MA in Interactive Media: Critical Theory and Practice

1 year full-time or 2 years part-time
Programme Convenor: Axel Roch

Introduction

With the profusion and multiplication of interfaces, standards, platforms, applications, and networks of communication, the media has become increasingly interactive resulting in:

■ the telescoping of work opportunities in the new media sector;
■ the emergence of a significant body of critical theory in this new digital context;
■ a profusion of multimedia presentation and performance in the arts.

This MA seeks to integrate theory and practice.

In the context of the Goldsmiths' tradition in the arts, the practical dimension of the MA is taught by an artist/practitioner and emphasises the dimension of digital art. The practical methods course focuses on the process of conceptualisation and development of your individual project, encouraging experimentation, innovative research and practice. It offers you the opportunity to critically review the potential of current and emerging technological tools in contemporary communication and cultural production, bringing together perspectives from social sciences, fine arts and communication/media related practices, according to your interests.

The programme equally focuses on the theory dimension. You will gain a grounding in the work of non-linear and/or post-structural theory of for example Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lacan; and an introduction and overview to contemporary media theory, such as Virilio, Kittler, Manovich, Weibel, and Zielinski. You will engage with theoretical issues in terms of what in today's second (interactive) media age constitutes memory, the archive and the database. For example, the MA seeks to consider the following:

■ What is code?
■ How does the media shift from an ethos of meaning to an ethos of 'doing' or operationality?
■ What might be the virtual?
■ How corporeal and how material are objects which are created in new media? What is meant by, and what are the relations between, content, code and communication?
■ What are the implications of an increasingly inter-networked culture for speed, domesticity, transnationalism?
■ Is there a global network society?
■ How – and to what extent – have networks of communication displaced society as an arena of cultural interchange?

You will acquire and develop skills in the use of applications. You will learn the basics of digital design and be introduced to advanced interaction techniques, working with sound, and with moving and still images. The practical elements will consistently be addressed in the context of both industry and the arts.

The course integrates the theoretical input of the programme with intensive practical training by new media practitioners and digital artists. The theory dimension will draw on a range of courses taught by philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists and art theorists.

Entry requirements

We welcome applications from people from a diversity of intellectual backgrounds. You should normally hold, or expect to hold, a first degree of at least 2.1 standard in an appropriate subject. Applications from EU and overseas students are welcomed. If your home (native) language is not English, you should have achieved a minimum score of 7.0 in IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or equivalent.

Application and admission

Please see the Postgraduate Prospectus for application details. Application forms can be downloaded at *www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/study-options/postgraduate-applications.php*

Number of places

25

Fees

Please see the website at *www.goldsmiths.ac.uk* for up-to-date information on fees.

Funding

You may be able to apply for funding to the Arts and Humanities Research Board. For further information visit their website at *www.ahrb.ac.uk* and contact the Centre's Administrator (contact details on page 38-39.) Please note that if you wish to apply for funding, your application on to the MA programme must reach Goldsmiths' Admissions Office by the end of February for studentships beginning the following September. Your completed funding application, including references, will need to reach us at the Centre for Cultural Studies 4-6 weeks before the AHRB's deadline.

The degree

■ Provides an in-depth basis in critical, non-linear and post-structuralist theory for the understanding of our new and second media age.
■ Introduces you to the use of a range of multimedia applications.
■ Provides you with an understanding of the uses of new media in the visual arts.
■ Gives an interdisciplinary theoretical framework together with an analytical basis for research into new media.
■ Provides advanced training in relevant skills in digital media to enhance job prospects.

■ Provides the opportunity to participate in an exciting intellectual environment of theory, practice and the visual arts which will be academically enriching and promote informed engagement in future developments.

Structure

Courses	Course-unit value
■ Three compulsory core courses:	
o Interactive Media: Critical Theory	$^1/_2$
o Interactive Media: Practical Methods	1
o Media and Culture Industries	$^1/_2$
■ Two options	$2 \times {}^1/_2 = 1$
■ A dissertation comprising an integrated major practical project and 6,000 word essay	1

Please note: You need to complete successfully 4 full course-units (eight $^1/_2$ course-units) to graduate from the programme.

Full-time students take the core course in *Interactive Media: Critical Theory* in the autumn term, and the core course in *Media and Culture Industries* in the Spring term. *Interactive Media: Practical Methods* is a laboratory course, intensively taught over two terms, ie in both autumn and spring terms. Options can be taken in either autumn or spring term, depending on when they are offered and on your individual workload. There is a show in July and the dissertation is submitted in September.

In the first year, part-time students take at least two core courses, which must include *Interactive Media: Critical Theory,* taken in the autumn term, and *Interactive Media: Practical Methods,* taken over both autumn and spring terms. You must also take at least one option, usually in the spring term. Progression into the second year is dependent upon successful completion of these courses. In the second year, part-time students take one option in the autumn term and *Media and Culture Industries* in the Spring term, (or a second option if this was studied in the first year). Part-time students participate in the show in July of their second year, and submit their final dissertation in September.

Core courses

Interactive Media: Critical Theory

Course convenor: Axel Roch

This course introduces you to critical theory of the so-called second and new media ages, in which the audience becomes user and interpretation and meaning is displaced by functionality and doing. We look at the relation between information technology, cybernetics (C E Shannon, N Wiener) and postmodern and/or poststructural thinking (J F Lyotard, M Foucault, G Deleuze, F Guattari, J Lacan, M Serres). The course gives a critical understanding to a spectrum of media theories: classical, radical and new media theory (M McLuhan, V Flusser, FA Kittler, P Weibel, L Manovich, S Zielinski, E Huhtamo).

After revisiting the French critical tradition under its technocultural conditions, the second part of the course focuses on the very characteristics of new media and therefore the 'new' technological framework for theory: code, interface, and interactivity (open vs. closed-systems). This will be put into the philosophical and theoretical context

REA, (Artist-in-Residence 1999), *Pop*, Digital prints, Installation View, 1999.

of critical theory. The displacement of media theory through interface theory will be discussed. Interactive art works and installations in the network of European and Non-European media arts will be shown as examples for discussions.

Indicative reading

F Crameret al, 'Software Art' in *Do it yourself Media – Art and Digital Media: Software, Participation, Distribution,* Transmediale. 01. A Broeckmann, et al eds, *Berlin: DIY,* 2001

D Daniels, *Interface: Duchamp: Turing. A Hypothetical Encounter between the Bachelor Machine and the Universal Machine*

D Daniels 'Strategies of Interactivity (1960-1990)' in *Media-Art-Interaction*

G Deleuze 'What is a dispositif?' in *Michel Foucault Philosopher.* T Armstrong, ed

G Deleuzeand F Guattari *A Thousand Plateau: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

M Foucault, 'Afterword: The Subject and Power' in *Michel Foucault, beyond Structuralism* and H Dreyfus and P Rabinow (Eds), *Hermeneutics*

E Huhtamo, 'From Cybernation to Interaction: A Contribution to an Archaeology of Interactivity' in *The Digital Dialectic. New Essays on New Media.* P Lunenfeld, ed, MIT Press

F Kittler, *The History of Communication Media*

J F Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition,* pp 3-17 and pp 60-67

M McLuhan, *Understanding Media; the extensions of man*

L Manovich, *The Language of New Media.*

M Serres, 'The Parasite', *Baltimore* Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982. pp 3-39

C Shannon and W Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964, pp 1-28

P Wegner, 'Why Interaction Is More Powerful Than Algorithms' in *Communications of the ACM,* 1997, 40, Nr. 5, pp 80-91

P Weibel 'The Noise of the Observer' in *Ars Electronica. Facing the Future: a Survey of*

two decades, T Druckrey ed, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.

Interactive Media: Practical Methods

Course convenor: Gisela Domschke

This course promotes the application of theory and research to contemporary practices in communication, culture and the arts. We focus on the process of conceptualisation and development of your individual project, encouraging experimentation, innovative research and practice. You will be offered the opportunity to critically review the potential of current and emerging technological tools in contemporary communication and cultural production, bringing together perspectives from social sciences, fine arts and communication/media related practices, according to your interests. This course is taught as a series of lectures followed by seminars over 10 weeks of each term. It also offers tutorial lab sessions according to the students needs. The lab offers individual mac workstations with software applications in image, sound, video, animation, the web and interactive installations (Photoshop, Illustrator, QuarkXPress , Premiere, After Effects, Sound Edit, Pro Tools, Director, Flash, Fireworks, Dreamweaver, Final Cut Pro, DVD Studio Pro, Max/MSP, Jitter).

Term 1 – experimenting, information gathering, research

Lecturers and seminars will focus on diverse topics of new media such as the confluence of media and culture and their relationships within social systems, different levels of perception in cultural narratives, the

production and distribution of culture, etc. Lab sessions will be dedicated to the development of small projects and the teaching of technical skills. Visiting tutors might occasionally collaborate with lecturers or workshops.

Term 2 – concept and development

Lectures and seminars will focus on topics of emerging interests, closely related to the students fields of research. Lab sessions and tutorials will be dedicated to the conceptualisation and development of students minor project. Visiting tutors might occasionally collaborate with workshops, according to your needs and interests. Deadline – minor practical project and accompanying notes: typically mid May.

Term 3 – final show and dissertation

Lab sessions and tutorials will be dedicated to the development of your final project, focusing on the ability to bind together the different contextual and technological levels involved in the process. Visiting tutors might occasionally collaborate with workshops, according to your needs and interests. The planning and implementation of the final show will also be part of your activities.

Deadline

Show at end of July. Dissertation at end of September (for details see 'Dissertation' page 25).

Media and Culture Industries

Course convenor: Axel Roch

This course draws on the expertise of practitioners in media art and cultural institutions such as television, digital arts, music, cinema and software in museum and galleries. There is an emphasis on creative elements in media arts and industries. The convenor, Axel Roch uses his hands-on knowledge of media arts and cultural institutions to organise a series of practitioner-led sessions. In the sessions, we will discuss in detail the nature of creative production within various commercial and non-commercial settings. A series of introductory notes and practitioner-run workshops will be held according to your needs. You will develop a detailed empirical understanding of creative production within different media industries and within media art. You will bring together critical theoretical perspectives with empirical, 'hands-on' knowledge of new media technologies. This, in turn, will promote an understanding of the complexity of contemporary culture at a range of different levels, and will enhance the practical skills and art-related knowledge needed to become a cultural researcher or reflexive cultural practitioner in the field of media arts and culture industries.

Assessment criteria

The course will be examined by either a 5,000-6,000-word essay or a 2,500-3,000 word essay plus a practical element. The main criteria for grading will be the ability to combine theory and practice in contemporary culture and media.

Indicative readings

T Druckrey, *Electronic Culture: Technology and Visual Representation*
T Druckrey, *Ars Electronica. Facing the Future: a Survey of two decades*
O Grau, *Virtual Art. From Illusion to Immersion*
P Lunenfeld, *The Digital Dialectic. New Essays on New Media*
A Scholder et al *Interaction. Artistic Practice in The Network*
C Sommerer and L Mignonneau *Art @ Science.* Wien
P Weibelet al, [Ctrl] Space. *Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*
P Weibelet al, Iconoclash. *Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art*
S Wilson, Information Arts. *Intersection of Art, Science, and Technology.*

Options

You choose three options from a wide list available in the Contemporary Cultural Processes programme. Options which are of particular relevance for this degree are: *Issues in Contemporary Art, New Media and Society, Cultural Theory, Methods of Cultural Analysis, Politics and Culture* and *Visual Anthropology.*

Please see page 30 for further details of these.

Dissertation

An integrated major practical project and 6,000-word essay. This will be a project that breaks new ground in an area of applied work, with the Project Paper documenting the work involved, placing it in the context of theory and practice in the field and explaining its originality.

Assessment

Assessment is by:

5-6,000 word essay for *Interactive Media: Critical Theory.*

A minor practical project for *Interactive Media: Practical Methods.*

5-6,000 word essay, or a 2,500-3,000 word essay plus a practical project, for *Media and Culture Industries*

Two option assessments (Option Courses have various assessments, typically between 4,000 and 6,000 word essays or sometimes practical elements);

A dissertation which comprises an integrated major practical project and 6,000-word essay.