

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

Instructors: W. J. T. Mitchell: [wjtm@uchicago.edu](mailto:wjtm@uchicago.edu) Wieboldt 203 Office Hours: M & W  
3:30-4:30  
Rebecca Reynolds: [rlreynol@uchicago.edu](mailto:rlreynol@uchicago.edu) Hours: Tues 4-5 PM in Smart  
Museum Café or by appointment  
Eduardo de Almeida: [dealmeid@uchicago.edu](mailto: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, Gramophone, 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

Readings: Mitchell, “Word and Image” in Critical Terms for Literary Study; Saussure “The Nature of the Linguistic Sign” Course in General Linguistics 65-70; C. S. Peirce, “Symbol, Index, Icon”; Alan Sheridan on Lacan’s “Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real” in Four Fundamental Concepts 279-80 ; Lessing; excerpt from Laocoon;

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

Readings: Plato, Phaedrus; McLuhan, "The Written Word" (81-89) "The Printed Word" (170-78); Heidegger, "The Hand and the Typewriter"(in Kittler, 198-200); Mitchell, "Visible Language: Blake's Wond'rous Art of Writing" in Picture Theory ch. 4, espec. pp. 111-30.

### Fourth Week: Art and Media:

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

Readings: Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon"; "Avant Garde and Kitsch"; Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood";

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)

Readings: Heidegger, "Art and Space"; Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field"; Mitchell, "What Sculpture Wants" (pp. 166-70 only); Robert Smithson, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape"

### Fifth Week: Media and Technology: Benjamin and McLuhan

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

Readings: Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"; McLuhan, Understanding Media part I

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. Wakoski 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-Young’s introduction, and the gramophone section of Kittler’s Gramophone 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)

Readings: Haraway, Donna. "The Cyborg Manifesto" from Simians, Cyborgs, and Women; Hayles, Katherine. "The Condition of Virtuality." from The Digital Dialectic. Revisit OED on biological senses of "media".

Suggested: Katherine Hayles. "Questioning the Machine Basis of Techne: Heidegger on Technology" from Embodying Technesis; "Visualizing the Posthuman," from Art Journal 59; Brian Massumi, "On the Superiority of the Analog" from Parables for the Virtual; Rutsky, R. L. "Technological Fetishism and the Techno-Cultural Unconscious." from High Techne

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