HUMA1673 Spring 2024

Course Instructor: Qiuzi Guo   Lecturer, Division of Humanities

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Office Hours: Mondays: 11:00-12:30 (by appointment)

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Course Description:

This course will explore how digital technologies are transforming art production and presentation. From early photography to virtual reality, it will examine art forms at the turn of the mechanical age (e.g. photography, film) as well as artistic practices in the digital age such as virtual reality, data visualization, artificial intelligence, and NFT (Non-fungible token). Situating art and digital culture within a cross-disciplinary context, the course also considers the following key issues: how do digital technologies change our art, culture, and contemporary life? How does art in the digital age define key issues in the digital world such as privacy, copyright, and identity? How can we create art through interdisciplinary practice? The course will also provide insights into how AI can enhance the artistic process, offering new perspectives on both traditional and digital mediums. Students will learn to analyze new forms of art and related technologies and to discuss the key issues of human experience, identity, and surveillance in the digital age.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

This course exposes undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds to a wide range of topics in art and digital culture. The students will

1. Develop a critical knowledge of art and related technologies in the digital age, including an understanding of the impact of AI on art creation and interpretation.
2. Cultivate specialized knowledge of art forms (e.g., photography, film, video art, nft)
3. Engage with disciplines outside their majors, exploring the intersection of art with technology.
4. Develop competencies and digital literacies that provide a foundation for future careers

Assignments:

- Attendance (10%):

  Students are required to attend classes and guest lectures. One point will be deducted for each absence, up to 10 points.

- Class Participation (20%): You are encouraged to join in the discussion in the class, up to 20 points. You will be rewarded in the following situations:

  a) Answer a question in the class (Register your name with TA), 2 points for each response (up to 10 points)
  b) Group discussion and task, assessed by the instructor (10 points)

- Final group Presentation (35%)

Students are organized into smaller groups to make 20-minute presentations. Potential topics will be given. Students sign up for their topics of interest. Teams will be formed based on the chosen topic.

The final presentation is to be presented orally in the class, and each team will submit their presentation materials (PDF or other formats) after their oral presentation The team members should be clearly divided into their respective roles, and each contributed to the presentation.

- Written Assignment (35%)

Students are required to write an essay (1500-1800 words) that addresses the issues and debates emerging in art and digital culture research. Students can make an appointment with the instructor to discuss the chosen topic (not mandatory).

Notes:

AI tools like ChatGPT can change the process of creating an essay. It is permitted to use AI writers to enable natural-language content, but it is important to indicate where and how they are used, and to specify the AI-generated content. The evaluation of the AI-generated content will not be based on the content itself, but on how it is used, and the AI-generated portion should not exceed 20%.

Weekly Topics:

Week 1

Wednesday 7 Feb   Welcome and Introduction

Review the syllabus, introduce the goal, and assignments of the class.

Week 2

Wednesday 14 Feb   A Loss of Aura: Photography in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

Outline the early histories of photography, discuss how photography technology transform the way of seeing

- Readings:

Marien, M. W. (2021). The Origin of Photography. In *Photography: A cultural history* (pp. 3–21). essay, Laurence King Publishing.

"Is Photography Art?" http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/photography-art.htm

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Shocken Books, 1969), 217–253.

- Videos:

John Berger / Ways of Seeing

Week 3

Wednesday 21 Feb   New Ways of Seeing: Moving Images, Cinema and Emerging Media Technologies

Discuss the role of movies at the turn of the mechanical age, and how new media technologies changed the modern world.

- Readings

Dixon, W. W., & Foster, G. A. (2013). The Invention of Movies. In *A short history of film* (pp.1-21). Rutgers University Press.

Manovich, L. (1996). Cinema and digital media. *Perspectives of Media Art. Ostfildern,* Germany: Cantz Verlag.

Barsam, R (2016). Looking at Movies. in *Looking At Movies: An Introduction to Film* (pp.1-34). W.W. NORTON & COMPANY

Week 4

Wednesday 28 Feb   After Photography: The Rise of Digital Art

Examine the use of computers in the art-making process; Explore Internet art, theories, practices and projects of internet art, ways of digital storytelling

- Readings

Greene, R. (2004). Web Work: A History of Internet Art

Fritz, D. (2016). International Networks of Early Digital Arts . *In A Companion to Digital Art* (pp. 46–68). Wiley-Blackwell.

Taylor, Grant D. "Introduction." In *When the Machine Made Art: The Troubled History of Computer Art*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Week 5

Wednesday 6 March   The Myth of VR (Virtual reality)/AR (Augmented reality)

This session will demystify the concepts of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) by exploring various VR/AR projects and their applications. We will delve into how these immersive technologies are redefining visual experiences, enhancing the storytelling of art exhibitions, and enabling access to cultural heritage beyond physical boundaries.

- Readings

Greengard, S. (2019). *Why Augmented and Virtual Realities Matter*. In Virtual reality (pp. 1–36). MIT press.

Greengard, S. (2019). *The Many Shapes and Forms of AR and VR*. In Virtual reality (pp. 37–64). MIT press.

Week 6

Wednesday 13 March   Photogrammetry Crash Course: Preserving Cultural Heritage through Technology

We invite the team behind *RealityCapture*, a photogrammetry software renowned for its precision and speed. Specialist will provide instruction on how to scan physical objects and artifacts, transforming them into high-fidelity 3D models suitable for VR experiences. You will gain practical skills in digitizing artifacts, understanding the technology's implications for historical preservation, and exploring the potential for new forms of digital engagement with cultural history.

Week 7

Wednesday 20 March   Digital Cultural Heritage

We will introduce the pioneering projects in digital cultural heritage and examine case studies where digital technology has been used to document, preserve, and share cultural heritage in innovative ways.

- Readings

Drucker, J. (2013). Is There a "Digital" Art History? Visual Resources, 29(1–2), 5–13.

Shep, S. J. (2016), 'Digital Materiality', in S. Schreibman, R. G. Siemens, & J. M. Unsworth (eds.), *new companion to digital humanities*, Toronto, Wiley, pp. 322–330.

- Project to explore

[Harvard FAS CAMLab Digital Luoyang](#)

Week 8

Wednesday 27 March   Artificial Intelligence and Creativity

Explore AI art by analyzing artworks; identifies the significant factors essential to the creative process.

- Readings

Miller, A. (2020).What Make Us Creative. *In The artist in the machine: The world of ai-powered creativity* (pp. 85–95). MIT Press.

Miller, A. (2020). The Birth of Artificial Intelligence. In *The artist in the machine: The world of ai-powered creativity* (pp. 85–95). MIT Press.

Kelly, K. (2022, November 17). What ai-generated art really means for human creativity. Wired. Retrieved January 1, 2023, from https://www.wired.com/story/picture-limitless-creativity-ai-image-generators/

Week 9

Wednesday 3 April   NFTs, Metaverse, and the Future of Art

- Readings:

Clark, M. (2021, March 3). *NFTs, explained*. The Verge. Retrieved January 2, 2023, from https://www.theverge.com/22310188/nft-explainer-what-is-blockchain-crypto-art-faq

TRLab. (2022, September 3). *Cai Guo-Qiang brings fine art to emerging collectors with second NFT drop: Exploding the self*. Medium. Retrieved January 1, 2023, from https://trlab.medium.com/cai-guo-qiang-brings-fine-art-to-emerging-collectors-with-second-nft-drop-exploding-the-self-82bbc34c5348

Week 10

Wednesday 10 April   Social Media and Surveillance

Discuss the growing presence of social media in the surveillance of everyday life.

- Readings

Trottier, D. (2015). Introducing Social Media Surveillance In *Social media as surveillance: Rethinking visibility in a converging world* (pp. 1–32).

Smith, B. (2021, December 6). *How tiktok reads your mind*. The New York Times. Retrieved January 1, 2023, from https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/05/business/media/tiktok-algorithm.html

Week 11

Wednesday 17 April   Art and Identity in the Digital Age

Discuss issues of identity and art production in the context of artificial intelligence, digital surveillance, and data dignity

- Readings

Jones, A. (2006). 1990–2005: In the Clutches of Time, In *A companion to contemporary art since 1945*(107-124). Blackwell Pub.

Oscar Ho. *Hong Kong: A curatorial journey for an identity*. Asia Art Archive. Retrieved January 1, 2023, from https://aaa.org.hk/en/ideas-journal/ideas-journal/hong-kong-a-curatorial-journey-for-an-identity

Week 12

Wednesday 24 April   Final Presentation

Presentations and discussion of each project.

Week 13

Wednesday 8 May   Final Presentation

Presentations and discussion of each project.