Media Aesthetics introduces students to the humanities by investigating how media work and how we aesthetically perceive them. We treat "aesthetics" as the study of sensory perception, of value, and of stylistic and formal properties of artistic products. We understand "medium" along a spectrum of meanings that range (in Aristotle's terms) from the "material cause" of art (stone for sculpture, sounds for music, words for poetry) to the "instrumental cause" (the apparatus of writing or printing, film, the broadcast media, the Internet). In Fall Quarter we focus on visual media, and pose a number of questions about images drawn from a range of historical periods: what are the different forms of copying and imitation? Is it possible to ascertain how seemingly “natural” and/or “mechanical” forms of representation are not as objective as they seem to be? Is representation a replication of reality or is reality constituted through representation? Could there be a copy without an original? Can images constitute the real?

Key Questions for Fall

- What are the different forms of copying and imitation?
- How do these forms relate to the medium in which they are rendered?
- Are some forms of reproduction valued more than others, considered more hazardous than others? If so why?
- Is it possible to ascertain how seemingly “natural” and/or “mechanical” forms of representation are not as objective or universal as they seem to be?
- Does the visible always have some relation to the invisible, and if so, what?
- What is the relation of knowledge to duplication?
- Is representation based on a prior reality or is reality constituted through representation—or some of both? Are there copies with no originals? And is it possible that images can seem as or more real than life itself, and under what conditions?
- Why and how has Western culture focused to such a great extent on questions and issues of reproduction?
- If we find that there are opposed ideologies about the legitimacy of simulation, are there important contradictions that result? How do these reverberate socially and politically?

Required Texts (available at the Seminary Coop). If you purchase online or elsewhere you must purchase these exact editions


Course Screenings (at Doc Films, Ida Noyes Hall, 1212 E 59th St)
Friday October 12, 3-5:00pm, *Close-Up* (Kiarostami)
Friday November 9, 3-5:30pm, *Vertigo* (Hitchcock)
Screenings take place at Max Palevsky Cinema at Doc Films in Ida Noyes Hall, 1212 E 59th St.
Films are also on reserve at the Film Studies Center in Cobb 306 (5811 South Ellis Ave)
Course Schedule

Week 1
A
Las Meninas
B
W.J.T. Mitchell, “Image”
Mitchell, “Addressing Media”

[POSSIBLE: Foucault, “Las Meninas”]

Week 2
A
Plato, Republic, Book 7 (pp. 208-214)
B
Plato, Republic, Book 2 (p. 56-end), 3 (through p. 86) and 10 (all)

10/12, 3-5pm SCREENING OF CLOSE UP AT DOC FILMS

Week 3
A
Close Up
Aristotle, excerpts from Poetics
B
Close Up

Week 4
A
Andre Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image”
Charles Baudelaire “Modern Public and Photography”
Poe, “The Daguerrotype”
B
Smart Museum visit
Holmes, “The Steroscope” (pairs well with special collections stereoscopes)

Week 5
A
Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”

10/31, 5-6pm Distinguished Faculty Lecture: Tom Gunning. Location: Oriental Institute, Breasted Hall
B  Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”

**Week 6**

A  Vertov, clips from *Man with a Movie Camera*
   Vertov, “WE: Variant of a Manifesto”
   Watch folder of early film clips on Box
   Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions”

B  Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”

**11/9 3-5:30pm SCREENING OF VERTIGO AT DOC FILMS**

**Week 7**

A  Alfred Hitchcock, *Vertigo*
   Laura Mulvey “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

B  Hitchcock, *Vertigo*

**Week 8**

A  Harun Farocki, *Serious Games*

B  No Class

**Week 9**

A  Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
   Images from *The Black Book*
   Images from *Dick and Jane* primer

B  Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

**Week 10**

A  TBD

B  TBD