ALTERNATIVE MOBILE MEDIA
Exploring non-western media technology through analysis and making experiments

CLIMATE CHANGING MEDIA
The political and poetic possibilities of climate change communications

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The learning of filmmaking inspired by prompts and guided with constraints

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MAKING SENSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
Exploring social media as a space for research and creative media making

REAL TO REEL
Self directed non-fiction project

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Studies in camera coverage
ALTERNATIVE MOBILE MEDIA

Exploring non-western media technology through analysis and making experiments

“European philosophers set out a universal understanding of the process of hominisation characterised by the technical tendency of invention. But how effective is the model in explaining the diversification of technologies throughout the world, and the different pace at which invention proceeds in different cultures?”

Yuk Hui (2016)

STUDIO PROMPT

What might alternative mobile media be? How do they work? How are they used? Who uses them? Why are alternative mobile media important? How might we use their different affordances to create distinct new content and/or services?

DESCRIPTION

For the past decade alternative mobile media platforms, services and apps such as WeChat, Line, TikTok, Didi, Ola, Alibaba and Easi have developed into vibrant media formats alongside the presence of more familiar Western global giants such as Google, Facebook, Uber and so on. What factors explain their continuing growth despite the formidable competition?

These alternative mobile media forms have appeared across major cities in Australia, despite coming from outside Australia’s anglophone majority. They enable users to engage in activities such as social communication, forming networks of strong and weak ties, broadcasting of news and information, engaging with the gig economy, cross-border e-commerce and food delivery.

This studio investigates the sheer variety of alternative mobile media and technologies in Australia where the key components of the new growth have been cross-border flows. As studies in western social media and technology mature, the necessity of broadening the understanding of alternative mobile media is all the more crucial. To understand the affordances of various alternative media applications, the studio will make use of a ‘walkthrough’ approach to apps, digital ethnography, and policy analysis. Throughout the semester students will make projects (such as services, content or products) that make use of the distinctive attributes of some of these instances of alternative mobile media. They will also present their reflections on current, emerging and potential uses of different mobile applications.

STUDIO LEADER

Fan Yang is a PhD candidate who studies how WeChat operates in Australia. She examines media practices within WeChat Official Accounts in Melbourne. She has extensive research interest in alternative media platforms, migrant entrepreneurship, internet governance, smart cities framework, data surveillance, and postcolonial theory. She has previously published in the International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social and Community Studies, Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies and Policy Forums.
CLIMATE CHANGING MEDIA
The political and poetic possibilities of climate change communications

“When I look at the sun gleaming on the solar panel on my roof, I am watching global warming unfold. Carbon compounds and other molecules in the upper atmosphere magnify the burning intensity of the sun in the Great Central Valley of California. Yet I do not see global warming as such. I see this brilliant blade of sunlight, burning the top of my head as I watch it with half-closed eyes reflecting off the burnished, sapphire surface of the solar panels.”

Morton (2013)

STUDIO PROMPT
How might climate change communications be both political and poetic?

DESCRIPTION
Communicating the existence, complexity, and effects of climate change is a political and an aesthetic act. On the one hand, ensuring accuracy, accountability, and scientific consensus are paramount. On the other hand, emotive narration, ethical practices, and sociocultural and politically conscious narratives are factors that often make the difference between media that alienates and divides people and media that can inspire ecological solidarity and collective action. This studio argues that climate change is one of the most important issues of our generation, and therefore, climate change communications is one of the most important practices of our current media ecologies.

STUDIO LEADER
Elaine (Si) Leong (she/her) is a writer-researcher and media creative based in Birraranga (Melbourne). Elaine (Si) has taught literature, philosophy, and digital media courses in the School of Media and Communications at RMIT. Her research investigates the intersection of experimental media practices and the emergence of what can be termed “ecological aesthetics”. She is particularly interested in charting the mutation of pop culture depictions of ecological crises and examining the impacts these depictions have on our collective attitudes towards minority (including nonhuman) experiences of global warming. You can contact Elaine / Si at elaine.leong@rmit.edu.au
DELIBERATE FILM

The learning of filmmaking inspired by prompts and guided with constraints

“You know you are encountering art when you are engaging with an intentional process or product that causes surprising transformations in matter or in a moment.’

Ross Gibson (2009)

STUDIO PROMPT

Could a different approach to the learning of filmmaking – working through a series of projects inspired by prompts and guided by constraints that investigate different facets of film production – elicit better outcomes?

DESCRIPTION

In order to evolve our filmmaking skills we need to steady up, take a breath and slow things down — become more deliberate. Through an iterative cycle of learning, making and reflection you will develop your competency in production techniques and your analytical skills will become more refined.

You will be viewing and analysing other’s work in parallel with planning, shooting and editing small projects in and out of class time. Each project will be inspired by a prompt and/or a constraint.

You will develop the technical competencies required to work through each of these projects. This will deepen your knowledge of each of the facets of film production and how they work together. The methods of collaboration and production will be designed as we progress through the semester. There will be time for discussion and feedback from staff and your peers. Outside of class time you will you will be researching, reflecting and writing on the issues each of the projects gives rise to.

The second half of the semester you will initiate your own series of film projects that will be small and contained. This is the reverse of the usual film school model of loading all of your eggs into the last week mega project and smashing them all together into a dissipated mess.

STUDIO LEADER

Paul Ritchard lectures in film production and is a member of the nonfiction lab and the Screen and Sound Cultures group at RMIT University. His PhD is titled The River Project: Towards an Eco-Aesthetic Practice where he is producing a series of films on rivers. His work is guided by his principle of making film that treads lightly on the landscape both literally and figuratively.

He has made 13 short films; two of which have been festival finalists. He worked on Matrix Reloaded and Matrix Revolutions. After graduating from RMIT Media in 1994, he worked as a freelance editor and camera operator while running his own production company ‘No Name Films’ which produced over 120 films, music clips, corporate videos and promos.

Paul has also played in various bands during the last twenty years including Crow, Mississippi Barry and Odette.
DEMAGOGUES, DOUBTERS AND DOUCHEBAGS
The voice-over in documentary film

"[V]oice-over narration is... arguably the most blatant example of intervention on the part of the documentary filmmaker. As de Antonio sees it, narration is a fascist act that proclaims a film's didacticism... However varied the use of narration has been... the overriding view is that the documentary voice-over is the filmmakers' ultimate tool for telling people what to think. This gross oversimplification covers a multitude of differences..."
Stella Bruzzi (2006)

STUDIO PROMPT
In what ways can we experiment with documentary convention and use the voice-over as something more than a purely functional tool?

DESCRIPTION
Direct Cinema pioneer Robert Drew famously dismissed voice-over narration as "something you do when you fail". But beyond the poles of having no voice-over at all or trotting out the much-maligned voice-of-god, film-makers adopt an endless variety of challenging, often experimental, approaches to the non-diegetic spoken word. From snarling narration dripping with irony, to the fumbling confusion of the film-maker who pretends to know nothing, the voice-over remains a potentially razor-sharp tool.

Documentary studies scholarship has tended to conflate the concept of "voice" with perspective or viewpoint, often for quite useful ends. But in their recent important work, Vocal Projections (2019), Maria Pramagiorre and Anabelle Honess Roe argue forcefully for giving more consideration to "the ways that documentaries attend to and exploit the attributes of voice by paying attention to the sonic principles, audio techniques and structural choices that filmmakers employ in their documentary treatment of recorded voices"..

In this studio we will experiment with documentary voice-overs. We'll record our own, we'll mangle those of others and we'll make our own documentaries to other's voice-overs. Perhaps we'll realise the sheer scale of the question, while identifying at least some of the possibilities of this under-appreciated aspect of documentary film.

STUDIO LEADER
Liam Ward has taught into the RMIT Media program since 2004 after spending several years working as a video editor. His research practice focuses on questions of documentary form and documentary politics.
DOCUMENTING THE ENVIRONMENT
Imaging new futures

“It is urgent and necessary to think and act differently about the ecological, the environmental, and the sustainable in new ways: new forms, new interfaces, new public commons.”
Patricia Zimmermann (2019)

“The job of an ecocinema is to provide new kinds of film experience that demonstrate an alternative to conventional media spectatorship and help to nurture a more environmentally progressive mindset.”
Scott MacDonald (2013)

STUDIO PROMPT
How can we make documentary which engages in new ways of representing and experiencing the environment?

DESCRIPTION
The impact of humans on the environment can no longer be ignored. And with this has come the ever-present onslaught of images, stories and situations of climate catastrophe. As media makers and storytellers, many of us feel compelled to use our craft and knowledge to respond. However, with so many documentary films being made about the climate crisis, how can we make works that not only identify problems, but also create connection and wonder, instill hope for our future, and have impact?

In this studio you will explore different approaches to making documentary about the environment. In doing this, you will learn a range of documentary film strategies including interviews, sound design, editing and montage, storytelling and camera techniques through individual and group work. Over the semester, you will hone your documentary knowledge and skills through watching films, analysis, critical reflections, questioning, reading, writing and practical experiments.

Through valuable feedback from industry experts, in this studio, you will focus on making works for a public screening at Federation Square in the week of World Environment Day.

STUDIO LEADER
Dr Kim Munro is a documentary maker, writer and academic. Her works have shown in galleries, festivals and on television. Her writing for journals and books has focused on such diverse subjects as activism and transmedia, participatory practices, sound and the environment, and the essay film. She is a regular contributor to Metro Magazine on interactive documentary, VR/AR and web series. Kim has taught at RMIT, Swinburne and Deakin universities. She is also currently the Conference Programmer at the Australian International Documentary Conference.
EXPERIMENT.  
SCREEN.  
SENSATION.

Screen art and film workshop

“Let us consider two important factors, the two poles of the creation of art: the artist on the one hand, and on the other the spectator who later becomes the posterity.”

Marcel Duchamp (1957)

STUDIO PROMPT
Create a dynamic and provocative moving image art work or film that is driven by the interplay between creative and conceptual doing.

DESCRIPTION
The central aim of this studio is to explore the process that guides what you want to produce for the screen and why. This motivation could be connected to an object, a location, a character, a message, a worldview or simply an emotion. As a creative practitioner you need to be able to voice your inspiration and direction. You need to be able to pitch and promote your work and ideas. This is essential for professional development and the collaborative process. We will be on the lookout for the random connections and surprising revelations that breathe life into our creative endeavours.

There will be opportunities for both collaboration and individual work throughout the semester. Our method is to engage in an ongoing process of drafting and development. There will be multiple tasks, prompts and outcomes across the semester. This work is essentially practical but will be underpinned with theoretical and historical research and reflective writing. The semester is structured around two film projects in addition to the above-mentioned tasks. We will aim to develop core screen production competencies and develop an understanding of the filmmaking process from story conception through editing and festival presentation.

If we can develop a deep understanding of our own original cinematic and artistic intentions, methods and practices we can be clear about who we are and where we are going as creatives in the film, television, media and art industries.

STUDIO LEADER
James Thompson is a filmmaker based in Melbourne, Australia. He has completed four shorts with an accompanying array of avant garde and experimental video and photography work which has featured in festivals such as Palm Springs International ShortFest (2016), MINA (Mobile Innovation Network Australasia - 2015), Austin Film Festival (2016, 2017) and received awards from the Los Angeles Film Review and the Zed Fest Film Festival and Screenplay Competition. He is currently completing a practice led PhD at MADA (fine arts) Monash University.
FACT CHECK

Figuring out fake news and post-truth

“It is now said that we live in a post-truth era—an era in which audiences are increasingly likely to believe information that appeals to their emotions and their personal beliefs, as opposed to seeking and accepting information that is regarded as factual and objective.”

Nicole A. Cooke (2018)

STUDIO PROMPT

What exactly is meant by the term ‘fake news’, and what is its history? What do we mean by ‘post-truth era’? In a media landscape where news and information are rapidly disseminated before the veracity of claims are checked, what is the role and importance of fact-checking and what are the possibilities for combating the spread of disinformation?

DESCRIPTION

In broadcast, online, and print media, the term ‘fake news’ has become something of a catchall, broadly used to refer to misinformation, disinformation, and in more troubling cases, news and information that people either don’t believe or simply wish to discredit. In this post-broadcast era and post-truth era the drive towards accountability and accuracy has taken on a new sense of urgency as journalists seek to combat the spread of disinformation. Fact-checking—which aims to present clear, objective assessments of a claim or news story—holds politicians, public figures, and institutions to account, sorting fact from fiction in a media landscape where a tweet can reach thousands in a matter of hours.

In this studio we will collaborate with RMIT ABC Fact Check, an organisation which seeks to determine the accuracy of claims made by those engaged in public debate. Through reading, viewing, discussion, and making, this studio will explore both the challenge and the necessity of fact-checking. Students will also learn the basic skills of fact-checking by familiarising themselves with the RMIT ABC Fact Check methodology. We will explore the history and definitions of the term ‘fake news’ and the ways the meaning attached to this term have shifted over time. This studio will make use of the multi-camera television studio, as students will be asked to not only produce a creative response to a Fact Check prompt but explore the role of fact-checking in a post-broadcast and post-truth era. Students will work in small groups in order to research and create a prototype Fact Check presentation.

STUDIO LEADER

Dr Ruth Richards recently completed her PhD in Media and Communication at RMIT University. Her PhD explored feminism and the body in animation, thinking through the nature of the real and its representation. Her research interests include feminist animation, film and television studies, live media production, news satire and post-truth. She has a background in multi-camera production practice, most recently floor managing the 2019 Antenna Awards.

E‘Benno’s TVs” by Stephen Coles www.flickr.com/photos/stewf/2553975875/in/photolist-4TFMQ2-4TL27U
THE FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE
Conceiving and mounting a film festival

“Listen, anybody who has a film festival has the right to show what they want.”
Abel Ferrara

STUDIO PROMPT
To what ends do we launch and sustain film festivals, with what means, and driven by what motivations?

DESCRIPTION
This studio will steep students in all that constitutes film festival culture. Students will work collaboratively to stage one or more film festivals in miniature on- and/or off-campus. Last year’s studio spawned the Melbourne International Youth Film Festival, aka MIYFF. What might this year inaugurate?

The hows, whys and for whoms of festivals will be extensively probed, from the festivals of the international A-list circuit to boutique local offerings. To what extent are international, national or regional film festivals exercises in soft diplomacy, or even propaganda? Do they strive to serve audiences both diasporic and cinephilic? Or are they more driven by the imperatives of the marketplace? What about festivals nominally pitched at other communities, e.g. minoritarian identities?

This studio will explore how festival programming can differ from, or intersect with, that of commercial exhibitors, repertory cinemas and not-for-profit film societies, and will consider the manifold ethical and practical considerations when determining what makes it into a program, and under what rubrics. And whether staff even get paid! Branding, promotion, partnerships, contra deals… Guests, awards, jurors… Q&As, panels, workshops, conferences…

Running a festival, no matter its proportions, is a consuming undertaking. This studio will prime students for a film festive future. Participants will be assisted to forge industry networks and will blog about their experiences as an audience member, and as a producer, of film festival experiences.

STUDIO LEADER
Cerise Howard is a co-curator of the Melbourne Cinémathèque who co-founded the Czech and Slovak Film Festival of Australia and was its Artistic Director from 2013-2018. A co-founder also of tilde: Melbourne’s Trans & Gender Diverse Film Festival, she has long been engaged with international film festival culture, whether reporting for Senses of Cinema on festivals from Abu Dhabi to Ukraine, reporting for a festival’s own daily newspaper in Karlovy Vary, participating in FIPRESCI juries or in programming and staging festivals in Australian cities.
FROM SCREEN TO STREET
A video collaboration with HRAFF 2020

"Let the atrocious images haunt us. Even if they are only tokens and cannot possibly encompass most of the reality to which they refer, they still perform a vital function. The images say: This is what human beings are capable of doing—may volunteer to do, enthusiastically, self-righteously. Don’t forget."
Susan Sontag (2003)

STUDIO PROMPT
If documentary films generate empathy in audiences, illuminating new perspectives and activating powerful emotions, then what happens next? How can film impact audiences to reflect upon and move to act to redress human rights violations?

DESCRIPTION
Human rights films and film festivals have grown in numbers since the late 1980s underlined by the hope of “transforming spectators into responsible, historical subjects” (Brenez 2012). However, a key issue according to human rights filmmakers and organizations concerns the development of effective post screening campaigns that suggest coherent and practical actions to desensitised audiences. Addressing this concern, the aim of this studio is to explore how film can be mobilized to empower audiences to take action against human rights violations. In a real sense, how can we close the distance between screen and spectator to build solidarity towards coordinated post screening action? How do we enlist audience emotion and empathy with human rights screen stories, issues and partners towards a concrete process of social change?

In this studio you will be making videos with the possibility of public screening at the 2020 HRAFF (Human Rights Arts Film Festival) in Melbourne. You will work with the HRAFF film programme to create 30-60 second “call to action” videos that create momentum towards three key audience actions specific to each film. Amplifying cinematic messages, the videos will connect audiences to individual issues and online and offline strategies to bring positive change. You will analyse films to ask for instance; What are the key human rights issues and who are the people most at risk? What are the most effective actions that audiences can take? What are the campaigns, tools and actions that will make an effective strategy?

Working individually and in groups, you will experiment with audio/video techniques and visual storytelling (e.g. composition, montage) and documentary strategies (e.g. interviews, voice over, text) to create succinct and impactful videos. The studio will draw on thematically significant footage from the HRAFF 2020 film programme categories of:

- Gender Equality
- Climate Action
- Indigenous Voices
- Global Movement of People
- Peace, Justice and Truth

STUDIO LEADER
Shweta Kishore is a filmmaker, curator and lectures in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT. Her research focuses on Asian media and documentary, activist and grassroots media, women’s film making, and practices of independent and alternative cinema production and circulation. Shweta is the author of Indian Documentary Film and Filmmakers: Independence in Practice (2018: Edinburgh University Press). In her current video-based research project, Shweta examines the relation between the field of contemporary art, gender and feminist discourse in Vietnam.
“We look at the present through a rear-view mirror.”
Marshall McLuhan (1967)

“That’s something that tends to happen with new technologies generally: The most interesting applications turn up on a battlefield, or in a gallery.”
William Gibson (2007)

STUDIO PROMPT
How might media contribute to practices of futurology - the study and extrapolation of current economic, social and cultural trends in order to imagine possible and plausible futures?

DESCRIPTION
Dystopian visions in films like *Ex Machina* and cautionary tales like *Her* are works of creativity that could be considered contemporary manifestations of an older tradition of futurist art. These types of films tackle complicated questions around technology and identity. While the original futurist movement of the previous century was art-based and sought to revolutionise culture by aestheticising modern life, contemporary futurology has extended to industries like business, public policy, and technology.

In this studio students will research, develop and produce stills, photography, film, video, audio and immersive art that explore the idea of Futurology.

In response to findings each week on key future-focused texts, students will be asked to:

- experiment with making connections with multi-media in an innovative, original way
- investigate the methods of cross-disciplinary applications
- explore questions around technology and identity

Students will develop the skills required to create stills, photography, film, video, audio and immersive art using a range of multi-media. This will potentially include an exploration of AR and Photo Animation Applications such as Assemblr, Madmapper, Hypervsn and Pixaloop.

STUDIO LEADER
Cat Lew is a Video Artist, Sound Designer, Audio Engineer and Educator. She has a diverse creative practice, having produced video art and sound design for Melbourne Fringe Festival, West Projection Festival, Incinerator Gallery, Mesma Studio, Cinema Viscera, City of Melbourne and City of Maribyrnong. She currently teaches digital media, film & sound editing and design at VU Polytechnic, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image and RMIT.
GREEN MEDIA
Media making in partnership with Friends of the Earth’s ‘Act on Climate’ campaign

“Environmental NGOs have been at the forefront of climate change communication since the IPCC published its first assessment report in 1990, and have been central to the translation of climate change science into lay discourse and understanding. Yet environmental NGOs have been largely ignored in the climate change story… Action to mitigate climate change is being enacted across a range of environmental groups. These range from the activities promoted by international NGOs such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and WWF, to the recent collaborations promoted by the ‘Stop Climate Chaos’ coalition.”

J. Doyle (2009)

STUDIO PROMPT
What kinds of media can be made to effectively encourage environmentalism and action on climate change (at the individual, community and government level)? What issues and trends of the current media landscape should we consider when working in this area?

DESCRIPTION
In this studio, we will study, make and evaluate a variety of approaches in media making to encourage environmentalism. We will look at media techniques used in environmental media, as well as experiment with borrowing/adapting techniques from other forms of media that engages.

We will consider diverse forms of media that may spur action, including, but not limited to: explainer videos, memes, short documentaries, interviews, podcasts, skits, comedy news, biopics and docudrama.

We will be working with a partner: Friends of the Earth’s ‘Act on Climate’ - an active grassroots campaign with its base in Melbourne. What kinds of academic and professional learning can we achieve through working with this community partner?

‘Act on Climate’ has the mission of making Victoria the national leader on climate action, with the goal of setting an important example for the rest of Australia. Alongside our investigations and experiments in environmental media, are there things we can make that might support this campaign specifically?

Our work will have the potential be distributed across Act on Climate’s media networks (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter). We will engage with the Act on Climate collective and receive information, advice and feedback.

STUDIO LEADER
Dr Alan Nguyen is an international-award-winning writer and director working across television, film, theatre, comics, VR and AR. He has written scripts for SBS Television, Melbourne Theatre Company, December Media, and most recently, for the Matchbox Pictures/NBC Universal miniseries ‘Hungry Ghosts’, to be released in 2020. Alan is a Lecturer in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University
INFINITE LISTS
Poetic Approaches to Media Production

"One day she got the idea of drawing up a list of 'things that quicken the heart.' Not a bad criterion I realize when I'm filming."
– voice-over in Sunless (Chris Marker, 1983)

STUDIO PROMPT
How can the list be used to make poetic media artefacts?

DESCRIPTION
You've most likely written a list, whether it be a to-do list, shopping list, bucket list or check list. We often use these lists as useful ways to de-clutter our heads and organise our thoughts. Online, Buzzfeed, Letterboxd, Pinterest, and Reddit organise content into evocative lists for your entertainment. In film, shot lists organise a shoot and lists have been used as an experimental way to creatively eschew narrative. Umberto Eco, in a book completely devoted to lists, proposes lists evoke the "infinite" in literature. In Infinite Lists, you will conceptually explore how the various practices of listing allow for poetic media artefacts.

Through readings, test exercises, and a final larger scale project, you will work individually and collaboratively to conceptualise what the list performs and how you might then use it as a basis to produce poetic media artefacts. Further, by making linear projects for cinema screens and multilinear work for online spaces, you will explore why the list as a form has become so prevalent on the Internet. You will leave this studio with the skills to produce creative and technically accomplished media artefacts, develop media appropriate for cinema and online distribution, and grasp the potential of the list as an evocative communication device.

STUDIO LEADER
Dr. Hannah Brasier has taught in the school of Media & Communication at RMIT for the past five years. Her research is interested in how we can use new media forms to engage with the world ecologically, with a specific focus on nonfiction and online content. Her film work is interactive, experimental and includes a wide range of palm trees. You can contact Hannah via hannah.brasier@rmit.edu.au.
MAKING EMBODIMENT

Media making through, with and about the sensing body

“If the body we have is the one known by pathologists after our death, while the body we are is the one we know ourselves by being self-aware, then what about the body we do?”


STUDIO PROMPT

How might we make media that evokes a strong feeling of what it is to be and do a body in the world? How might such media work explore embodied knowledges of the body and of the world? That is, how might media work explore what it is to be a seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling body-in-action?

DESCRIPTION

Sociologists Anne Marie Mol and John Law write that “the living body is both an object and a subject”. It is an object when it is observed with the naked eye, they say, and through medical imaging devices. (We could say this, too, of the body when it is observed through media works.) The living body is also a subject: “In being a living body we experience pain, hunger or agony as well as satisfaction, ecstasy or pleasure” (Mol & Law 2004: 45).

They argue that we also enact our bodies, and that this way of thinking about bodies includes body-as-object, body-as-subject, as well as other perspectives on and experiences of the body. Along with other theorists, they argue for the value of the kinds of embodied knowledge that come from enacting our bodies in various situations and activities, in relationship with the world.

In this studio, we will use the senses as a starting point to explore media making about the kinds of embodied knowledge of the world that comes from being a ‘body-we-do’ (Law & Mol 2004: 57). We will explore how we might use media making techniques to heighten the experience of the senses in media works.

In this studio we will explore existing examples of media work that begin to explore these ideas. We will make a series of small exploratory works in a number of different media modes. These will be developed later in the semester into larger works in a medium of the student’s choice.

STUDIO LEADER

Sophie Langley is a fiction and nonfiction writer, sonic essay maker, photographer, sketcher and PhD candidate at RMIT. Her work is interested in the ways in which different types of knowledge, storytelling and media can be entangled to make new kinds of stories, particularly in response to some of the most urgent issues of our times, such as the climate crisis and social and technological changes. Her PhD project uses an entangled essaying approach, blending various media modes and ‘creative’ and ‘academic’ writing to explore embodied and material knowledges for patients in medical encounters. She has been teaching at RMIT for the last few years.
MAKING SENSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
Exploring social media as a space for research and creative media making

“[F]rom the creator-centric position we have declared from the start, we anticipate something new - not media business as usual.” (p.285)

“As we have gone about our research, we have witnessed the thirst for knowledge about this emerging industry and the need for thorough, independent accounts of its shape, size, challenges and prospects.” (p.287)

-S. Cunningham & D. Craig, (2019)

STUDIO PROMPT
How can we creatively use the research data from the Sensis 2020 Yellow Social Media Report to make media that contributes to knowledge of the continuing economic, cultural and social impact of social media in our daily lives?

DESCRIPTION
This studio is a collaboration with a leading Australian social media analysis company, Sensis, who produce the Yellow Social Media Report. Over the past seven years this report has provided rich data about how consumers and businesses are currently engaging with social media.

We've learnt from many of our recent RMIT Media graduates of the importance of developing skills across social media research and media making. This is your chance to hone your skills and develop new ones in this specific area in collaboration with an industry partner.

We will bounce off Sensis’s extensive body of research on the interests and behaviour of consumers and businesses in social media. What are some of the key trends? How can we offer Sensis and a wider audience a different creative perspective on some of this research?

More specifically, what are some of the report's implications for media practitioners? For instance, how can we engage online audiences and create communities?

Our exploration of the potential and implications of contemporary digital media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube will proceed through the making of video, photography, copywriting or podcasts. Students may also compare these Western platforms with other emerging platforms like WeChat, Line and TikTok.

STUDIO LEADER
Dr Mark Poole is a writer, director and academic and the local head of the Australian Directors’ Guild. In teaching Media 6 last year I was impressed by the number of RMIT students who are already working in social media, whether in online journalism, digital marketing or video production for Instagram. In this studio I want to build on students’ interest and expertise in social media and use it with the data gathered by Sensis to find out what we need to know, how to know it and where we are all headed in the future.
REAL TO REEL
Self directed non-fiction project

“Every aspect of filmmaking requires choice. The selection of the subject, the shooting, editing and length are all aspects of choice.”
Frederick Wiseman (2002)

STUDIO PROMPT
What are the various applications for non-fiction materials and, from a production standpoint, what creative and technical challenges arise whilst capturing the real world?

DESCRIPTION
In recent decades, non-fiction media practice has expanded from traditional documentary production to a wider sphere that encompasses transmedia, the essay film, VR, podcasting and branded content. In Real to Reel, students will engage in a variety of studio activities (including screenings, discussion, practical exercises, reflective tasks and media production) to explore the various ways in which non-fiction materials can be arranged for different outcomes and audiences.

The first half of the semester finds students engaging with various approaches to capturing the real world. In class, students will respond to the work of practitioners such as filmmakers Frederick Wiseman and Molly Dineen and photographers Eve Arnold and Martin Parr in a series of in class exercises. Along the way, students will evaluate and improve their media production skills.

The second half of the semester finds students working in small groups to devise, produce and edit a major work (such as a short documentary of 5 minutes duration, a promotional video, a photo essay, a podcast, an electronic press kit (EPK), transmedia experience or some other approved activity). Whilst the studio content and class exercises will focus on non fiction video production and photojournalism, there is scope within the unit to create a radio/audio or transmedia artefact as part of this studio.

Students are encouraged to bring a laptop to all classes with video editing software they feel comfortable using. Closed ear headphones are also recommended for the second half of semester.

STUDIO LEADER
Rohan Spong has worked as a sessional academic at RMIT for over eight years, across a range of diverse classes including music video production, broadcast media, and documentary studies. When not feverishly drawing diagrams on campus whiteboards, Rohan has devised, shot and directed three acclaimed feature length documentary films: Winter at Westbeth (2016) and All The Way Through Evening (2012) and T is for Teacher (2009). His film work has screened theatrically in cinemas in Australia, New Zealand and the USA, been broadcast on ABC and STUDIO, and appeared at festivals worldwide including MIFF, Sydney Film Festival, DOC NYC, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Winter at Westbeth has also recently been acquired for national US broadcast by World / PBS network.
ROOM WITH A VIEW
Live to air radio as a site for collaborative production and distribution

“Radio can be said to have certain characteristics, but the evidence suggests that radio is what history says it is: it has no essence since it has already taken, and continues to take, different forms. Radio is what it is at a given time, in a given context of use and meaningfulness.”

Jo Tacchi (2000)

STUDIO PROMPT
How does the practice of context-specific live-to-air radio production inform how we present audio narratives compared to pre-recorded material?

DESCRIPTION
The shift to digital modes of production and distribution, and the emergence of hybrid sound-based forms has presented challenges that many believed radio would not survive. To do so, radio practitioners have been forced to change their relationship with their listenership and adopt collaborative methods to enable multi-platform approaches to their content making.

This sort of collaborative radio production is not in itself a new concept. For ABC radio producer John Jacobs ‘the creation of media that involves a group has always had the potential to be a co-creative process’. Jacobs compares film and TV productions with their ‘higher budgets, larger editorial quality expectations and associated constraints and hierarchies of creative control’ with the ‘small teams, low budgets and fast turnaround of radio, leaving more room for flat structures and co-creative ways of working’. For Jacobs, collaborative or co-creative radio production is simply ‘good practice’.

In this studio you will work in small groups to produce radio for different distribution platforms.

You will produce:

• live radio, the medium’s most visceral form, through the program Room With A View with our project partner 3RRRFM.
• content for online distribution across multiple platforms
• pre-recorded radio content in the form of interviews and features.

Through these activities you will use technologies that enable co-located and distributed production to gain industry-relevant skills in research, interviewing and narrative. Working with others on these projects will provide opportunities to develop understandings of the individual within the group and enablers in collaborative production.

STUDIO LEADER
Heather Jarvis is a radio & podcast producer, journalist and lecturer in Media Studies at RMIT. In her extensive career at the ABC and also in community radio, Heather produced and presented programs spanning from music and magazine-style shows through to current affairs and sport. Her radio documentary Fallen Angels, produced for the ABC with journalist and academic Margaret Simons, was a finalist in the 2017 Amnesty International Australia Media Awards, and the 2017 United Nations Media Awards.

Heather’s practice-based PhD research is exploring the potential of podcasting as a way to advance social change agendas.
THE SCENE IN CINEMA

Studies in camera coverage

“Through segmentation, the script or the written assemblage of visual ideas ceases to be literature and becomes cinema.”
Luis Bunuel (1928)

STUDIO PROMPT

How is a drama scene constructed; and what are the theoretical traditions, functional imperatives, and expressive possibilities associated with the terms, “coverage” and “decoupage”?

DESCRIPTION

The term “coverage” has, at the very least, two distinct meanings, each with significantly divergent qualitative connotations. The first relates to the practice of capturing a dramatic scene as scripted: “Is the scene covered?”; “Do we have sufficient coverage?” This usage alludes to functionality and industrial efficiency, and is closely associated with the notion of the supremacy of a script, or text, as blueprint. The other (often parallel) meaning is more to do with the expressive potential, and uniquely cinematic application and effects of the process of segmentation.

Research and practical investigation in this studio will revolve around the broadest possible understanding of the word “coverage” in relation to the cinema:

The planned spatial and/or temporal fragmentation of a cinematic action or event (a scene) in relation to camera position, camera angle, choice of focal length, image size and camera movement, with a view to its (re)construction in post-production; this, together with its implications for performance, lighting, production design and audio; and all these elements’ potential influence upon that planning.

It should be acknowledged also, that the process of decoupage conceivably begins with the overall structuring of a script or working text, as well as being planned and executed by a director and cinematographer, in concert with all on-set personnel.

This studio will investigate coverage /scene construction / decoupage, from both an academic, theoretical perspective, and a practical one. Outcomes have the potential to contribute to a specific dimension in film appreciation and future academic research, together with a better-informed approach to the problems of practical filmmaking. Therefore, our studies will involve film viewing, research and practical experimentation, but we will not be making a film. We will assist one another in that experimentation, and share our ideas and discoveries.

STUDIO LEADER

Robin Plunkett is a cinematographer. He has worked in all capacities in camera departments for more than 35 years. He also has experience as a producer, director (of non-fiction) and editor. For the last several years he has been teaching elements of cinematography, and film production in general, at the VCA and RMIT.

Il deserto rosso
(The Red Desert, 1964)
Dir. Michelangelo Antonioni