CP470b/MCMA543 Proto-Cinematic Production: Explorations from Still to Moving Images

CP 470b & MCMA 543
Proto-Cinematic Production: Explorations from Still to Moving Images
Wednesday 1-4:50 COMM 1116
email: drleigh@micheleleigh.net or mleigh@siu.edu
Office: 1121L, Communications Bldg.
Office hours: Dr. Leigh – M/W 10-12pm, T 1-3pm

Required Texts:
All readings will be available online. Readings will correspond to topics covered in class.

Course Description:
Cinema was not invented in one day, with one invention, or by one person. Cinema, as we know it today was several hundred years in the making. This production course explores the pre-history of cinema through several of its various modes of production. We will explore major historical shifts in visual modalities, concepts and practices by making the objects in question. We will interrogate humankind’s propensity for narrative storytelling. We will investigate and interact with the materials and techniques of these key moments in cinema’s pre-history by making and using various objects such as: the camera obscura, stereoscopic slides, Muybridge inspired flip-books, the zoetrope and praxiniscope, among others. We will learn and experiment with rudimentary image making ranging from sun prints to Méliès style in-camera editing. We will also discuss curation methodologies as we plan a final class exhibit. Students will finish the course a body of work that builds on and adds to their film/photographic portfolios.

Course Goals:
Students in this course will:
* discuss theoretical approaches to proto-cinematic production
* understand the historical the evolution of cinema and its intersection with narrative storytelling
* create various examples of proto-cinema
* critique the work of their fellow classmates
* develop and curate an end of semester exhibit of their work

Expectations:
Students are expected to attend class sessions, participate in class discussions, and complete all assignments and projects on time. Active participation means prior reading of assigned materials and
sharing of relevant thoughts and experiences both in class and on-line. Students are encouraged to bring to class examples of visual material from a variety of sources to further class discussions. 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.

Class Assignments:

**Sketchbook** – Each student is required to have a sketchbook for class (size is up to you). Your sketchbook is the place where you note ideas/sketches/plans for current and future projects. Sketchbooks will be turned in to be graded at midterm and at final time. Please bring your sketch book to class every week.

**Blog Postings** – Each student is required to post comments on any course readings, prior to the week they are assigned (check the website regularly for updates). This will prepare you for discussions in class. Additionally, students should also document their creative process, and artistic development within their blog. Students should also comment and make suggestions on your fellow classmates postings.

**Production Assignments** – You will be given several assignments that will introduce you to some of basics of proto-cinematic tools and techniques. These will be simple assignments that will provide you with some appreciation for the work involved in the creation and evolution of early narrative cinema. There will be several group assignments, where students will be required to work cooperatively to build and/or update a proto-cinematic device/concept. In addition to building these pre-cinematic objects you will also be creating art work with these objects.

**Final Project** – Each student will be required to complete a final project utilizing one or more of the proto-cinematic devices covered in class. By week 10 you will have to submit a written proposal, with designs, projected costs and completion schedule.

**Participation** – Occupying a seat does not constitute participation, though attendance will affect your participation grade. Students are expected to have read the course readings and to participate in discussions. Students are expected to actively and constructively participate in classroom critiques. Participation is also required to construct and curate an exhibit of the class work during finals week. More detailed guidelines will be handed out in class.
GRADUATE Students:

Class Presentations – you will each have to research and give a presentation on a proto-cinematic device, its history, its uses and how we might imagine using it today. Presentations should be 20 minutes in length, no longer. Additionally, each student will be assigned a topic for which they are responsible for finding an appropriate reading for the class.

Curation of Final Projects – Grad students will work together to select and curate class projects as part of a final exhibit of class work, date TBD.

Undergrad Grades:
Sketchbooks 5%
Blog Postings 10%
Participation 15%
Production Assignments 40%
Final Project 30%
Total 100%

Graduate Grades:
Sketchbooks 5%
Blog Postings 10%
Participation 15%
Production Assignments 30%
Class Presentation & Curation 10%
Final Project 30%
Total 100%

Attendance:
ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY! Many of the materials shown in class come from my personal collection. The library does not own them and therefore they cannot be put on reserve. However, you are responsible adults, if you should happen to miss class; you are responsible to getting notes from fellow classmates. Missing class however, does not exempt you from completing work that was due.

Course Calendar:
Week 1 Jan 20   Introduction Cave Paintings -Readings
Week 2 Jan 27   Hieroglyphs
Week 3 Feb 3    Cabinets of Curiosity
Week 4 Feb 10   Camera Obscura
Week 5 Feb 17   Pinhole Camera
Week 6 Feb 24   Panorama
Week 7 Mar 2    Thaumotropes and Flipbooks
Week 8 Mar 9    Magic Lantern
Week 9 Mar 16- SPRING BREAK
Week 10 Mar 23  Magic Lantern
Week 11 Mar 30  Stereoscopic Slides
Week 12 Apr 6   Chronophotography
Week 13 Apr 13  Zoetrope
Week 14 Apr 20  Praxinoscope
Week 15 April 27  TBD
Week 16 May 4th  Final Projects Due

Final Exam Friday May 13th 2:45 -4:45 pm