

Fall 2021

**Screen Cultures and Media Arts/ Popular Media**

Topic: “Environmental Mediations”

**EAST 560 / COMS 646**

Thursday 11:35-2:25 in person, Ferrier Building 230

Prof. Yuriko Furuhata

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Office hours: Tuesday 2:30-3:30 on Zoom and by appointment

**Course Description**

As part of the larger environmental turn within humanities, scholars in media studies and area studies have turned to “environmental media” and “elemental media” approaches in order to rethink the material and ecological conditions of technologies of communication, storage, and processing of data, sounds, and images. Media and environment are articulated in myriad ways, from the ecological footprint and environmental toxicity of producing, shipping, and disposing consumer electronics, to the energy-intensive networks of undersea cables and wireless signals that connect our smartphones, speakers, and laptops to satellites and local data centers. These environments also serve as the site of geopolitical and territorial conflicts and negotiations. Keeping in mind the legacies of imperialism and settler colonialism in Asia, North America, and elsewhere, this MA/PhD and advanced undergrad seminar explores this entangled relationship between media and environments with an emphasis on Asia.

Drawing on the approaches of media archaeology, environmental media studies, and critical area studies, the course approaches the nexus between technological media and the environment through a series of technological, geological, ecological, and infrastructural mediations. The questions this seminar will address include the following: How might we think historically and site-specifically about universalizing claims about “media” in relation to the geopolitical “area” called Asia? How does paying attention to the ambient, atmospheric, elemental, and ecological dimensions of our everyday media practice change the way we define media? How do media organize our perception of time and space? How do we account for the historical and ongoing violence (e.g. colonialism, imperialism, warfare, climate crisis) that have shaped and continue to affect the proliferation of media infrastructures which are supposed to make our life more comfortable and convenient? How might we decolonize knowledge production within and through Asian Media Studies?

**Objectives**

The seminar is designed to foster dialogues between Media Studies and Area Studies, and I invite you to be attentive to the methodological, theoretical, historical, and political resonances and dissonances across some of the readings. You will also have the opportunity to develop and hone your skills to act effectively across a range of academic genres of performance, thinking, planning, writing and presenting.

**Readings**

Readings will be available on myCourses.

### **Course Delivery Guideline**

Our seminar will take place *in person* on Thursdays. If you must self-isolate and miss the seminar due to COVID-19 related conditions, I will discuss a make-up assignment with you for those days.

### **COVID-19 Health Guidelines**

Procedural masks are required in all indoor spaces, including classrooms. For more information and protocols on campus, please see McGill's general health and safety guidelines: <https://www.mcgill.ca/coronavirus/health-guidelines>

### **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 11:00pm on Wednesday, the night before our scheduled class meetings on Thursday. 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 7**

**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 the issues of environmental media or a media technology associated with environmental ramifications; 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).

- The notions of media and environment can be defined broadly (e.g. natural, ecological, technological, artificial, infrastructural, climatological, immersive, ambient, online/offline).
- If possible, pick an example or topic that relates to the political, economic, and sociocultural conditions in Asia and/or Asian diaspora, including the legacy of colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism.
- 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 on **November 4** you can finesse and incorporate suggestions and feedback from your classmates. Please upload your paper on myCourses by 10:00pm on **Sunday November 7**.

**4/ In-Class Presentation of Your Proposal: November 4** **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. that captures the gist of your proposed research. Feedback from the class on your presentation may 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 on December 2.

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- Please note that 5% out of 40% of the final grade allocated to this assignment will be based on the workshop presentation and the accompanying abstract. 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. 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/](http://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 a disability 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'kehà: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

### **Sept. 2 Introduction: Media/Environment**

- Introduction and overview of the course.

### **Sept. 9 Time-Keeping Media: Calendar, Astronomy, and Time Management**

- Stefan Tanaka, *New Times in Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1-53.
- John Durham Peters, "Lights in the Firmament: Sky Media I (Chronos)," *The Marvelous Clouds: Towards a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 105-212.
- Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, "Introduction: An Archaeology of Media Archaeology," *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, eds. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 1-24.
- Melissa Gregg, "A Brief History of Time Management," *Counterproductive: Time Management in the Knowledge Economy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 22-49.

#### Recommended

- Lisa Conrad, "Organization is the Message: Grey Media," *Organize*, eds. Timon Beyes, Lisa Conrad, Reinhold Martin, Geert Lovink, and Ned Rossiter (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 63-87.

### **Sept. 16 Spectral Mediations: X-Ray, Electromagnetism, and Electricity**

- Michael Dylan Foster, "Science of the Weird: Inoue Enryō, Kokkuri, and Human Electricity," *Pandemonium and Parade*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008, 77-114.
- Lisa Cartwright, "Decomposing the Body: X-Rays and Cinema," *Screening the Body*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 107-142.
- Lisa Parks, "Searching: Screening Practices at US Airport Security Checkpoints," *Rethinking Media Coverage: Vertical Mediation and the War on Terror* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 64-100.

#### Recommended

- Douglas Kahn, "Introduction," *Earth Sound Earth Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 1-24.
- Kerim Yasar, "Vocal Cords and Telephone Wires," *Electrified Voices: How the Telephone, Phonograph, and Radio Shaped Modern Japan, 1868-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 22-51.

### **Sept. 23 Oceanic Mediations: Islands, Territories, and Undersea Cables**

- Elizabeth DeLoughrey "The Myth of Isolates: Ecosystem Ecologies in the Nuclear Pacific," *Cultural Geographies* 20.2 (April 2013): 167-184.
- Nicole Starosielski, "Gateway: From Cable Colony to Network Operations Center," *The Undersea Network*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015, 95-137.
- Daqing Yang, "Submarine Cables and the Two Japanese Empires," *Communications Under the Seas*. eds. Bernard Finn and Daqing Yang (Cambridge: The MIT Press,

2007).

- Lisa Han, "Sonic Pipelines at the Seafloor," *Media+Environment* 3. 2(2021). <https://doi.org/10.1525/001c.21392>.

#### Recommended

- Erin Y. Huang, "Ocean Media: Digital South China Sea and Gilles Deleuze's Desert Islands," *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 7.2 (Fall 2021): 177-203.

#### **Sept. 30 Ecological Mediations: The Earth, Race, and Metabolism**

- Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 1-42.
- Tao Leigh Goffe "Guano in Their Destiny": Race, Geology, and a Philosophy of Indenture," *Amerasia Journal*, 2019, VOL. 45, NO. 1, 27-49.
- Brett Clark and John Bellamy Foster, "Ecological Imperialism and the Global Metabolic Rift: Unequal Exchange and the Guano/Nitrates Trade," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 50.3-4 (2009): 311-334.
- Liam Cole Young "Salt: Fragments from the History of a Medium," *Theory, Culture & Society* (2020):1-24.

#### **Oct. 7 Check-in/Grant Writing Workshop**

#### **Oct. 14 Fall break**

#### **Oct. 21 Geological Mediations: Settler Colonialism, Extraction, and Indigeneity**

- Jussi Parikka, "Deep times and media times: A descent into ecological materiality of technology," *General Ecology: The New Ecological Paradigm*, eds. Erich Hörl (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 169-192.
- Yuriko Furuhashi, "Archipelagic Archives: Media Geology and the Deep Time of Japan's Settler Colonialism," *Public Culture* 33.3 (September, 2021).
- Juliana Hu Pegues, "Settler Orientalism: The Asian Racialization of Alaska Natives," *Space-Time Colonialism: Alaska's Indigenous and Asian Entanglements* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 19-49.
- Kim Tallbear, "Beyond the Life/Not-Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking, and the New Materialism," *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, eds. Joanna Radin and Emma Kowal (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017), 179-202.

#### **Oct. 28 Microscopic and Aerial Mediations: Military and Epistemic Targets**

- Bishnupriya Ghosh's chapter "Chasing Bugs: Microbial Frontiers in American Epidemiological Documentaries, 1946-60," *Cinema of Exploration: Essays on an Adventurous Film Practice*, eds. James Leo Cahill and Luca Caminati (Routledge, 2021), 23-39.
- 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.

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- Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 115-154.

Watch at home

*Age of Promise* (Chas. Pfizer & Co., Inc. 1956, 9 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiGhOvfWsTE>

#### **Nov. 4 In-Class Presentation of Your Research Paper Proposal**

#### **Nov. 7: Deadline to submit Your Research Paper Proposal**

#### **Nov. 11 Atmospheric Mediations: Air, Breathing, and Radiation**

- Peter Sloterdijk, *Terror From the Air*, trans. Amy Patton and Steve Corcoran (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 1-70.
- John Durham Peters, “The Media of Breathing,” *Atmospheres of Breathing*, eds. Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 179-198.
- Rahul Mukherjee, “‘City Inside the Oven’: Cell Tower Radiation Controversies and Mediated Technoscience Publics,” *Television & New Media* 18 (2017): 19-36.

#### **Nov. 18 Ambient Media: Music, Screens, and Waiting Bodies**

- Paul Roquet, *Ambient Media: Japanese Atmospheres of the Self*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016, 1-47.
- Anna McCarthy, “The Rhythms of the Reception Area: Crisis, Capitalism, and the Waiting Room TV,” *Television after TV*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004, 183-209.
- Graham Burchell, “Liberal Government and the Techniques of the Self,” *Foucault and the Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government*, eds. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 19-33.

Recommended

- Peter Adey, “Air’s Affinities: Geopolitics, Chemical Affect and the Force of the Elemental,” *Dialogues in Human Geography* 5.1 (2015): 54-75.

#### **Nov. 25 Public Mediations: Loudspeakers, Street Protestors, and Platform Workers**

- Laikwan Pang, “Civil Disobedience and the Rule of Law: Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement,” *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 2.1 (2016): 170-192.
- Joshua Neves, “Introduction” and “People as Media Infrastructure: Illicit Culture and the Pornographies of Globalization,” *Underglobalization: Beijing’s Media Urbanism and the Chimera of Legitimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 1-32, and 169-198.
- Marc Steinberg, “LINE as Super App: Platformization in East Asia,” *Social Media & Society* (April-June 2020): 1-10.
- Julie Yujie Chen and Sun Ping, “Temporal arbitrage, fragmented rush, and opportunistic behaviors: The labor politics of time in the platform economy,” *New Media & Society* (2020): 1-19.

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Recommended

- Jie Li, “Revolutionary Echoes: Radios and Loudspeakers in the Mao Era,” *Twentieth-Century China*, 45.1 (January 2020): 25-45.
- AbdouMaliq Simone, “People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg,” *Public Culture* 16.3 (2004): 407-429.

**Dec. 2 Final Research Paper Workshop**

**Dec. 10 \*\*Final Paper Due at 11:00pm\*\***

Please upload your paper on myCourses and email it me.