

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY, VISUAL ART AND THEORY
VISA 481 2017

Fridays 9:00 – 12:00 pm. LASS 107

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Office hours: Tuesdays 1 – 3 pm

Description

Readings in art theory and criticism

Introduction

*"a new epoch was being born, in which man (all mankind in fact) was undergoing
a transformation more radical than any other known within historical times "*

D. H. Kahnweiler

The epoch here described by Kahnweiler (who was a friend of the Cubists and their dealer) can aptly depict our own times. Today however, the stakes are even higher. As our symbiotic relation with technology brings about a new geological era, we are well aware that not only our kind, but also our whole planet is living a defining moment.

The scope of these changes challenges anything we took for granted and brings back fundamental questions for which we are prompted to find new answers

What is it to be human at the turn of the 21 century?

How to understand our relation with Technology?

What is reality?

This class will attempt a series of scattered reflections on such questions. Our discussions and investigations will follow two main directions:

1. NEW MODES OF EXISTENCE IMPLIED BY THE CURRENT STAGE OF TECHNOHUMAN EVOLUTION
2. THE MEANS TO INTERROGATE AND ELUCIDATE THEM

Topics include:

- The nature of the relation between Technology and Humanity
- The impact of technohuman evolution on our perception of reality
- The need of a new language proper to investigate these conditions

Objectives

- To cultivate the learning skills and habits proper to [life-long learners](#)
- To introduce and develop in the participants the means to interrogate the world employing artistic perspectives and strategies
- Develop a personal visual language informed by contemporary online visual culture
- Improved awareness of the role of images in all aspects contemporary human existence

Classwork

The class will examine texts, films and other sources as the starting point for individual reflections about our contemporary human condition. These reflections will also constitute an exploration of new possibilities of expression afforded by current technologies.

As part of our goals, this class seeks to create the skills and culture of life-long learning. Participants are expected to take agency in their individual learning in two main ways:

Weekly charts will serve as basis for class discussions and individual responses. However, time constraints do not allow for a full exploration of that content. *For a fuller comprehension of the topics, students are expected to individually explore the content and links in each chart.*

In the same manner, the technical tools necessary for your work depend on your individual style and needs. *Students are expected to obtain the tools necessary for your work through individual research.* If you need further support we can address it on individual basis during office hours.

A general thesis if this course is this: *the current moment of the techno-human evolution generates new ways of being in the world. It is also providing new means for the expression of our experiences*

During the term, we will reflect on contemporary human experiences in a series of audio, visual, textual experiments aimed at opening of new creative possibilities.

Each session will generally consist of:

- Discussion of previous class ideas, questions and responses posted in the website (see 'weekly contributions' below)
- Discussion on a new topic
- Introduction of the conceptual basis for the next project.

Evaluations

Our class will take an approach in which experimentation and risk-taking are essential to fruitful investigations.

Our evaluation scheme encourages such open investigations: students' performance will be evaluated primarily based on their commitment to the class and artistic explorations.

Here are the main criteria for evaluation:

- *Attendance*- The class plan is but a general guide for the course. Many ideas and topics will emerge from class discussions.

- *Artistic investigation*- It is important that you feel free to explore new challenges and ideas. Take chances as any truly open exploration includes the possibility of failing. Trial and error will be the main approach to our projects. Failures are only so if we don't learn from them. Your work can be partially appropriated (all sources shall be properly cited).
- *Participation* (comments in class and online). Your questions and comments are your most important contribution to the class. You are required to weekly post to the class website. This includes:
 - Class notes (posted during the class or within the day);
 - Questions
 - Responses to classmates
 - Ideas
 - Related links
- *Timely submissions*- conversations will take mainly through your responses to given materials. It is vital that you submit all classwork by the due date

Comments

At the beginning of the term students are adjudicated a base mark of 75% (B+). **This mark will be re-assessed at the end of the term in an individual meeting**

The main reference for the success of your work will be the comments made by your peers in class and the website. Given the time constraints I will not be able to make specific remarks about every single work. For a thorough discussion of your work and progress, please attend the weekly office hours or make an appointment.