

NYU Department of Media, Culture, and Communication

WAR AS MEDIA

MCC-UE 1351

Machiavelli stated war is politics by other means. The question of “other means” raises the issue of the mediatic infrastructure of war and the cultural-political framing of warfare as the media of history. The question of means highlights the largely untheorized relation between political violence, media and the technological under the rubric of a philosophy of means. Communication studies traditionally focus on how war is propagandized by mass media. In contrast, this seminar proposes that war is an encompassing mode of political communication and ex-communication in itself by which media is militarized and violence is mediatized. I propose that a theory of modern war is in effect a philosophy of media.

We will examine how modern warfare has generated new visual cultures, spatialities, modes of embodiment, soundscapes, and new modes of witnessing and archiving the traumatic. This seminar proposes that the visual technology of war and the technologies of event dissemination are linked problems in the political history of representation. The triangulation of person, place and time as the basis of perceiving history can only be accounted for by a history of mediated perception-- a history increasingly characterized by military technologies and a militarized visual culture, and their fashioning of the modern sensorium and modern memory. The seminar will examine the thesis that the “informatization” of contemporary consciousness can only be understood through a media theory of war.

Requirements:

1. In class discussion and/or presentation of assigned readings: 30%
2. Take home Midterm: 20%
3. Term Paper: 50%
 - Exploration of a chosen thematic that works with 10 readings from the syllabus of 5,000 words in length. 12-point typeface excluding footnotes and references and external resources specific to the theme if necessary.

Class Code of Conduct:

- **SMS messaging/email devices**, or other portable communication devices are not to be used during the class.
- **Voice recordings** via digital/portable platforms will not be allowed.
- **Attendance** is important to the success of this class and to your development as a media expert. Each unexcused, absence will result in the lowering of your final grade. Excused absences, such those for documented illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or travel will not affect your grade. Five unexcused absences will automatically result in failure for the course.

- **Lateness** is disruptive to the seminar environment, and prevents you from fully participating and assimilating the information and materials discussed in class. Excessive tardiness will lower your participation grade.
- **Plagiarism** is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. It is a serious academic offense that can result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct and failure for the course.
- **Student Work** must be completed and submitted on time. All assignments should be turned in when they are due.
- **Eating in Class:** NYU rules forbid food consumption in classrooms.

Course Resource Materials:

1. Syllabus and all course readings in Classes website section.
2. Films to be selected will be screened in class as time permits

Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to demonstrate:

- advanced understanding of research methodologies, vocabularies and procedures appropriate to graduate work in Visual Culture and the Archeology of Media.
- developing research, writing and communication skills
- self-reflexivity as a research practitioner
- developing ability in identifying and addressing research objectives
- knowledge of a range of specific critical vocabularies and concerns focused philosophy of media, violence, society-technology studies and visual culture.
- interfacing theoretical frameworks and practice based research

Weaponizing the Body: September 1 - September 7

Junger, Ernst 1993. On Danger, *New German Critique*, No. 59. Spring-Summer, pp 27-32.

Junger, Ernst 1993 War and Photography *New German Critique* No 59, Summer: pp 24-26.

Kaes, Anton 1993. The Cold Gaze: Notes on Mobilization and Modernity, *New German Critique* No 59, Summer, pp 24-26.

Ballistical Gaze: September 8 - September 14

Virilio, Paul 1989 "Cinema Isn't I see, Its I Fly" In War and Cinema The Logistics of Perception, Verso.

Saint-Amour, Paul K 2003. Modernist Reconnaissance *Modernism/modernity* - Volume 10, Number 2: pp. 349-380.

Recommended Reading:

Werneberg, Brigitte 1992. Ernst Junger and the Transformed World, *October* Volume 62, Autumn, pp. 42-62.

Alter, Nora 1996. The Political Im/perceptible in the Essay Film: Farocki's Images of the World and the Inscription of the War, *New German Critique*, No 68: pp. 165-192

Space and War: Forensic Phantasms: September 16 - September 28

Zanara, Jana 2009. Machiavelli's Optical Arts: Political Theory, Action and Realism (manuscript)

Weizman, Eyal 2002. Introduction to The Politics of Verticality
<http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article.jsp?id=2&debateId=45&articleId=801>

Davis, Mike 1999. Beyond Blade Runner in The Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster, New York Picador.

Gilles, Deleuze 1992. "Postscript on the Societies of Control", *October* 59, Winter, pp. 3-7.

Appadurai, Arjun 1998. Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization, *Public Culture* Vol. 10 no 2, pp. 225-240.

Scopic Regimes, September 29 - October 5

Foster, Hal 1996. Death in America: Shocked Subjectivity and Compulsive Visual Repetition." *October*, Vol. 75, pp. 133-152.

Feldman, Allen 2005. The Actuarial Gaze: from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib, *Cultural Studies* Spring Volume 19, and no. 2 March, pp. 203-226.

Recommended Readings:

Feldman, Allen 1997. Violence and Vision: the Prosthetics, and Aesthetics of Terror in Northern Ireland." *Public Culture*, Volume 10, No. 1, Fall, pp 25-60.

In the Medium of the Body: October 6 - October 12

Mbembe, Achille 2003. Necropolitics *Public Culture* 12(1), pp. 11-40.

Bunn, David 1999. Morbid Curiosities, Mutilation, Exhumation and the Fate of Colonial Painting. *Transforming Anthropology*. Volume 8 Numbers 1 & 2. pp 39-53.

Doherty, Brigid. 1997 "We are All Neurasthenics" or, The Trauma of Dada Montage, *Critical Inquiry* 24, Autumn, pp. 82-132

Occupied Bodies: October 13 - October 19 (Fall Recess October 14-15) Midterm Due Oct 17

Dubois, Paige 1988. *Torture and Truth*, (Selected Chapters), New York, Routledge.

Scarry, Elaine 1985. The Structure of Torture: The Conversion of Real Pain into the Fiction of Power. In *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Oxford University Press.

Zoopolitics: (October 20 - October 26)

Taussig, Michael 2007. Zoology, Magic, and Surrealism in the War on Terror, *Critical Inquiry* 34, suppl. (Winter Supplement 2008), pp. 98-116.

Parikka, Jussi 2009. Politics of Swarms: Translations between Entomology and Biopolitics, *Parallax*, 14:3, pp. 112 — 124

Speed and The Technological Uncanny: October 27 - November 2

Virilio, Paul 2002. Forward to the Museum of Accidents.
http://www.onoci.net/virilio/pages_uk/virilio/all_avertissement.php

Featherstone, Mark 2001. Speed and Violence: Sacrifice in Virilio, Derrida, and Girard *Anthropoetics* 6, no. 2 (Winter).

Crogan, Paul 1999. The Tendency, the Accident, and the Untimely: Paul Virilio's Engagement with the Future, *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol 16 (5-6) pp. 161-176.

Recommended Reading:

Redhead, Steve 2004. The Art Of The Accident Paper to 'Urban Vulnerability And Network Failure' ESRC International Seminar, Centre for SURF, Manchester, UK, April 29, 30, May 1,

Auto-Immune Disorders: November 3 - November-9

Esposito, Roberto 2006. The Immunization Paradigm. *Diacritics*, Volume 36, Number 2, Summer, pp. 23-48.

Derrida, Jacques. 2003 *Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides in Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* by Giovanna Borradori, Jurgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nuclear Fiction: November 10 - November 16

Mizuta Lippit, Akira 2005. The Shadow Archive (A Secret Light) An Atomic Trace. In *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Derrida, Jacques 1984. No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, And Seven Missives) Author (s): *Diacritics*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Nuclear Criticism (Summer) pp. 20-31

Witnessing the Unwitnessable I: November 17 - December 7 (November 28, Turkey Day Recess)

Didi-Huberman, George 2012. *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, Selected Chapters Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Guerin, Frances 2006. The Perpetrator in Focus: Turn of the Century Holocaust Remembrance in *The Specialist*, *Law Text Culture* 167, pp. 167-193.

Robinson, Benjamin 2003. The Specialist on the Eichmann Precedent: Morality, Law, and Military Sovereignty, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Autumn).

Azoulay, Arieilla 2008. *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Selected Chapters Boston: Zone Books.

December 8 -December 14

Review

Final Paper Due December 17