

Media-Archaeology of Visual Strategies (A005295)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)	Dutch	Gent	independent work excursion lecture
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Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Vannieuwenhuyze, Tessa	LW17	lecturer-in-charge
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Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities (main subject Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies)	5	A
Master of Science in Teaching in Social Sciences(main subject Communication Science)	5	A
Master of Science in Communication Science(main subject Film and Television Studies)	5	A
Master of Science in Communication Science(main subject Journalism)	5	A
Master of Arts in Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Visual culture, film, photography, video art, sound art

Position of the course

The pictorial turn refers to the increasing centrality of visual language in the twentieth century as a dominant mode of meaning-making. Visual strategies actively shape our reality: we think and communicate ever more intensively through images. In today's technological context, images can moreover no longer be understood in isolation from the broader audiovisual environment within which they emerge and circulate.

Over the past two decades, media archaeology has emerged within the field of media studies as a distinct interdisciplinary approach that revalues the materiality of media as technical and historical systems and is not only theoretically grounded but also closely connected to experimental media art practices. By engaging with forgotten, obsolete, or disappeared media and technologies, media archaeologists seek to critically examine the complex dynamics of our contemporary media landscape.

This course focuses on how visual strategies and media archaeology intersect in the critical analysis of audiovisual and digital media within an art-historical and theoretical context. It engages with both classical theoretical frameworks on visual strategies (Barthes, Debord) and key texts in media archaeology by, among others, Jussi Parikka, Wolfgang Ernst, and Friedrich Kittler.

Exchange students are welcome to enrol in this course. An individual English-language learning track will be provided. An alternative examination format is also offered for exchange students.

Contents

This specialized course focuses on image strategies and media archaeology in relation to contemporary artistic practice.

In a first section, a theoretical foundation will be established for image analysis and common visual strategies. This part of the course situates the pictorial turn, the

semiotics of the image, meta-images and hermeneutics, as well as concepts such as spectacle, surveillance, and simulacra.

The second section turns to the field of media archaeology. The foundational principles of media archaeology are introduced, followed by a critical examination of the role of the archive in the context of new media. In addition, social media archaeology and meme studies are discussed, with particular attention to the blind spots and limitations of media-archaeological approaches.

The third section brings together and deepens insights from the previous parts through lectures and case studies on artistic practices situated at the intersection of these theoretical frameworks. Topics include digital practices in contemporary art, screen time in theatre, art documentaries, music videos, and television as a medium. Guest lecturers are also invited, including both researchers in media archaeology and artists working from a media-archaeological practice.

Initial competences

Basic knowledge of aesthetics is recommended .

Final competences

- 1 To have insight into the technological developments of media and to be able to reflect on the social and cultural implications.
- 2 To have an analytical insight into the visual language and visual strategies of old and new media.
- 3 To have a theoretical knowledge with regard to visual culture studies and media archaeology, and to be able to implement it in the analysis of a contemporary audiovisual and digital artistic practice.
- 4 To be able to formulate and defend a theoretically founded point of view with regard to the way a particular image (a visual strategy) works.
- 5 To demonstrate a critical perspective on the aesthetic and philosophical writings that inform the reading and writing assignment.
- 6 To be able to formulate factual and theoretical research problems in the domain of visual culture studies, and to tackle it from a personal perspective, concerning genre specific as well as intermedial aspects.
- 7 To be able to process the different aspects of independent research for the reading and writing assignment, as well as for the preparation of the written exam.
- 8 To demonstrate, in the writing assignment and the written exam, the competence of a theoretically founded analysis of an image (visual strategy).
- 9 To be able to formulate a theoretically founded conclusion on a research question.
- 10 To be able to plan, independently, a research assignment, with regard to the reading and writing assignment.
- 11 To be able to write a well-structured paper, with a clear methodology, testifying of a mature research attitude, and taking into consideration aspects of language and style.
- 12 To have an insight into the ways in which the digital turn influences the nature, origin, distribution, (re)use, manipulation, and the availability of digitized or born-digital sources.
- 13 To be able to assess in an independent and scientific way the principles of digital source-criticism.
- 14 To be able to reflect critically and independently about the social impact, needs and ethical dimensions of the digital turn.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Group work, Excursion, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Media Archaeology of Visual Strategies is taught using a flipped classroom model. In a flipped classroom, the conventional structure of teaching is reversed. Students are expected to prepare theoretical texts and course materials independently before class (guided self-study). This allows lecture time to be

dedicated to in-depth discussion, clarification, and further exploration of the material.

Study material

None

References

- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacres et simulation*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1981.
- Cartwright, Lisa and Marita Sturken. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Debord, Guy. *La société du spectacle*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1992.
- De Kosnik, Abigail. *Rogue Archives*. Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 2016.
- Ernst, Wolfgang. *Digital Memory and the Archive*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- Fickers, Andreas and Annie van den Oever. *In Doing Experimental Media Archaeology*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. 1-17; 18-29.
- Malloy, Judy. *Social Media Archaeology and Poetics*. Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 2016.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. *Picture Theory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Parikka, Jussi. *What is Media Archaeology?*. Cambridge: Polity, 2012.

Course content-related study coaching

Guidance is progressively structured and supports the implementation of theoretical frameworks through reflection moments during lectures (critical readings of audiovisual examples) and interactive discussions that further engage with the reading assignments in relation to the aesthetic and theoretical concepts touched upon.

PowerPoints, reader, audiovisual materials, links, and additional reading materials will be shared on Ufora.

Intermediate feedback on the assignment is provided throughout the semester and can also be requested by email or by appointment.

Feedback on the exam and assignment is available during scheduled feedback sessions after the examination period.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment open-book, Written assessment open-book, Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment open-book, Written assessment open-book, Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Presentation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

A. End-of-term assessment (75%)

For *Media Archaeology of Visual Strategies*, the assessment consists of a written exam in which students are given a maximum of 8 hours to write a 1500 to 2000-word essay in response to an open question. The exam assignment will be made available via Ufora at 9 am on the day of the exam. Students then write the essay (open book), which must be submitted via Ufora by 5 pm the same day.

In the essay, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of visual strategies and media-archaeological frameworks, and to be able to operationalise and problematise these in relation to a case study. Although all course materials (PowerPoints, reader, notes, etc.) may be used for this open-book assignment, students are strongly encouraged to thoroughly familiarise themselves with the course content in advance, so that on the day of the exam they can readily activate the material and engage in critical thinking.

During one of the final class sessions, time will be allocated to review expectations regarding the exam essay, address students' questions, and further elaborate on writing tips and guidelines.

B. Continuous assessment (25%)

This course also includes an assignment that requires active participation and engagement. Assessment is based on participation, contribution at each stage of the assignment, preparation and quality of the presentation, and participation in the discussion during the presentation session.

Calculation of the examination mark

The end-of-term assessment accounts for 75% of the final grade, while the continuous assessment accounts for 25%. Students must complete all assessment components in order to obtain a passing grade for the course.

Facilities for Working Students

- 1 Participation in the assignment is mandatory and is included in the final grade for the course.
- 2 An exam at an alternative time within the regular examination period is possible.
- 3 Feedback at an alternative time is possible.

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy