

# MEDIA ONLINE ONLY STUDIOS SEMESTER 1 2021

*These studios will be run online only.*

*There is a separate book for HYBRID teaching mode studios which are a combination of online and some face-to-face classes.*

***Do not preference any of these studios if you only want to take a studio that includes some face-to-face classes.***

## DELIBERATE FILM

The learning of filmmaking inspired by prompts and guided with constraints

## IT'S NOT ROCKET SURGERY

Communicating complex ideas

## SEEING THE UNSEEN

Media and the environment

## SIX MODES OF DOCUMENTARY

Drawing on the "six modes" to develop distinctive documentary voices

## THE SCENE IN CINEMA 2021

Studies in camera coverage



NASA/SOHO image bank



'Agency Time' 2011 dir Paul Ritchard

## DELIBERATE FILM

**The learning of filmmaking inspired by prompts and guided with constraints**

“[Y]ou 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 back from staff and your peers. Outside of class time 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.



'Colin Clive & Ernest Thesiger in *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), dir. James Whale

## IT'S NOT ROCKET SURGERY

### Communicating complex ideas

"The accusations most often levelled at programme makers by scientists are that television simplifies and trivialises. Sometimes the accusation is valid, sometimes not. Even complex issues can be discussed on different levels without necessarily trivialising."

R Taylor (2003)

### STUDIO PROMPT

What are the challenges and creative possibilities in communicating complex ideas, scientific processes, or philosophical concepts to online video audiences?

### DESCRIPTION

As communication professionals and media producers, we often take the task of communicating incredibly complex ideas to general or non-specialist audiences. Sometimes we barely understand the ideas ourselves! From quantum physics to the rules of popular sporting codes, our world is full of complicated concepts.

In this studio, we'll be working with leading experts in various fields to produce short videos that convey these ideas in ways that take advantage of your own expertise in media production.

We'll start by trialling different approaches for communicating scientific concepts, then broaden out to

concepts that might be even more nebulous - philosophical, political, economic, or something else entirely.

We will be drawing on theories of visual communication, graphic design, cognitive science, and more. We'll analyse infographics, and consider the role of experimentation, humour and even haikus. Our motto is to push the boundaries while striving for clarity.

The studio aims to:

- To understand what might constitute high quality content in this context
- To collaborate with experts in other fields, in a dynamic situation where your own media production skills are an integral element
- To explore and reflect on the political, ethical, and philosophical implications of these type of communication processes

### 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.



Image from Helen Keller *In Her Story* (1954, director: Nancy Hamilton)



Image from *Super Size Me* (2004, director: Morgan Spurlock)

## SIX MODES OF DOCUMENTARY

### Drawing on the “six modes” to develop distinctive documentary voices

"As is true of other arts, filmmakers who are familiar with previous work and who are aware of the basic characteristics of different models and modes typically exhibit a fluidity and grace in their ability to use a wide range of conventions and techniques to create a style and voice uniquely their own."

B. Nichols (2017)

### STUDIO PROMPT

What are “six modes of documentary”, and how can these support our analysis of documentaries?

Can drawing from these modes enable us to come up with fresh ideas and distinctive approaches to documentary making?

### DESCRIPTION

There many ways of categorising approaches to documentary. Nichols (2017) outlines six modes: Poetic, Expository, Observational, Participatory, Reflexive and Performative. While Nichols’ six modes may refer to entire documentaries, some theorists argue that the modes can refer to individual scenes within documentaries (Natusch & Hawkins, 2014). The modes are not mutually exclusive -- overlapping and hybridisations are common.

The goal of this studio is to deepen our understanding of existing documentaries and to spark possibilities for our own work. We will spend the first six weeks focusing on

one mode per week: analysing and discussing documentaries, engaging with a relevant reading, and making one “sketch” or experiment. We hope that this will shake us out of our routine patterns or “go to” styles when it comes to creating non-fiction video. After the first six weeks, we will have produced a collection of content that will be wildly diverse in form.

Drawing from our regular analyses and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of our experiments, we will develop a major documentary project. The project may feature one dominant mode or fuse together multiple modes.

Studio classes and project work will emphasise a high degree of group discussion, participation, collaboration and experimentation.

### STUDIO LEADER

Dr Alan Nguyen is a Lecturer in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT.

He is a 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 Matchbox Pictures/NBC Universal miniseries 'Hungry Ghosts' which aired on SBS Television in 2020. His directorial work has screened on ABC and won awards at film festivals around the world. Alan is writing and directing two non-fiction projects: 'BeeScapes', a VR documentary about how honeybees see the world, and 'Your Brain on Media', a community television project about the effects of social media on humans.



Still from *There's still heaps of water*, Hannah Brasier  
(work-in-progress, 2021)

# SEEING THE UNSEEN

## Media and the environment

“A lot of filmmaking is about re-creating an idea that existed beforehand, even in documentary. There are not many films that actually ‘look’.”

S. Panse (2013)

## STUDIO PROMPT

How can we create media artefacts which sense a changing world?

## DESCRIPTION

Climate change is an urgent topic which increasingly exposes the precariousness of the environment; as always changing and exceeding comprehension. A dog running through the bush creates marks on the land, heat creates humidity on a rainy day, sunsets turn clouds pink, and wind creates ripples on the surface of a lake. While we may expect these environmental patterns, there are others less determinate, which remain unseen. In the fourth iteration of ‘Seeing the Unseen’ you will explore how to observe, pay attention and use media to sense rhythms, patterns and changes in the environment.

Through practices of attuned noticing, this studio will look at ways of using digital media technologies to sense the changing world around us as opposed to telling stories about it. In this process you will be exposed to experimental, digital and interactive modes of making and distributing media beyond traditional film and television formats.

Be prepared to think critically about what you notice, what media technologies notice, and how we can use media to communicate and sense shifting environments. In ‘Seeing the Unseen’ you will create media artefacts which come closer to performing the complexity of the changing world around us

## 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 digital media. Her film work is interactive, experimental and includes a wide range of palm trees.

You can contact Hannah via [hannah.brasier@rmit.edu.au](mailto:hannah.brasier@rmit.edu.au)



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

## THE SCENE IN CINEMA 2021

### 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 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.

### 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.