WINTER 2020

New York Arts Program Seminar in Film, Music and Sound in Modern Media Arts

Overview

In this seminar we explore strategies to unlock creativity and move past creative obstacles through games, writing, screenings, discussion and field trips.

As a course focusing in large part on storytelling through visual and sonic forms, we will also examine the roles producers, editors and directors of photography play in the production of films, be it documentary, narrative, experimental, hybrids, etc. We will also meet an HBO programmer, an award-winning film editor and award-winning film composer, and present a case study in the VICE Media style of storytelling with a special guest from VICE News.

Learning Objectives

1. Develop vocabulary to describe film practices in documentary, narrative and experimental
2. Analyze film styles from aesthetic, historical, and cultural perspectives
3. Analyze musical styles in film from aesthetic, historical, and cultural perspectives
4. Recognize trends and recurring themes in visual and audio storytelling
5. Learn to recognize storytelling innovations
6. Improve and develop critical listening and interviewing skills in service of documentary and documentary film related endeavors

Outcomes

1. Expansion of aesthetic taste, and the ability to debate the quality of work with reasonable, logical means.
2. Recognition of fundamental roles within film
3. A willingness to explore new approaches in one’s independent work

Office Hours: I’m flexible in this regard and would even consider weekends since we’re all in Brooklyn. The main point is that I need to meet with each of you at least four times this year, individually, as well

Assessments

Will be based on the following:

Attendance and punctuality
Meaningful participation in seminars and individual meetings
Evidence of exploration of media outside one’s current media consumption habits and patterns
Quality of critical thinking
Final presentation of independent projects (as we discussed this previously, if you do have a well prepared final presentation for the year you’ll be happy you did as your classmates will see just how talented you are!)

NYAP Seminars have a non-traditional structure. Course credit and assessment are dependent on:

Seminar attendance (eight two-hour sessions)
One-on-one meetings (four minimum)
Outside program event attendance
Grading for NYAP

Internship (3.25 credits)
Grade is based on your evaluation and faculty contact with your sponsor

Seminar (1)
Grade is based on attendance, participation, and work ethic for seminar assignments

Journal and Independent Study (0.25 credits)
Grade is based on the quality and frequency of journal entries, and the breadth and quality of your final project

Reading
Students may be assigned reading according to his or her independent project, and for seminar assignments, where applicable.

Journal
Students will be asked to attend documentaries, films and other arts-related events in New York City and to keep a journal of their thoughts. This journal is a record of intellectual and creative experiences and discoveries. Please have fun with it, but also take it seriously too. This is your chance to create a meaningful time capsule for you to explore and draw on in later years.

Independent Project
Based on your journal entries, you will pursue a focused, supervised, open-ended independent project. Weekly progress will be expected and personal and professional goals identified.

Communication
My preferred method of communication is email, so please check your email regularly and respond in a prompt manner, as in you should write back within no more than 24 hours of getting an email from me, and preferably, responding within a few hours is what I would love as that is the expected response within a professional environment.

Text or phone is okay - but it should be secondary to emailing. I will respond as quickly as possible. Lastly, all changes to internship schedule must be cleared with myself and NYAP.

Important Notes
Please be proactive in your pursuit of your interests within your chosen fields. Ask colleagues if they want to go to a film screening or discussion or to get feedback on your work. Also, attendance to seminars is mandatory and please be on time.
iPhone use in class is a no-go. Meaningful participation in our seminar discussions is a key factor in final grading.

Lastly, I’m forgiving and I’m here to help you explore your interests. But … you need to tell me with as much advance as you can if you are having any issues so we can deal with them as promptly as possible.

Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>St. George, Silver Screen Room, First Floor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date 1/16</td>
<td>6:30-8:30 pm</td>
<td>Seminar #1 – Creating an Environment of Experimentation</td>
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In Class: Students will collaborate on a written as well as an illustrated exquisite corpse, with the goal of creating something as a group and then moving off individually and building on this first collaboration.

Discussion: We will explore the origins of this creative exercise as a parlor game in Montparnasse - the artistic hub of Paris – at the turn of the century, and how it can be used to invigorate one’s imagination.

Assignment: Students choose a version of an exquisite corpse arrived at in class and expand on their idea to create their own version to be presented at the next seminar. Headline: Have fun with this, but all I ask, as always, is that you care about the work you are doing.

Date 1/23 6:30: -8:30 pm Seminar #2 – Discussing Creative Process with a Pulitzer Prize winner

Field Trip: MacDowell Colony performance and discussion of the process behind launching the forthcoming Broadway-bound production of“Flying Over Sunset.” Students meet and discuss the project with Pulitzer Prize winning stage director, playwright and librettist, James Lapine.

Assignment: After listening to the three-minute long music sample (five songs total) that I provide, students create their own story through what they feel the music is or could be signaling – fiction, non-fiction, hybrid, experimental, doesn’t matter – this is your call and there is no right answer. Have fun with it, make it serious, make me cry, make me mad, make me think, make me fall in love with the story - do what you can with it, but bring something in that you feel strongly about.

Date 1/30 6:30-8:30 pm Seminar #3 – Movie Night Followed by Discussion

Field trip: We’re going to hit the Metrograph Theater in lower Manhattan, one of the centers in NYC for independent films, to watch Jia Zhangke’s “I Wish I Knew,” a rumination on modern China.

Assignment: Watch this poorly recorded but fascinating link showing director Harmony Korine’s creative process. You need only go up to 6:30 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fb0ny1g_pC0; additionally,
using the MP3 I put together with five pieces of experimental music listen to the music (preferably repeatedly) and use it as a basis to create a story. The story can be a video, photo essay, written, doesn’t matter - the point is to let this particular piece of music guide your narrative process.

Date 2/6 6:30-8:30 pm  Seminar #4 – Editing Film and Working with Sound and Music

In Class: Emmy Award-winning and Oscar-nominated film editor Kristen Nutile discusses her creative process in film editing and show samples of her work. A Q&A will follow.

Assignment: Create two or more Tik-Tok films with a subject or theme of your own choosing. The films can be fictional, comic, a PSA, a musical number, a news report, a documentary, absurdist – you name it. Just make it fun and make it good and we’ll present to the class the following week.

Date 2/13 6:30-8:30 pm  Seminar #5 – Basics of Documentary

In Class: What does a news and documentary producer do? We’ll break down the producer’s job - including research, identifying stories, reporting, overseeing production, scripting, editing. In terms of an example where careful scripting lead to larger issues, we’ll use this idea to expand on the topic and discuss the landmark Ford Pinto case.

Discussion: Ethics of documentary and news. What ethical issues do makers and their teams run up against in their daily interactions?

Assignment: Think of one example of an ethical question in media and bring it in to discuss for the next seminar.

Date 2/20 6:30-8:30 pm  Seminar #6 – The Role of a Television Programmer

In Class: Former HBO documentary programmer Greg Rehm discusses HBO documentary aesthetics and the role of a programmer. Greg shows examples of films he admires in their approach and why.

Discussion: Q & A with Greg regarding what he and HBO, and other programmers, look for in a documentary film.

Assignment: Come up with a documentary idea. The subject is up to you. It can be on music, a profile of an artist, on fashion, on social issues, justice issues, environmental issues, politics, even on your musings on your internship itself. Anything you choose is great as long as you are passionate about it.

Date 2/27 6:30-8:30 pm  Seminar #7 – Experimental Music

Field Trip: LaMonte Young’s Dream House. This is one of the last vestiges of New York City’s early experimental music scene. LaMonte Young, still alive, is the father of minimalist music and this is his art
project, which has been going since the 1990s. Young was a major influence on The Velvet Underground, as well as the godfather of downtown cool in New York in the 1950s/60s. A hidden gem.

Date 3/5 6:30-8:30 pm  Seminar #8 – Scoring for Film and Television

In Class: Award-winning composer, Douglas Cuomo. Douglas is best known as the person who wrote the theme song for “Sex in the City,” but is also behind the scores of numerous independent films and documentaries. He also composes operas and his most recent work, 2018’s “Savage Winter” was developed by the American Opera Projects and was performed at Brooklyn Academy of Music. He is currently working on a score with Wilco’s Nels Cline.

Discussion: Q & A with Douglas regarding his process and an overview of his work in the commercial realm and the artistic realm.