Critical Research Methods in Media Arts
MCMA 531 –Fall 2015

Dr. Michele Leigh
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Office Hours: Tues 11-2 pm & Wed 12-3 pm

Class Meeting Times:
T 6:00-9:00 pm COMM 2216

Required Text:
ALL READINGS available on my website www.micheleleigh.net

Course Description:
This course introduces students to critical and interpretive research methods and techniques for the study of media arts and culture. In the words of Marshall McLuhan, "the medium is the message"; taking this into consideration we will explore the ways in which artists media create meaning. Various methods of media criticism apply differing theoretical premises to identifying the message of the medium. Students will examine the relationship between theory and praxis, as a means for understanding how as practitioners they might use theory in creating their own work. This course builds upon the experiences and learning that students have acquired throughout their education, and seeks to integrate that understanding with current art theory in order to foster the continuing development of a critical understanding of the visuals arts.

The course will be divided into six theoretical concepts, ranging from structuralism to gender theory. Over the course of the semester we will unpack the significance of each critical approach to media, exploring both historical and contemporary approaches to visual arts.

Course Goals:
This course will familiarize students with:
* the theoretical approaches to visual media/art
* the analysis of visual images and their impact on culture

This course will:
* foster critical thinking about visual media through the examination of pertinent topics related to media theory.
* provide students with an understanding of the main issues and problems confronting artists and media critics.
* encourage students to develop their own philosophical approach to media construction and consumption

Expectations:
Students are expected to attend class sessions, participate in class discussions, and complete all assignments and projects. Active participation means prior reading of assigned materials and sharing of relevant thoughts and experiences both in class and on-line on my website. Students are encouraged to bring to class or post to the website examples of visual material from a variety of sources to further
class discussions. Everyone must log on to the course website  http://www.micheleleigh.net  If you miss a class it is YOUR responsibility to get notes or materials from a classmate. Assignments are due as indicated on the course calendar. Late assignments will lose 10 points for each day they are late. ALL assignments MUST be turned in, regardless of how late they are. Failure to turn in an assignment will result in an F for the course.

All cell phones MUST be turned off prior to entering class. Texting and IMing during class are NOT permitted. Please be considerate of your fellow classmates.

Class Assignments:

Class Presentations – 15% - you will each have to give two presentations on class readings. These presentations should summarize and contextualize the readings for that week. Presentations should be about 15 minutes in length. Your presentations should be accompanied by visual examples which help to illustrate a practical application of the readings (you are encouraged to try to use visual examples other than those mentioned in the readings).

Website Postings – 15% - each week you must post comments and/or questions on at least two of the readings on www.micheleleigh.net. I also want you to write a paragraph or two discussing the applicability of the readings to your research/artistic practice. Your questions/comments MUST be posted by 1 pm on Tuesdays before each class.

Participation – 10% - you are required to come prepared to class and to speak regularly. One of the best ways to process difficult concepts and material is to talk about it and to listen to what others have to say.

Archival Assignment – 5% - You will be required to do research in an archive, SIUC has an excellent one. You will have to write a 1-2 page synopsis of what you found and how you might use it if you were to create a piece of art.

Critical Analysis Papers – 30% You must write THREE 6-8 page papers. For each paper you will take a particular theoretical approach to a film, filmmaker, media maker, multimedia project, photograph/series or photographer. Over the course of the three papers you will write about the same subject from three different theoretical perspectives. Each paper should interact with the readings from class. Additionally, you are required to cite at least two other works (not covered in class) on the different theoretical approaches. Your papers must be properly cited using the Chicago Manual of Style or the MLA Handbook.

Conference Proposal – 5% You will each have to find a conference that fits into your field of study/art (preferably it could be something to which you could actually apply, though this is not necessary.) You will turn in the call for papers along with your written proposal.

Conference Paper and Presentation – 15% You will write a 7-10 page paper on the topic of your proposal, using theory discussed in class. These papers will be presented in class as part of our final.
Attendance:
ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY! However, you are responsible adults, if you should happen to miss class; you are responsible to getting notes from fellow classmates. If you will be absent for more than two classes you must submit written documentation explaining your absence.

Academic Misconduct:
Southern Illinois University, the College of Mass Communication and Media Arts is committed to academic and professional ethics. Should any student be guilty of plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation, or other forms of dishonesty in any assigned work, they will be subject to a failing grade, and to additional disciplinary action as may be recommended pursuant to University regulations. Academic misconduct includes the following:

- Cheating, or the improper taking or giving of information, which includes copying graded homework assignments from another student, looking at another student's paper during an examination, giving your work to another student to be used or copied, giving answers to exam questions either when the exam is being given or after taking an exam, and providing a term paper or project to another student.
- Plagiarism involves submitting the words, work or ideas of another and representing them as your own, without citation. SIU subscribes to the anti-plagiarism services of TurnItIn.com, where you can find out more about how to avoid missteps in your writing.
- Misrepresentation includes lying or misrepresenting facts to affect your grade.

Emergency Procedures:
Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on the BERT’s website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Public Safety’s website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guidelines pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

Class Schedule:
* All Readings must be completed before class on the day they are assigned *
Class Readings are subject to change

Week 1 – August 25 - Introduction
   Introductions, class business and begin discussion about arts practice and arts research
Week 2 – September 1 – What is Art? How do we create, research and write about art?  
Readings: by Terry Barrett, Leo Tolstoy, Walter Benjamin, Immanuel Kant, Edward Casey

Week 3 – September 8 – Structuralism/Semiotics/Post-Structuralism  
Readings: by Kate McGowan, Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Catherine Belsey, Michel Foucault

Week 4 – September 15 – Psychoanalysis  
Conference Proposals Due  
Readings: by Sigmund Freud, George Hagman, Jacques Lacan, Rob Lapsley, Joan Copjec, Malcolm Quinn, Constance Penley

Week 5 – September 22 – Feminism  
Critical Analysis Paper #1 Due  
Readings: by Laura Mulvey, Susan Hekman, Lana F. Rakow, Mary Anne Doane, Marta Zarycka, Zhang Zhen

Week 6 – September 29 – Post-Feminism  
Readings: by Tasker and Negra, Angela McRobbie, Kimberly Springer, Kim Toffoletti, Anna Feigenbaum, Jane Stokes

Week 7 – October 6 – Gender and Queer Theory  
Archival Assignment Due  
Readings: by Donald E. Hall, Michel Foucault, Ruth Holliday, Judith Butler, Alexander Doty

Week 8 – October 13 – No Class due to Fall Break

Week 9 – October 20 – Gender and Queer Theory  
Critical Analysis Paper #2 Due  
Readings: by Judith Butler, Adam Isia Green, Thomas Waugh, Steven Cohan, Donald Morton, Gina Wisker

Week 10 – October 27 – Cultural Studies  
Readings: by Douglas Kellner, Raymond Williams, Aaron Barlow, David A. Bailey, Stuart Hall, Grossberg, Nelson, & Treichler, Benedict Anderson

Week 11 – November 3 – Post Colonial & Race Studies  
Readings: by Apollo Amoko, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Henry Giroux, Stam and Spence

Week 12 – November 10 – Post Modernism  
Critical Analysis Paper #3 Due  
Readings: by Linda Hutcheo, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, bell hooks, Andy Grundberg, Steve Edwards
Week 13 – November 17 – Post Modernism
Readings: by Dick Hebdige, Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, Mark Poster, Ana M. López

Week 14 – November 24 – The Artist and Research
Conference Paper Due
Readings: by Mark Johnson, Morwenna Griffiths, Susan Kozel, Siegfried Zelinski, Ed Hirsch, Graeme Sullivan

Week 15 – December 1
Class Presentations of Final Projects

Week 16 – December 8
Class Presentations of Final Projects

Final – Tuesday December 15, 2015 5-7:00 pm
Final Revisions Due

Resources:
Writing a Research Paper
http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/mla/index.shtml
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/
http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/docs/research_papers.doc

Writing About Film/Television/Photography
http://www.gmu.edu/departments/writingcenter/handouts/film.html
http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/humanities/film.shtml
http://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop/departments/film.html
http://www.ucalgary.ca/~rseiler/film.htm