

# ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES: STORYTELLING IN VIDEO ART

## ARTS 362

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### Course Description:

Early filmmaking included abstract montage, surreal fantasy and playful narratives that were reflective of the investigations occurring in painting, sculpture, science and politics of the time. These methods have influenced video artists today. Increasingly, artists are crossing disciplinary and media boundaries. The first artists to explore videotape as a media (1960s-70s) were interested in its relationship to popular culture (critiquing its subjects and politics), in performing with their own bodies and in video's essential formal characteristics. Existing in tandem with television, video art is uniquely suited to critique television as part of popular culture. As video quality and software improved, artists have also deconstructed the work of the film world.

In this class we will explore non-traditional narratives that rise from the cultural context of recent media art. Interfacing our ideas with the variety of art forms present in the liberal arts, we will develop our own vocabulary for these narratives. They may incorporate parody, appropriation, deconstruction or (pastiche) montage. The imagery may range from slow-motion to stop-motion, from low-resolution to high-definition real time footage, from drawing to microscopic capture. We will approach stories from different starting points including the visual, the aural and the written. The methods that we use to develop our projects will include studied and intuitive approaches, deconstruction of existing work, juxtaposition of dissociative material, development of unusual symbolic actions/ objects/ images, prolific writing, shooting and editing, critiquing and revision. We will screen contemporary and historical video art by professional artists and students, read about their context, while utilizing our individual expertise from other disciplines and our own historical, cultural and personal stories.

### Course Goals:

Be curious, playful and innovative.

Challenge yourself in an area that is difficult for you and be unafraid of risk.

Develop metaphors, irony and mystery in your work while avoiding clichés.

Love your materials and images, but don't be afraid to cut them if needed.

Pay attention to detail.

Develop an understanding of time as vocabulary for your aesthetic explorations.

Structure your work time well and show dedication.

Anchor your work in its appropriate context: historically, culturally, socially, aesthetically and with regard to other courses you are taking through research and presentations.

Learn how to control and care equipment to the degree needed to produce your work.

Make art in relationship to others: your class, your community and beyond.

### **Evaluation Criteria (Does the work show:)**

1. An approach that is visually, intellectually and emotionally compelling? Is there something that initially draws the viewer in to want to experience more?
2. Originality/ creativity/ innovation/ surprise/ cleverness? Does the work avoid clichés and pat expectations? Did you take a risk ...step away from your comfort zone?
2. Conceptual depth, sophistication or complexity that allows a sustaining interest from the viewer.
4. Form (its color, media, rhythm, etc) that supports the content (the idea or concept). Does it make sense to use this form for this subject?
4. Resolution in the way that makes sense for your own project. The various themes and metaphors should pull together into a unified whole that makes sense. It should be finished. It should fulfill the assignment.
5. A commitment to the work that involves creative problem solving, development of technical skills, attention to detail, meeting deadlines, showing artistic integrity and effort, a willingness to learn from others including faculty and students, participation in group critiques and discussions.
6. An awareness of the appropriate audience/ assignment/ social context of your work as relating to other artists and non-artists, those of your generation and beyond, what era you are working within, what cultural knowledge you can refer to and what will be lost on the viewer. The piece should be appropriate for galleries or public art presentations. It should a creative response to the guidelines of the assignment.

*The piece should be appropriate for experimental galleries and/or video festivals. It should a creative response to the guidelines of the assignment.*

**Class Structure:** The course will be structured around assignments of varying length and will meet for two hours every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The first part of the semester will include many demonstrations. Classes will include presentations from the professor and students, discussions of readings, technical demonstrations of equipment, screenings of historical/ contemporary artists' videos/films. Every night there will be homework. Equipment should be tried immediately after being demonstrated. Although you may work in teams some projects, you will be expected to have a basis of competency on all equipment individually.

**Communication and grading:** Grading comes in the form of comments and numbers. I really value talking to you personally, writing emails in response to your work and I only give number grades as a supplement to these more important tasks. Nevertheless, the numbers can tell you how I think you are doing in relationship to my overall expectations which are based on a history of knowing what students can do, what the rest of the class might be able to do in the allotted time, and what I think you personally are capable of all in relationship to the above mentioned goals. Please do not compare your grades with others! There are many reasons for variations in grades. What is taking a risk for one person might be comfortable and predictable for someone else with more experience. Good work comes in many forms! Please take initiative in scheduling conversations with me if you don't understand something. It is your responsibility to catch up on work you have missed. Communication is key to understanding! To do the best in this class you should start work right after the assignment is given so that you can revise as needed. . If you miss a demonstration/ lecture, you will have to work with a TA and will not be able to visit the material as thoroughly.

Many critiques will offer a possible 10 points at a time, but this does NOT equate to traditional 100 point scales (where 70 is a C) ...instead I am trying to SPREAD out the scale. You can translate the numbers as follows:

9-10 = A- to A+ The high end of this indicates exceptional work to which nothing can be added, on time, following the assignment and with special insight, effort, risk-taking and creativity. All of the evaluation criteria are met. Excellent participation in critique and discussions.

7-8 = B- to B+ This indicates above average work, competent, safe and interesting but still lacking something or it could be innovative work without a high enough skill level. Good comments during critique and discussions.

5-6= C- to C+ This indicates average work, average effort, basic amount of skill and creative ideas. Low participation in critique and discussions.

3-4= D- to D+ The work is handed in but shows less than acceptable effort creativity and skill. Little to no participation in critique and discussions.

0-2= F Little effort, skill, imagination.

**Due Dates:** Projects are due at the beginning of the class period on the date of the progress or final critique. A project is considered late if it is not ready at that time and will receive a zero until submitted. The zero will then be averaged with your grade if the piece is handed in BEFORE the next scheduled critique. If you have an excused absence coming up on a critique day, the work is due *before* you leave. Most projects will have one or more progress critiques for which you will receive points toward the final score. The final project is due the last day of class, not during final's week. The final portfolio for the semester is due the next class day after the final critique.

**Resubmission:** You may improve and resubmit work and the new grade will be averaged with your initial grade. Please submit the new version within a week. Revisions that are expected for the entire class receive their own additional credit.

**Collaboration:** You all have different aptitudes and experiences, please be respectful of these in each other. Working together will improve all of your pieces. For some projects you will be the crew for another artist in the class. You are expected to help each other and to pull your part of the load. Groups will also be important at idea sessions and critiques. It is here that feedback from your peers becomes collaborative. Your voluntary participation at critiques will influence your grade.

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance in this class is extremely important because you cannot make up lost days by just reading or any other independent work. The class time is full of demonstrations, presentations, critiques and workshop time. If you miss demos you may never catch up and not know how to use the equipment. Workdays in class allow personal assistance from the professor on assignments and should be prepared for (you should work outside of class to be at the next stage of work, ready for assistance. Expect to spend at least 12 hours per week outside of class). You will always do better on an assignment if you are ready for the workdays in class. Video screenings are wonderful opportunities to inspire your work and describe the nature of the assignment. Students who miss these invariably don't do as well on the associated project. For all of the above reasons, I am strict about attendance and accountability.

After three (3) unexcused class absences I will begin to *lower your final grade for the course by five points for each additional absence*. Unexcused absences should be saved for occasional minor illnesses and you should still notify me through a call or email. Two times late (10 min after class starts) will count as one absence. ***An absence before or after a school break will count as two absences.*** Excused absences are only given for illnesses that require a doctor, death in the family, Kenyon sanctioned activities such as athletic events, etc, and must be okayed before the missed class whenever possible. Do not leave for these events early. All work must be handed in before an excused absence if it is due on the date of the absence or it will be considered late. If you have more than three excused events that pull you away from class, you will have to start using your three allowed unexcused absences (for instance, if you have 5 scheduled events, two of them will use up some of your allowed unexcused absences.) Excused absences do not include taking a friend to the airport, leaving early for break or the common cold.

**Technical Proficiency:** You may not use any equipment until you have been trained on it. Most of you will have some training from the beginning level class, but there will be additional training that you will get in this class. Some things may be done differently, and the software has changed somewhat. If you miss a day, you must receive training from a T.A., not just another student. This being said, you should realize that although increased technical proficiency may show determination and hard work (which can improve your grade), it is the concept and structure of your piece that will make it successful along with the appropriate amount of technological know-how.

**Copies:** All work will be handed in as a copy on DVD and/or TAPE for grading and for inclusion in the Kenyon Art Department Archives. They maybe exhibited on our website or for promotional reasons within the college. You can purchase blanks at cost from Lisa Dilts for this purpose.

**Academic Honesty:** Being honest academically in an art class is more difficult to define than in other classes. Sometimes using another image/video is intended as a cultural reference or quote. It even has a name: "appropriation". Whenever this is intended, the image is well known enough in the culture for most people to know where it came from, and therefore it evokes some ideas or feelings tied to the original. This is fine for an

artist to do. It is less appropriate to use a copy of a beach scene from a TV commercial for instance, just because you need a “beach” and you aren’t near one. Taking another artist’s image or idea directly and passing it off as your own is a case for dishonesty however unless the “stealing” itself is part of your concept. I suggest that if you have a question, come talk to me first.

Journal: You will keep a journal in which you will record ideas, notes on demos, notes and responses to screenings and readings and write stories. You can sketch ideas for video sequences, storyboards, treatments, etc. It can also be a depository for interesting articles you find. A loose leaf works fine.

**Disability Statement:** If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your ability to carry out assigned course work, I would urge you to contact the Office of Disability Services at 5453. The Coordinator of Disability Services, Erin Salva (salvae@kenyon.edu) will review your concerns and determine, with you, what accommodations are appropriate. All information and documentation of disability is confidential.

**Equipment policy:** You may not use any equipment until you have been trained on it. You are expected to care for all equipment both on the premises and off. If something breaks or is lost while in your possession, you are responsible for it financially. You may sign out equipment through Lisa Dilts between the hours of 8:30 and 3:30 (except the lunch hour, 12-1pm) Return time is by 12 noon the next day. If you are late in returning equipment, your borrowing privileges may be revoked. You may use Installation Art tools in the Gazebo, but you must get permission to take the tools off that site and must return them the same day. The keys must be returned when your portfolio is handed in or you risk not having your grade recorded. Make sure you clean up after yourself, don’t bring food or drink in the edit facilities. Only Students enrolled in Installation art, Digital Imaging, Digital Photo, Video Art, Acting and Directing for the Camera and Photography and Advanced Studio may use Bexley Computer Lab. Anyone else, for any other project is not allowed (even with you helping them! There is a media lab in the library for all other classes or other projects you create for other classes.

**Equipment and Materials needed for Storytelling in Video Art:**

Notebook//Journal, Index cards, Video Tapes and DVDs (available from Lisa Dilts

Helpful Texts:

Photoshop CS3 Visual Quick Start (Barnes and Noble, Borders, Amazon)

Final Cut Pro 6 or 7 Visual Quick Start (Barnes and Noble, Borders, Amazon)

Plus Books available through me and Library....see extensive bibliography in FAQs on computers.

*For additional help contact Visiting Artist/ Manager of Technology: Adam Hinterlang (individual appointments available) Contact Adam at [Hinterlanga@kenyon.edu](mailto:Hinterlanga@kenyon.edu) or at his office in Bexley. Teaching Assistants are also available in the digital studio several nights a week (look for schedule) and Madeline Courtney, Shop Monitor in the Sculpture Area is available in the Sculpture Shop during scheduled hours.*