

University of North Texas  
SPRING 2026

**MRTS 4412.001 | MRTS 5702.004**

Thursdays / 2-4:50 pm  
RTFP 135

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Office Hours: Mon, Thurs | 12:30-1:30 & by appt.

## Experimental Cinema Production

### Description

**MRTS 4412** is a three-credit hour course drawing from the widest practices of the moving image, including Surrealism, video art, *slow cinema* and the French New Wave. The conceptualization of *experimental* is investigated as a gamut between spectacle and narrative often championed by the solo filmmaker. Film projects emphasize practical, in-camera solutions, while introducing non-narrative traditions in cinema. Students find their place in a tradition of works addressing meaning, chance and ritual.

Prerequisite: MRTS 3220, 3230 or 3500 or Instructor's Permission.

**MRTS 5702** is the graduate-level call sign for *Experimental Cinema Production*. This class meets with MRTS 4412. Graduate projects parallel the undergraduate objectives while providing a bespoke approach to the student's creative practice. Graduate students in this class are expected to present ongoing work at the mid-term and final moments of the semester, while participating in graduate-only individual meetings with the instructor. Graduate projects should engage the context of the course topics while advancing individual practice and eventual thesis.

Graduate students elect a supplemental writing option augmenting their film production. In this case, the graduate student will research and write a 10-page paper about a topic related to the *Experimental* course material presented. Prerequisite: Graduate Status and Instructor's Permission.

### Course Outcomes

- Students engage in principle concepts of avant-garde filmmaking.
- Students negotiate *pre-visualization* solutions in camerawork.
- Students employ basic research methods to investigate a filmmaker's process.
- Students publish all finished works on a publically accessible website, such as Vimeo or YouTube.
- Students produce a four-minute, final film incorporating an experimental practice.

### Primary Texts (excerpts provided via Canvas portal)

MacCabe, Colin; *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, Macmillan Press, London, 1980

Rees, A.L.; *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., The British Film Institute, 2023

Schrader, Paul; *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*, UCLA Press, 2018

Youngblood, Gene; *Expanded Cinema*, Fiftieth Anniversary Ed., Fordham University Press, 2020

### Recommended Texts

Beckman, Karen and Jean Ma; *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, Duke University Press, 2008

Bresson, Robert; *Notes on the Cinematograph*, New York Review of Books, 1975

Buñuel, Luis; *An Unspeakable Betrayal: Selected Writings of Luis Buñuel*, University of California Press, 2000

Calle, Sophie; *Sophie Calle: Overshare*, Walker Art Center, 2024

Campany, David; *The Stillpoint of the Turning World: Between Film and Photography*, Kehrer, 2017

Coppola, Francis Ford; *Live Cinema and its Techniques*, Liveright Publications, 2017

Harris, Alexandra; *Tacita Dean: Landscape, Portrait, Still Life*, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, 2018

Hegnsvad, Kristoffer; *Werner Herzog: Ecstatic Truth And Other Useless Conquests*, Reaktion Books, 2021

Herzog, Werner; *The Future of Truth*, Penguin Press, 2025

Insdorf, Annette; *François Truffaut*, Cambridge University Press, 1995

Lecoq, Jacques; *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre*, Routledge, 2001

MacDonald, Scott; *Avant-Doc: Intersections of Documentary & Avant-Garde Cinema*, Oxford University Press, 2015

Murch, Walter; *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Silman James Press, 2001

Murch, Walter; *Suddenly Something Clicked: The Languages of Film Editing and Sound Design*, Faber & Faber, 2025

Mulvey, Laura; *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, Reaktion Books, 2006

Richie, Donald; *Ozu: His Life and Films*, University of California Press, 1977

Ross, David; *Bill Viola*, Flammarion / Whitney Museum of American Art, 1998

Royoux, Jean-Christophe; et al; *Tacita Dean*, Phaidon Press, 2006

Scheyerer, Nicole; *Mika Rottenberg*, Verlag, 2019

**No Required Supplies, but, everyone should have:**

**External Hard Drive** – LaCie Rugged All-Terrain model, recommended. 4 TB minimum.

**SDXC Card** (class 10, V90) 128 GB recommended. | **Noise-Canceling Headphones.**

**Media Arts Equipment Room / RTFP 166 / Checkout Policy.** Cameras, audio recorders, tripods and lighting kits are available to check out, free of charge to students currently enrolled in MRTS courses. The student assumes full responsibility for any equipment and accessory under rental period, including repair or replacement of chargers, batteries, memory cards or the camera itself.

Equipment access is granted once a student passes an essential camera skills test. Only then will students be allowed gear from the Media Arts Equipment Room. Equipment can be reserved by going to **checkout.unt.edu**.

**Online Content**

critterion.com	mubi.com	ubu.com	vdb.org
kanopy.com	mobygratis.com	tubi.com	vimeo.com

**YouTube Channels**

Every Frame a Painting	Science Fiction with Damien Walter	MarkusPix	NOWNESS
Art21	Lessons from the Screenplay	Nerdwriter	No Film School
Omeleto	Piercefilm Productions	Cine Dailies	TIFF Originals

**Communication Expectation**

The UNT Canvas portal is the virtual meeting place for this course. Additional content will be made available there. Projects will be uploaded and graded there. All students are expected to use their unt.edu email address. Email is typically responded Mondays-Fridays, 9 am – 6pm. Take advantage of in-person office hours.

**Attendance / Participation / Time Commitment**

Attendance is mandatory for all Lecture and Workshop sessions of this course.

- One absence is allowed per semester without penalty. Semester grade will be lowered one letter after the second absence.
- A significant late arrival or leaving early will be counted as a half absence. Two count as an absence.
- Attendance is expected for all class meetings, even if assignments are not completed by the due date.
- Please schedule your appointments outside of class time if you expect the same courtesy in return.
- If you miss a class, find out from your classmates what was covered and what was due; syllabus schedule is subject to change.
- You must come prepared to work every class; for lecture this means active note-taking and engagement.

**Plan to schedule approximately 4 hours per week on production assignments outside of class.**

**Late assignments** will be lowered one letter grade at the instructor’s discretion if not completed by the following week. They will continue to be lowered a letter grade with every late week.

Individual activity in group projects affects the project grades of others in your group.

Do not expect extra-credit assignments to make up for absences or missed assignments.

Students are expected to complete the **SPOT** online course evaluations as part of their successful completion of this course.

**Climate of respect and civility**

Participation is mandatory. Open, courteous discussion is expected in both lecture and lab sections. Learning to communicate with lens-based media is essential to developing personal vision, creative expression, while freely describing and interpreting the actual and resistant world. That said, please expect an environment where all content and viewpoints relevant to the course are welcome if respectfully presented.

The classroom, as critique space, functions as the principle (and non-partisan) venue for negotiated thought and is meant to deliberately entertain competing and unpopular ideas. This course follows the spirit of free expression as stated in *The Chicago Principles* (University of Chicago, 2014).

**Grading Policy**

Students with no previous experience in cinema or the arts can regularly receive **A** or **B** grades but is not guaranteed. To do so, the student must come to all the classes, work effectively in a group, complete all the assignments with *demonstrated improvement* throughout the semester and participate liberally in discussion.

The following constitutes a letter grade for an assignment:

**A: Exceptional.** The student/group completes the requirements of the assignment, demonstrates a technical mastery of their craft and bases the work around a theme or idea demonstrating critical thought.

**B: Promising.** The student/group completes the requirements of the course and demonstrates a technical mastery of craft.

**C: Average.** The student/group completes the requirements of the assignments and demonstrates a basic competence of craft.

**D: Poor.** The student/group completes the requirements of the course but does not demonstrate a basic competence of craft or an adequate development of concepts.

**F: Absent.** The student/group fails to answer the basic requirements of the course or turns in no work at all.

<b>Grading Breakdown: 4412</b>	%	Points
Film No. 1: Exquisite Corpse	15%	150
Film No. 2: Simultaneous Image	20%	200
Mid-Term Presentation	10	100
In-Class Sessions / Participation & Attendance	20%	200
Final Film: Non-Linear Narrative +	35%	350

<b>Grading Breakdown: 5702</b>	%	Points
Film No. 1: Sensate	10%	100
Film No. 2: Simultaneous Image	15%	150
Mid-Term Paper	20%	200
In-Class Sessions / Participation & Attendance	20%	200
Final Film: Non-Linear Narrative +	35%	350

**Total** **100%** **1000 points**

#### **Semester End Grade:**

A	900+
B	800+
C	700+
D	600+
F	599-0

#### **Academic Integrity / Creative Labour**

The university prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty, which is understood as the appropriation and representation of another's work as one's own. Just as plagiarism describes the familiar, fraudulent writing scenario, in the case of production courses, evidence of a student having the *creative labour* of a given project performed by another outside their group, will result in the immediate failure of the project for all in the group. *There will be a zero-tolerance policy for any A.I. generated content.*

Submitting someone else's work as your own or something you have already submitted for another class is unacceptable. You are expected to shoot original work for this course's assignments; not old footage to be re-edited, unless asked to do so. You will earn an F for any work that violates the academic integrity policy.

Creative labour also pertains to ethical use of third-party music and instrumental score. Only music for which you own licensed permission can be used for cinema projects in this course. Search for free-license and royalty free sources.

#### **ODA Policy**

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at [disability.unt.edu](http://disability.unt.edu).

<b>Course Outline</b>	MRTS 4412   5702
Week 1 Jan 15	<b>Course Intro and Syllabus   What is Experimental?</b> <b>Cinema of Attractions: Spectacle vs. Narrative</b> Screen: <i>Entr'Acte</i> , Rene Clair, d., 1924   <i>Un Chien Andalou</i> , Luis Buñuel, d., 1929
Week 2 Jan 22	<b>Project: Exquisite Corpse: Reassembled Body   Script   Chance   Chimera</b> Screen: <i>Orpheus</i> , Jean Cocteau, d., 1950   <i>Cosmic Generator</i> , Mika Rottenberg, d., 2017 Screen:   <i>The Seashell and the Clergyman</i> , Germaine Dulac, d., 1928 <b>Demo: Camera &amp; Character Lens</b>
Week 3 Jan 29	<b>Calling it Film When There's No Film   Surface Features   Practical Solutions</b> Screen: <i>THX1138</i> , George Lucas, d., 1970   <i>La Chimera</i> , Alice Rohrwacher, d., 2024
Week 4 Feb 5	<b>Screening First Film: Exquisite Corpse   Sensate</b> <b>Project: Mid-Term Presentation</b>
Week 5 Feb 12	<b>Project: Simultaneous Image: Opacity   Bokeh   Refraction   Overlays</b> Screen: <i>The Green Ray</i> , 2001, <i>Film</i> , 2011   Tacita Dean Screen: <i>Dog Star Man</i> , Stan Brakhage, d. 1961-64   <i>Goodbye to Language</i> , Jean-Luc Godard, d. 2014 <i>Timecode</i> , Mike Figgis, 2000   <i>Sisters</i> , 1972, <i>Blow Out</i> , 1980, Brian DePalma d. <b>Demo: Split Screen, Split Diopter</b>
Week 6 Feb 19	<b>French New Wave: Popularizing the Experimental</b> Screen: <i>Breathless</i> , 1959, <i>Every Man for Himself</i> , 1980   Jean-Luc Godard, d. Screen: <i>Jules et Jim</i> , François Truffaut, d., 1963   <i>Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid</i> , George Roy Hill, d., 1969
Week 7 Feb 26	<b>Mid-Term Presentation</b> <b>Filmmaker + Process</b>
Week 8 Mar 5	<b>Mid-Term Presentation</b> <b>Project: Final Film   Non-Linear Narrative + Body Gesture   Time Slow   Meta-Myth   Miniature</b>
Week 9 Mar 12	SPRING BREAK   NO MEETING
Week 10 Mar 19	<b>Screening Second Film: Simultaneous Image</b>
Week 11 Mar 26	<b>Screening Second Film: Simultaneous Image</b>
Week 12 April 2	<b>Time   Lapse   Still Moving   Slow Cinema   Transcendental Style</b> Screen: <i>Koyaanisqatsi</i> , Godfrey Reggio, dir., 1982   Screen: <i>Nostalghia</i> , Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983 <b>Demo: Frame by Frame, Titles &amp; Text, Reversing the Body</b>
Week 13 April 9	<b>Miniature Effect   Still Life</b> Screen: Francis Coppola's <i>Dracula</i> and <i>Megalopolis</i> , MarcusPlix, Brothers Quay
Week 14 April 16	<b>Gesture Inventory   Body As Vehicle   Jacques Lecoq's Levels of Tension</b> Screen: Francis Alÿs, Bill Viola, Maya Deren   Sophie Calle: <i>Overshare</i> Screen: <i>History Zero</i> , Stefanos Tsivopoulos, 2013   <i>Upstream Color</i> , Shane Carruth, d., 2013
Week 15 April 23	<b>Unreal, But True   Mythologies   Meta-Cinema</b> Screen: <i>Irma Vep</i> , Olivier Assayas, d., 1996, 2022   <i>Bergman Island</i> , Mia Hansen-Løve, d., 2021
Week 16 April 30	<b>Rough Cuts   Work in Progress</b> Screen: Werner Herzog: <i>The Inner Chronicle of What We Are</i>
Week 17 May 7	<b>Final Film: Non-Linear Narrative + Body Gesture   Time Slow   Meta-Myth   Miniature</b> <b>FOUR minute / single/multi-channel / with sound</b>