

**DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES
TRENT UNIVERSITY**

CUST 4136H: WORKSHOP: DIGITAL MEDIA LAB

2021 W
Peterborough

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Calendar Description

Examines diverse spatial media experiences with a focus on documentary, narrative and visual culture. Engaging through experimentation with mapping and GIS tools, location-based media, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality, students will participate in a major project using the digital imaging resources at The Moore Innovation and Research Hub.

Course Description

Media labs are open spaces geared to creative work and collaborative outcomes. By rejecting the idea of “genius” scholars working alone in their ivory towers, the media lab concept favours curiosity-based inquiries that are tested and reworked through dialogue and peer support. In this workshop, we follow in the tradition of media labs by inviting you to develop projects that draw from your wildest imaginations, but in ways that further help you to acquire transferable skills and training in the media technologies available at Bata Library. We focus on four major topic areas – mapping, images, locations, and experiences – and we use these to ask questions such as the following: What is the relationship between narrative and spatial representations? How does artificial intelligence affect our visual culture? To what extent do media infrastructures shape perceptions of social reality? What ethical limits should we place on mediated forms of embodiment such as VR? Throughout the term, you will have the opportunity to explore at least two of these topic areas – first, in a Lab Experiment, which is a beginner assignment that includes specific parameters, and second, in a Term Project where you will be asked to develop a concept of your own from start to finish. With assistance provided by the digital scholarship librarian and course instructor, this workshop challenges you to adapt your vision within the limits of a capstone project engaging different media applications.

Course Format

Three contact hours per week. Although time at the Moore Innovation and Research Hub has been scheduled on Weeks 1, 2, 4, 10 and 11, You may need to book additional studio time outside of class hours.

Texts and Materials

All required readings are available for free on Blackboard, online, or through Trent Library's online resources, as indicated.

Learning Objectives

Upon completing the class, you will be able to:

- Develop applied methods in visual studies and media studies.
 - Learn the value of hands-on, practical applications of media.
 - Develop skills in mapping, image making, locative media experiences and VR.
 - Read historical, critical and theoretical perspectives on media.
 - Build your skills working collaboratively in a group setting.
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Evaluation

Your grade for this course will come from the following:

Lab Experiment	Week 5	20%
Project proposal	Week 6	P/F
Presentation	Weeks 6-9	15%
Final project	Week 12	30%
Interventions (x6)	Ongoing	15%
Participation	Ongoing	20%

1. Lab Experiment

In Part I of this course, we engage readings and seminar discussion on four key subjects – mapping, images, locations, and experiences. You will be asked to concentrate on a single theme in a Lab Experiment. To accomplish this aim, choose ONE of the corresponding options:

Option a): Story map. Using dedicated ArcGIS software, you will be able to develop a multimedia narrative by curating maps, images and other digital materials. The theme of your story will depend on your interests, the kind of material that you want to work with (i.e. personal

archive vs. generated material), and time limitations. Construct a story that highlights the spatial dimensions of your chosen subject.

Option b): Platform audit. This option requires that you develop an inventory of every instance in which a preselected image or image type, such as a face, participates in the digital realm and is processed by third parties. Follow the journey that those images take through the web. Develop a critical methodology that weighs the impact of these transfers, focusing on algorithmic codes, platform interfaces, and internet protocol. Make a poster detailing your results.

Option c): Critical infrastructure walking tour. This option requires that you develop a walking tour map that features a location of your choice. Complete the map by touring the space you have chosen, marking out areas such as parks, walkways, major intersections, public amenities, and zoning restrictions. Identify the infrastructures that are present and/or hidden in this space, connecting them to specific purpose-built features or designs. These may include aspects of the built environment, such as light fixtures, sewage systems, and building materials like asphalt, concrete and steel; and media infrastructures, like cell towers, telephone wires, and handheld devices. Locate the broader web of these infrastructures on your map.

Option d): Drawing and printing in 3 dimensions. This option allows you to experiment with the VR tools available in the Odette Critical Making Studio, focusing on the VR drawing application and 3D printer in particular. Develop a concept for your constructed object(s) before getting to work. Bear in mind both the limits and possibilities of the VR interface, as well as printer specifications.

2. Project Proposal

By Week 6, you should have a rough idea of the kind of work you want to engage in for the capstone assignment. The only restriction is that you choose a subject area that is different from the one you focused on for the Lab Experiment (these are indicated in the weekly schedule). You do not need to create any materials for the proposal. Rather, the aim is for students to workshop ideas with your peers.

3. Presentations

In Part II of this course, we provide a second set of reading material focused on our four subject areas. Each student will be asked to select one of these topics and deliver a class presentation. The work you complete toward the presentation can help clarify methodological questions that may arise in your Final Project, so you are encouraged to select a week that aligns with it. Matching your presentation topic to your Final Project is not necessary. However, you do need to choose a subject area that you DID NOT focus on in Part I's Lab Experiment. The presentation itself should be 10 minutes in length, accounting for the underlying problems or questions that bring the readings together while avoiding summaries of the individual texts. You do not need to include PowerPoint slides unless you feel it is necessary or useful to get your points across. You also do not need to cover the recommended readings in your chosen week. These are intended for further reading, which may be helpful for completing your Final Project.

4. Final Project

The Final Project is the penultimate assignment in this course, and should reflect many weeks of preparation, from developing the concept through peer dialogue, presenting on adjacent research

in the field, and, of course, the use of critical making tools in the Moore Innovation and Research Hub. We will investigate – and celebrate – these works on our final day in class.

5. Interventions (x6)

During weeks 2 and 9, you are expected to come to class with a prepared document of approximately 300 words. The content of these pages should not be summaries of the texts that we are scheduled to read, but rather incisive questions, critiques and/or informed rejections of the material. You may be asked to read the text you have written, or you may be asked to paraphrase your ideas in seminar discussion. These assignments need not be printed and brought to class, but they should be sent to me prior to our seminar meeting. I will not accept your assignment if you are absent from the class without prior notice on a given week. You are asked to complete an intervention for each week that we are reading and discussing written and visual texts in a seminar. There are two exceptions: 1) you are granted one “free” week off, 2) you aren’t expected to write an intervention on your presentation week.

6. Participation

To repeat the first line of the syllabus, media labs are open spaces geared to creative work and collaborative outcomes. Participation is essential to this process. That includes active, engaged and informed seminar discussions as much as it includes consistently helping to provide a supportive environment for your peers.

Schedule and Readings

Week 1: Introduction

Required: Emerson, L., Parikka, J., and Wershler, D. (2021) “Lab Space,” in *The Lab Book: Situated Practices in Media Studies*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, online excerpt.

In class: Tour of the Moore Innovation and Research Hub, Bata Library.

Part I: Groundwork for the Lab Experiment

Week 2: (Mapping 1) Spatial media narratives

Required: Caquard, S. (2011) “Cartography I: Mapping narrative cartography,” *Progress in Human Geography*, 37(1): pp. 135-144.

Kurgan, L. (2013) “Mapping Considered as a Problem of Theory and Practice,” *Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology, Politics*, Brooklyn: Zone Books: 9-19.

Pickles, J. (2004) “The Cartographic Gaze, Global Visions and Modalities of Visual Culture,” *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World*, New York: Routledge, pp. 75-92.

Stoler, A. (2010) "Writing and Its Imperial Mutations," *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 1-8.

In class: Radical Cartography <<http://www.radicalcartography.net/>>, Torn Apart / Separados <<http://xpmethod.plaintext.in/torn-apart/volume/2/>>, Queering the Map <<https://www.queeringthemap.com/>>.

Introduction to ArcGIS Story Maps at the Maps, Data & Government Information Centre (MaDGIC), Bata Library.

Week 3: (Images 1) Fakes

Levitt, D. (2018) "Animatic Pop: Body-as-Image, Image-as-Body," *The Animatic Apparatus: Animation, Vitality, and the Futures of the Image*, Zero Books: 83-109.

McCosker, A., and Wilken, R. (2020) "Face Value," in *Automating Vision: The Social Impact of the New Camera Consciousness*, New York: Routledge, pp. 34-55.

In Class: Gil-Fournier, A., and Parrika, J. (2020) *Seed, Image, Ground*.

Bergen, H. (2019) *Animating the Kinetic Trace: Kate Bush, Hatsune Miku, and Digital Dance*.

This Person Does Not Exist. <<https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/>>

Guest Speaker: Aaron Tucker, PhD Candidate in Cinema and Media Studies, York University. Title: "Facial Recognition Technologies: Portrait, Film, Software."

Introduction to Adobe Creative Cloud at the Odette Critical Making Studio.

Week 4: (Locations 1) Locative arts

Behrendt, F. (2015) "Locative Media as Sonic Interaction Design: Walking through Placed Sounds," *WI: Journal of Mobile Media*, 9(2).

Hemment, D. (2006) "Locative Arts," *Leonardo*, 39(4): 348-355.

Farman, J. (2012) "Embodiment and the Mobile Interface," *Mobile Interface Theory: Embodied Spaces and Locative Media*, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 16-35.

Recommended: McQuire, S. (2016) "Googling the City," *Geomedia: Networked Cities and the Future of Public Space*, London: Polity, pp. x-x.

In Class: Superflux Lab (2015) *Drone Aviary*.

Mock critical infrastructure walking tour.

Week 5: (Experiences 1) Walled experiences

- Required: Evans, L. (2018) "A (Brief) Cultural History of VR," *The Re-Emergence of Virtual Reality*, Routledge, pp. x-x.
- Li, J. (2018) "The Virtual Walls," Working paper (with permission).
- Pullen, T. M. (2016) "Skawennati's-Timetraveller™: Deconstructing the Colonial Matrix in Virtual Reality," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 12(3): 236-249.
- In Class: Ji, H. and Wakefield, G. *Artificial Nature* <artificialnature.net>.
- Presentation: Introduction to VR at the Odette Critical Making Studio.

Part II: Building Knowledge toward the Final Project

Week 6: (Mapping 2) Deep Mapping

- Required: Mattern, S. (2015) *Deep Mapping the Media City*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Shields, R. (2018) "Bergson's GIS: Experience, Time and Memory in Geographical Information Systems," *Media Theory* 2(1): pp. 316-322.
- Recommended: Kitchin et al. (2017) "Understanding Spatial Media," *Understanding Spatial Media*. London: Sage, pp. 1-25.

Week 7: (Images 2) Limits of construction

- Required: Denson, S. (2020) "Discorrelation and Post-Cinema," in *Discorrelated Images*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. x-x.
- Encheva, L. and Pedersen, I. (2013): "'One Day...': Google's Project Glass, Integral Reality and Predictive Advertising," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 28(2): pp. 235-246.
- Recommended: Manovich, L. (1999) "Database as Symbolic Form," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 5(2): 80-99.

Week 8: (Locations 2) Seams and folds

- Required: Licoppe, C. (2016) "Mobilities and Urban Encounters in Public Places in the Age of Locative Media. Seams, Folds, and Encounters with 'Pseudonymous Strangers,'" *Mobilities*, 11(1): pp. 99-116.

Verhoeff, N. (2012) *Mobile Screens: The Visual Regime of Navigation*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. x-x.

Recommended: Morley, D. (2017) *Communications and Mobility: The Migrant, The Mobile Phone, and the Container Box*, London: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. x-x.

Week 9: (Experiences 2) Sensorium

Required: Huhtamo, E.(1995) “Encapsulated Bodies in Motion: Simulators and the Quest for Total Immersion,” *Critical Issues in Electronic Media*, ed. Simon Penny, State University of New York Press: 159-186.

Inde, D. (2002) “Bodies, Virtual Bodies, and Technology,” *Bodies in Technology*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 3-15.

Parisi, D. (2018) “The Cultural Construction of Technologized Touch,” in *Archaeologies of Touch: Interfacing with Haptics from Electricity to Computing*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Part III: Studio sessions / Presenting Final Projects

Week 10: Session 1

Week 11: Session 2

Week 12: Presenting Final Projects