

Spring 2017 NYU Dept. of Cinema Studies
 CINE-GT 1806
 Curating, Programming, Exhibiting, and Repurposing/Recontextualizing Moving Image Material
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Curating Moving Images

Meetings: Tuesdays, 12:30-4:30 pm, Michelson Theater (721 Broadway)

Professor: Dan.Streible@nyu.edu

Office hours: Mondays, 11am to 1pm, or by appointment; room 626 (917) 754-1401

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, cinematheques, 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, 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, cinematheques, art houses, galleries, distributors, and Web content providers.

Required readings:

- Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16: Documents towards a History of the Film Society* (Temple University Press, 2002). Also in [ebook](#) editions.
- David Bordwell, *Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies* (Irvington Way Institute Press, 2012). PDF download at davidbordwell.net/books/pandora.php.
- Essays, website readings, online screenings, and other documents. Posted in an [NYU Drive for this course](#) and the "NYU Classes" site. Others will be distributed via e-mail or paper. <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1siTRSSStpykMXktblJtMUJHcTA>
- **Recommended:** Paolo Cherchi Usai, David Francis, Alexander Horwath, and Michael Loebenstein, *Film Curatorship: Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace* (Vienna: Österreichisches Filmmuseum, 2008); distributed by Columbia U Press.

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 (up to 100). 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); 65-69 (D); less than 65 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 sufficient length is about 200 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, guest speaker, 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.

For all writing in this course, follow the guidelines in Curating_Format_Style_Guide.docx.

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: 17s_1806_Surname_a1.suffix. (Suffixes = pdf, docx, xlsx, mov, mp4, 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 assignment (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 Monday, March 6. Then, submit a final printed copy at the beginning of class, Tuesday, March 7. 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 URL.

Option 2: You may opt for a different midterm assignment of similar substance and deadline. Permission of the instructor required before selecting that option.

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 21; also e-mail a copy to dan.streible@nyu.edu.

a3. Final project (40%): Due no later than May 16. 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 during one of the final two class meetings.

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. Or other creative idea of your own. These are all acceptable final projects. All should demonstrate original research and a polished presentation of it.

- ◆ 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. (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 (Columbia U Libraries), Walter Forsberg (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture). [FYI. The online movie service Fandor has begun a portal for such work. https://www.fandor.com/films/eph_42716
- ◆ A research project connected to the NYU Audiovisual Preservation Exchange initiative.
- ◆ A project or production related to the 2017 Orphans in Paris or the April 2018 Orphan Film Symposium at Museum of the Moving Image.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision as we progress)

Jan 24 Introduction to the course; What is curating?

Read: the syllabus; Advisory on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity.

Jan 31 Meet at the NYU Grey Art Gallery (100 Washington Square East)

Guest: **Melissa Rachleff**, curator [Inventing Downtown](#)

Read:

- [Grey Gazette: Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952–1965](#) (Grey Art Gallery, 2017). PDF. 17 pages.
- Grey Art Gallery, “Greenwich Village and the Arts,” May 2016, greyartgallery.nyu.edu/2016/05/greenwich-village-arts
- Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16*, Introduction, 1-36; interviews with Amos Vogel, Marcia Vogel, and The Documents, 77-112; Nat Hentoff, “Last Call for Cinema 16,” 413-15; Amos Vogel, “Film Do’s and Don’ts” (1949), 130-33; “Cinema 16 and the Question of Programming” (1955), 259-61.

Begin reading these two essays. We will discuss on Feb. 7.

- Paolo Cherchi Usai, “A Charter of Curatorial Values,” *NFSA Journal* 1.1 (2006): 1-10.
- Laura U. Marks, “The Ethical Presenter: Or How to Have Good Arguments over Dinner,” *The Moving Image* 4.1 (2004): 34-47.

Recommended extracurricular talk and screening:

Screening: Amos Vogel & Cinema 16

Wed., February 1st, 6:30 pm, Michelson Theater

“Founded by Amos Vogel in 1947, Cinema 16 attracted downtown artists to its landmark programs of documentary and avant-garde films. This screening will present a medley of shorts selected from Cinema 16’s rosters. Introduced with Q&A by **Scott MacDonald**, visiting professor of Art History, Hamilton College. Co-sponsored by NYU’s Department of Cinema Studies (TSOA) and Grey Art Gallery.”

A Divided World (1948) Arne Sucksdorff
Allegretto (1936) Oskar Fischinger
Fireworks (1947) Kenneth Anger
Weegee's New York (1952) Weegee and Amos Vogel
Loving (1957) Stan Brakhage
A Man and His Dog Out for Air (1957) Robert Breer

Feb 7 Cinema 16 and its Descendants in the Age of DCP

- Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16*, The Documents, 77-112; read selectively through the pages that follow 112. Look particularly at the programming Cinema 16 was offering (which films, how grouped) and the kinds of program notes the film society offered.
- David Bordwell, *Pandora’s Digital Box*, 5-45, 131-73.

Feb 14 Guest: **Ruth Somalo** (Flaherty NYC; Horns and Tails Productions; Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) [“Broken Senses,” Flaherty NYC](#) series of 5 screenings at Anthology Film Archives, Jan. 17 – Mar. 28.

Readings: TBA +

- Cameron Nicoll, “Flaherty NYC's ‘Broken Senses’ Explores the Dysfunctional World Within,” POV blog, January 13, 2017, pbs.org/pov/blog/news/2017/01/flaherty-nycs-broken-senses-explores-the-dysfunctional-world-within/

Feb 21 Documentary Programming and the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar

- Flaherty Seminar readings (see folder), including screening notes from *Sonic Truth* (2011).
- excerpts from “The Flaherty: Four Decades in the Cause of Independent Film,” ed. Erik Barnouw and Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Wide Angle* 17.1-4 (1996), flahertyseminar.org/60thanniversary/wide-angle, including Laura U. Marks, “The Audience Is Revolting: Coalition and Transformation at the Flaherty Seminar,” 277-91.
- David Bordwell, *Pandora’s Digital Box*, 5-45, 131-73.

Feb 28 Meet with **Howard Besser’s** Culture of Archives, Museums, and Libraries class

Read: TBA

Mar 7 Home movies and amateur cinema

- Peruse centerforhomemovies.org + homemovieregistry.org
- Patricia R. Zimmermann, “The Home Movie Movement,” in *Mining the Home Movie*, ed. Karen Ishizuka and Zimmermann (U of California Press, 2008), 1-28.
- “The ‘Ten Best’ Winners, 1930-1994, from the Amateur Cinema League and American International Film & Video Festival,” comp. Alan D. Kattelle, *Film History* 15.2, Small-gauge and Amateur Film (2003): 244-51.
- Charles Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Moviemaking, 1923-1960* (U of California Press, 2014), excerpt.

Mar 21 Distribution: **Dennis Doros & Amy Heller** (Milestone Films)

- About Milestonefilms.com/pages/about-us.
- Amy Heller, “Restoring a Portrait, with Some Help from Our Friends...,” Oct. 13, 2012, Milestonefilms.com/blogs/news/6711064-restoring-a-portrait-with-some-help-from-our-friends.
- Dennis Doros, “My Time with James Card,” James Card Memorial Lecture, Nov. 18, 2012, Milestonefilms.com/blogs/news/6912078-my-time-with-james-card
- Masterpieces of Polish Cinema [press kit](#) (2014); *Strange Victory*
- Project Shirley and *Portrait of Jason* [press kit](#) (2013);

Mar 28 Meet at **Quad Cinema** (34 W. 13th St.)

Programmers: **Gavin Smith** and **Chris Wells**

- finish reading Bordwell, *Pandora’s Digital Box*, chapters 2-5, 8, and conclusion.
- Loan policy documents from LOC, UCLA, the Academy, et al.

Apr 4 Cinephilia, film festivals, and found footage

- Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (Routledge, 2014), excerpt.
- Thomas Elsaesser, “Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies of Cinema in Europe,” in *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam U Press, 2005), 82-107.
- Ed Halter, “Recycle It: A Look at Found-footage Cinema, from the Silent Era to Web 2.0,” *Moving Image Source*, July 10, 2008, www.movingimagesource.us/articles/recycle-it-20080710.

- Roland Barthes, "Upon Leaving the Movie Theater," (1975) 4 pp.
- Manohla Dargis, "Floating in the Digital Experience," *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 2010.
- Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Goodbye Cinema, Hello Cinephilia," *Trafic* 50 (Summer 2004).
- Susan Sontag, "The Decay of Cinema," *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 1996.
- Richard Brody, "[Don't Worry About the End of Film](#)," *New Yorker*, Jan. 21, 2014, and "[The Limits of American Cinephilia](#)," Jan. 20 2015.

Apr 11 Walter Forsberg (National Museum of African American History and Culture)
The "Great Migration" public digitization project; filmmaker Hortense Beveridge (1923-1993)
Readings: TBA, including excerpts from *Incite* no. 4

Apr 18 Publicity & Programming: **Livia Bloom** (Icarus Films /curator) @Livia_Bloom
Case studies:

- * Horror Films at Museum of the Moving
- * *The Great Flood* (2013) by Bill Morrison
- * *No Home Movie* (2015) by Chantal Akerman

Read:

1. "[It's Only a Movie](#)" Program, Museum of the Moving Image.
 2. [Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws*](#). (1993), Ch 1, "Her Body, Himself."
 3. [Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation*](#). (2005), Introduction and Ch. 4, "Only a Movie."
 4. Review of Program by Jason Zinoman, "A Bloody Cut Above Your Everyday Zombie Film," *New York Times*, June 10, 2007: [Review](#) [Online Slideshow](#).
 5. Read these sample press releases for: [THE GREAT FLOOD](#), [IFC Center](#), [DREAMS REWIRED](#), [FRANCOFONIA](#), [NO HOME MOVIE](#), [Film Forum](#), [Film Society of Lincoln Center](#), [Library of Congress](#), [Whitney Museum](#) and [NYU](#)
- Familiarize yourself with <http://icarusfilms.com>.

Apr 25 Presentations et al.

- Linda Williams, "'White Slavery' versus the Ethnography of 'Sexworkers': Women in Stag Films at the Kinsey Archive," *The Moving Image* 5.2 (2006): 106-35.
- + What should the [Kinsey Institute](#) do with its films? A debate.

May 2 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?