Instructor: Jonathan Beller
Contact: jbeller@barnard.edu
Time: 11-12:50
Office Hours: M 1-2:30 and by appointment

The integration of contemporary media and social practices of all types is intensifying. This seminar examines media theory and various media platforms including Print/Language, Photography, Film, Television, Radio, Digital Video, and Computing as treated by feminists, critical race and queer theorists, and other scholars and artists working from the margins. While media theory is a recently emerged and rapidly growing field, conventional (masculinist, Euro-centric) approaches, often assuming the universal relevance of their claims, threaten to define and overwhelm a diversity of critical endeavors that self-consciously hail from specific communities and locales. Despite a growing awareness that the ostensibly solid entities or objects of culture, society and knowledge are the result of mediations at every level of their constitution, media theory runs the risk of perpetuating certain “givens” including those that sustain patriarchy, Eurocentrism and economic injustice. The materials in this course critique some of the shortcoming of main-stream media and media-theory while building on their insights and/or offering additional methods of analysis and inquiry.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the tremendous impact of media forms on the disciplines and the world about.

Students will be able to explain and to write about the changed situations of peoples, places and politics in relation to shifts in media technologies.

Students will demonstrate and indeed participate in the generation of knowledge about a variety of media platforms as well as an understanding of the new capacities and potentials of these media.

This course also fosters and extends a broad range of interests that students of the humanities may have including interests in critical theory, psychoanalysis, semiotics, political economy, visual culture, techno-culture and performance. Students will develop knowledge and analytic skills in these areas.
Students will be able to analyze a text, an image, an object or other cultural form “mediologically.”

Students will gain experience working with and analyzing visual texts and screen-based media.

**Course Requirements:**
- Participation 10%
- Presentation 10%
- Weekly Response Paper 20%
- Take-home Midterm 25%
- Final Essay 35%

**Texts:**
- Course Reader
- Electronic pdfs (available on courseworks)
- Books (available at Book Culture):
  - Vilem Flusser, *Philosophy of Photography*
  - Jacqueline Goldsby, *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature*
  - Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*
  - Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*
  - Lisa Nakamura, *Race After the Internet*
  - Steven Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect*
  - J. Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender and the End of Normal*

**Course Outline: Schedule of Meetings and Assigned Texts.**

**Unit 1: Platforms (Part I):**

**January 28**
Week 1. Race, Gender, Nation, Class as Media of Production
  Introduction to the seminar.
  *Señorita Extraviada*, d. Lourdes Portillo (Ciudad Juarez, Mexico 2001, 75’)

**February 4**
Week 2. Language: Gender, Race and Being
  Helene Cixous, “The Newly Born Woman,” and “Angst,” also “Foreword” (by Jacques Derrida) and "Preface" to *The Helene Cixous Reader*
  Julia Kristeva, ”Woman is Never What We Say,” and “unes femmes: The Woman Effect”
  Hortense J. Spillers, ”Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book”
  Agnes Varda, *Vagabond* (film, to be viewed in library)
February 11
Week 3. Film I: The Gaze, Subjectivity, Marginality
Alfred Hitchcock, Rear Window (film, to be viewed in library)
Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

February 18
Week 4. Film II: Language, Law, Justice and Representation
Marlene Gorris, A Question of Silence (film, to be viewed in library)
Takashi Mieke, Audition (film, to be viewed in library)
Carol Clover, “Her Body, Himself,” from Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film
Kaja Silverman, “Suture” from The Subject of Semiotics

February 25
Week 5. Reality and Television: The Process-ing of Fantasy
View: Trinh T. Min-ha, Reassemblage (Film to be viewed in library)
Trinh T. Min-ha, “The Totalizing Quest of Meaning,” and “Holes in the Sound Wall”
Selections from Charlotte Brunsdon and Lynn Spigel, Feminist Television Criticism:
Tania Modleski, “The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas”
Jane Arthurs, Sex and the City and Consumer Culture: Remediating Post-feminist Dramas”
Ien Ang, Melodramatic Identification: Television Fictions and Women’s Fantasy

Unit 2: Informatic Reorganizations of the Humanities and the Human

March 4
Week 6. Cybernetics and Posthumanism:
Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs”
Katherine Hayles, How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics
Annneke Smelik, “Tunnel Vision: Inner, Outer, and Virtual Space in Science Fiction Films and Medical Documentaries”

Take-home Midterm Assigned

March 11
Week 7. Affect and Touch:
Laura Marks, Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media (selections)
Sara Ahmed, “Affective Economies”

**Take-home Midterm Due.**
March 18 SPRING BREAK
Week 8.

March 25
Week 9. (Re-)Mediating Social Difference
Rosalind Morris, “Modernity’s Media and the End of Mediumship?: On the Aesthetic Economy of Transparency in Thailand”
*Scholar and Feminist Online, Feminist Media Theory: Iterations of Social Difference* (select 4 of the following essays)

Patricia Ticineto Clough, “In the Aporia of Ontology and Epistemology: Toward a Politics of Measure”
Katie King, “A Naturalcultural Collection of Affections: Transdisciplinary stories of transmedia ecologies learning”
Jonathan Beller, “Camera Obscura After All: The Racist Writing with Light”
Deborah Levitt, “Subject of the Phantasm”
Roya Rastegar, “Curatorial Interventions at Sundance’s New Frontier”
Orit Halpern, “Schizophrenic Techniques: Cybernetics, the Human Sciences, and the Double Bind”
Marina Gržinić, “Europe: Gender, Class, Race”
Cindy Gao, “The Virtuosic Virtuality of Asian American YouTube Stars”

**Unit 3: Platforms (Part II)**

April 1
Week 10. Photography:
Vilem Flusser, *Philosophy of Photography*
Jacqueline Goldsby, *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature* (selections)
Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (selections)

April 8
Week 11. Radio and Sound Recording:

*Social Text 102: The Politics of Recorded Sound* (select 3 of the following):
David Suisman, “Sound, Knowledge, and the ‘Immanence of Human Failure’: Rethinking Musical Mechanization through the Phonograph, the Player-Piano and the Piano”
Mara Mills, “Deaf Jam: From Inscription to Reproduction to Information”
Jennifer Stoever-Ackerman, “Splicing the Sonic Color Line: Tony Schwartz Remixes Postwar Nueva York”
Gustuvas Stadler, “Never Heard Such a Thing: Lynching and Phonographic Modernity”
Alexandra T. Vazquez, “Can You Feel the Beat? Freestyle’s Systems of Living, Loving, and Recording”
Jaynee Brown, “Buzz and Rumble: Global Pop Music and Utopian Impulse

Final Essay Assigned

April 15
Week 12. Computing:
Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Programmed Visions: Software and Memory
Lisa Nakamura, Race After the Internet

April 22
Week 13. Digital Video/Digitality: Race, Gender and Sexuality
Grace Jones, Corporate Cannibal (Video)
Ken Jacobs: Capitalism: Slavery (Video)
Steven Shaviro, Post-Cinematic Affect
Allesandra, Reango, “Reification, Reanimation, and the Money of the Real” (World Picture, 7)
J. Jack Halberstam, Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender and the End of Normal

April 29
Week 14: Digital Feminisms, Digital Ethnographies, Digital Humanities

Jennifer Terry, Killer Entertainments, A Vectors Project,
http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/index.php?project=86
Sharon Daniels and Erik Loyer, Blood Sugar, A Vectors Project
http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/index.php?project=95
Elizabeth Povinelli and Peter Cho, Digital Futures, A Vectors Project
http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/index.php?project=90

May 6 Final Paper Due.
Presentations of final work by students.