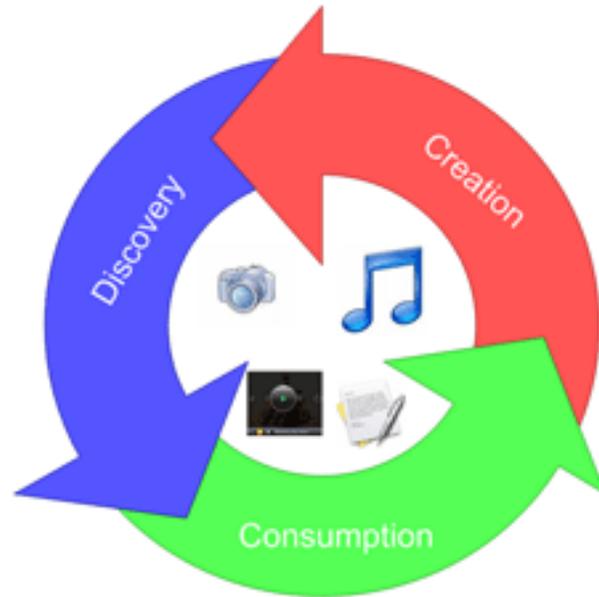


**FILM 351** (Special Topics in Literary and Cultural Studies)

## **ISSUES IN NEW MEDIA: CREATIVITY, CONVERGENCE, CONNECTEDNESS**

### **Overview**

This course investigates how cultural identities are constructed through new media—broadly defined to include film, photography, journalism, museum exhibition, etc. By examining the effects of globalization on worldwide cultural identities as viewed from the nation's capital, we will probe questions like the following: How does new media participate in forging identities? To whom (or in the interest of whom) does new media speak? And how do its ever-changing modes of production and circulation generate new relationships and conceptions of "home," "community," and "the world."



In this "seminar in the city," we will augment our classroom explorations with discoveries gleaned through conversations with new media practitioners. Many of the course sessions will be "on location" in media agencies, film festival offices, audiovisual production and preservation facilities, museums, etc. We will have the opportunity to hear perspectives and pose questions in order to make sense of the challenges these practitioners face in fomenting creative expression and disseminating ideas and information in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Of particular interest will be the strategies they have developed to adapt to changing policies, increased convergences, new technologies, shifting demographics, and global forces.

### **Key Concepts**

new media, convergence, representation, culture, identity, globalization, digital humanities, technology, creativity, discovery, literacy, collaboration, globalization, remix, America, race, ethnicity, borders, gender, resistance, hybridity, migration, commodification, consumption, activism, cultural agency

### **Texts**

We will take full advantage of the Washington DC setting by including as course "texts" film screenings, museum exhibitions, interviews, and a variety of cultural events. (There will likely be some entrance fees.)

Discussions and assignments will be based on readings from texts like the ones listed below. This list is intended as a preliminary sampling of the types of readings to be included; the instructor will provide a final list of materials and make available selections over BB.

- *The Politics of Culture: Policy Perspectives for Individuals, Institutions and Communities*, edited by Gigi Bradford, Michael Gary and Glenn Wallach (Washington DC: Center for Arts and Culture, 2000).
- *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: New York Univ., 2007). [e version on BB]
- *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich
- *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made*, by Kenneth Turan (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 2002). [e version on BB]
- *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, Marijke Devalk
- *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media and the Politics of Place*, Ed. Hamid Naficy
- *In/Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture*, by Victor Burgin
- *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, Ed. Ivan Karp et. al.
- *Expediency of Culture*, by George Yúdice
- *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor
- *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall
- *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, Iain Chambers

**Sample Assignments and Evaluation** (parameters to be determined with input from program participants)

Assignments in this course will be designed to connect with students' interests, to the extent possible, and take full advantage of the DC setting. Each of the assignments will contribute toward the final portfolio, a compilation of individual student work to be framed by a critical introduction and conclusion and accompanied by images and/or creative media. Students will have the opportunity to present their findings during a session to be scheduled in early July.

T - Tour Review. Take part in a guided tour of some site in the DC area. (Suggestions of tours at museums, cultural institutions, landmarks, etc. will be offered.) Prepare a written review of the tour, describing the site of interest and its presentation through the tour. Analyze the framing of the site, and evaluate the narrative/s being circulated in light of the issues (keywords) we are exploring in the course. In other words, what is the story being told about this site, how is that particular vision/version being promulgated? And how does the presence/absence of new media shape the narrative?

E - Event Review. Attend a cultural event in the DC area (festival, concert, play, lecture, etc.) Consider the producers (actors, musicians, speakers) and consumers (audience, attendees, listeners) as well as the context (time, place, venue). Prepare a summary of the event. Include a critical reflection on the ways in which this event reinforces or resists the arguments presented in one or more of our texts and/or by one of the new media specialists with whom we meet.

F - Festival Report. Attend a festival (in the past, students have selected Rosslyn Jazz, National Book, DC Shorts Film, AIDS Walk/Taste of Bethesda, Foto Week DC, etc.). Determine the purpose/s of this event (to forward a political agenda, generate revenue,

increase awareness, entertain, showcase a collection or institution, other)? Whose interests are served? How is new media employed in the production, presentation or circulation of the message? Integrate some of your observations to support your assertions/argument in the report.

X - Exhibit Report. Identify an exhibit you would like to analyze. Do some preliminary investigation to prepare for your visit (web site, reviews, conversations with program participants, questions to culture brokers, etc.). Record your observations at this stage. What are you expecting? What interests you? What will you pay close attention to? Then visit the exhibit. Note the items on display, physical positioning (relationship to other objects, to room/building, to visitors), and accompanying information (text panels, brochures, signs). Who is the intended audience? How do you know? Identify any absences in this display. In other words, are there groups who might feel left out? What issues might the curator have had to take into account in selecting items and organizing them? Is technology present? If so, how is it used? If not, how might you explain its absence, and how might you have integrated it? Prepare an analysis of the exhibit.

M – Montage. Choose one of the keywords for this program and illustrate that concept with images. You may wish to create original images such as video, photographs, sketches, or paintings, or you may choose to work with images created by others (billboards, newspaper advertisements, graffiti, paintings, monuments, etc.) for your own remix/mash-up. Produce a narrative by juxtaposing these images. You may opt to integrate text and/or sound. A variety of forms would be appropriate for this assignment. (You may want to refer to John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* for inspiration.)

A – Assignment Design. Collaborate with at least one other student to design an assignment for this course and then carry it out and submit along with a brief reflection. Did it accomplish what you intended? What might you change in the future?

I - Interview. Prepare an interview with a new media specialist (filmmaker, film producer, event organizer, media artist, web designer, photographer, journalist, museum specialist, foundation professional, media lawyer, cultural policy specialist, or some other). Conduct the interview, and prepare the results for dissemination in writing (on the course web site and perhaps also in the College's journal *Monitor* or on the Charles Center's research blog) and/or as a podcast and/or brief documentary over the W&M web site. It is strongly suggested that you record this encounter (photos or video or voice). Be sure to have your subject sign a release so you can use the material for public dissemination. Submit interview questions and biography of interviewee as well as your edited/framed interview.

P – Project. The course project will engage seminar participants in collaborating with one another, the instructor, and Swem Media Center staff to prepare a video. We will seek to showcase our encounters with these culture brokers, our reflections, and/or the program theme. Filmed footage and photographs will be edited and disseminated over the Internet. In this way W&M students will engage in meaningful undergraduate research as they serve as cultural agents to foster creativity, generate new knowledge, and disseminate their findings widely.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation will take into account student projects completed during the semester, engagement in class sessions, and the final program portfolio (more information to be provided). It is expected that students will participate in articulating learning objectives and determining evaluation criteria of assignments. Grades will be earned on the following scale:

A – successful completion of [exact number to be determined] assignments from the options above, plus 1 presentation and the portfolio.

B – successful completion of [exact number to be determined] assignments from the options above, plus 1 presentation and the portfolio.