

# Media Aesthetics

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**MED 114 Section 20764**

**County College of Morris  
Randolph, New Jersey  
Spring, 2010**

**Matthew T. Jones, Ph.D.**

## *Instructor Contact Information*

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## **Course Description**

Media Aesthetics examines the meaning of visual images designed for use in film and electronic media. Through current and historical examples, students learn the principles and significance of media aesthetics including light and color, space, time, motion, and sound, and how they are used to optimize effective message production. Students learn how aesthetic elements of film and electronic media have been translated into vectors – forces that push or pull users in certain directions. Operationally, students learn how to interpret, order, clarify, and intensify various communications including fiction, by employing appropriate aesthetic elements.

## **Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Recognize historical examples of film, and electronic media.
2. Demonstrate understanding of the evolution of visual images.
3. Demonstrate understanding of the importance, influence, and meaning of visual images through written exams.
4. Demonstrate competence over aesthetics via the practical application of theories to film/video production or essay writing.

## **Methods of Instruction**

1. Lecture: A brief introduction to material that connects readings to class exercises.
2. Class Discussion: Full group discussion of topics related to specific questions, readings, media presentations and/or exam preparation.

3. Audio-Visual Presentations: Short presentations that are focused on a relevant topic and intended to provoke discussion.
4. Workshop: Use of studio facilities.

### **Required Textbook**

Zettl, H. (2008). *Sight, Sound, and Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Thomson Wadsworth.

### **Additional Resources**

**<http://mattsmediaresearch.com>**: This will serve as the official website for this class.

The syllabus and other material will be made available through the “Students” hyperlink at the top of the homepage.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Attendance: Students are expected to attend all class meetings.
2. Reading and Participation: Students are expected to complete all assigned readings and come to class prepared for discussion.
3. Tests: Students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge in the form of in-class tests.
4. Final Project/Final Essay: Students have a choice of writing/shooting/editing a final film or video project or writing a final critical essay.

### **Evaluation and Grading**

1. *Attendance Policy*: All students are entitled to two unexcused absences from class. Beyond this single absence, 1/3 of a grade will be deducted from the final grade for each additional unexcused absence (e.g. B- reduced to C+). Excused absences are accepted only if accompanied by documentation relating to the nature of the excuse (e.g. auto repair receipt, doctor’s note, jury duty notification, etc.).
2. *Participation*: All students are expected to demonstrate informed participation in class discussion. Participation can include [1] initiation of discussion about an issue related to the topic scheduled for discussion for that class session [2] contribution to an ongoing discussion through informed opinion and/or presentation of evidence. Please note that there exists a distinction between an uninformed opinion and the assertion of a particular theoretical perspective. As opposed to personal opinion that is grounded in individual anecdotal experience, the statement of a perspective implies a coherent paradigm that has application value based on functionality in other circumstances. Put simply, a perspective has demonstrated its validity elsewhere. Having made that distinction, participation will be evaluated based on the number of valid contributions that the student makes throughout the course of the semester. A minimum of 1 contribution is expected each week. Additional contributions will be added as half points to the final grade and deficient contribution points will be subtracted as half points from the final grade. For example, if a student has a final test average of 77%, but six contributions above and beyond the quota, the student will have earned an 80%. If that same student has a deficit of six points below the quota, the student will have earned a 74%.
3. *Tests (50%)*: There will be four tests throughout the course of this semester. These will be evaluated in terms of percentile and translated to a letter grade based on the grading chart below.

4. *Final Project* (50%): As noted above, students have the option of writing, shooting, and editing a final film or video project. The content of the project is open, but the technical execution will be evaluated based on specific criteria, including: conceptualization, lighting, mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing.
5. *Final Essay* (50%): Students may choose to write an essay instead of producing a final project. The essay will be written on a film or television series of the student's choice. Theory and technique relevant to aesthetics must be pursued in the course of the analysis. The essay will be graded based on the following: (1) Application of Ideas (use of aesthetics to explore the text), (2) Logic of Argumentation (connection between observations and aesthetic meaning), (3) Organization of Content (Introduction, Body, Conclusion), Clarity of Presentation (writing skills).

### Grading Chart

A (93-100)	C (73-76)
A- (90-92)	C- (70-72)
B+ (87-89)	D+ (67-69)
B (83-86)	D (63-66)
B- (80-82)	D- (60-62)
C+ (77-79)	F (below 60)

### Course Calendar

#### Week 1

1/20

- ❖ **Overview:**
  - Fill out index cards.
  - Personal introductions.
  - Distribute syllabi.
  - Introduction and overview of the course.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
  - What is aesthetics?
- ❖ **Assignments:**
  - Read Chapter 1: Applied Media Aesthetics
  - Decide whether you want to write an essay or produce a project.

## Week 2

1/27

- ❖ **Overview:**
  - Chapter 1: Applied Media Aesthetics
- ❖ **Discussion:**
  - **Declaration of Project or Essay Due.**
  - Experimental Film and Video
- ❖ **Assignments:**
  - Read Chapters 2 (The First Aesthetic Field) & 3 (Structuring the First Aesthetic Field).
  - Choose the topic of your project or essay.

## Week 3

2/3

- ❖ **Overview:**
  - Chapters 2 & 3
- ❖ **Discussion:**
  - **Topic of Project or Essay Due.**
  - Lighting in painting.
  - Lighting in photography
  - Lighting in film.
  - Lighting in video.
- ❖ **Assignments:**
  - Read Chapters 4 (The Extended First Field) & 5 (Structuring Color)
  - Research your project or essay.

## Week 4

2/10

- ❖ **Overview:**
  - Chapters 4 & 5
- ❖ **Discussion:**
  - Color in painting.
  - Color in photography.
  - Color in film.
  - Color in video.
- ❖ **Assignments:**
  - Read Chapters 6 (The Two-dimensional Field: Area), 7 (The Two-Dimensional Field: Forces), & 8 (Structuring the Two-dimensional Field).
  - Research your project or essay.

## Week 5

2/17

### ❖ Overview:

- **Test 1: Introduction, Light, Color**
- Chapters 6, 7, & 8

### ❖ Discussion:

- Two-dimensional composition.

### ❖ Assignments:

- Read Chapters 9 (The Three-dimensional Field) & 10 (Structuring the Three-dimensional Field).
- Research your project or essay.

## Week 6

2/24

### ❖ Overview:

- Chapters 9 & 10

### ❖ Discussion:

- Three-dimensional composition.

### ❖ Assignments:

- Read Chapter 11 (Building Screen Space)
- Prepare the treatment, script, and/or storyboard for your project. Prepare the outline for your essay.

## Week 7

3/3

### ❖ Overview:

- Chapter 11

### ❖ Discussion:

- **Scripts or Outlines Due.**
- Mise-en-scène.

### ❖ Assignments:

- Read Chapter 12 (The Four-dimensional Field: Time)

## Week 8

3/10

### ❖ Overview:

- **Test 2: Two & Three-dimensional Fields**
- Chapter 12

### ❖ Discussion:

- Time.

### ❖ Assignment:

- Read Chapter 13 (The Four-dimensional Field: Motion) & 14 (Timing and Principal Motions)

- Produce projects or write essays.

## **Week 9**

3/17

### **❖ Spring Break!!!**

## **Week 10**

3/24

### **❖ Overview:**

- Chapter 13 & 14

### **❖ Discussion:**

- Motion.

### **❖ Assignment:**

- Read Chapters 15 (Continuity Editing) & 16 (Complexity Editing).
- Prepare “dailies” for projects. Prepare rough drafts for essays.

## **Week 11**

3/31

### **❖ Overview:**

- **Test 3: Four-dimensional Fields**
- Chapters 15 & 16

### **❖ Discussion:**

- **Dailies and Rough Drafts Due.**
- Editing

### **❖ Assignment:**

- Read Chapter 17 (Sound)

## **Week 12**

4/7

### **❖ Overview**

- Chapter 17

### **❖ Discussion**

- Sound

### **❖ Assignment:**

- Read Chapter 18 (Structuring the Five-dimensional Field)
- Refine projects and essays.

### Week 13

4/14

- ❖ **Overview:**
  - Chapter 18
- ❖ **Discussion:**
  - Five-dimensional composition.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
  - Refine projects & essays

### Week 14

4/21

- ❖ **Overview:**
  - **Test 4: Editing and Sound**
  - Projects & Essays
- ❖ **Discussion:**
  - TBA
- ❖ **Assignment:**
  - Refine projects & Essays

### Week 15

4/28

- ❖ **Overview:**
  - **ALL PROJECTS AND ESSAYS DUE**
  - View Projects & Present Essays
- ❖ **Discussion:**
  - Discuss Projects & Essays
- ❖ **Assignment:**
  - N/A

### Week 16

5/5

- ❖ **Overview:**
  - View Projects & Present Essays
- ❖ **Discussion:**
  - Discuss Projects & Essays
- ❖ **Assignment:**
  - Have a good summer.

**END**