty (after Hito Steyerl)" (online: https://medieninitiative.wordpress.com/2015/04/10/participatory-poverty-after-hito-steyerl/)

Gregg Biermann, "Emergent Phenomena" (online: https://www.fandor.com/films/emergent_phenomena)

Gregg Biermann, various works (online: https://www.fandor.com/filmmakers/director-gregg-biermann-652)

Week 10

12.06.   Forms of Interactivity
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Final Project, Rough Cut (Video)

TEXTS: Shane Denson, "Speculative Data: Post-Empirical Approaches to the 'Datafication' of Affect and Activity" (online: https://medieninitiative.wordpress.com/2016/01/31/speculative-data-full-text-mla-2016-weirddh/)

VIDEOS: Contributions to *after.video* (Raspberry Pi-based video book, edited by Oliver Lerone Schultz, Adnan Hadzi, Pablo de Soto, and Laila Shereen Sakr)

Karin + Shane Denson, "Scannable Images" (online: http://shanedenson.com/stuff/ScannableImages/index.html)

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Shane Denson, "Don't Look Now: Paradoxes of Suture" (online: http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2016/10/06/don-t-look-now-paradoxes-suture)

Tyler Knudsen, "What I Learned from Watching: Breathless (1960) [INTERACTIVE VIDEO]" (online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Iz3JTGHRh0)

Finals Week

12.14. Final Paper/Project Due by 3:15pm!

Exhibition

01.12. – 01.26.2018. Public Exhibition of Videos in Gunn Foyer, McMurtry Building!