

Kevin Hamilton

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ARTS 240: Introduction to New Media

Description:

This course is a broad survey of the history, theory and practice of New Media forms. Different models of professional practice, including studio and client driven practices, will be explored through lecture, discussion and research components. Students will also be introduced to the use of some common new media tools.

We will be covering a great deal of material that you will be expected to recall throughout your tenure as a candidate for an undergraduate degree in New Media. Though there will be no tests in this course, you are strongly encouraged to take notes and begin making a habit of collecting names, references, and vocabulary for later use.

Contact information:

Kevin can be best reached by email (kham@uiuc.edu). Office hours will be announced later, or can sometimes be arranged by appointment.

Activities:

This course will entail a great deal of reading, discussion, and research. Each week you will be assigned readings, response questions, and research tasks involving the collection and sharing of examples in practice. In addition to weekly reading and writing assignments, you will be expected to keep an online journal or journals via a blog. A final project will involve the assembly of an annotated reference collection that relates to some of your more specific interests in New Media. You will also be expected to attend a few out-of-class events, typically on Wednesday evenings.

Expectations:

Timely attendance is mandatory. Writing assignments will not be accepted late. You will be expected to have read each week's course material in time for our discussion. Participation in class discussions is also required. Your grade will be determined thusly:

Attendance (10%)

Participation in class discussions (20%)

Completion of weekly writing and research assignments (40%)

Final Project (30%)

Required Texts:

Blais and Ito, At The Edge of Art - available at campus textbook stores

Arjen Mulder, Understanding Media Theory - out of print. I have copies for loan a passing grade for this course is contingent upon your return of the book in good condition.

MIDTERM PAPER

You are to write a paper of at least 3 pages that applies specific, cited texts from Mulder to interpret one of the artworks I have selected.

I have selected these works because they are in some ways about media, and are often cited as influential on media art. The works I've selected are, admittedly, very arty, and not representative of the scope of practice that might fall under the heading "New Media." There's nothing here, for example, that might count as commercial design. But these works have all been influential on a wide variety of practices. You should really know about them all.

I've also chosen them because they are to be found in multiple forms. Some portion of your paper should be concerned with comparison of the piece in different forms and media.

You may rely on outside sources, but you should cite them. The application of Mulder's text to your interpretation should be the focus! Don't just explain the works based on what you read of others' interpretations.

I advise that you scan back through your notes from the class, and through the book. Look at some of the main points we've covered, think of some of the language we've been using from Mulder to talk about Media.

CHOOSE ONE FROM THESE THREE. Compare at least the versions I've cited. You may add more versions in the comparison if you can find them.

1. ----- KRAPP's LAST TAPE, a play by Samuel Beckett

as typed text

<http://www.msu.edu/~sullivan/BeckettKrapp.html>

as video, on reserve at the undergrad library

(if it's not on reserve yet as per my request, please leave still view it in the library to allow others a chance to see it.)
DVD 791.4375 B388

as recorded for sound, released as a record LP

http://www.ubu.com/sound/beckett_krapp.html

2. ----- URSONATE, a poem by Kurt Schwitters

original score

<http://www.ubu.com/historical/schwitters/ursonate.html>

original performance by the artist

http://ubu.artmob.ca/sound/schwitters_kurt/Schwitters-Kurt_Ursonate-Merz-No.-24_1932.mp3

Two different versions performed by Jaap Blonk, an artist who is known for his vocal work

<http://www.ubu.com/sound/blonk.html>

There are several video versions online, animations based on the text but also documents of performances of the poem. You may choose one of these to throw in the mix if you like, I think it will give you more to write about.

3. ----- 4'33", by John Cage

introduction to the piece on wikipedia here:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4%E2%80%B233%E2%80%B3>

There are many many versions of this piece recorded. You can compare any few versions you can find, but they should include at least some in sound and some in video, as well as the original score, which you can find here:

<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/4-33/images/1/>

I would also recommend that you try and listen to recordings of this performance in multiple formats. Go to the Music Library, listen to some on Record, compare it to the experience of listening on an Mp3 or CD.

FINAL PROJECT: Annotated Bibliography

Create a Bibliography of references that charts a course of exploration related to your interests in New Media. Think of this as a way of narrowing the field of New Media to one you would like to learn about and improve your skills within over the next few years. Think of this as marking out a route you might want to follow out of school, or at least a course toward a Senior Thesis project.

Your sources could include:

Books of essays	people
Anthologies of literature	museums or galleries
theoretical works	research institutions
articles	Compilations in video or sound
whole magazines	design firms
email listservs	record labels
websites / blogs	whole archives and collections
biographies	exhibition catalogs
supply catalogs	"for dummies" - style guides
novels	technical manuals
how-to-guides	

You need not have read everything you include - this is a list of things to be explored, not already explored. For each entry, write 1-3 lines explaining the source and its possible relationship to your topic, interests.

Pay the most attention to how your bibliography describes a specific set of concerns and interests. We should be able to read it and get a picture of a particular aspect of New Media, in terms of medium, content, context.

Your project should be at least 3 pages in length, and submitted as a Word file via email. Use the MLA guidelines for bibliographic entry, even if you have to stretch them to fit some of your sources.