

Epistemologies of the Film and Video Archive

Winter 2020

FMST 804/4

Wednesday: 13:15-17:15

VCR EV EV-3.735

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Thursday 2 to 4 or by appointment



Filmmakers have been raiding the archive for decades, making new work out of old. The aesthetics of this practice are extremely varied, and have undergone several phases of revision with new technologies and new artistic practices, not to mention different archival sources. In this class we will survey the history of this practice as it has evolved since the 1950s, and into the digital era. Through the work of moving image artists and media theorists we will explore the changing role of the archive in audio-visual culture, as it intersects with a wide range of media technologies, cultural and social priorities, and modes of access. What kind of knowledge is produced by different kinds of archives, and how does that knowledge shift with changes in media and technologies of storage and access? What are the politics of the archive, and how have archives served (or not served) different constituencies in Canada and globally? How are archives funded and supported and how does that support influence the kinds of knowledge, research, and historiography thereby produced?

Readings

All readings will be made available through a dropbox site. The books listed at the end of the syllabus will be made available through course reserves at the Concordia Library. *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices* has been ordered at the bookstore, although I have a few copies available for sale in my office on a first-come-first served basis. A list of recommended additional readings can be found at the end of the syllabus.

Syllabus

1. January 8 Introduction

Film 1st parts 7-12 (Gustav Deutsche, 2002), 90 mins

- Catherine Russell, *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices*, (Durham NC: Duke University Press), Preface plus chapters 1 and 2 pp 1-35

- Paula Amad, "Introduction," *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la planète*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 1-24.

2. January 15 Found Footage

Rose Hobart (Joseph Cornell, 1936) 19 mins.

() (Parentheses) (Morgan Fischer, 2003), 21 mins.

The Colour of Love (Peggy Ahwesh, 1994), 10 mins.

Kristall (Christoph Girardet and Matthias Müller, 2006), 14 mins

- Walter Benjamin, "The Collector," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999, 203-211.
- Walter Benjamin, Konvolute N, in *The Arcades Project*, 456-488.
- Catherine Russell, "Collecting Images," *Archiveology* chapter 4, 97-140.

3. January 22 Anarchival Media

The Green Fog (Guy Maddin, 2017) 63 mins.

Guest speaker: Alanna Thain, Associate Professor, McGill University

- Alanna Thain, "Anarchival Cinemas" *Inflexions* 4, "Transversal Fields of Experience" (December 2010). 48-68. www.inflexions.org
- Gilles Deleuze "Powers of the False" from *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Minneapolis MN: Minnesota University Press, 1989, 126-155.
- Dale Hudson and Patricia Zimmermann, "Cinephilia, Technophilia and Collaborative Remix Zones" *Screen* Vol. 50 no. 1 (Spring 2000): 135-146.
- Rick Prelinger, "Archives of Inconvenience," in *Archives*, Andrew Lison, Marcell Mars, Tomislav Medak, and Rick Prelinger eds. Meson Press, 2019 <https://meson.press/books/archives/>

4. January 29 Archival Ethics

Suitcase of Love and Shame Jane Gooly 2013 70 mins

Souvenirs films: NFB 2015 Four 3-minute remix films by Indigenous artists

- Emma Cocker, "Ethical Possession: Borrowing From the Archives," *Scope* 16 (February 2010) <http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/cultborr/chapter.php?id=9>

- Jaimie Baron, “The Ethics of Appropriation in *Suitcase of Love and Shame* and *A Film Unfinished*,” in *Contemporary Documentary*, ed. Selmin Kara and Daniel Marcus, London: Routledge, 2015, 156-70.
- Thomas Elsaesser, “The Ethics of Appropriation: Found Footage Between Archive and Internet,” in *Found Footage Magazine* Issue #1 (October 2015): 30-37.

5. February 5 Archival Affect

The Watermelon Woman (Cheryl Dunye, 1996) 90 mins.

Guest speaker: Antoine Damiens, Postdoctoral Student, McGill University

- Anne Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings* Chapter 7 and epilogue
- Cait McKinney. 2015., “Body, Sex, Interface: Reckoning with Images at the Lesbian Herstory Archives,” *Radical History Review* 122: 115–28.
- George Derk “Inverting Hollywood from the outside in: the films within Cheryl Dunye’s “The Watermelon Woman” *Screen*, Volume 59, Issue 3, Autumn 2018, Pages 293–310

6. February 12

Guest speaker: Olivier Charbonneau, Associate Librarian, Concordia University

The Three Disappearances of Soad Hosni (Raina Stephan, 2011) 70 mins.

- Charlotte Hess and Elenor Ostrom, “A Framework for Analyzing the Knowledge Commons” In *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice*, edited by Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom, 2007, 41-81. MIT Press. URL: <https://clues.concordia.ca/record=b3085147>
- Recommended: Catherine Russell, “Awakening from the Gendered Archive: Archiveology and Critical Cultural History,” *Public* 57 (2018) eds. May Chew, Susan Lord, and Janine Marchessault, 36-46.

7. February 19 History and Testimony

Maelstrom: A Family Chronicle (Péter Forgács, 1997) 60 mins.

Night and Fog (Alain Resnais, 1955) 32 mins

- Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7-24.
- Giorgio Agamben, “The Archive and Testimony,” in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, (Zone Books, 2002), 137-171

- Michel Foucault, excerpts from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. (trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith New York Pantheon Books 1972) “The Historical *a priori* and the archive,” 126-131; “Conclusion” 199-211.
- Recommended: Michael S. Roth, “Ordinary Film: The Maelstrom,” in *Cinema’s Alchemist*, 75-84; Michael Renov, “Historical Discourses of the Unimaginable: *The Maelstrom*,” in: *The Films of Péter Forgács* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 85-95.

8. March 4 Film in Transition

Cinema Futures (Michal Palm 2016), 126 mins.

- Trond Lundemo, “Archive and Technological Selection,” *Cinémas* 24 no. 2-3 (Spring 2014): 17-40
- Giovanna Fossati, “Theorizing Archival Film,” in *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009, 103-145.
- Jussi Parikka, “Archive Dynamics: Software Culture and Digital Heritage,” in *What is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2012), 113-135.

9. March 11 Canadian Archives

Dawson City: Frozen Time (Bill Morrison 2016) 120 mins.

- Jennifer Vandergurgh, “Against Ephemerality: The CBC’s Archival Turn 1989-96, in *Cinephemera: Archives, Ephemeral Cinema, and New Screen Histories in Canada*, Zoe Druick and Gerda Cammaer eds. McGill Queens University Press, 2014, 210-231.
- Katherine Quanz, “Preserving Ephemeral Aboriginal Films and Videos: The Archival Practices of Vtape and ISUMATV, in *Cinephemera*, 256-272.
- Andrew Burke, “Memory, Magnetic Tape, and *Death by Popcorn: The Tragedy of the Winnipeg Jets*, *Cinephemera*, 236-350.

10. March 18 Documents and Records

Let the Fire Burn (Jason Osder 2013), 95 mins.

- Friedrich Kittler, “Memories are Made of You,” *Lost in the Archives*, 405-416.
- Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst, “Towards an Archive for Visual Concepts,” *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*. ed. Thomas Elsaesser. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004): 261-286.

- Sekula, Allan. "The Body and the Archive," *October* Vol. 39 (Winter 1986), 3-64.

11. March 25 Heritage and the City

LA Plays Itself (Thom Anderson, 2003), 169 mins (excerpts)

Lost Landscapes excerpts (Rick Prelinger)

- Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1-23; 83-95.
- Domietta Torlasco, "Introduction" and "Against House Arrest" in *The Heretical Archive: Digital Memory at the end of Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.), ix-xxi, 1-23.
- Caroline Frick "Toward a More Inclusive Film Heritage: Challenging the National," and "The Plurality of Preservation," in *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 119-180.

12. April 1 Class cancelled for SCMS

13. April 8 Student Presentations

Thursday April 9 makeup class/ more student presentations

Assignments

Presentation of assigned readings	20%
Research proposal	10%
Research Presentation	20%
Final paper	40%
Class participation and moodle posts	10%

Presentation of readings

Each student should volunteer to present the readings assigned for a given week, including weeks 4,7,8,9,10, 11 only (not including recommended readings). Depending on the number of students enrolled, we may divide up the presentations differently. These presentations should normally be sixty minutes long, during which the presenter should be prepared to answer

questions about the article and their presentation of it. A good presentation is much more than a summary of the articles. You should include the following:

- A summation of each author's main point or argument
- Evaluate the authors' methods. Are they convincing? Based on what evidence?
- Discuss the context of the piece (book, journal, article, author's identity)
- Evaluate the articles' overall contribution to the topic of archival film practices
- Compare the assigned articles and identify any key points of convergence or divergence
- Pose two or three questions arising from the material for class discussion

To adequately cover these points, you will probably want to do more research around the given articles, including viewing films that are cited and looking up key references. Presentations may include film clips and power point slides if desired.

Presentation assignments will be made on the first day of class. Please note that you do not have to discuss the films screened that week.

Research Proposal Due Feb 19

This should be 1000 words plus bibliography and filmography. Please outline the topic, and indicate how you will find additional resources. You may choose to research a specific archive and write about its history and future, suggesting what kind of epistemological role it fills. Your paper may explore definitions of archives and include on-line sites, museums, distribution sites or film co-ops that are involved in archival film practices. Please feel free to speak to me about these projects at the proposal stage and after so that I can help you develop them. Students may also choose to do a video essay, if they have prior film editing experience. Practice-based research should be accompanied by a written component. In your proposal you should indicate how will you complete your research, and what perspective you intend to adopt toward that research. Indicate why the topic is interesting, original and significant and how it relates to the theme of epistemology of the archive.

Final Paper Due April 22

This should be approximately 5,000 words developing the ideas introduced in your proposal. A good essay is narrowly defined. Video essays must be accompanied by a 2000 word written discussion of the objectives, challenges, context and sources of the audio-visual work.

Class Participation and Moodle posts

Because this is a seminar, it is important that every member of the class contribute to the discussion of the assigned readings and screenings. Please post your responses to the assigned articles every week, by Tuesday morning at 10 am. (You can choose just one article or you can discuss more than one). In your responses, please indicate what you learned from the article

and any criticisms you may have; or you may be able to make connections between the article and other writings, or films we have screened in class—or to other materials you are familiar with. Please try to keep your post within a 300 to 500 word range. Each student should have posted **at least 7 times** by the end of the semester. This grade will be based on the quantity and quality of contributions to oral and written discussion.

Research Presentation

The last two weeks of class will be devoted to student presentations. Each student will have one hour to present their work, including screening clips. This is work in progress, as the final paper will be due two weeks later. It will provide an opportunity to get feedback from your classmates as well as the instructor. It can also be a trial run for participation in the symposium planned for late April on Epistemology of the Archive for those students interested in presenting at that time.

Bibliography/ Books on Reserve

Amad, Paula. *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Baron, Jaimie. *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*. NY: Routledge, 2014.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Bloemheugel, Marente. Giovanna Fossati and Jaap Guldemond, eds. *Found Footage Cinema Exposed*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012.

Cardinal, Roger. *The Cultures of Collecting (Critical Views)*. London: Reaktion Books 1994.

Comay, Rebecca. ed. *Lost in the Archives*, Alphabet city, no. 8. (2002).

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Doane, Mary Anne. *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Druick, Zoe and Gerda Cammaer eds. *Cinephemera: Archives, Ephemeral Cinema, and New Screen Histories in Canada*. Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 2014.

Flaig, Paul and Katherine Groo. *New Silent Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

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Hodge, James J. *Sensations of History: Animation and New Media Art* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2019).

Merewether, Charles. ed., *The Archive*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Nichols, Bill and Michael Renov eds., *Cinema's Alchemist: The Films of Péter Forgács*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

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Skoller, Jeffrey. *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-garde Film*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Spieker, Sven. *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

Torlasco, Domietta. *The Heretical Archive: Digital Memory at the End of Film*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Wees, William C. *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*, Anthology Film Archives, 1993.