VM503 Aesthetics and History of New Media
Walker 418, TR 12:00 - 1:45 pm

Adjunct Professor **Jo-Anne Green**, MFA, MS
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:00 pm (and by appointment)

Course Description

What is new media? How has it altered our perception of artist/audience, author/reader, producer/consumer, professional/amateur? We will look at precedents such as Dada, Fluxus, Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), Conceptual Art, Mail Art, and Relational Art, and compare them to recent genres such as Telecommunications Art, Net Art, Networked Performance, Information Visualization, Art in Synthetic Worlds and Art & Social Media. Examples of computational developments will be interspersed throughout. We will also consider whether traditional aesthetic criteria can be applied to New Media Art, where remix, coding/software, collaboration, open source, and participation dominate the cultural landscape. The Aesthetics and History of New Media is still very much *under-construction*. As we excavate its birth and follow its trajectory, we might ask the following: Are we witnessing the end of Art – the system of galleries, museums, collectors, and free market capitalism – and the birth of something else (creative culture), where "amateur" storytellers, VJs, coders, etc. become our makers and translators; and corporations (Google, Facebook) become the sole owners and archivists of all?

Required Reading

There is no course textbook. All readings either will be handed out, emailed, or accessed online.

Course Requirements

Participation	40%
Multimedia Presentation of Class Readings	20%
Research (Oral Presentations)	20%
Final Paper	20%

Project Descriptions

Multimedia Presentation of Class Readings

Over the course of the semester, each student is required to lead two class discussions based on assigned reading materials. This entails a **20-minute multimedia presentation** that exhibits an understanding of the concepts articulated by the author, and provides examples of artists/works mentioned. The rest of the class will be expected to ask questions and contribute to the discussion, such that it is clear to the instructor that they have read the material.

Research (Oral Presentations)

Each student will mine journals, blogs, newspapers, magazines, etc. for technology related information that impacts online creativity. This can include everything from *copyright, piracy, free labor, open source, social media, and mobile devices to surveillance, augmented reality, video games* and *synthetic worlds*. Also consider these terms: *Digital Aesthetics, Computational Aesthetics, Immaterial Aesthetics, Database Aesthetics, Ephemeral Aesthetics, Synthetic Aesthetics, Web Aesthetics, Glitch Aesthetics, Remix Aesthetics, Social Aesthetics,* and *Flux Aesthetics*. Each student must present once a week for **5-10 minutes**, and answer questions from the class about the research. I will assign half the class Tuesdays and the other half Thursdays.

Projects will be evaluated based on the students understanding of the topic, their articulation of the information to the class, and its relevance to the course.

Paper

Students will select an historic precedent and relate it to a contemporary practice. They may either expand on material covered in class, or introduce new material (as long as it is relevant to the course). The paper will be evaluated according to (1) understanding of key concepts, (2) research abilities, (3) originality of ideas, and (4) writing skills. The paper must be **10 pages** (double spacing) with Footnotes/Endnotes/MLA Citation and a Bibliography (additional pages).

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Late Work: All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day specified in the syllabus. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. You will not be admitted if you are more than 7 minutes late. More than one unexcused absence will result in a failing grade.

Participation: Participation contributes to 40% of your grade. You will be expected to demonstrate that you have done the reading and that you are interested in the course material. Initiative and enthusiasm will be rewarded.

Laptops in the Classroom: Laptops will not be permitted. Students will use a classroom computer for their presentations. During each class, a student will be designated "class surfer", conducting searches for queries that arise.

Plagiarism: All information or content in papers and projects must include the proper attribution of its source. "Plagiarism is the act of using another person's ideas or expression in your writing without acknowledging the source. The word comes from the Latin word plagiarius ('kidnapper'), and Alexander Lindey defines it as 'the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of a person's mind, and presenting it as one's own' (Plagiarism and Originality [New York: Harper, 1952] 2). It is also possible to plagiarize from yourself: turning in a project or paper from a previous class without asking both professors' permission. So, careful acknowledgment and documentation is the best way to avoid plagiarism,

a serious offence in the academy that can result in failure, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the situation and the degree of the act.

<u>Disability Statement:</u> If you believe you have a disability that may warrant accommodations in this class, I urge you to register with the disability services coordinator at 216 Tremont Street, 5th Floor (617-824-8415), so that together you can work to develop methods of addressing needed accommodations in this class.

<u>SCHEDULE</u>

WEEK ONE

9/15   Course Introduction

Media in Class: (1) Michael Wesch, **The Machine is Us/ing Us** and (2) **The Machine is (Changing) Us: YouTube and the Politics of Authenticity**

9/17   <u>Reading</u>: Walter Benjamin: **The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (Version 1, 1935)**

<u>Media in Class:</u> John Berger, **Ways of Seeing**

WEEK TWO

9/22   <u>Reading</u>: Vannevar Bush, **As We May Think**

<u>Media in Class:</u> **Sketchpad**, Ivan Sutherland

9/24   <u>Reading</u>: Owen Smith, **Pre-Fluxus Conceptual Developments and Generative Influences** (course pack)

<u>Media in Class:</u> (1) **Marcel Duchamp Interviews** (2) **John Cage on forgetting and the uniqueness of Coca-Cola Bottles**

WEEK THREE

9/29   <u>Reading:</u> Norbert Wiener, **Men, Machines, and the World About**

10/1   <u>Reading</u>: Alan Kaprow, **Happenings in the New York Scene** and Johanna Drucker, **Collaboration without Object(s) in the Early Happenings**

<u>Media in Class:</u> (1) **Hello**, Alan Kaprow; (2) **The Last Nine Minutes**, Douglas Davis; (3) **Hole in Space**, Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz.

WEEK FOUR

10/6   <u>Reading</u>: Roy Ascott, **The Construction of Change** and Edward A. Shanken, **Cybernetics and Art: Cultural Convergence in the 1960s**

Media in Class: (1) **The NLS Demo**, Douglas C. Engelbart and William K. English

10/8   Reading: Various, **Four Selections by Experiments in Art and Technology**

Media in Class: **Open Score by Robert Rauschenberg**, and **Variations VII by John Cage**, 9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering.

WEEK FIVE

10/13   (1) Edward Shanken, **The House that Jack Built: Jack Burnham's Concept of Software as a Metaphor for Art** and (2) Edward Shanken, **Art in the Information Age: Technology and Conceptual Art**

10/15   Reading: Jack Burnham, **Systems Esthetics**

Media in Class: Alan Kay, **Personal Computing: Historic Beginnings**

WEEK SIX

10/20   Reading: Seeta Peña Gangadharan, **Mail Art: Networking Without Technology**

Media in Class: (1) **History of the Internet** (2) **Ethan Zuckerman's History of the Internet** (3) **The Invention of the World Wide Web**

10/22   Reading: Bill Nichols, **The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems"**

WEEK SEVEN

10/27   Reading: Bolter and Grusin, **Immediacy, Hypermediacy, and Remediation** (pages 1-15)

Media in Class: **The Sixth Sense**

10/29   Reading: Bolter and Grusin, **Immediacy, Hypermediacy, and Remediation** (16-end)

WEEK EIGHT

11/3   Reading: Eduardo Kac, **Aspects of the Aesthetics of Telecommunications**

Media in Class: (1) **Walter Ruttmann – Weekend** (2) **Paul Sermon, Telematic Dreaming** (3) **Paul Sermon** (4) **War of the Worlds** (radio)

11/5   Due: **Research Paper Proposals**

Reading: Florian Cramer, **Entering the Machine and Leaving It Again: Poetics of Software in Contemporary Art**

Media in Class: **Jeffrey Shaw: Legible City, Responsive Environment**

WEEK NINE

11/10   NO CLASS

11/12   Edwina Bartlem, **Reshaping Spectatorship: Immersive and Distributed Aesthetics**

WEEK TEN

11/17   Reading: Sherry Turkle, **Video Games and Computer Holding Power**

   Media in Class: (1) **Space Wars** (2) **The History of Pong** (3) **History of Nintendo**

11/19   Reading: Arthur Danto, **The Aesthetics of Brillo Boxes** and Golan Levin, **New Media Artworks: Prequels to Everyday Life**

   Media in Class: (1) **Myron Krueger - Videoplace, Responsive Environment** (2) **Golan Levin Makes Art that Looks Back at You**

WEEK ELEVEN

11/24   Reading: Jason Freeman, **Storage in Collaborative Networked Art**

   Media in Class: **8-Bit Documentary**

11/26   NO CLASS

WEEK TWELVE

12/1   Reading: Hanna Sommerseth, **Exploring Game Aesthetics**

12/3   Reading: Adriana de Souza e Silva & Daniel M. Sutko, **Playing Life and Living Play: How Hybrid Reality Games Reframe Space, Play, and the Ordinary**

   Media in Class: (1) **I Like Frank by Blast Theory** (2) **Day of the Figurines by Blast Theory** (3) **Uncle Roy All Around You by Blast Theory** (4) **Can You See Me Now – Tokyo by Blast Theory** (5) **Ulrike and Eamon Compliant by Blast Theory** (6) **Rider Spoke by Blast Theory**

WEEK THIRTEEN

12/8   Reading: Lev Manovich, **Who is the Author? Sampling, Remixing/Open Source**

   Media in Class: (1) **Lawrence Lessig: What's Good for Artists and Creativity** (2) **M.A.R.S. - Pump Up The Volume** (3) **You're Not My Father by Paul Slocum**

12/10   Reading: Patrick Lichty, **Why Art In Virtual Worlds? E-Happenings, Relational Milieux & "Second Sculpture"**

Media in Class: (1) **One Hour Sim Project by Eshi Otawara** (2) **Scene from VolaVola (Gazira Babeli's Gallery)** (3) **This Land Is Your Land... by Gazira Babeli** (4) **China Tracy: RMB CITY - A Second Life City Planning** (5) **China Tracy: i.Mirror**

WEEK FOURTEEN

12/15   Reading: Christiane Paul, **The Database as System and Cultural Form: Anatomies of Cultural Narratives**

Media in Class: (1) **Pockets Full of Memories by George LeGrady** (2) **Effective Information Visualization by Matthias Shapiro - EP 31**

12/17   Reading: Kazys Varnelis, **The Immediated Now: Network Culture and the Poetics of Reality**

FINAL EXAM PERIOD

12/22   **Paper Due**