Screen Cultures and Media Arts/ Popular Media

Topic: “Media and Environment II”

EAST 560 / COMS 646
Thursday 11:35-2:25; on Zoom

Prof. Yuriko Furuhata
Email: yuriko.furuhata@mcgill.ca
Office hours: Thursday 2:30-3:30 on Zoom and by appointment

Course Description

From invisible networks of Wi-Fi and Bluetooth signals that connect our smartphones, speakers, and laptops to satellites and local data centers to the ecological footprint and environmental toxicity of producing, shipping, and disposing consumer electronics, what we call “media” are deeply entangled with our “environments” (both natural and technological). This MA/PhD and advanced undergrad seminar explores this entangled relationship between media and environments with an emphasis on Asia.

Drawing on methods and approaches of media archaeology, environmental media studies, and critical area studies, the course approaches the nexus between media and the environment through the following three thematic foci: 1) atmosphere and ambience; 2) infrastructure and architecture; 3) ecology and geology. We will explore both established and emerging methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of mediated environments that are central to the interdisciplinary field of Asian Media Studies.

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 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 will be distributed via myCourses.

Class Format

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our seminar will take place synchronously on Zoom at 11:30am on Thursdays. However, in order to accommodate for the challenges posed by the remote delivery, the class time may be cut shorter (i.e. 90-120 minutes) and will be supplemented by asynchronous activities on myCourses. In cases where not everyone
registered in the course is unable to regularly meet synchronously on Zoom, we may record our seminar sessions and make them available to the registered members of the class who can only participate asynchronously – contingent on class consent.

**Assignments and Evaluation**

1/ **Participation**

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 hosted on Zoom 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 & After-class Online Discussions**

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, please post a one-paragraph response to the issues discussed in class and/or follow-up questions and thoughts on the issues, which we did not to discuss during the class time. Please post your after-class comments by Saturday at noon EST.

**Note:**

- If you are unable to synchronously participate in the Zoom class session, I will ask you not only to post a reading response for each week before the class, but also provide one example or case study pertinent to the readings and issues covered for that week. This example could be audio-visual (e.g. YouTube video), archival document, journalistic news, artwork, etc. Please make sure to provide a link to these documents or directly post them.
- Those of you who are able to synchronously participate in the Zoom class session, I will ask you to discuss this example provided by your fellow classmates who cannot join the Zoom class session by responding to their posts on myCourses so that we can create opportunities for everyone to participate in class discussion.

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!
Fall 2020

3/ Midterm Paper: due on October 24  20%
Write writing a 6-8 pages (approx. 1500-2000 words) synthesis paper, analyzing one thread or topic raised from the readings before Oct 15. To write this paper, you will need to think of the following issues:

- Pick one type of “media environment” or a media technology that has environmental ramifications. The notion of “media environment” can be defined broadly (e.g. natural, ecological, technological, artificial, infrastructural, climatological, immersive, ambient, online/offline).
- Discuss how this media environment relate to the political, economic, and sociocultural conditions in Asia and/or Asian diaspora, including the legacy of colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism.
- Synthesize and productively engage with 2-3 scholarly readings from the required and recommended readings assigned for the course between September 10 and October 15. 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. 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 Oct 22, you may finesse and incorporate suggestions and feedback from your classmates. Please upload your paper on myCourses by 10:00pm on Saturday Oct 24.

4/ Midterm Presentation: October 22  10 %
Prepare a 5-7 minutes class presentation on your topic and your analysis. To facilitate this presentation, please prepare a thesis statement that captures the gist of your argument; an abstract of your analysis (3-4 sentences); one visual image (e.g. a screen capture from a video, a photograph, a map, a flow chart, etc.) that is related to your topic to share with the class. During or before the class on Oct 22, please submit your abstract on myCourses. For those unable to participate synchronously, I will ask you to make a short (5minutes) video presentation, posted on myCourses.

5/ Final Paper & Workshop Presentation  40 %
You will write a research paper on the topic of your choice. You may build on some of the ideas and topics you explored in the midterm paper. The essay must make substantial engagement with readings from the course (at least two of which should be new and not covered in your midterm paper or project). You may 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 15-18 (approx. 3750-4500 words) pages.

- You will orally present your topic and preliminary argument for your paper during the workshop on the last day of class on November 26.
• For the workshop, please prepare your 5-7 minutes presentation in the same manner as the midterm and submit a short abstract (3-4 sentences) with a bibliography before or during the class via myCourses. 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. For those unable to participate synchronously, I will ask you to make a short (5 minutes) video presentation, posted on myCourses.
• Please submit the final version of your paper via myCourses by 11:00pm on December 7. 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 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 is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 3 Introduction: Media/Environment
• Introduction and overview of the course. We will discuss Zoom protocols and other issues related to a remote delivery of the course!

Sept. 10 Time-Keeper Media: Calendar, Astronomy, and Media Archaeology

Recommended
Sept. 17 Spectral Media: X-Ray and Electricity

Sept. 24 Aerial Media: Military and Epistemic Targets

Oct. 1 Telecommunications Media: Undersea Cables and Technologized Orality

Recommended

Oct. 8 Geological Media: The Earth, Race, and Metabolism
Fall 2020


**Oct. 15 Atmospheric Media: Radiation, Breathing, and Fog**

**Recommended**
- Peter Sloterdijk, Terror From the Air, trans. Amy Patton and Steve Corcoran (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 1-70.

**Oct. 22 Midterm Presentations**

**Oct. 29 Ambient Media: Music, Screens, and Waiting Bodies**

**Recommended**

**Nov. 5 Democratic Media: Loudspeakers, Street Vendors, and Protestors**
Fall 2020

**Recommended**

**Nov. 19 Organizational Media: Desks, Apps, and Platforms**

**Nov. 26 Final Paper Workshop**

**Dec. 7 **Final Paper Due at 11:00pm**
Please upload your paper on MyCourses and email it me.