

EAST 564/COMS 646 (Fall 2023)
Structures of Modernity/Popular Media
Tuesday 11:35am-2:25pm, ArtsW-220

Professor Yuriko Furuhashi

Office: Room #266, 680 Sherbrooke West:

Office Hours: Wednesday on Zoom 10:00am-11:00am, and by appointment

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Course Description

This seminar on “structures of modernity” explores the roles of various media technologies in shaping histories of colonialism, capitalism, territorial conflicts, and knowledge production. The seminar brings together critical theory, media history, environmental humanities, cultural studies, and science and technology studies to rethink the purported unity of “modernity” across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Modernity is not one thing, as we will see, but rather fractured along the lines of media, geopolitics and the environment. The guiding question of the course is Foucauldian: what were the underlying historical and cultural conditions of possibility that led to the invention, circulation, and transformation of certain media technologies? How might we resist the Eurocentric tendency to flatten and homogenize conceptions of key terms such as *media*, *technology*, and *human* by paying attention to the racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed structures of modernity?

Part I of the course “Visual Media and Knowledge Production” loosely takes a media archaeological approach to popular and commonly used technologies of visualization, communication, transmission, and storage (e.g. almanacs, X-Ray films, television, space telescopes, infrared radio, refrigeration). By foregrounding how the ostensibly “Western” lineage of scientific modernity intersected with various modes of modern institutions and disciplinary knowledge production in East Asia and beyond, we will also explore the national, colonial, and imperial dimensions of modern media technologies. Part II of the course “Capitalism, Labour, and Ecology” focuses on the intertwined histories of colonial and capitalist regimes of racialized labour, biopolitics, border control, environmental pollution, and territorialization, while attending to the proliferation of analog and digital surveillance technologies.

Readings

All the readings in either PDF or E-Pub format will be made available through MyCourses.

How to Read:

While it may seem self-evident, reading is a skill I would like you to focus on during this course. In reading I ask you to focus on three things in particular:

1. The *content* of the text (the argument, the claims made, the information presented)
2. *How* this content or argument is presented (the structure of the text, as well as the rhetorical means by which this argument is unfolded)
3. The *evidence* marshalled to make this argument (how the author supports claims made, whether by engagement with theory, with existing scholarship, with new historical or archival research, by recourse to journalistic reports, by close readings of filmic and visual texts, or some combination of these or something else entirely. When possible, pay attention to *how* the author gathered this evidence)

Focusing on these things will allow you to start thinking about how you could develop your own research projects, and what evidentiary support you will need for them.

Assignments and Evaluation

1/ Participation

10 %

Please complete all assigned readings before coming to class and be prepared to participate thoughtfully and actively in class discussion. The weight of your grade for participation will be determined holistically considering your synchronous and asynchronous participation in class discussions during the weekly class in person as well as conversations taking place online on myCourses. I understand that there are many types of challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic affecting each of us in a unique manner.

2/ Weekly Reading Responses

20 %

In preparation for class, please write a short one- or two-paragraph response (approx. 200-300 words) to the readings assigned for the given week, and posted on myCourses by 10:00pm on Monday, the night before our scheduled class meetings on Tuesday. The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to both identify and articulate the main threads of arguments and/or key issues from the readings before you come to the seminar. You can also frame your responses around questions raised by the texts, or difficulties in reading them. For instance, you may point to passages in the text that you find difficult to understand and want to discuss in class. After each class session, I also encourage you to post a follow-up response to the issues discussed in class or respond to your classmates' posts.

The seminar is a place of inclusivity and equity, where all of us can freely and respectfully express and share ideas and work together towards addressing the issues pertinent to the course materials, including systemic racism, institutionalized inequity, social injustice as well as the need and ongoing efforts to decolonize knowledge production. This entails discussing sensitive materials that deal with legacies of imperialism and colonialism, including those by the former Japanese empire. The seminar offers opportunities for you to explore new ways of thinking, expressing and exchanging your ideas with your fellow classmates. Never hesitate to ask a question, even if you think it's basic or trivial!

3/ Research Paper Proposal: due on November 11

20%

Write a 6-7 pages (approx. 1500-2000 words) research proposal for your final seminar paper, including the following components: 1) an introduction that explains how your chosen example or topic relates to media technology, modernity, and other issues dealt in the readings from the course; 2) a thesis statement that leads to the hypothetical "argument" of your paper, organized in dialogue with at least 2 readings from the course (required or recommended); 3) a brief summary of each reading with which you want to engage in dialogue (including additional readings from outside the course materials).

- Make sure to briefly summarize the main arguments or analyses presented in the readings you chose to engage; you may build upon, supplement and/or critique their approaches. You can draw on your weekly reading responses for such summaries.
- As you summarize, analyze, or criticize ideas from other theorists, make sure to provide full citations, including page numbers either in the Chicago or MLA style. Failure to provide appropriate citations will affect your grade.

- After in-class presentation you can finesse and incorporate suggestions and feedback from your classmates. Please upload your proposal on myCourses.

4/ In-Class Presentation of Your Proposal: November 7

10 %

Prepare a 5-7 minutes class presentation on your proposal for the final seminar paper. To facilitate this presentation, I suggest that you come up with a “pitch” and a preliminary “argument” that persuasively frame the relevance of your proposed topic/example to the course and put your paper in a generative dialogue with course readings (see above). If you’d like, you can share an audio-visual image (e.g. a screen capture from a video, a photograph, a map, a flow chart, etc.) or PowerPoint slides to aid your presentation. Feedback from the class on your presentation could be included in your Research Paper Proposal.

5/ Final Research Paper & Workshop Presentation

40 %

Building on your midterm proposal presentation and the feedback you receive, you will write a final research paper on the topic of your choice. You can build on some of the ideas and topics you explored in the midterm proposal, but the final paper must engage with one new reading from the course material, which was not covered in your midterm proposal. The aim here is to develop your proposal with additional readings and sources. While you are encouraged to build on your midterm proposal, you also may switch your topic or example for the final paper. The final paper should engage with at least 3 readings from the course. For this paper, may conduct historical research, or write a purely theoretical essay focusing on one conceptual problem, or combine theoretical engagement and object analysis (e.g. film, visual artwork, music, architectural design, mass cultural form, social media phenomenon, political event, etc.). The total length of the paper should be 16-20 (approx. 4000-5000 words) pages.

- You will orally present your topic and preliminary argument for your paper during the workshop on **the last day of class (December 5)**.
- Please note that 5% out of 40% of the final grade allocated to this assignment will be based on the workshop presentation. The remaining 35% will be based on your final paper itself.
- Please submit the final version of your paper via myCourses by 11:00pm on **December 10 (Sunday)**. If you need more time, you can reach out and consult me about getting an extension.

NOTE: (1) McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). (2) In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. (3) In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change. (4) If you have concerns related to disabilities, please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 514-398-6009 before you do this.

McGill University (Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal) is situated on the traditional territory of the Kanien’kehà:ka, a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst

many First Nations including the Kanien'kehá:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg. We recognize and respect the Kanien'kehà:ka as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today.

SCHEDULE

September 5 Introduction

Part I: Modern Media and Knowledge Production

September 12 **Aerial Modernity and Area Studies**

- Rey Chow, "The Age of the World Target," *The Age of the World Target: Self-referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 25-43.
- Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "The Myth of Isolates: Ecosystem Ecologies in the Nuclear Pacific," *Cultural Geographies* 20.2 (April 2013): 167-184.
- Peter Sloterdijk, *Terror from the Air*, trans. Amy Patton and Steve Corcoran. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009, 47-70.

Recommended

- Gavin Walker and Naoki Sakai, "The End of Area," *positions: asia critique* 27.1 (February 2019), 1-31.

September 19 **Astronomy, Satellites, and Sky Media**

- Gordon Fraser, "Cherokee Astronomy," *Star Territory: Printing the Universe in Nineteenth-Century America*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021, 78-105.
- Lisa Parks, "Satellite Panoramas: Astronomical Observation and Remote Control," *Cultures in Orbit: Satellites and the Televisual*, 139-166, Duke University Press, 2005.
- John Durham Peters, "Lights in the Firmament: Sky Media I (*Chronos*)," *The Marvelous Clouds Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*, University of Chicago Press, 2015, 165-212.

September 26 **X-Ray Films, Magic Waves, and Media Archaeology**

- Lisa Cartwright, "Decomposing the Body: X Rays and the Cinema," *Screening the Body*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 107-142.
- Xiao Liu, "Extrasensory Powers, Magic Waves, and Information Explosion: Imagining the Digital," *Information Fantasies: Precarious Mediation in Postsocialist China*, University of Minnesota Press, 2019, 39-82.
- Errki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, "Introduction: An Archaeology of Media Archaeology," *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, University of California Press, 2011, 1-24.

Recommended

- Weihong Bao, "A Culture of Resonance: Hypnotism, Wireless Cinema, and the Invention of Intermedial Spectatorship," *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915-1945*, University of Minnesota Press, 2015, 91-150.

October 3 **Media Theories & Grant Proposal or Abstract Writing Workshop**

**The first second of the class will be used as an in-class workshop for grant proposal writing*

- Marc Steinberg and Alexander Zahlten, "Introduction," *Media Theory in Japan*, eds. Marc Steinberg and Alexander Zahlten, Duke University Press, 2017, 1-29.
- Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan, "After Kittler: On the Cultural Techniques of Recent German Media Theory," *Theory, Culture & Society* 30.6 (November 2013), 66-82.

October 10: **Fall reading break**

October 17: **Class Canceled – Use this week to read ahead and plan your research paper topic**

October 24 **Thermal Politics**

- Hi'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart, "Cold and Sweet: The Taste of Territorial Occupation" and "Local Color," *Cooling the Tropics: Ice, Indigeneity, and Hawaiian Refreshment*, Duke University Press, 2022, 91-135.
- Nicole Starosielski, "Heat Ray," *Media Hot and Cold*, Duke University Press, 2021, 135-165.
- Yuriko Furuhashi, "Indoor Weather" *Climatic Media: Transpacific Experiments in Atmospheric Control*, Duke University Press, 2022, 48-79.

Recommended

- Jiat-Hwee Chang and Tim Winter, "Thermal Modernity and Architecture," *The Journal of Architecture*, 20:1 (2015): 92-121.

Part II: Capitalism, Race, and Labour

October 31 **Racial Capitalism and Migration**

- Lisa Lowe, "Introduction," *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 1-42.
- Tao Leigh Goffe, "The Flesh of the Family Album: Black Pacific Kinship," *On Being Adjacent to Historical Violence*, ed. Irene Kacandes (De Gruyter, 2022), 280-298.
- Allan Lumba, "Transpacific Migration, Racial Surplus, and Colonial Settlement," *Histories of Racial Capitalism*, eds. Destin Jenkins and Justin Leroy, Columbia University Press, 2021, 111-134.

Recommended

- Michel Foucault, Chapter 11, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003), 239-264.

November 7 **Midterm Presentation of Your Research Proposal**

November 11 (Saturday) **Deadline to Submit Your Research Paper Proposal**

November 14

Surveilling “Foreign” and “Native” Species

- John Tagg, “A Means of Surveillance: The Photograph as Evidence in Law,” *The Burden of Representation*, 66-102.
- Gyewon Kim, “Unpacking the Archive: Ichthyology, Photography, and the Archival Record in Japan and Korea,” *Positions* 18.1 (2010): 51-87.
- Jeannie N. Shinozuka, “San José Scale: Contested Origins at the Turn of the Century,” *Biotic Borders: Transpacific Plant and Insect Migration and the Rise of Anti-Asian Racism in America, 1890–1950*, University of Chicago Press, 2022, 15-48.

November 21

Digital and Perceptual Enclosures

- Paul Roquet, “Introduction” and Chapter 3 “VR Telework and the Privatization of Presence,” *The Immersive Enclosure: Virtual Reality in Japan*, MIT Press, 2022, 1-18 and 81-104.
- Darren Byler, “Introduction: What Is Terror Capitalism?” and Chapter 1 “Enclosure,” *Terror Capitalism*, 1-29 and 31-60.
- Mark Andrejevic, “Surveillance in the Digital Enclosure,” *The Communication Review* 10:4 (2007): 295-317

November 28

Marx and the Anthropocene

- Kohei Saito, “Introduction,” “Marx’s Theory of Metabolism in the Age of Global Ecological Crisis,” and “Marx as a Degrowth Communist,” *Marx in the Anthropocene: Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism*, Cambridge University Press, 2023, 1-42 and 171-215.
- Maxim Tvorun-Dunn & Nathalie Pascaru, “Environmentalism Polluted: Consumerism and Complicity in Studio Ghibli’s Media Mix,” *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 2023: 1-22.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2023.2225548>

December 5

Final Research Paper Workshop

December 10 (Sunday):

Final Paper Submission