Instructor: Prof. Susan Murray; susan.murray@nyu.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays 1-2:30 or by appointment. Office is 239 Greene st., 716
Class schedule/Location: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will track the various manifestations of media amateurism over time and medium, while also exploring the theoretical concerns and cultural discourses that surround their work and social construction, especially in relation to notions of professionalism, community, networks, artistic practice, collectivism, and marginalization. We will cover the histories of and issues within: amateur photography (victorian pictorialism, snapshot photography, leisure photography, digital photo-sharing, etc.); amateur film and video (art film at the margins, home movies, camcorders, video vigilantes, viral videos, Youtube, etc.); as well as early radio amateurs, ham radio, 'zines, blogging, and hacking.

OBJECTIVES
+ Students will compare and critique the terms “amateur” and “professional” and track how they change in different institutional, cultural and historical contexts.
+ Students will evaluate and critique historical and theoretical writings on amateur work.
+ Students will analyze concepts such as community, networks, and collectivism
+ Students will compare and analyze the history of the amateur in relation to different media forms such as radio, photography, 'zines, blogs, film, video, and digital technology.
+ Students will come to explain and evaluate amateurism in the current media and cultural environment.

REQUIRED READINGS:

ASSIGNMENTS & RESPONSIBILITIES
1. Attendance and Participation (30% of final grade): Students must attend every class and participate in discussion.
2. One in class essay exam (30% of final grade). This exam will consist of 1-2 essay questions.
3. Research paper (worth 40% of final grade). Students must research write a paper that covers a community of amateurs or their productions, an issue related to amateur practice, or theoretical approaches to the amateur/professional divide. Papers can be grounded in the present or the past. 10-12 pages in length. DUE: June 21st.

Grading:
90 – 100= A range
80 – 89 = B range
70 – 79 = C range
60 & below= Fail
SCHEDULE

+May 28 Amateurs vs. Professionals
  Screening (in class): Panorama Ephemera (Prelinger, 2004)
  Readings: Fox, Broderick. “Rethinking the Amateur”
  Shand, Ryan, “Theorizing the Amateur Cinema: Limitations and Possibilities”,
  Zyrd, Michael, “Experimental Film as Useless Cinema”
  Zimmermann, Patricia. “Pleasure or Money”

+May 29: Photography: Victorian Amateurs
  Readings: Robert E. Mensel, “Kodakers Lying in Wait”: Amateur Photography and the
  Right to Privacy in New York,” 1885-1915.
  Edwards, Elizabeth, “A Credit to Yourself and Your County: Amateur Photographers and
  the Survey Record Movement.”
  Judith Williamson, “Family, Education, Photography”
  Zimmerman, P. “Entrepreneurs, Artists, Hobbyists, and Workers.”

*Note: Event on Riot Grrls zines at Fales collection in Bobst tonight*

contributors Ramdasha Bikeeem (GUNK zine), Johanna Fateman (Artand-Mania zine, and
essayist for the book) and Kathleen Hanna (Bikini Kill; My Life With Evan Dando, Popstar zine;
and more) to discuss their contributions to the book, their donations to the collection, and their
perspective on Riot Grrrl 20 years later.

+May 30: Photography: the Snapshot & Aesthetic practice
  Willis, Deborah “A Search for Self: The Photograph and Black Family Life
  Pazderic, Nickola, “Mysterious Photographs”
  Zuromskis, Catherine, “On Snapshot Photography”
  Sontag, Susan, “In Plato’s Cave”
  Bonasos, Christopher, Instant: The Story of Polaroid (excerpts)

+June 3: Home Movies
  Screening (in class): Home Movies from Prelinger archive
  Readings: Zimmerman, Patricia, “Professional Results with Amateur Ease”
  Abraham, Ayisha. “Deteriorating Memories, Blurring Fact and Fiction in Home Movies
  in India.”

+June 4: Film: Hollywood Outsiders
  Screening (in class) TBA
  Readings: Anne Morey, “Fashioning the Self to Fashion the Film: The Case of the
  Palmer Photoplay Corporation”
  Horne, Jennifer., “A History Long Overdue: The Public Library and Motion
  Pictures”
  Waller, Gregory, “Projecting the Promise of 16mm”
  Additional reading TBA-Ackland/Wassen
+June 5: IN CLASS ESSAY

+June 6: Wireless Amateur Operators, Low Power Stations and Ham Radio
Readings: Douglas, Susan, “Exploratory Listening in the 1920s”
Dunbar Hester, Christina, “Geeks, Meta Geeks and Gender Trouble: Activism, Identity and Low Power FM radio”
Haring, Kristen, “The ‘Freer Men’ of Ham Radio: How a Technical Hobby Provided Social and Spatial Distance”

+June 10: Video: Guerilla and Alternative TV to Video Vigilantes
Screening (in class):
Shamberg, Michael, Guerilla Television, Holt, 1971 [excerpts]
Buckingham, D. “Take Back the Tube! The Discursive Construction of Amateur Film and Video Making.”
Ouellette, Laurie, “Camcorders Dos and Don’ts”

+June 11: Zines & Blogs
Readings: Tigges, Teal, “Scissors and Glue: Punk Fanzines and the Creation of a DIY Aesthetic”
Kearney, Mary Celeste, “Grrrl Zines; Exploring Identity, Transforming Girls Written Culture”
Cohen, Kris. “What Does the Photoblog Want?”

+June 12: Labor and Digital Amateur
Readings: Van Dijck, Jose, “Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-generated Content”
Murray, Susan, “Amateur Auteurs? The Cultivation of Online Video Partners and Creators”
John T. Caldwell, “Worker Blowback: User-Generated, Worker-Generated and Producer-Generated Content within Collapsing Production Workflows”
Mark Andrejevic, “Authoring User-Generated Content”

+June 13: More Digital
Godwin, Mike, "Nine Principles for Making Virtual Communities Work," available online.
Christenson, Christen. “Hey Man, Nice Shot”: Setting the Iraq War to Music on YouTube
Banet-Weiser, “Creative Authorship: Self-Actualizing Individuals and the Self-Brand.”