Theories of Media Winter 2003: Syllabus
English 12800/32800 Art Hist 25900/35900

Instructors:  W. J. T. Mitchell: wjtm@uchicago.edu Wieboldt 203 Office Hours: M & W 3:30-4:30
Rebecca Reynolds: rreynol@uchicago.edu Hours: Tues 4-5 PM in Smart Museum Café or by appointment
Eduardo de Almeida: dealmeid@uchicago.edu Hours: Thurs 10-11 AM in Classics Café or by appointment

Lectures: M & W 1:30-2:50 Cobb 307 (Film Studies Center)

Screenings & Performances: Tuesdays 7-9 PM  Harper 130 except Jan. 21st when we will meet in Cobb 307

Texts (available at Seminary Coop Bookstore):

Required:
- Friedrich Kittler, *Gramaphone, Film, Typewriter*
- Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*
- W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*

Recommended:
- Peter Lunenfeld, *Snap to Grid*
- Timothy Druckrey, *Electronic Culture* (availability uncertain)
- Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*

Course Packet: available on Regenstein’s Electronic Reserve. Go to http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/index.html, click on “reserve catalog,” and enter “Regenstein” and “Mitchell” to get to these texts. If the texts are marked “eres” or “photocopy,” there will be a hot link to them. These readings will also be available at my homepage: http://home.uchicago.edu/~wjtm/ or its mirror version: http://www.wjtmitchell.net

Required Work:
- Show and Tell Proposal  *January 15th*
- Show and Tell Performance OR Taxonomic Chart of Media *January 20-21st*
- Annotated Bibliography: *anytime before tenth week.*
- Essay on Keyword in Media Theory:  *First Draft February 3rd; Final Draft Feb. 24th*
- Final Paper (10 pages for undergrads, 15 for graduate students): *March 17th*
First Week: Introduction to Media

Jan. 6: Introduction: What Is a Medium?

Readings: OED on “Medium,” “Media,” and “Mediation.” Raymond Williams, “From Medium to Social Practice”

Jan. 7: Tuesday Screening (Harper 130): Bamboozled (dir. Spike Lee)

Jan. 8: Media and the Life of Images

Readings: Plato, Allegory of the Cave; Aristotle, excerpt from Poetics; Exodus 20, 32: The Ten Commandments and The Golden Calf; Mitchell, Introduction to Picture Theory, and “The Pictorial Turn”

Second Week: The Dialectics of Media: see Adaptation (dir. Spike Jonze) over weekend

Jan. 13: Words, Pictures, and the Spaces Between


Recommended: Mitchell “Pictures and Paragraphs” from Iconology; “Beyond Comparison: Image, Text, and Method” in Picture Theory, espec. pages 100-104 on Billy Wilder’s Sunset Boulevard

Jan. 14: Screening: Memento (dir. Christopher Nolan)

Jan. 15: Memory, Mind, and Media: SHOW AND TELL PROPOSAL DUE

Readings: Frances Yates, Ch. 1 in The Art of Memory; Mitchell, “Narrative, Memory, and Slavery” Picture Theory Ch. 6, espec. 190-98 on narration and description, temporality and place.

Jan. 18: Keyword Selection due (sign up sheet by my office door).
Third Week: Picturing Media

Jan. 20: Metapictures: Taxonomies of Media due

Readings: McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message,” Ch. 1 of Understanding Media; Mitchell, “Metapictures” Ch. 2 of Picture Theory espec. 35-57.

Jan. 21: Show and Tell Presentations (Cobb 307).

Jan. 22: Inventions of Writing


Fourth Week: Art and Media:

Jan. 27: Purity, Presence, and the Specificity of Media:


Recommended: Mitchell, “Ut Pictura Theoria” in Picture Theory

Jan. 28: Screening: Robert Smithson, The Spiral Jetty; Sculptors at Storm King (possible)

Jan. 29: Sculpture and Space: Art in an Expanded Field (lecture by Rebecca Reynolds)


Fifth Week: Media and Technology: Benjamin and McLuhan

Feb 3: Media, Machines, and Perception: 1st Draft of Keyword article due in Drop Box


Recommended: Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry”
Feb. 4: Screening: Videodrome (dir. David Cronenberg)

Feb. 5: The Medium is the Message

Reading: Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media Part II

Recommended: Introduction to McLuhan by Lewis Lapham

Sixth Week: Media Aesthetics in the Electronic Age

Feb. 10: Digitization, Interactivity, and Hyperaesthetics

Readings: Lev Manovich, The Language of New Media, ch. 1; Peter Lunenfeld, “Hyperaesthetics: Real-Time Theory,” ch. 3 of Snap to Grid

Feb. 11: Screening: The Matrix (dir. Wacoski Brothers)

Feb. 12: “There Is No Theory of the Media”

Readings: Hans Magnus Enzenberger “Constituents of a Theory of Media” from Druckrey, Electronic Culture; Jean Baudrillard, “Requiem for the Media” from Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign

Seventh Week: Beyond Media

Feb. 17: The Sound of the Real

Readings: Geoffrey Winthrop-Youngs’s introduction, and the gramaphone section of Kittler’s Gramaphone Film Typewriter

Feb. 18: Screening: The Sixth Sense d. M. Night Shyamalan

Feb. 19: Imaginary Spectres, Symbolic Letters, Real Seances

Readings: “Film” and “Typewriter” sections of Kittler

Eighth Week: The Work of Art in the Age of Biocybernetic Reproduction: Final Draft of Keywords Essay Due

Feb. 24: Posthuman Studies, Evolutionary Epistemology, and New Media (lecture by Eduardo de Almeida)


Feb. 25: Screening: Akira, directed by Katsuhiro Ôtomo (film) OR eXistenZ (David Cronenberg).

Feb. 26: Biotaylorism 2000: PowerPoint presentation by Natalie Bookchin and The @rtmark Collective.

Readings: Explore the Rtmark.com website; Teresa de Lauretis, essay on eXistenZ forthcoming in Critical Inquiry.

Ninth Week: The Systems Theory of Media

Mar. 3: Totalizing Media

Readings: Niklas Luhmann, “Medium and Form,” from Art as a Social System and/or “How Can the Mind Participate in Communication?” in Materialities of Communication; excerpts from The Reality of the Mass Media

Mar. 5: Final Lecture

Tenth Week: Workshops on final papers at regular class times.

FINAL PAPER DUE: Monday, March 17th