

# Introduction to Digital Media

## Film and Media Studies Department, Hunter College, New York

Department Office 695 Park Avenue, Room 433 Hunter North. (212) 772-4949

<b>Course Number</b>	<b>Semester</b>	<b>Classroom</b>	<b>Class Times</b>
MEDIA 161 00 002	Fall, 2006	HN 432	Mondays, 3:10PM - 6:00PM

**Katherine Behar**, Instructor      **Class Website:** <http://fmfaculty.hunter.cuny.edu/~behark/courses/06F161002/>  
Office HN 515.      Office hours held in lab HN 432, Mondays 6-7      [kb@katherinebehar.com](mailto:kb@katherinebehar.com)

## Course Summary

*This syllabus is subject to changes and may be amended over the course of the semester. You will be notified of all changes in class and on the class website.*

### DESCRIPTION

This course provides a hands-on introduction to key software tools and techniques and fundamental theories and concepts supporting digital media production. We begin from the premise that within digital media production we can distinguish between techniques that *manipulate data* and techniques that *structure data*. During the first half of the course the focus will be on *processes* for manipulating digital information. Students will learn basic technical and conceptual approaches through an introduction to digital imaging and sound software. With the second half of the semester, our concentration will shift to *relational* structures for digital information. Students will be introduced to theories and methods for associative and time-based media while learning to code basic websites and simple interactive web animations.

There will be four major critique assignments during the semester. These assignments are thematically related, requiring students to remake / reinterpret / remix / reproduce their own work(s). Through this process, students are encouraged to explore the recombinant nature of digital information as well as the specificity of media forms.

### PREREQUISITE

Introduction to Media Studies (Media 180--pre or co-requisite)

### OBJECTIVES

This course covers a lot of ground in only one semester. As a result, it does not aim to produce advanced proficiency in any of the software packages or coding techniques that we'll be covering; rather the intent is to teach basic principles for understanding how many different kinds of digital media work. Such concepts are common across multiple forms of digital media production and will allow students to translate the tools they acquire in this course to unfamiliar software environments that they encounter in the future.

Upon completing this class, students should be (1) familiar with technical skills necessary for basic digital imaging, sound production, web production, and animation/interface design; (2) sufficiently fluent in common digital media production software concepts to approach advanced coursework; (3) aware of principle theories and concepts in contemporary discussions of digital media.

Students will develop skills including:

1. Online communication over email
2. Importing digital imagery through scanners, digital cameras, and other peripheral devices
3. Using layers, masks, effects, and typography to process digital imagery
4. Recording, editing, and mixing digital audio
5. Understanding file types, formats, resolutions, compression schemes, and compatibility
6. Using HTML and FTP to create a basic website
7. Creating simple computer animations
8. Experimenting with introductory object-oriented programming

## COURSE FORMAT

This course is divided into four four-week sections, two for manipulating data through digital imaging and sound, and two for structuring data through associative media and time-based media. Each section will include lectures and demonstrations, screenings/viewings, readings, and class discussions. *Please note that there is substantial work required in this course, including out of class work time and weekly reading / writing assignments. Notes are not available online, so students should come to class prepared to take notes.*

### Class time will be allocated approximately as follows:

Technical Skills and Demonstrations	50%
Theory and Discussion	20%
Critique of Student Work	30%

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Course readings
- Personal email account
- Access to the Internet (many readings are online)
- USB Flash Drive (128 MB minimum)
- Headphones
- USB Microphone
- Reference book(s) of your choice\*

### \*Note:

This course does not follow a textbook, however *you are required* to invest in one or more reference books. I recommend the "Visual QuickStart Guide" series published by Peach Pit Press as beginning, hands-on guides. There are Visual QuickStart Guides available for Photoshop CS2, HTML, XHTML and CSS (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.), and Flash 8. Sourceforge, the makers of Audacity, have an excellent online tutorial. For coding, O'Reilly Press publishes a two great series: a basic one called "Pocket References" and an advanced one called "Definitive Guides." There are also several good advanced books for Photoshop: Adobe's *Classroom in a Book*, Scott Kelby's *The Photoshop CS2 Book for Digital Photographers*, . We will discuss alternative online resources during class, but **using a reference manual to troubleshoot and learn specific tasks on a per project basis is an essential part of software literacy, so you should invest in the book(s) that will best suit your needs.**

## COMMUNICATION

**My office hours are on Mondays following class from 6-7PM in room HN 432.** Between weekly class meetings, all communication will be carried out over e-mail. At the beginning of the semester all students must provide an e-mail address at which they can be reached during the semester. It is imperative that students regularly check, read and respond to e-mails sent over the week. *The instructor's office hours are limited.* The instructor's email address is listed on this syllabus and on the class

# Course Requirements

## GRADE POLICY

There will be no exams, tests, quizzes, etc. of any kind. Your midterm and final grades will be calculated by assessing your performance in critiques, your homework, and your overall participation and attendance in the course.

**Grades will be determined as follows:**

Attendance and Participation	20%
Homework, Reading, and Writing	20%
Assignment 1	15%
Assignment 2 (Midterm)	15%
Assignment 3	15%
Assignment 4 (Final Project)	15%

**Assignments will be evaluated on the following points:**

1. The energy and integrity of the effort
2. The quality and originality of the interpretation of the assignment
3. The conceptual and technical success of the work
4. The formal and conceptual coherence of the work

**Note on Incompletes:**

Granting "Incompletes" to eligible students is at the discretion of the instructor. I will grant incompletes only in cases of documented emergency.

**ATTENDANCE**

Attendance to all classes is required and attendance is taken at each class. A significant part of your final grade will be determined by class attendance. If you need to miss a class, contact the instructor **prior** to the date and make alternative arrangements. After the fact explanations do not work. More than three absences will result in an 'F' (failure) for the class. No exceptions. This is standard policy across digital media courses. Class begins on time, so you must be punctual. Two late arrivals equal one absence.

**Absence Policy Formula:**

15 MINUTES (arrive late / leave early)	=	1 TARDY
2 TARDIES	=	1 ABSENCE
3 ABSENCES	=	F (FAILURE)

Before any absence or tardy, contact me by email ([kb@katherinebehar.com](mailto:kb@katherinebehar.com)) and save a copy of your outgoing email with the time and date stamp. Note that excused and un-excused absences are decided at the discretion of the instructor.

**PARTICIPATION**

Because we are working as a community, your participation is a critical aspect of this class. You are accountable for your own education as well as for contributing to each other's. As an active participant in your education, you are responsible for exhibiting a professional attitude toward your work and the work of your peers, arriving to class on time and prepared, being engaged and vocal during lectures and critiques, and speaking up whenever you need clarification or wish to make observations. **Always let me know if you are having difficulties mastering a technique presented in class and I will help you or direct you to appropriate resources.** Your evaluation will be based on willingness to engage in the exploration of creative and intellectual challenges, demonstrated development of sensitivity and skills relating to peer evaluation, and evidence of growth in terms of working with and for fellow students.

**HOMEWORK**

**All homework assignments are due at the beginning of class. Points will be deducted from any late homework.**

Because we have a lot of ground to cover this semester, the majority of your homework will be geared toward helping you realize your critique projects. You will have occasional in class work time, but by no means will you be able to finish your assignments in class. Most individual research, studio and production work will take place *outside of class time*. **You should expect to spend several hours each week working on your critique projects outside of class time!**

## **READING AND WRITING**

Homework readings will be assigned weekly. For each reading you will be required to write a one-page response consisting of a half-page summation of the article's central thesis and a half-page personal opinion regarding that thesis in relation to your own work. I will collect reading response papers **in hard copy form** at the beginning of each class period and we will discuss the readings cumulatively on the final day of each section. Written responses and participation in discussions are both mandatory.

There are several labs at Hunter that are available for students to use outside of class to complete homework assignments. The computer lab schedule will be available on the departmental website and will be posted on the door.

\* See below "Statement on Originality of the Work."

Hunter's Reading/Writing center is where students receive tutoring in reading and writing skills, critical reading, and the writing process. Students can apply for a weekly appointment with a tutor and/or use drop-in services during scheduled hours. Students may also attend workshops offered at the Center throughout the academic year. <http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/>

## **LATE WORK**

If a student finds they will not be able to hand in a critique assignment on the scheduled day, it is the student's responsibility to notify me prior to that day. Under no circumstances will I accept the work if I have not been notified and arrangements made prior to that day.

All assignments are due on time. Late work will be downgraded one grade per week late. This includes reading response papers.

## **STATEMENT ON ORIGINALITY OF THE WORK**

All work completed for this course must be completed by the student enrolled in the course. All work for this course must be made in this course and not fulfilling the requirements of another prior or current course unless pre-approved by the instructor. Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense which will result in penalties ranging from reduction of class grade to failure in the course. Plagiarism occurs when the ideas, images, and words, published or unpublished, of others are presented as one's own without citing the original source. Plagiarism also occurs when the papers, research, or creative works of another person are presented as one's own work.

## **EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES**

\* If you have a disability which will affect your coursework, please notify the instructor within the first two weeks of class to ensure suitable arrangements and a comfortable working environment. Contact The Office for Students with Disabilities, Hunter East 1119 Phone (212) 772-4882 or 4891, TTY: (212) 650-3230.

\* This is a list of numbers which you can use if there is an emergency or crisis situation on the Hunter campus or if you need assistance at other times. Security -B125 West - 772 – 4444; During business hours: Medical Office - Room 307 North - 772 – 4800; Office of Student Services - 1119 East - 772 – 4882 4891 (crisis counseling available), The Women's Center - 801 East - 772 – 4931.

# Introduction to Digital Media

MEDIA 161 00 002, Fall 2006

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the syllabus and agree to abide by it to complete the class. I agree to stay informed about updates to this syllabus by checking the class website: <http://fmfaculty.hunter.cuny.edu/~behark/courses/06F161002/>.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

