**Syllabus**

Spring 2015  NYU Dept. of Cinema Studies  
CINE-GT 1806  
Class # 8927; 4 units  
Curating, Programming, Exhibiting, and Repurposing/Recontextualizing Moving Image Material  
ak a
Curating Moving Images

**Meetings:** Tuesdays, 12:30-4:30 pm; room 674 (721 Broadway)  
**Professor:** Dan.Streible@nyu.edu  
**Office hours:** W 3-5 pm, or by appointment; room 626

**Description:** This course embraces a broad conception of curating as the treatment of materials from their discovery, acquisition, archiving, preservation, restoration, and reformatting, through their screening, programming, use, re-use, distribution, exploitation, translation, and interpretation. This course focuses on the practices of film and video exhibition in museums, archives, cinemathques, festivals, and other venues. It examines the goals of public programming, its constituencies, and the curatorial and archival challenges of presenting film, video, and digital media. We study how archives and sister institutions present their work through exhibitions, events, publications, and media productions. We also examine how these presentations activate uses of moving image collections. Specific curatorial practices of festivals, seminars, symposia, and projects will be examined in detail.

**Objectives:** After successfully completing the course you should be able to:  
• understand professional practices of film and video curators and content programmers;  
• demonstrate knowledge of the history of film exhibition and programming;  
• discover the location of historical footage, copyrighted works in distribution, and other media;  
• define key concepts in audiovisual preservation, restoration, reformatting, and access;  
• participate in debates about the appraisal of moving image works;  
• discuss how curatorial practices affect the writing of history and the production of media;  
• understand the materiality of audiovisual media carriers (film, tape, disk, file);  
• assess the curatorial needs of organizations and institutions that work with film and video;  
• demonstrate knowledge of institutions that present content to publics, including festivals, museums, cinemathques, art houses, distributors, and Web content providers.

**Required readings:**  
• Essays, website readings, online screenings, and other documents. Some are posted on the course’s “NYU Classes” site. Others will be distributed via e-mail or paper.  

**Attend** all class meetings. Missing 2 classes will lower your final course grade by a half letter. Missing 3 will lower your final course grade by a full letter (B+ becomes C+, and so on).
Course grades will be determined by performance in four areas. Each receives a numerical score. The final letter grade for the course is determined by numerical total. 92 or higher (A); 90-91 (A-); 88-89 (B+); 82-87 (B); 80-81 (B-); 70-79 (C); 66-69 (D); less than 66 points (F).

Participation: 20 points
Midterm: 25 points
Proposal: 15 points
Final project: 40 points
TOTAL: 100 points maximum

Participation (20%) Contribute actively to discussions. Be prepared to respond to questions about readings, screenings, and research. (If students demonstrate lack of familiarity with readings, the instructor reserves the right to require written summaries of some readings.)

Contribute to the course blog: http://curatingmovingimages.blogspot.com. Read the blog postings as they appear. Post at least two thoughtful entries. An appropriate length is about 250 words, but you may write more. Images, links, and video embeds welcomed. Any topic relevant to curating moving images is fair game. Your post might address something topical you read about on your own. Or it might respond to a reading, screening, lecture, class discussion, or a preceding post. You may also post shorter, newsier items (in addition to the two required).

Lively is good. Failure to post at least two substantive entries will result in the lowering of your course grade by a full letter grade.

Note: Because too many people use laptops, tablets, and phones during class for things not related to class, during our first class meeting we will discuss this practice. How should we conduct ourselves during class time? Should there be a ban on texting, web surfing, and the like during class time?

For all writing in this course, use the guide provided (15s_Curating_Format_Style_Guide.doc).

MIAP Digital Archive: All course work must be submitted with accompanying electronic copies. These will be made part of the web-accessible archive. Name files thusly: 15s_1806_Surname_a1.suffix. (Suffixes = pdf, doc, xls, mov, etc.)

Advisory on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: Any student guilty of plagiarism or cheating will be assigned a course grade of F. Read the accompanying Advisory on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity, and act accordingly.

a1. Midterm report (25%)
Write a report (ca. 2,000 words) assessing a curated exhibition or screening you attend. Submit via e-mail no later than 12:00 noon on Friday, March 6. Then, submit a final printed copy at the beginning of class, Tuesday, March 10. Within a week after receiving feedback from the instructor, post a final version of your report to the class blog. For the blog version, include at least two illustrations, one of which must be a photograph you took on site. Also include at least one useful link (URL).

a2. Proposal (15%): Write a description (ca. 500 words) of the project you will submit at semester’s end. Include: (1) a working title for the project; (2) an argument for the significance
of the project; and (3) a bibliography of at least five substantive resources you have consulted. Submit a paper copy in class on March 24; also e-mail a copy to dan.streible@nyu.edu.

**a3. Final project** (40%): Due May 13. You have several options. You may work solo, or with one or two classmates. Or you may collaborate with a third party on an existing curatorial project. You will deliver a short in-class presentation on May 5 (or earlier in some cases). PechaKucha style recommended.

The nature of the projects will vary widely. In terms of scope and depth, use the first example below (a prospectus for a curated series) as a guide. However, you don’t necessarily need to do something this conventional (program a film series). An online exhibition of ten annotated video works. A research paper assessing a curatorial issue. A symposium proposal. A plan to premiere a restored film. A stand-alone video production using archival or “found” material. A database. Or a creative idea of your own. These are all acceptable final projects. All should demonstrate original research and a polished presentation of it.

Research into under-used archive collections is encouraged. Curators at, for example, NYU Fales Library, can be a great help in guiding you to newly accessible material waiting for a good scholar-curator to interpret it. (See separate document from Fales.)

- Prospectus for a curated series: Produce a substantive, in-depth research project. Create a document (illustrated to some degree) to persuade a potential funder to support your proposed project. As a general guideline, program five sessions of approximately two hours each. Identify, research, and put in context the works to be screened, the venue for presentation, and supporting material. Identify appropriate speakers. Describe the supporting elements of the presentations (performance, music, text, slides, lighting, audio, etc.), and the audience being addressed. Append a budget and a filmography. Assess which versions of films and videos are available and justify the one you choose. Give your series a title. Give each session a title. Include well-researched, salient notes for each screening. Your vision can be as fantastical or ambitious as you choose, but all of the details must be concrete.

- Conduct a research project using the William K. Everson Collection of papers, ephemera, and films housed at NYU Cinema Studies. Many of Everson’s program notes (1940s through 1990s) are digitized and online, as are press kits, photographs, and more. You may access 16mm prints and video copies. [www.nyu.edu/projects/wke/bio.htm](http://www.nyu.edu/projects/wke/bio.htm). (Scott MacDonald’s book on the Vogels’ Cinema 16 might spark some ideas.)

- Collaborate on the NYU-based Amateur Film Project [working title], developing content (text, video, images) for a curated online selection of amateur films. Work with Dan Streible and others who originated the idea, including Kimberly Tarr (NYU Libraries), Jonah Volk (NYPL), Walter Forsberg (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture), and Kathleen Maguire (The Exploratorium). [FYI. The online movie service Fandor, has offered to host a curated group of such films.](https://www.fandor.com/company/about)

- A research project connected to the NYU Audiovisual Preservation Exchange initiatives, presumably one in Buenos Aires in June 2015. (The two-week venture will culminate in a day-long colloquium with all of the participants. Of what will it consist?)
♦ A program of film/video/audio housed at MLB Productions. Work with Nick Trotta, manager of library licensing, to access historic recordings from throughout the lifespan of Major League Baseball. He welcomes such.

♦ Work with Stephanie Sapienza (Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, University of Maryland) on a database and online portal project that aggregates and enhances filmographic information from past Orphan Film Symposiums. She has created an initial spreadsheet with metadata categories. A portal outcome she compares it to is her site www.alternativeprojections.com, devoted to Experimental Film in Los Angeles, 1945-1980.

♦ A project or production on the theme of sound and orphan films, in preparation for the 2016 Orphan Film Symposium at the Library of Congress National Audio Visual Conservation Center. Designed in consultation with an LOC curator and the instructor.

♦ A curatorial project or media production for online display, using unedited video and/or audio recordings from past editions of the Orphan Film Symposium. These include Indiana University Cinema’s video from the “Orphans Midwest” film symposium (Materiality and Moving Image, 2013), audio recordings from the 2014 symposium in Amsterdam, raw footage shot at Museum of the Moving Image’s 2012 symposium (downloadable), and much more.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision as we progress)

Jan 27 [Snow day.] Read the syllabus and the Advisory on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity.

Feb 3 Introduction to the course; What is curating? what do curators do?; + orphan films
• Dan Streible, "Saving, Studying, and Screening: A History of the Orphan Film Symposium," Film Festival Yearbook 5: Archival Film Festivals (St. Andrews Film Studies, 2013).
• Booklet for the DVD set Orphans in Space: Forgotten Films from the Final Frontier (2012).

Feb 10 Publicity and Programming: Livia Bloom (Icarus Films / indie curator) @Livia_Bloom
• Bloom, Sample press releases and publicity material (see NYU Classes site).
Feb 17 Documentary and the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar
• Flaherty Seminar readings (see folder), including screening notes from *Sonic Truth* (2011).
• Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16*, Introduction, 1-36;
• Amos Vogel, “Film Do’s and Don’ts” (1949), 130-33; “Cinema 16 and the Question of Programming” (1955), 259-61.

Feb 24 Film Festivals: Toby Lee
• Toby Lee, “Festival, City, State: Cultural Citizenship at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival,” in *Coming Soon to a Festival Near You: Programming Film Festivals*, ed. Jeffrey Ruo (St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 1-15.
• Ragan Rhyne, "Film Festival Circuits and Stakeholders,” in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit*, ed. Ragan Rhyne and Dina Iordanova (St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 9-22.

RECOMMENDED:

Mar 3 European archives and festivals: Tami Williams (UW Milwaukee)
• items from the Fonds Germaine Dulac (La Cinémathèque Française), Cinema Ritrovato, et al.

Mar 10 Cinema 16, and its Descendants in the Age of DCP
• David Bordwell, *Pandora’s Digital Box*, 5-45, 131-73.

Mar 24 Distribution: Dennis Doros & Amy Heller (Milestone Films)
• About Milestonefilms.com/pages/about-us.
• Masterpieces of Polish Cinema press kit (2014);
• Project Shirley and *Portrait of Jason* press kit (2013);
• finish reading Bordwell, *Pandora’s Digital Box*, chapters 2-5, 8, and conclusion.
Mar 31  Cinephilia + found footage

Apr 7  Dwight Swanson (Center for Home Movies)
  • Peruse centerforhomemovies.org.
  • excerpt from *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*, ed. Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

Recommended:


Apr 14  FIAF April 11-18
  Found footage continued; culture jamming (readings by Guy Debord, Craig Baldwin, et al.)
  Access, Presentation, and Projection
  • Loan policy documents from LOC, UCLA, and the Academy
  • projection manual excerpts, et al.
  + What should the Kinsey Institute do with its films? A debate.

Apr 21  Negotiating Transnational Obstacles: La Frances Hui (Asia Society, New York)
  • SCREEN: *Downpour* (Bahram Bayzai, 1972)
• BEFORE CLASS WATCH: Inside Asia Society's 'Iran Modern Exhibition (2013) 3 min.
  * Sound the Trumpets, Beat the Drums (Anthony Williams, BBC TV, 1969) 23 min.

Apr 28  Curating Films at the Museum of Modern Art: Josh Siegel & Katie Trainor (MoMA)
  • MoMA ephemera

May 5  last class day; presentations

Midterm report (25% of course grade)
Write a report (ca. 2,000 words) assessing a curated screening or exhibition you attend.

  Describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate a curated exhibition that includes moving images. Whether the event consists of a single film screening or multiple pieces in a multimedia show, you are not writing an analysis of the work; you are assessing the context in which the work is presented and received.

  Describe what you saw. When and where was the exhibition? What was it called? Was it part of series or a larger frame of reference? Of what did the screening/s consist? Include not only description of the content (images and sounds) but also of the specific media used (projected film? videotape or files played on monitors? DVDs navigated by computer users?). If it is not apparent what media are being used, ask.

  Analyze the exhibition or presentation. Break down the whole into parts and discuss connections among them.

  What institution, group, or person put the presentation together? Tell us about the curator, programmer, and/or the institution. In some instances, you may consider the artists or filmmakers as curators, especially if they use archival or ‘found’ material and recombine it for a new purpose. What is characteristic of their previous work? What is their reputation and historical mission? For some of the questions you seek to answer, some basic research will be in order (contemporary periodicals, reference works, an organization’s web site, a short interview, promotional and press material, and such). In all cases, locate, read, and cite reviews or commentary about the exhibition.

  Who was the audience? Report on the kinds of people you observed and any discernible responses they had. Is there other evidence of the extended audience, or of the intended audience?

  What other elements shaped the viewing experience? (e.g., music, spoken introduction, text panels, notes, ambience, narration, current events, the type of screen, adjacent exhibitions, companion website?)

  Interpret the exhibition. Why was the material presented in the way that it was? what was the curator’s “argument”? If no argument is apparent, are there meanings that can be made by viewers?

  Evaluate the presentation, briefly. Did the curator succeed? Were there particular strength or weaknesses in the exhibition?
♦ Fales Library & Special Collections

Archivist Brent Phillips compiled this list of collections with sizeable media holdings for which NYU Fales Library has access copies (or can make them). Much of the media in Fales consists of performance documentation, unfinished works or works-in-progress, source material and production elements, and documentation of conceptual works which no longer have a physical manifestation. The challenge of working with this material within a curatorial and exhibition framework is to properly contextualize the material.

Jaime Davidovich Collection. Co-founder of Cable SoHo, which used early cable technology to broadcast contemporary arts programming to a general audience. Collection processing and reformatting underway.

David Wojnarowicz Papers. Incredible collection of source material, all on Super-8mm. Collection contains many experimental short works in process, Heroin, Death of Peter Hujar, Fire in My Belly, etc. Collection finding aid available: http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/fales/woj.html

Frank Moore Papers. With recent funding from the NFPF we preserved the collaborative 16mm short, Beehive. See attached excerpt from NFPF grant.

Gay Cable Network Collection contains more than 5,000 hours of programming and more than 2,000 hours of rushes and never-aired original videotape material (ca. 1980-2000).


MIX Collection. Archive of materials relating to the NYC-based Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film and Video Festival. Access to media determined on a case-by-case basis as we do not have access copies yet. Finding aid drafted.


Riot Girrrl Collection, Andrea Callard Papers, and the Downtown Collection

“Other collection materials may be available depending upon areas of interest, project specifics, and collection processing status. I’m available to work with students individually on specific projects.” -- Brent.Phillips@nyu.edu

NYU Fales Library and Special Collections, Bobst Library, (212) 998-2521