ALTERNATIVE MOBILE MEDIA
Exploring alternative media technology through analysis and making experiments

CANON FODDER
Creating media manifestos that interrogate cinema canons

GETTING INTO CHARACTER
Generating characters through writing and filming

COLLABORATIONS: SOFT CHOREOGRAPHY
Poetry + Essay; Word + Moving Image

DEMAGOGUES, DOUBTERS AND DOUCHEBAGS
The voice-over in documentary film

EXPERIMENT. SCREEN. SENSATION.
Screen art and film workshop

INFINITE LISTS
Poetic approaches to media production

MAKING EMBODIMENT
Media making through, with and about the sensing body

PLATFORM VIDEO
Social media video content produced in partnership with McClelland Sculpture Park

REAL TO REEL
Self directed non-fiction project

SCREEN LAB
Educating and engaging through cinematic experiments

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
Educating, informing, influencing and rallying on social media

TELLING STORIES WITH SOUND
Podcasting and audio storytelling

THE NEWS IS A JOKE
Investigating news satire and parody in a post-broadcast era

TRANSLATING OBSERVATION
Experiments in actuality, subjectivity and film form

UNRAVELLING THE REAL
Experiments in documentary
ALTERNATIVE MOBILE MEDIA
Exploring alternative 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)

“We are going to slow down, reorient and regulate the proliferation of ‘monsters’ by representing their existence officially.”

Bruno Latour (1993)

STUDIO PROMPT
What are alternative mobile media? How do they work technically, culturally, ethically, conceptually? Who uses them? Why are alternative media important? How do different digital platforms shape our experiences in the space? How can we create distinct digital communication platforms to provide new content and services? Can we make our current digital environment better?

DESCRIPTION
For the past decade alternative mobile media platforms, services and apps such as WeChat, Line, TikTok, Didi, Ola, Alipay and Easi have developed in to vibrant media formats alongside the presence of more familiar Western corporate digital infrastructure 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 migrant-led gig economy, cross-border e-commerce and food delivery.

This studio is about analysis, experiment, innovation and entrepreneurship. We investigate 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. We will make use of a ‘walkthrough’ approach to apps, digital ethnography, and policy analysis. Throughout the semester students will build up alternative digital platforms (with no programming skills required) that can have alternative regulatory frameworks and provide distinct user experiences, services and content. The app development will be substantiated by the critical reflection on the current digital media sphere globally.

STUDIO LEADER
Fan Yang is a PhD candidate who studies the interaction between ‘news’ publishers and the platform WeChat/Weixin. She also publishes works on technologies and surveillance, privacy, postcolonial technoscience, and research methodologies.
CANON FODDER
Creating media manifestos that interrogate cinema canons

“No more painters, no more writers, no more musicians, no more sculptors, no more religions, no more republicans, no more royalists, no more imperialists, no more anarchists [etc.]”

Tzara and others (1920) quoted in Danchev (2011)

STUDIO PROMPT
Who are the great filmmakers, and which are the great films? What even is greatness, and how is it recognised – how are canons (lists of the classic works exemplifying the form) made, what are their purposes and can or should we resist them? And, in 2020, what even is a film, anyway…?

DESCRIPTION
There is something peculiar about cinema (b.1895, Lyon), the still relatively youthful Seventh Art; its most ardent admirers are regularly commissioned or otherwise compelled to write up lists which reliably exalt only a small, aged pool of canonical artworks. How can this be – has there truly never been, for example, a “greater” film made since Alfred Hitchcock’s classic “Vertigo” premiered in 1958 (as per Sight & Sound’s most recent, ten-yearly poll of the “Top 50 Greatest Films of All Time” in 2012)?

Whose voices are privileged, their perspectives normalised and entrenched, in the formation and sustenance of the film canon – and why? Should canonical artworks perforce be respected?

However, if the canon is to be challenged, will that not just create more canons and is this desirable?

Can’t canonisation leach an artwork of vitality, rendering it unable to be viewed on its own merits, untarred by claims made for it of “greatness”?

Of course, lovers of other art forms from literature to gaming aren’t wholly immune to list-making and canon-building either. This calls then for a multi-arts resistance movement, replete with a Dada-like manifesto (pursuant to the drafting of a few choice listicles).

Accordingly, the studio begins by interrogating the logics and uses of canons before crafting one or more group manifestos in response. We will then implement these manifestos by using media forms chosen by students (e.g., video essays, podcasts, games, installations, happenings, expanded cinema) to further interrogate the process by which we value different media.

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 co-hosted the 3RRR film criticism show and podcast “Plato’s Cave” from 2014-2019 and has been a member of the International Jury Board of the East-West: Golden Arch Awards, founded in Moscow, for its two editions to date since 2018. A regular commentator on intersections of film, gender, sexuality and other matters, her writing on film can be found in Senses of Cinema and Metro, on the byNWR website, in the KVIFF Festival Daily and in forthcoming books on Peter Strickland and *Bride of Frankenstein*. Away from film she plays bass for Queen Kong and The HOMOsapiens, a Melbourne-based punk, performance art, queer rock band.
GETTING INTO CHARACTER
Generating characters through writing and filming

"An idea of character is an idea of consistency…. Not to fulfill an expectation of character is to be out of character; but to be out of character is to be understood in relation to an expectation of character, however unfulfilled."
Sara Ahmed (2011)

STUDIO PROMPT
Can a deeper understanding of the nature of fictional and real life characters help us to create better stories?

DESCRIPTION
There is an old adage that “character is revealed in the choices a human being makes under pressure - the greater the pressure, the deeper the revelation” (McKee 1999, 101). But what if pressure does not reveal true character? What if it reveals who we become under pressure – which is not necessarily who we always are. Are you the same person in lockdown as you were before?

In this class we will use Robert McKee’s idea of character (the actions of the person) as opposed to characterisation (their idiosyncrasies), and Christopher Vogler’s hero’s journey archetypes to unpack characters as we create them. We will see how characters are entwined with the narrative structure. We will connect this with Roland's Barthes discussion of the multiplicity of the self when being filmed, and notice how this multiplicity can still contain the expectations of character that Sara Ahmed explores. One character can be both complex and consistent.

In this studio you will analyse characters in existing works, and you will write and film monologues and dialogues where the characters you create will be respectfully inspired by people you know or encounter. You will explore the different ways that character functions in fiction and in documentary works, because both fiction and documentary use characters. You will develop skills in interviewing, writing, filming and editing characters.

STUDIO LEADER
Catherine Gough-Brady is an award-winning documentary producer and director of six ABC TV documentary series, including “Legal Briefs” (2016) and “Ethics Matters” (2017). Catherine created 11 radio features for ABC Radio National. Catherine has almost completed her PhD at RMIT and has published widely on the emergent use of video as a method of academic discourse. She is currently in pre-production for a new ABC TV series.
COLLABORATIONS:
SOFT CHOREOGRAPHY

Poetry + Essay; Word + Moving Image

“The only worthwhile film is one that ‘creates a reality and itself constitutes an experience.’ All else is ‘criminal negligence’”
Maya Deren

“If my mind could gain a firm footing, I would not make essays”
Michel de Montaigne

STUDIO PROMPT
What kinds of affective and critical compositions emerge in the play between the literary and cinematic figures of the essay and poem?

DESCRIPTION
A collaboration between Creative Writing and Media students writing and making sound and moving image works.

The literary essay and the poem are forms also found in moving image works. We are interested in the ways these forms and practices engage in an exploration of things outside the strictly seeable or sayable. In this studio we will be exploring how the essay and poem (in writing and moving image) allow us to make and think our way into non-representational spaces of Soft Choreography (Mette Ingvartsen). Soft Choreography is a concept I like because of the flexibility, improvisation, experimentation, multiplicity, and thinking-feeling it encourages in our practices of writing and media making.

As a Collaborations studio, our focus will be on the rich exchange between our diverse sets of skills, interests, and disciplines. We will be paying attention to these transpositions and compositions across forms of fiction and non-fiction, image and language, essay and poetry. We will contemplate the affective, feeling, abstract potentials of these forms, as well as their potential for deep thinking, and criticality. We will watch films; read poems and essays; make moving image works; write about each other’s works. And we will finally put together an online ‘festival’ to showcase the work produced during the semester, which will be both creative and critical; literary and cinematic.

The aims of the studio are to:
- Experiment and play with form
- To explore the relationship between moving image and language
- To move into new thinking-feeling spaces of our practices

STUDIO LEADER
Dr Smijiana Glisovic has worked across various mediums and forms, as an artist, actor, writer and filmmaker. Her creative practice research is located in the intersecting fields of documentary, installation and performance as a site for affective knowledges of body-place relationships. Finding language in all of these spaces—of documentary, installation, performance, and the body—is also of particular interest of exploration. She has taught writing and cinema in the School of Media and Communication for the last 10 years.
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.
EXPERIMENT.
SCREEN.
SENSATION.
Screen art and film workshop

‘Every art erects its forbidden city … its own exclusive, autonomous and specific domain hostile to all that is not its own. It is perhaps quite astonishing to say this, but literature should above all be literary; the theatre, theatrical; painting, painterly; and the cinema, cinematic.’
Jean Epstein (1926)

STUDIO PROMPT
Create a dynamic and provocative moving image art work or film. We will be investigating the nexus between creative work and research productivity.

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.

If we can develop a deep understanding of our own original cinematic and artistic intentions, methods and practices, we can then 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 and instructor based in Melbourne, Australia. He has completed a series of shorts with an accompanying array of experimental video and photography work. His films have featured in festivals such as Palm Springs International ShortFest (2016), Austin Film Festival (2016, 2017) and Sydney Film Festival in competition for the Lexus film fellowship and Dendy Film Awards (2017) and received awards from the Zed Fest Film Festival and Screenplay Competition. He is currently completing a practice led PhD at MADA (fine arts) Monash University. His research is focused on the cinema of Jean Epstein and conceptions of photogénie alongside adaptation practices and the literature of Edgar Allan Poe. He is a long-term regular fixture of the RMIT University cinema studies program and a studio leader.

*Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954) Dir. Kenneth Anger
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 checklist. We often use these lists as useful ways to declutter our heads and organise our thoughts. In an online context, 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 interactions with the world through sensory perception?

DESCRIPTION

Sociologists Anne Marie Mol and John Law (2004) 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” (p.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, and perceiving the world through our senses.

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 experiment with how we might use different media making techniques to heighten the experience of the body and 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.
PLATFORM VIDEO
Social media video content produced in partnership with McClelland Sculpture Park + Gallery

“At the level we as users encounter an application or platform, our engagement is both fostered and constrained through the affordances which that piece of software provides.”

STUDIO PROMPT
How do the affordances of Instagram affect the way video content is authored?

DESCRIPTION
Media theorist Geert Lovink in ‘Requiem for the Network’ (2020) claims that platforms have played a significant role in making the network extinct. We are now living in the era of ‘platform media’ that involves many of the users on the Internet working within social media services like, for example, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Riffing off this idea of platform media, this studio explores the notion of ‘platform video’, moving-image content created for publication on social media.

Education scholars propose the concept of ‘software literacy’ that involves students developing a range of competencies and knowledge so that they can work with software in a creative and critical way. A crucial part of that competency is understanding the affordances of software, what the software offers a practitioner, what it enables them to do. What actions does it prescribe? What uses does it constrain?

This studio’s work practices utilise a combination of media and design methods adapted from the video production and user-interface design professions. There are three stages: scoping design criteria and ideas, generating concepts and prototyping works. Feedback will be provided on each stage by the client, the studio lead and your peers. Through research and practice, you will professionally develop your client liaison and media-making skills. For your portfolio, you will produce media content for potential publication on the McClelland Sculpture Park + Gallery’s social media channels.

STUDIO LEADER
Dr Seth Keen is a practice-led designer, researcher, and educator in the RMIT Media Program. His teaching and research focus on new media photo and video practices. Seth has over 25 years of experience in designing and producing audiovisual media content. This industry experience includes social and mobile media content, primetime television documentaries, short films, experimental videos, music videos, interactive documentary, art installations and video content for bespoke media platforms.
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 creative and technical challenges arise whilst capturing the real world? And, what are the various ways that non-fiction materials can be arranged for different outcomes?

DESCRIPTION
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 researching and reflecting on 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, pitch and produce a major work (such as a short documentary of 5 minutes duration or a 1500 word photo essay containing 20-30 images).

STUDIO LEADER
Rohan Spong has worked as a sessional academic at RMIT for a number of years across a range of diverse classes including music video production, broadcast media, and documentary studies. When not feverishly drawing diagrams on the campus whiteboards, Rohan has filmed and directed three acclaimed feature length documentary films: “Winter at Westbeth” (2016), “All The Way Through Evening” (2012) and “T is for Teacher” (2009). Rohan’s films have screened theatrically in cinemas in Australia, New Zealand and the USA, been broadcast on ABC, SBS and FOXTEL, and appeared at numerous international film festivals including MIFF, Sydney Film Festival and DOC NYC. His films have also been programmed at a number of cultural and screen institutions including ACMI, MONA, Boston Museum of Art, Lincoln Center (NYC) and the US Library of Congress (DC). “Winter at Westbeth was recently acquired for national US broadcast on the Emmy award winning program “America ReFramed” (PBS/WORLD).
SCREEN LAB
Educating and engaging through cinematic experiments

“Your goal must be a good story well told”
Robert McKe (2005)

“If you make something, it’s an artifact. It’s something that somebody or some corporate entity has caused to come into being. A great many human beings have thought about each of the artifacts that surround us. Different degrees of intelligence and attention have been brought to bear on anything…”
William Gibson (2010)

STUDIO PROMPT
What possible aesthetic styles, development approaches and other parameters might shape the production of short-form educational videos about complex screen media concepts and processes?

DESCRIPTION
As communication professionals and media producers, we often take the task of communicating incredibly complex ideas and processes to general or non-specialist audiences. The world of ‘media’, for instance, is a multifarious intersection of industrial processes, histories of technological innovation and evolution, cultures of public and private communication and so on; and it can be difficult to explain because of its seamless integration into our everyday lives in ways that mask its complexity. Stop for a moment and consider that the smartphone is far more intricate than any of the filmmaking tools Alfred Hitchcock used.

This studio is a collaboration with ACMI (The Australian Centre for the Moving Image), Melbourne’s preeminent centre for exploring the cultural and creative richness of moving image forms.

ACMI are working to produce a series of short form videos that complement their new permanent exhibition and help engage audiences. These videos focus on communicating concepts from across film, TV, videogame and digital art making to potential audiences and visitors and will have a high educational value.

Short films are very much the future and are having a bigger presence in mainstream creative industries than ever before. The most successful short films demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of stories and how to tell them.

This studio will work closely with ACMI in the design, development and production of these works. You will be skilled up in sound, video and graphics production and post production methods.

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.
SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
Educating, informing, influencing and rallying on social media

“[S]ocial media platforms have emerged as an important venue to amplify less powerful voices in the overall media landscape, as users disrupt, confront, or counteract traditional narratives through their own storytelling”
Blevins, Lee, McCabe & Edgerton (2019)

STUDIO PROMPT
What kinds of media or media strategies are effective at influencing users on social media platforms?
How can these be used in ways that contribute to positive societal change eg. in regards to the environment, workers’ rights, or racial or gender discrimination?

DESCRIPTION
Social media consumption is pervasive. We consume (and participate in) a wide variety of content across an assortment of platforms – all of them competing for our attention.

As media specialists, how can we be active in facilitating positive change in the world? What kinds of novel content can we make that addresses issues such as (but not limited to) climate change, racial discrimination, gender discrimination, workers’ rights, unemployment and the treatment of refugees?

In this studio, we will experiment with making media aimed at social media delivery and engagement. Possible forms are forums, comedy skits, memes, animated explainers, vlogs, short films, video podcasts, challenges and virtual events.

Amongst the sea of content on social media, we will experiment with making media that: (1) attracts and hold attention, (2) affects an audience, (3) educates or informs an audience, and potentially (4) influences the behaviour of an audience. We will question whether we should be thinking of the people we are trying to reach as the “audience”, or rather are they “users”, “participants” or “members of our community”?

Through analysis, discussion and media experiments we will attempt to answer:
- When do techniques designed to influence audience behaviour become unethical?
- What are principles to keep in mind when working in specific platforms eg. what are the differences in making a video for YouTube, Facebook and TikTok?
- What is the difference between ‘views’ and ‘engagement’?

STUDIO LEADER
Dr Alan Nguyen is an international-award-winning writer and director working across TV, film, theatre, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). He has written scripts for Melbourne Theatre Company, December Media and for the upcoming Matchbox Pictures/NBC Universal miniseries “Hungry Ghosts” coming soon to SBS television. He is a Lecturer in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT 2020.
TELLING STORIES WITH SOUND
Podcasting and audio storytelling

“Don’t be disembodied - radio can have a tendency to lean towards the cerebral. Don’t just tell a listener about a subject, let them understand an idea by feeling it in their body. Make radio that starts a listener’s heart beating faster; that whispers lovingly in their ears; that takes them out dancing, spins them around, gets drunk and throws up on their shoes.”

Eleanor McDowall (n.d)

STUDIO PROMPT
How can we as media-makers harness the affective power of voice and sound to tell compelling audio stories? What relationship and responsibility do we have to those whose stories we tell?

DESCRIPTION
Radio scholar Michelle Hilmes (2013) coined the term ‘soundwork’ to describe “media forms that are primarily aural, employing the three basic elements of sonic expression - music, speech and noise.” In both radio and podcasting, voice comes to the fore with its powerful affective resonance. Stories are told and shared with a high degree of intimacy that is enhanced by listening through earbuds.

In this studio you will learn practical skills that apply to both radio and podcasting - including how to publish a podcast series. You’ll weave voice, sound and music to create engaging and emotive works of sound. You’ll share your own stories as well as those of others, and you’ll consider the relationships between you as the interviewer and your interviewees.

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 NEWS IS A JOKE
Investigating news satire and parody in a post-broadcast era

“News may seem to offer viewers information, but satire does more. Satire asks the audience to take a piece of news and play with it, test it, reflect on it, and question it.”

Sophia A McClennen (2011)

STUDIO PROMPT
To investigate comedy news production practices and to explore how comedy news may operate as alternative public pedagogy.

DESCRIPTION
News satire has continued to flourish in the post-broadcast era. However, it is important that we understand and continue to interrogate the ways that news satire and parody – or more broadly, comedy news – can productively blur the distinction between ‘news’ and ‘entertainment’. By offering critique of public figures and institutions, comedy news offers the possibility “to see the social and scientific anew” (Gray, Jones and Thompson 2009, p.9).

This studio will merge theory and practice through reading, viewing, discussion, and making of comedy news segments. Students are encouraged to play with the standard comedy news form, experiment with it, and potentially find ways to transform it as they research and create a series of satirical/parodic news artefacts.

STUDIO LEADER
Dr Ruth Richards completed her PhD at RMIT University in 2019; her research interests include animation, film, television studies and feminist theory. She has a background in multi-camera production, with a focus on live television and comedy news production and has presented research on feminist television news satire.
TRANSLATING OBSERVATION
Experiments in actuality, subjectivity & film form

“You must always write when you want to make a film.”
Chantal Akerman (1995)

STUDIO PROMPT
How can personal observation and experience be translated to the screen in ways not strictly reliant on conventional fiction or documentary approaches?

DESCRIPTION
This studio is dedicated to experimentation in the development and realisation of film content that sits somewhere between documentary and fiction. A very specific procedure, with writing at its centre, will be applied in the development stage, and the result is likely to lead to idiosyncratic production methods, and highly individual short film pieces.

The idea is that an experience or observation is expressed in writing without any need to contextualise or narrate. The emphasis should be on the subjective essence of the observation. The text then becomes a working document that needs to be further translated into a film scene. The scene, or scenes, can take any form, or combination of forms. The objective is to explore cinematic expression free, not of structure and discipline, but of the conventions of “complete” storytelling, and of the demands typical of much documentary production.

The studio will acknowledge and explore the critical function of writing in the development of a film work (but not necessarily that of normal scriptwriting, or the expression of “objective” research) and offer the opportunity to learn and practice film craft and production methods in the service of a potentially unfamiliar and unpredictable outcome.

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.
UNRAVELLING THE REAL
Experiments in documentary

“We need documentary. We need it to help interpret the world. We use documentary. We use it as artists, as viewers, and as activists to help us imagine new ways to engage with the world. We rely on documentary, in all of its eclectic variety, to record, trouble, explain, reveal, and share lived reality and our plans and hopes to transform it.”

Alex Juhasz & Alisa Lebow (2018)

STUDIO PROMPT
How can we use experimental techniques to explore documentary as an art form?

DESCRIPTION
You may be familiar with the big nature docos on television, the latest true crime series of Netflix, or the well-meaning fact-filled film that persuades us to change our behaviours. This is not what this studio is about! Documentary has a rich and varied history of experimentation with form and ways of telling stories that explore the world in surprising, unconventional and creative ways. It is a form that interrogates our understanding of the world and challenges the status quo. This studio encourages you explore non-fiction events and stories through a range of creative techniques, and personal expression, as well as questioning what documentary can be. We will also read a manifesto or two.

In this studio you will learn some of the more traditional strategies of documenting such as finding stories, treatment and script-writing, interviews, sound design, editing and montage. These of course are essential as they might form the basis of your films. In addition, you will also explore a wide range of visual, textual and aural storytelling techniques through weekly experiments – both individually and collaboratively. Throughout the semester, you will develop and make your own creative non-fiction projects.

The studio involves an integration of watching films, analysis, critical reflections, reading, writing and practical experiments. So, forget what you think documentary is and bring your curiosity for a semester of playful experimentation with the “real.”

STUDIO LEADER
Dr Kim Munro is a documentary maker, writer, academic and programmer from Melbourne. Kim has a background in fine art, linguistics and filmmaking. Kim has taught at Swinburne, Deakin and La Trobe universities and has been teaching at RMIT in the Bachelor and Masters programs for the last 6 years. Her multi-disciplinary works have shown in galleries, festivals and on television. She has written articles and book chapters on activism and transmedia, participatory practices, expanded documentary, sound and the environment. Recent projects have included programming the Australian International Documentary Conference, media advocacy and mobile filmmaking workshops around climate adaptation for UN Habitat in the Solomon Islands and producing videos for the Victorian National Parks Association.