

HUM 425-01 | |Thought and Image

Fall 2014

Dr. Robert C. Thomas

T/TH 12:35–1:50 in BH 28

Office: HUM 416, Office Hour: Thursday's 1:50 pm — 2:50 pm

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Course Website: <http://thoughtandimage.org/>

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

One of the defining characteristics of globalization has been the increasing proliferation of the image (in various forms) throughout society. Images are everywhere: Cell phones, the World Wide Web, social networking, advertising, movies, video games, comics, pornography. They pervade our everyday lives. How do we think the growing proliferation of image in society? In this course, we will think seriously about the power (and potential) of the image in global culture. In particular, we will ask how our relation to the image changes the ways we think about race, sexuality, and gender, among much else. Towards this end, we will study video games, kitsch, film theory, digital culture, philosophy, literature, and social theory. Students will read social theory by McKenzie Wark, Steve Shaviro, Celeste Olalquiaga (Chile), Ian Bogost, Nicholas Rombes, Yuriko Furuhatu, Brian Massumi, Guy Debord and the Situationist International. Students will be introduced to difficult critical concepts such as spectacle, simulacra/simulation, mise-en-scene, and post-cinematic affect, among much else. We will read a science fiction novel by Douglas Lain about Christopher Robin (from Winnie-the-Pooh) “growing up” to become a member of the Situationist International in May 68 during the student uprisings in France. We will carefully study and analyze the films of Douglas Sirk and Todd Haynes in relation to mise-en-scene, melodrama and “women’s pictures.” The films of Richard Kelly and Nevelndine/Taylor will be studied in relation to both genre and post-cinematic (digital) forms of expression. Work from the Art Theater Guild and Japanese avant-garde cinema from 1970 (Oshima Nagisa’s *Man Who Left His Will on Film*) will be studied in relation Japanese landscape theory (*fuke-iron*), as well as compared to the work of the Situationist International in France. Forms of global popular culture will be used to interpret the cultural present. Cross-cultural analysis will be presented in the context of subcultures within globalization, as well as in relation to Western and non-Western cultures.

## **BOOKS** (Available at the bookstore)

Ian Bogost -*How to do Things with Video Games*

Douglas Lain - *Billy Moon*

Nicholas Rombes - *10/40/70*

Steven Shaviro – *Post-Cinematic Affect*

McKenzie Wark – *Gamer Theory*

## **ESSAYS** (Print, Read, Bring to Class)

Michael Camille – "Simulacrum" from (ed) Nelson and Shiff, *Critical Terms in Art History*  
Guy Debord – "The Culmination of Separation" from *Society of the Spectacle*  
Fassbinder – *Anarchy of the Imagination* (selection)  
Yuriko Furuhatu – *Cinema of Actuality* (selection)  
John Gibbs – *Mise-en-scene: Film Style and Interpretation* (selections)  
Todd Haynes – "Movies are Nothing Until We Bring Emotional Life to Them" (Interview)  
Todd Haynes/Douglas Lim – "Heaven Sent" (Interview with Douglas Lim)  
Todd Haynes – "Intro" & "Director's Statement" from *Three Screenplays*  
Sabu Kosho – "Cine-activism in an Archipelagic World"  
Brian Massumi - "Realer Than Real"  
Masao Matsuda – "An Excerpt from 'City as Landscape'"  
Oshima Nagisa – "Starting from Scratch," "How to Die in the 70's," "Requiem" from *Cinema, Censorship and the State*  
Celeste Olalquiaga -*The Artificial Kingdom* (selections)  
Situationist International – "Definitions," "Introduction to the Critique of Urban Geography," "Theory of the Dérive" "User's Guide to Détournement"  
Jane Stern/Michael Stern – "Two Weeks In Another Town: An Interview with Douglas Sirk"  
Mckenzie Wark – *Disintegration of the Spectacle* (selections)

## **FILMS**

Todd Haynes – *Far From Heaven* (USA, 2002)  
Todd Haynes – *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (USA, 1987)  
Richard Kelly – *Southland Tales* (USA, 2006)  
Oshima Nagisa - *Man Who Left His Will on Film* (Japan, 1970)  
Mark Neveldine / Brian Taylor – *Gamer* (USA, 2009)  
Douglas Sirk – *All That Heaven Allows* (USA, 1955)

## Video Essay

Gary Hall, Clare Bichall, Peter Woodbridge – "Deleuze's Postscript on the Societies of Control" (2009)

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Students are responsible for completing all the assigned course work and are expected to regularly attend and participate in course discussions. Reading difficult texts is a major component of this course. If you are not prepared read and interpret difficult material, you should not take this course. Students are expected to come to class prepared. Prepared means that you have done the assigned reading, have thought about it and have something to say in class. Always bring the assigned reading material (for each particular day) to class. Always take notes. My lectures, comments, and rants constitute an important "text" for the course. There will be one short 2-page essay, two 4-page essays, and a final exam required. There will be a handout on the essay assignments before each essay is due (see the schedule). With the exception of the second assignment, these will only be handed out in class. If you do not come to class, you will not receive the assignment. No digital copies of the assignments will be handed out or made available. If a student makes a digital copy of the assignment available to other students, this will be considered a form of cheating and subject to disciplinary action (up to receiving a failing grade for that assignment). For this reason, *do not lose your copy of the essay assignments*. Pay close attention when I go over the assignments in class. To complete the course, per the Segment Three rules, you must write a total of 10 pages of formal college level writing. Your

essays must demonstrate *mastery of the reading material and course lectures* for the assignments (your grade will be based on this). No papers will be accepted via e-mail (no exceptions). No rewrites and no late papers. *Plagiarism in any of the course assignments, in any form, will be dealt with harshly and will be forwarded to the Dean's Office for appropriate action.* Plagiarism on any assignment will also result in a grade of zero. You must receive a letter grade on all assignments in order to complete the course. (Please note that Wikipedia is NOT a critical source and cannot be used for college writing. The same is true of IMDB.) The final exam will consist of ten questions and test whether students have done the required readings. If you do not read the course material, you will fail the final exam. Warning: approximately 60% of students in previous semesters have failed the final exam because they have not done the course readings. Students are responsible for all of the course content and materials even if they are absent (absences of more than three class sessions can result in your final grade being substantially lowered). No incompletes will be given. Please be aware that from time to time I may need to contact you via e-mail. In order to facilitate this, you will need to make sure that your SFSU e-mail account is actively working. The system is not set-up to accommodate non-SFSU emails. It is your responsibility to make sure your SFSU email is working and accessible to you.

**Warning:** This is a difficult and challenging course. Please note that we are not watching films so that you can be “entertained” by them, but in order to critically study and analyze them. If you are not up to the challenge of learning a new language for the interpretation of film, do not take this course. While we are doing some really cool things in this course, the purpose is to challenge you. I know from experience that showing a lot of older films can be challenging to students. It’s worth remembering that this is a University course and it’s supposed to be challenging. **If you do not do the course readings, you will be completely lost in this class.**

**The biggest mistake** that students make on the essay assignment is to not actually read the assignment and/or fully follow the instructions or fully answer the questions. Additionally, if your paper does not demonstrate that you’ve read the assigned books, you will be graded down significantly and may not receive a passing grade. Students need to include a S.A.S.E. if they want their final papers returned to them.

**This syllabus is part of the course materials and your road map to the class and your learning.** You are provided with a copy of the syllabus at the beginning of the semester and are expected to know the information contained within it the same way you are expected to know the information contained in the articles, books, and lectures for the course. I reserve the right to grade you down based on your lack of knowledge of the syllabus and **any other written directions. Refer to the syllabus BEFORE asking me questions (that I have already answered in writing or in class).**

## **CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

Cell phones are to be turned off in class. If you are caught text messaging in class, surfing the web, or playing video games, or engaging in any other non-course related activity, you will be required to leave the classroom. No eating in class (unless you bring enough to share with everyone). No electronic recording in the classroom. **If even one student complains about the misuse of**

**laptops or tablets in class, especially during film screenings, they will be permanently banned from the classroom.**

## **AGREEMENT**

Enrollment in this course constitutes your agreement to abide by all of the above rules and policies.

## **SEGMENT THREE WRITING REQUIREMENT**

To meet the segment III writing requirement, you will be required to write two five page critical papers. These papers are "formal" and will be read and graded by the professor. You will be expected to argue coherently, to support your arguments with detailed examples from the works analyzed, to edit your papers for spelling, grammar punctuation and agreement, and to meet recognized standards for notes and bibliography when relevant. All of the above will be taken into account in the grading of these assignments.

## **SEGMENT THREE NOTICE**

This course satisfies part of the General Education, Segment III requirement. Ten pages of formal critical writing, which will be graded by the professor for style and content, will be required (see below).

## **STATEMENT ON DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2472) or by email: [dprc@sfsu.edu](mailto:dprc@sfsu.edu)

## **GRADING**

Attendance and Participation: 10% || First Paper: 20% || Second Paper: 30% || Final Paper: 30% | Final Exam: 10%

Films that SFSU does not own will be placed on reserve at the Library (main check out counter) under the course name, number, instructor, AFTER they have been used in class.