

## Kevin Hamilton

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

### ARTS 442: Moving Image 1

---

#### Course Description:

This course takes as its focus the creation and reception of time-based media in image and sound. Our concern will be with open-ended exploration of the formal and contextual opportunities unique to these media, rather than with any one applied vocabulary (i.e., commercial cinema, documentary radio). We will approach time-based media as:

1. possessive of unique formal properties worthy of consideration through practice and critique
2. part of an already diverse and contentious history deserving attention and concern
3. dominant in the visual and aural landscape of our everyday lives, and therefore in need of close observation, understanding and critique
4. influential as an example of a "new" medium, in which tools invented outside of art practice are put to new uses by artists and designers

#### Methodology:

Our goal will be to attend equally to the formal, contextual, and technical aspects of each subject we address.

Work will consist of:

- \* in-class studio: short and long-term exercises, projects
- \* out-of-class projects: short and long-term projects completed alone and in groups
- \* training and proficiency sessions in the computer lab
- \* discussion and critique
- \* presentations
- \* viewing of works in various media, in and out of class
- \* writing in response to your work in the work of others
- \* some reading of relevant theories, histories
- \* research of relevant artists, artifacts for source materials and examples

#### Expectations:

##### 1. WORK

You should expect to spend as much as six hours a week outside of class on projects (or more if you wait until the last minute). Often you will be asked to work with a partner on these projects; you will be expected to respect this arrangement by contributing equally and showing up for arranged meetings.

##### 2. PATIENCE

Important to the success of this technology-intensive course is your willingness to adapt and problem-solve in the face of unexpected (even disastrous) technical snafus. You will be expected to demonstrate that you have done everything possible to achieve all projects. Creativity in the face of adversity (even, occasionally, at the expense of departing from stated project parameters) will help all of us in our attempts to explore these media.

##### 3. PARTICIPATION

Attendance is mandatory, and timeliness is important to our staying on schedule - missing more than three sessions will result in a full grade drop. You will also be expected to contribute to class discussions and critiques through your thoughtful and relevant questions, comments, challenges, suggestions.

Your grade in this course will be comprised of 1/3 participation score and 2/3 for project scores. Each project will be scored according to adherence to project parameters, creativity of solution, mastery of technical and formal elements.

**Course Content:**

UNIT	FORMAL	TECHNICAL	CONTEXTUAL
SOUND	Duration vs. Space Forms of Representation Sound Principles: pitch loudness attack peak sustain decay	Microphones Recording Importing / Digitization Analog vs. Digital Audacity Sound physics (terms) File Transfer / sharing (harddrives)	Radio - (Rudolf Arnheim) Early radio drama Welles Musique Concrete Futurists ubuweb Sound synthesis Electronica DJ Culture Sound Art Phonography/ Acoustic Ecology Spoken Word Tzara, Schwitters, etc. Radio Documentaries Sound Portraits
MOTION	Continuity Completion Rhythm Gestalt Economy camera shot types	Digital Still Photography Digital Imaging Keyframes, tweening Adobe Photoshop Adobe ImageReady intro to imovie intro to the DVcamera tripod	(early cinema) Winsor McKay Oskar Fischinger Michel Gondry Joan Jonas (rhythm) Film and Time (Zeno, Bergson) Broadfoot article (deleuze) Jeremy Blake Forcefield Marey / Muybridge
EDITING	Economy Montage	how video works more imovie non-linear editing	Vertov Guy Maddin Eisenstein, Soviet Cinema Walter Murch Paul Thomas Anderson Chris Marker
IMAGE AND SOUND	synchronous sound asynchronous sound	sound in imovie	Walter Murch Gary Hill Michel Chion Arnheim (new laocoon) John Smith

**Other subjects will include:**

Surveillance, Audience, Presence, Special Effects, and Postproduction.

## PROJECTS:

### Chronophotograph:

Using the digital camera and/or Photoshop, you are to create a still image that records a specific motion event, with an emphasis on information and illustration. Your image should read as photographic in nature, but may or not take the form of a conventional pictorial depiction (ie., it may read as "abstract" as long as it is still informative.)

Choose a subject for which the record of motion will be new and interesting - that is, something so elusive as to be rarely captured, so banal as to be overlooked, or even so shocking as to be irresistible. Convey as much information about your chosen movement as possible. This information, however, should be portrayed economically. Only use information that helps us understand the movement.

You may use any technique you can devise for this project - part of the project is the problem of representation. Your choice of method is as important as your choice of subject. Here are a couple conventional methods you may employ:

1. Use a digital still camera and tripod, leaving the shutter open long enough to record multiple positions of the subject.
2. Use a digital still camera and tripod, taking multiple shots and superimposing them in Photoshop.

### Stop Motion Studies:

(terminology from artist David Crawford)

Using Adobe Imageready, create a simple animation that functions well as a loop - when we watch the sequence, we may see repetitions, but these repetitions must be possible to read as distinct events in time.

The goals of the project are:

- further mastery of Photoshop, digital imaging, the Macintosh environment
- addition of Adobe Imageready to your technical skills
- experimentation with the illusion of movement
- exploration of the loop as a formal device
- further exploration of modes of depicting time
- effective connection of form to content

Your final should be in the form a .gif formatted image, with the largest side no larger than 400 pixels, a resolution of 72 pixels-per-inch. Post your file to the WEB folder of our server, and create a opic that links to it, as we did in the last project.

Most importantly, make sure your chosen subject matter relates to our form in an interesting way.

### Frames-per-Something:

In our first project, we saw how recording of successive images of a single subject might be used to illustrate movement. In our second project, we saw how playback of such images in order creates an illusion of this movement. Now we want to look at both of these strategies at the same time, still considering carefully the relation of subject to method.

Film has for some time now adapted the convention of recording 24 pictures per second. These pictures are then played back as "frames" in a continuous reel of film, at the same rate as their capture. Video does the same at a different rate - 30 frames per second. (In actuality it's 29.97 frames per second, but that's another story.) But digital video allows us to manipulate this quite a bit - we can pretty much capture at any frame rate our cameras allow, and playback at different rates as well.

For this project, you'll invent your own framerate. Decide on how many pictures you want to take to capture a motion or event, and how fast you want to play it back.

Use a digital still camera to take your pictures - make sure you're shooting them at a resolution of 72 pixels-per-inch and a size of 640x480 pixels (on our digital still cameras, set QUALITY to FINE and SIZE to VGA) . All your pictures should be oriented in the same direction (horizontal is easiest.)

Place your images in a sequence in Imovie - alter the duration of each image to your preferred system. Export your finished movie as a Quicktime movie, FULL QUALITY DV, and burn it to a DVD. You may work with a partner if you like. There is no preferred duration, but try to choose your subject in such a way that your piece has a logical start and finish.

#### Vision Machine:

Use the digital still cameras to shoot a selection of pictures that either have no focal point or have a single, strong focal point.

Then choose an example of repetitive, multi-layered instrumental music, and set a segment of it to image-loops. Your segment should be between 30 seconds and one-minute long: if you choose to do more than 2 minutes or a whole song, you may work together with a partner.

I will provide music examples to choose from if you wish. If you want to pick your own, I suggest that you play it for me for advice on selection. Music that is easily understood as "loop-based," but that possesses some degree of change or development works best. (i.e., techno, IDM , serialist composers).

Your goal should be to communicate visually the densest possible selection of music. You may need more than a minute to do this in some cases, because of the need for "teaching" the viewer how to see a particular "beat." Consider carefully how and when you ask us to think of your piece spatially, temporally. A beat so rapid as to be perceived as a texture might eventually be treated as a single beat. Consider when chaos or order are more called for.

Work to vary as few items as possible as you introduce new beats or musical elements to create harmony and unity across the piece (or make your 'disharmonious' choices intentional and event.) Work in layers - lay down one layer of rhythm, then use "paste over" and export capabilities to add more. This is not an animation project, nor is it likely to be narrative - focus on the manifestation of sound through creation of formal rhythm.

#### Day in the Life:

We've looked at editing images in sequence to portray passage of time, to convey rhythm, to intersect with word or image, or to inform other images in a series or catalog. Now we will combine these, with a special focus on MONTAGE, or the creation of a new narrative/image through the juxtaposition two distinct and separate narratives/images.

You are to create a work in video that portrays 'A Day in the Life.' This may be a day in the life of anything - a whole city, campus, or building, a plot of grass, an individual, an animal, anything.

Consider how your choice of shots, as well as how you edit the shots, portrays what makes one part of a day different from another - which parts of the day seem longer, which seem shorter, or fly by incomprehensibly? Use what you learned about rhythm and duration in the first project to create contrasting passages of time. At the end of a day (or of your film) what stands out from the day? What kinds of images recurred more frequently, and what images might seem to be missing?

#### TECHNICAL PARAMETERS:

- Your edited final work should be close to two minutes long (no longer than three.)
- Sound is optional.
- Do not vary the speed of your clips to portray passage of time - aim to create passage of time through editing instead.

## FORMAL PARAMETERS:

Attend to these three main characteristics of film sequence editing:

- Montage, or how we infer a new third meaning from the juxtaposition in time of two images.
- Visual Analogy, or how two or more images in succession point to some common formal, functional, or emotional prototype.
- Rhythm. How long should we see various images, depending on what part of the day or what activity they represent? Think of your film as if it were music - where should we perceive a regular beat, where should it be a jumble of random pacing? Where there is a beat, how fast or slow should it be? Will there be a chorus and verse type structure?

### Text / Image:

The purpose of this assignment is to explore how text can function in relation to image and sound, producing new relationships - formal/rhythmic, pictorial/compositional, symbolic/semantic, spatial - between sound, image, word.

Choose an existing text, and create a "reading" of it through video/image, sound, and graphical type. Your resulting video should last around a minute, and should be exported as a quicktime movie in full quality dv format. Bring your finished project to class on your lacie drive or burned on a DVD.

You may use sounds from any source you like, but use video solely from found or pre-recorded VHS or DVD sources. You may do as much or as little editing as you like. Your work should possess images or video, sound and type at all times, in simultaneity. Consider the construction of your piece as a 3-layered project - sound, image and type. Your images should establish specific and intentional relationships to the words and sounds, and may include pictures of text or found words.

The three layers will likely come in and out of synthesis - for example, we might hear a word spoken at the same time we see the word printed over top of an image clearly associated with the word, creating emphasis - but we might often see jarring juxtapositions as well - a given word in your original text for example, may not ever literally appear in the video, but would instead be heard, or seen pictured.

### Sound Passage:

Using Audacity and your choice of sound sources, you are to create two distinct, representational "sound spaces," starting with one and transitioning into the other.

Aim for your whole piece to last around 1-2 minutes. Your "pictures" should be constructed out of a clear three-level spatial structure, containing three simultaneous layers of sound: a foreground, a middle ground, and a background. Sounds in different layers of depth should be recorded separately and mixed together, instead of recorded in unison.

In all three levels, your sounds should be unique and chosen carefully, but it is sometimes helpful to think of these levels as increasingly specific as they rise up a pyramid-like structure. Those in the base layer, the background, are usually less distinct, even ambient, but are often needed through out the 30 second picture. The middle-ground levels of the second layer are often a little more distinct, perhaps the noises of other people in the room, and can more easily fluctuate, hesitate, change. The foreground sound is usually the loudest, the clearest, and the least reverberating. It also may not need to be present more than for one quick appearance.

You may employ sounds from any source, but you may only employ music or human voices in the background or middle ground.

Consider:

- choice of sound (identity, specificity)
- juxtaposition (how do sounds mixed together create space and meaning)
- volume of playback in the mix
- conditions of original recording scenario
- reverb or other illusion of space introduced in production

