**Cinema Studies 3318: Film as a Subversive Art**  
M/W 1:30 – 3:55pm, Language Media Center (LMC, basement of Sills Hall)  
***Film screenings: Thursdays at 7pm in VAC Beam***

Sarah Childress  
Office: 208 Dudley Coe  
Email: schildre@bowdoin.edu  
Office Hours: Mon/Wed 4:00-5:30pm and by appointment

**Required materials**  
A.L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video* (2nd ed)  
Erin Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image*  
Subscription to Fandor  
Other required readings will be placed on Blackboard

**Course Description**  
Avant-garde cinema is a subversive cinema. Its images are unruly and transcendent. Its filmmakers challenge aesthetic, social, intellectual, and political conventions. To emancipate viewers from hegemonic values and mass-market entertainments, inviting them to see the world differently, think independently, and empathize with other perspectives. We will explore the rich history of avant-garde cinema created by artists who experiment with the formal, narrative, and perceptual elements of film. Through weekly screenings, the reading of filmmaker “manifestos,” theory, and film scholarship, and the creation of your own short videos, we will examine the history and practice of avant-garde cinema and the forces that have engendered its forms.

**Course Objectives**  
- Develop skills for analyzing and creating experimental films  
- Explore the history and theory of experimental film & video to understand the contexts for their development and their relationships with one another

**Policies**  
- *You will need to view films outside of class.* These viewings are mandatory. We will watch some of the assigned short films in class, but we won’t be able to screen all films or feature-length films, which you should view on Fandor or Blackboard or during our assigned screening time. Also, our collaborative assignment will require you to meet with colleagues in Advanced Composition (Dance) and Intro to Composition (Music) during a special 3-week lab time (Fridays 1:30-3pm 2/20-3/6).  
- *Readings should be prepared for the day they are listed on the course schedule.* Please bring readings to class.  
- Readings may be changed to accommodate course flow or speaker visits.  
- Assignments may not be submitted via e-mail.  
- I do not accept late work except in the case of approved holidays or documented emergencies. For each 24 hours an assignment is late, I deduct 1/3 of a letter grade.  
- Since I publish due dates at the start of the semester, extensions will only be granted 5 days in advance of the due date and only in the case of extreme extenuating circumstances.  
Academic Honesty
Plagiarism seriously compromises the integrity of the classroom and of your educational experience and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person’s thoughts, words, judgments, ideas, etc. as your own. Direct quotations must always be identified with full reference to their sources according to MLA guidelines. You can find details on proper citation practices at: http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/academic-honesty/how-to-cite.shtml. You must also reference sources within your text if you paraphrase or summarize another person’s ideas or judgments and include a Works Cited reference. If you incorporate found footage or audio within one of your video projects or are assisted in your videomaking efforts by others, you must reference their contribution via end credits. Though you may refer to our assigned readings to contextualize your thesis for any written analysis of films we view for class, I expect your formal analysis of the films to derive from your own original interpretation. Your analysis should not include references to scholarly resources (assigned or otherwise). Similarly, your film productions should exclusively involve footage of your own creation, unless the assignment calls for the use of found or appropriated footage.

A Note on the Films
Some of the assigned films and readings for this course may contain graphic images or statements that involve sexuality, profanity, crude behavior, nudity, violence, or frankly stated beliefs that may be offensive to some. Please engage with these materials in a spirit of investigation and critique, but please don’t hesitate to let me know if you have any concerns.

Assignments
Reading Responses (25%)
In weekly responses, please summarize each reading’s thesis and the key points that explicate that central idea. This assignment gives you an opportunity to reflect on each essay. Please don’t turn in reading notes: phrases, ideas, or quotes that you jotted down as you read. I want to see your interpretations of each reading in 150-200 word summaries. Grading: 95: entries that show a close reading of the material and a clear and thorough attempt to work through the major ideas. 85: entries that pull out big ideas, but miss important nuances or don’t indicate a sophisticated and practical understanding. 75: entries that show the material has been read but key concepts have not been grasped. 0: no response turned in. I will collect responses each Wednesday. Please do not submit them via e-mail.

Video Responses (40%)
You will apply the ideas and techniques we read, discuss, and view to create your own 1-to 3-minute videos. The video form must be derived from the practices we are investigating and the films you view that week (and thus will be graded according to how you interpret and apply the ideas and techniques you see). But the content can be of your own choosing. Each video should be accompanied by a short (250-word max!) reflection on your creative process, including how you interpreted and applied the techniques you saw in the assigned films. You will use this reflection (which you will also turn in to me) to inform the presentation of your short videos in class on Mondays. You should plan to draw upon your weekly videos and reflections to create your final film project and manifesto.

Final Film Project & Manifesto (15%)
You will create a short film (3-5 min) and accompanying manifesto that expresses your challenge to aesthetic, cinematic, social, intellectual, and/or political conventions. The form and content of your final film should be original and unique yet, like all experimental films, reference specific historical practice(s) or tradition(s).
**Collaborative Screendance Project (15%)**
You will be working with colleagues in Advanced Composition (Dance) and Introduction to Composition (Music) to create a short original “screendance” video during a special three-week unit. Collaboration and creativity will be key to the production and evaluation of these videos. We will dedicate class time to related representational practices (dancefilm, gesture & expression, music) to prepare you for your role in this collaboration (you’ll be putting the “screen” in “screendance”). But the final video you produce will largely derive from, and be evaluated in terms of, your interpretation of these techniques and unique collaboration with your colleagues.

**Film-Culture Activities (5%)**
Please attend **four (4) extracurricular** film events and write a 250-word response that reflects on how the screening’s public forum dialogues with the ideas we discuss in class. Qualifying events include on-campus screenings and cinema-related lectures, Bowdoin Film Society screenings (1), screenings at the Eveningstar, Frontier, other theaters (in Maine or away), film festivals, etc. **Films screened for a class in which you are currently enrolled do not qualify as film-culture activities. All film-culture responses due by May 6.**

**Course Schedule**

**Introductions**

**Jan 19:** Rees “Introduction” (1-14). Class introduction; “defining” the avant-garde; applying film analysis to film production; camera introduction and FCPX orientation

**Fandor:**
- *The Dancing Pig* (1907, 4 min)
- *The Acrobatic Fly* (Percy Smith, UK, 1908, 3 min)

**Week 1: Origins: Anarchic Cinema**


**Fandor:**
- *The Cook's Revenge* (Georges Méliès, France, 1900, 1 min)
- *Extraordinary Cab Accident* (Walter Booth, UK, 1903, 1 min)
- *The Gay Shoe Clerk* (Edwin S. Porter, US, 1903, 1 min)
- *The Consequences of Feminism* (Alice Guy-Blaché, France, 1906, 7 min)
- *Fantasmagoria* (Émile Cohl, France, 1908, 2 min) OR *Comic Mutations* (1909, 3 min)
- *A Busy Day* (Charles Chaplin, US, 1914, 5 min)
- *A Fool There Was* (Frank Powell, US, 1915, 66 min)
- *Gumov’s Diary* (Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1923, 5 min)

**Blackboard:**
- *Good Night, Nurse!* (Roscoe Arbuckle, US, 1918, 26 min)
- Marx Brothers *Go West* Train Station scene (8 min)
- *Land Without Bread* (Las Hurdes, Luis Buñuel, Spain, 1933, 30 min)

**Sun Jan 25 @ 7pm,** Pickard Theater: Tanya Tagaq performance

**M Jan 26:** **No videos for this week:** Luis Buñuel “Land Without Bread” and Catherine Russell “Surrealist Ethnography” (Blackboard); Q & A with Tanya Tagaq
Week 2: Early European Avant-garde: Dada and Cinéma Pur

In class:
*Anemic Cinema* (Marcel Duchamp, France, 1926, 7 min)
*Rhythmus 21* (Hans Richter, Germany, 1923, 3 min)
Blackboard:
*Ballet Mécânique* (Fernand Léger & Dudley Murphy, France, 1924, 19 min)
*Return to Reason* (Man Ray, France, 1923, 3 min)
*Entr’acte* (René Clair, Francis Picabia & Erik Satie, France, 1924, 22 min)
*Dada* (Mary Ellen Bute & Ted Nemeth, 1936, 2 min)
*Cinq minutes du cinema pur* (Five Minutes of Pure Cinema, Henri Chomette, France, 1926)
*Étude cinégraphique sur une arabesque* (Germaine Dulac, 1929, 5 min)
*H₂O* (Ralph Steiner, US, 1929, 13 min)
*Radio Dynamics* (Oskar Fischinger, Germany, 1942, 4 min)

Th Jan 29 @ 7pm: “Collaborations, Collusions, and Duchamp” (Bowdoin Museum of Art)

M Feb 2: Video presentations

Week 3 Early European Avant-Garde: Surrealism

Thursday night screening: *Blood of a Poet* (Jean Renoir, France, 1932, 55 min) and *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (Germaine Dulac, France, 1928, 41 min)

Blackboard:
*Le Etoile de Mer* (Man Ray, France, 1928, 21 min)
*Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel & Salvador Dali, France, 1929, 16 min)
People Like Us & Ergo Phizmiz from *Keystone Cut Ups*

M Feb 9: Video presentations

Week 4 Avant-doc
W Feb 11: Rees pp. 53-59; Nichols “Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-garde,” Dziga Vertov “Council of Three,” and excerpt from Joris Ivens *The Camera and I* (Blackboard)

Thursday night screening: *Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, Soviet Union, 1929, 68 min)

Blackboard:
*Manhatta* (Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand, US, 1921, 11 min)
*Regen* (Rain, Joris Ivens & Mannus Franken, Netherlands, 1929, 12 min)
*A Bronx Morning* (Jay Leyda, US, 1931, 11 min)

M Feb 16: Video presentations
World Cinema Festivals begins (Feb 16-21)

**Choreography for Camera**

**Week 5 Dancefilm**

W Feb 18: Brannigan: Intro and Chapters 2 and 7

Blackboard

Danse Serpentine (Loïe Fuller) (Auguste & Louis Lumiere, France, 1896, 1 min)

Geography of the Body (Willard Mass, US, 1943, 7 min)

A Study in Choreography for Camera (Maya Deren, US, 1945, 2 min)

Hand Movie (Yvonne Rainer, US, 1966, 6 min)

Screen Test #3 (Edie Sedgwick) (Andy Warhol, US, 1966, 3 min)

Element (Amy Greenfield, US, 1973, 11 min)

Monoloog van Fumiyo Ikeda op het einde van Ottone, Ottone (Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Walter Verdin, Germany, 1989, 6 min)

Resonance (Stephen Cummins & Simon Hunt, 1991, 11 min)

Hands (Adam Roberts, 1995)

Solo [William Forsythe] (Thomas Lovell Balogh, US, 1997, 7 min)

Dust (Anthony Atanasio, UK, 1998, 8 min)

da nero a nero. Tempo per pensare (Anna de Manincor, 1999, 14 min)

The Moebius Strip (Vincent Pluss & Gilles Jobin, France, 2001, 26 min)

Rooms (Paul Sarvis, US, 2013, 6 min)

F Feb 20 1:30-3pm: Improvisations (Collaborative Lab: Edwards Building)

M Feb 23: Video presentations

**Week 6 Gesture and Expression**

W Feb 25: Brannigan: Chapters 3, 4, and 5; Amy Greenfield “The Kinesthetics of Avant-Garde Dance Film: Deren and Harris” (Blackboard)

Blackboard

The New York Hat (D.W. Griffith, US, 1912, 16 min)

Broken Blossoms excerpt (D.W. Griffith, US, 1919)

Ruth St. Denis East Indian Nautch Dance (1944)

Visual Variations on Noguchi (Marie Menken, US, 1945, 4 min)

Ritual in Transfigured Time (Maya Deren, US, 1946, 15 min)

Meditation on Violence (Maya Deren, US, 1948, 12 min)

Excerpt from Ivan the Terrible (Part 1) (Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1948)

Nine Variations on a Dance Theme (Hilary Harris, US, 1966, 13 min)

Breakaway (Bruce Conner, US, 1966, 5 min)

Excerpt from Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men (David Hinton, 1989)

Boy (Peter Anderson & Rosemary Lee, 1995, 4 min)

Magnetic North (Miranda Pennell, 2003) [check book website for film]

Blush (Wim Vandekeybus, 2005, 53 min) [pls watch excerpts of your choosing]

Adaptive Lines (Flora Weigmann, US, 2007, 3 min)

“Nelken” (excerpt) (Pina Bausch)

F Feb 27 1:30-3pm: Theme and variations (Collaborative Lab: Edwards Building)

M Mar 2: Video presentations
**Week 7 Music(ality)**


Blackboard

*Opus I* (Walter Ruttmann, Germany, 1921)

*Danse Macabre* [Camille Saint-SAëns] (Dudley Murphy, US, 1922)

*Romance Sentimentale* [Eisenstein & Alexandroff, France, 1930]

*Allegretto* (Oskar Fischinger, Germany, 1936, 3 min)

Excerpt from *Night Mail* (Henry Watt & Basil Wright w/ Benjamin Britten, UK, 1936)

*Tarantella* (Mary Ellen Bute, 1940, 4 min)

*Film No. 1 (Five Film Exercises)* (John & James Whitney, US, 1943, 4 min)

*Pacific 231* [Arthur Honegger] (Jean Mitry, France, 1949, 10 min)

*Begone Dull Care* (Norman McLaren & Evelyn Lambart, Canada, 1949, 8 min)

*Free Radicals* (Len Lye, UK, 1958, 5 min)

*Bridges-Go-Round* (Shirley Clarke, US, 1958, 7 min)

Excerpt from *Light Music* (Lis Rhodes, UK, 1975)

*Doin’ It* (Harold “Hype” Williams & LL Cool J, US, 1995, 4 min)

*Static Cling* (Bill Alves, US, 2000, 8 min)

*Weapon of Choice* (Fatboy Slim & Spike Jonze, US, 2001, 4 min)

*Debussy Arabesque #1 Piano Solo (Animation ver. 2)* (Stephen Malinowski, 2010, 5 min)

F Mar 6 1:30-3:pm: Final shoot day!

**Spring Break (Mar 7 – Mar 22)**

**Week 8 Assemblage and Found Footage**

M Mar 23 Rees 59-67; Paul Arthur “The Status of Found Footage”; in-class: found footage exercise (please bring your hard drives to class)

W Mar 25 Presentation of screendance rough cuts to class (SCMS)

F Mar 27 Presentation of screendance rough cuts to Advanced Comp & Intro Comp

M Mar 30 Presentation of screendance videos for Mary Jane Doherty (director of *Secundaria*)

** Screening of *Secundaria* at 7pm, location TBD

Fandor:

*LBJ* (Santiago Alvarez, Cuba, 1968, 18 min)

*An Untitled Portrait* (Cheryl Dunye, US, 1993, 3 min)

Blackboard:

*Report* (Bruce Conner)

Excerpts from *La Hora de los Hornos* (Fernando Solanas & Octavio Getino, Argentina, 1968)

Excerpt from *Alone: Life Wastes Andy Hardy* (Martin Arnold)

Excerpt from *Confessions with an open curtain* (Eli Cortiñas Hidalgo)

*Reckless Eyeballing* (Christopher Harris, US, 2004, 14 min)

**Week 9 1960s Mythopoeic Film**


Thursday night screening: *Prelude: Dog Star Man* (Stan Brakhage, US, 1962, 25 min)

*Scorpio Rising* (Kenneth Anger, US, 1964, 28 min)

Fandor: *Ganja and Hess* (Bill Gunn, US, 1973, 110 min)
M Apr 6: Video presentations; **screendance films due**

**Week 10 Structural Film**  
W Apr 8: Rees 79-90; Michael Snow “Two Letters and Notes on Films,” Hollis Frampton “A Pentagram for Conrying the Narrative” or “A Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses” and Mark Peranson “Trainspotting with James Benning”

Claudio Caldini, *Gamelan* (Argentina, 1981, 12 min)

Thursday night screening: *RR* (James Benning, US, 2007, 111 min)

Blackboard  
*Wavelength* (Michael Snow, Canada, 1967, 43 min)  
*Yes No Maybe Maybe Not* (Malcolm LeGrice, UK, 1967, 8 mins)  
*Zorns Lemma* (Hollis Frampton, US, 1970, 60 min)  
Gill Eatherley, *Dialogue* (UK, 1973, 10 mins)

M Apr 13: Video presentations

**Week 11 Threshold to the Digital**  
W Apr 15: Excerpts from David Lynch *Catching the Big Fish*; Stefanie Diekmann “The Lord of the Inland Empire” (TBD)

Thursday night screening: *Inland Empire* (David Lynch, US, 2006, 180 min)

M Apr 20: Video presentations

**Week 12 & 13 Technologies of Avant-doc**  

Thursday night screening: *Leviathan* (Lucien Castaing-Taylor & Verena Paravel, U.S., 2012, 87 min)

Fandor:  
*Misconception* (Marjorie Keller, 1977, 43 min)  
*Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs, US, 1994, 87 min)  
*Vanilla Sex* (Cheryl Dunye, US, 1992, 4 min)  
*Workingman’s Death* (Michael Glawogger, Germany, 2005, 122 min) – please watch “Heroes,” “Ghost,” “Lions,” “Brothers,” or “Future”

M Apr 27: Erik Knudsen “Transcendental Realism in Documentary” and Sarah Pink, “Visualising Emplacement;” please be prepared to discuss the assigned films and strategies for your video responses

W Apr 29: Video presentations

**Week 14 Final Film Projects**  
M May 4: Rough Cut & Manifesto presentations  
W May 6: Rough Cut & Manifesto presentations; last day of class; film culture responses due
** Final films and manifestos due W May 13 by 12Noon