Copy This Class (The Art of the Remix)

Professor Julie Levin Russo
voice: (775) JLRUSSO
email: jlrusso@stanford.edu
office: M/W 4:15-5:15, ART116

Mashups, sampling, parodies, fan video, DIY media, memes: we are in the midst of an explosion in vernacular creativity that appropriates, celebrates, critiques, and transforms commercial entertainment. New digital technologies and Internet platforms support a developing ecology of remix forms with unprecedented reach, richness, and cultural influence. At the same time, the value and legitimacy of this popular production is hotly contested on the basis of artistic merit, traditional literacies, and intellectual property. This course analyzes and engages in contemporary remix culture via precursors like appropriation art and hip hop, exploring theoretical questions about originality, capitalism, law, and digital media.

this syllabus remixes:

Digital Media and Participatory Culture • Melanie Kohnen • Georgia Tech
http://lcc.gatech.edu/~mkohnen3/index_tp_syllabus_participatoryculture.html

Remix Culture • Jill Walker Rettberg • University of Bergen
http://jilltxt.net/?p=2418

Open Source Culture • Mark Tribe • Brown University
https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/mcm1700n

Writing, Research, and Technology • Bill Wolff • Rowan University
http://williamwolff.org/courses/wrt-fall-2010/wrt-syllabus-f10/

SPACES

This course meets twice a week for about 2 hours to allow for flexible class time that may include discussion, screenings, presentation, critiques, and labs.

Monday's meetings will typically include discussion of the assigned readings and some in-class viewing (approximately 1 hour each). Wednesday's meetings will typically include presentation/discussion of student projects and technical workshops.

The syllabus includes several special events outside of class – these are required unless you have an insurmountable conflict.

To foster experiential learning about media, we will be using a dedicated website at *http://edu.j-l-r.org* for all course work. This is a social network platform that supports blogs, wiki-like pages, bookmarks, threaded discussion, file uploads, status updates ("the wire"), live chat, and streaming videos. You can also submit relevant media artifacts to *http://newoldmedia.tumblr.com* to help build our archive.

POLICIES

laptops and/or mobile devices are encouraged in class for note-taking and connected engagement. Often, you will want to have a laptop available for hands-on lab time. You are expected to be aware of your own attention and stay focused on our work.

attendance at all class sessions is required. If you have a conflict or illness that causes you to miss class, contact the professor in advance. Grade penalties will be imposed for excessive unexcused absences.

late work is discouraged. Most assignments are integrated with class activities and thus do not accommodate lateness. If you are facing extenuating circumstances and need an extension, contact the professor in advance. Grade penalties will be imposed for unexcused late work.

plagiarism is different from remix. For more information on avoiding plagiarism and the rest of Stanford's Honor Code, see http://stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/avoiding/guide.htm

Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class, must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC), located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). The SDRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the SDRC as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The Office of Accessible Education is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066; TDD: 725-1067).

ASSIGNMENTS

The course website will be your platform for archiving, sharing, and collaborating on critical work. At the beginning of the term, the class will be divided into four groups (Z-Y-X-W) for collaboration and staggered due dates.

remix
two, by group

For two Wednesdays, you will create a remix project engaging with the week's topic, accompanied by a 500 word project statement describing your concept, process, and intensions. Post your text and your artwork (or a link to it) on the course blog before class, and be prepared to show and discuss it.

You should choose one assignment marked A and one marked B, but you can decide which to do first.

The second time, your group will also be responsible for researching and selecting readings/screenings to assign to the class, which you'll have to determine together the week before.

remix assignments:

A. visual essay
http://lcc.gatech.edu/~mkohnen3/index_tp_assignment_visual.html
EDITS: images must be appropriated, post files to Tumblr for slideshow effect

A. collage
https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/mcm1700n/Open+Source+Culture+Spring+10+-+Student+Work
EDITS: pretty open ended (click "Collage Project" for examples), can post to blog directly

B. audio mashup
Hearing Voices by Catherine Amelia Shuler: *http://writingnewmedia.com/hearingvoices*
EDITS: only use appropriated audio, can upload to Tumblr via prof

B. remix video
williamwolff.org/courses/wrt-fall-2010/wrt-assignments-f10/wrtf10-assignment-2-mixin-mashin-and-remixin
EDITS: write only one accompanying text, upload to Vimeo or Tumblr via prof (or your own)

adapt
due May 6

Students in Adaptation (FILMPROD103) with Adam Tobin will be writing up concepts for an adaptation of a story from myth, fairy tale, etc. After they select one winning idea in a "pitchfest" on April 27, you will be working with your group to render it as a multimedia remix.

final project
due June 10

You will create an essay or media work to submit to one of the following venues:
o a Ford Foundation "Wired for Change" competition for remix videos (details forthcoming)
o the remix video issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures*: *http://journal.transformativeworks.org /index.php/twc/announcement/view/13* [extended deadline]
o *Intersect* (the online journal of Stanford STS): *http://stanford.edu/group/publicknowledge/cgi-bin/ojs/sts-journal/index.php/intersect/about/submissions#authorGuidelines*

EVALUATION

Hierarchical assessment is often at odds with experimentation, innovation, and creativity. Therefore, every student who commits to dedicated participation in this class and to completing all assignments to the best of his/her ability can expect to receive an A in this course. You will receive regular in-class feedback on assignments from the professor and your peers, but there will be no formal grading process.

You will receive a lower grade if you:
o do not complete all the required work
o turn in work late
o are frequently absent or late from class
o do not actively engage during class
o are often unprepared to discuss course materials in class
o do not collaborate with and offer constructive feedback to your classmates

This overview of a course in Multimodal Composition by Cheryl Ball at Illinois State encapsulates my goals, values, and expectations for your performance. Please read it carefully:
http://ceball.com/classes/239/fall09/syllabus/

Presenting and critiquing multimedia projects will be a substantial component of this class. Reading and considering this post by Shannon Christine Mattern on Evaluating Multimodal Student Work will help you to assess and comment on your classmates' (and your own) work:
http://wordsinspace.net/wordpress/2010/08/11/how-to-evaluate-multimodal-work/

SCHEDULE

INTRO
March 28

texts
o Eduardo Navas, "Remix Defined": *http://remixtheory.net/?page_id=3*
o Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction": *http://marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm*

media
o visit Cantor Art Center to view Rodin collection and contemporary art
o HOW: course website and tumblr

orientation
March 30

ORIGINALS
April 4

texts
o Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant Garde": PDF
o Martha Buskirk, "Original Copies": PDF
o Jonathan Latham, "The Ecstasy of Influence": *http://harpers.org/archive/2007/02/0081387*

media
o *Exit Through the Gift Shop*
o HOW: digital graphics

group W
April 6

EVENT: "Re-staging the Spectacular: Digital Displays Inside and Outside the Home" (William Boddy)
April 6 at 5:30pm, ART2: *http://art.stanford.edu/news-events/events-calendar/view/1136/?date=2011-04-06*

APPROPRIATION April 11

texts
- Lev Manovich, "The Interface" [excerpt] from *The Language of New Media*: PDF
- Michael Zryd, "Found Footage Film as Discursive Metahistory": PDF
- Emma Cocker, "Ethical Possession: Borrowing from the Archives": *http://scope.nottingham.ac.uk/cultborr/chapter.php?id=9*

media
- selection of found footage films by Craig Baldwin, Bruce Conner, Dara Birnbaum, Peggy Ahwesh, etc.
- HOW: basic video editing

group X April 13

EVENT: 24/7 2011: The State of the Art in DIY Video (we will go by Caltrain as a group)
Saturday April 16, 2:30-7:30 at California College of the Arts, San Francisco: **RSVP** *http://amiando.com/247CCA.html*

AUTHORSHIP April 18

texts
- Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author": *http://deathoftheauthor.com*
- Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?": PDF
- Siva Vaidhyanathan, "Copyright and American Culture" and "The Digital Moment" from *Copyrights and Copywrongs*: ebook in searchworks
- Edward Samuels, "Copyright Limitations, Exclusions, and Compromises" from *The Illustrated Story of Copyright*: *http://edwardsamuels.com/illustratedstory/isc8.htm*

media
- *RIP: A Remix Manifesto*
- HOW: basic audio editing

group Y April 20

EVENT: Q&A with writer Doug Miro on adapting the Prince of Persia video game into a film
April 25, 11:00-12:15pm

SAMPLING April 25

texts
- Mark Katz, "Music in 0s and 1s: The Art and Politics of Digital Sampling" from *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*: ebook in searchworks
- Abigail de Kosnik, "Common Sense v. Common Sound: How the Culture Wars Killed Digital Sampling" from *Illegitimate Media*: PDF
- Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid, "In Through the Out Door: Sampling and the Creative Act" from *Sound Unbound*: PDF

media
- *Copyright Criminals*
- *http://mashupbreakdown.com*
- HOW: library research tutorial

group Z April 27

EVENT: Hip Hop, Race, and Citizenship in Japan, France, and the United States
April 28 at 7pm, Cubberly Auditorium: *http://aaas-hutalk.stanford.edu/74-12396250840838566371*

PLAYBOR May 2

texts
- o Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy": PDF
- o student selections on video game modding, machinima videos, etc.

media
- o selections from *http://youtube.com/machinima* and *http://archive.org/details/machinima*
- o HOW: creating web pages

group W May 4

MEMES May 9

texts
- o Lawrence Lessig, "RO, Extended" and "Cultures Compared" from *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*: *http://archive.org/details/LawrenceLessigRemix*
- o student selections on internet memes, viral video, etc.

media
- o Mike Wesch, "An Anthropological Introduction to YouTube": *http://youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-lZ4_hU*
- o *http://knowyourmeme.com*
- o HOW: finding and processing source material

group X May 11

FAN VIDEO May 16

texts
- o Rebecca Tushnet, "User-Generated Discontent: Transformation in Practice": PDF
- o student selections on vidding, film parodies, etc.

media
- o "Remixing Popular Culture: Vidding": *http://vimeo.com/13021751*
- o selection of parody trailers
- o HOW: Creative Commons

group Y May 18

POLITIX May 23

texts
- o Guy Debord, Chapter 1 of *Society of the Spectacle* and "A User's Guide to Détournement": *http://bopsecrets.org/SI/debord/1.htm* + *http://bopsecrets.org/SI/detourn.htm*
- o student selections on political remix video, pop culture hacking, etc.

media
- o "Remixing Popular Culture: Political Remix Video": *http://vimeo.com/13058679*
- o further selections from *http://politicalremixvideo.com*
- o HOW: students' choice

group Z May 25

CONCLUSION: Wednesday, June 1 (no class Monday, May 30)
- o HOW: final projects

Jill Walker Rettberg: Topics

This semester the focus is on remix culture: the ways in which artists, writers and creators of all kinds of cultural artifacts today borrow, appropriate and remix content created by other people. We'll be interpreting works where this happens, we'll read about cultural and legal implications of remixing, study historical examples of earlier cultural appropriation (we are far from the first remixers) and think about the theoretical and practical implications of a culture where the original genius is no longer the dominant cultural myth.

I'm expecting most of the students have *not* been required to make a YouTube video to convey their research before, so looking at examples of what these might look like seems sensible. We'll also look at examples of remixes... I'm thinking of showing some visual examples, like the many variants of the Mona Lisa and the recent photoshopped Obama as the Joker images (with many variants) that Whitney Phillips wrote about recently. Then some videos - certainly I'll show Bush and Blair's love song, and the Vote Different video (which plays on Apple's 1984 ad)...

Literature has remixes too - William Burrough's cutups, of course, or Tom Phillip's Humument, a "treated" Victorian novel.... And of course literature is saturated with reinterpretations and appropriations of more traditional kinds - Romeo and Juliet to West Side Story, for instance, or Shakespeare's own borrowing of stories. Games can be remixed with mods that actually rewrite or modify the game itself (Quake is a great example, with lots of mods) or in machinimas, videos made by "taping" actions in the game...

The examples I'm showing span across art, political commentary, fan fiction/expression and references that carry some kind of cultural meaning often not expressed explicitly ("intertextuality").

Bill Wolff: Course Strands

In this course all work will be dedicated to students developing their skills in the following Course Strands:

Video Composition
Students will develop their ability to look compose complex, multimodal video compositions that mash up video footage, still images, primary and secondary sources, and sound.

Research
Students will expand their research skills by engaging in primary and secondary research in and outside the library. Students will also learn oral history research methodologies.

Critical Thinking, Writing, and Reading
Students will develop their ability to analyze the texts they read and then filter that information in terms of the theories and other texts being read.

Technology
Students will learn how to use various online tools and technology-related skills which can help them develop their abilities in the other course objectives.

Collaboration
Students will develop the ability to work collaboratively in activities that range from online discussion postings to peer reviews to in-class discussion.

Mark Tribe: A Note on Technical Skills

The emphasis in this course is not on technical mastery but on understanding new media technologies as tools and sites for creative cultural practice. Some students will come to the course with advanced new media production skills, others with very limited skills. This is OK! Advanced skills are not necessarily needed in order to make advanced art. Keith Obadike's Blackness for Sale and Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries' work are two examples of successful and influential new media art that required limited technological skill to produce. What makes these projects effective is, among other things, their conceptual deftness, the effectiveness with which they use relatively simple tools, and strength of their artistic voices.

New media technologies are so numerous and complex, and they are changing so quickly, that keeping up can be a sisyphean task. The most important tech skills you can learn are: how to teach yourself what you need to know in order to realize your ideas; how to find ways to realize your ideas given the skills and resources you reasonably can acquire; and how to partner or collaborate with others who have skills you need but don't have and don't want to acquire yourself. That said, there is no substitute for learning by doing. We will organize workshops on key skills, teach one another as we learn, and strive throughout to maintain a playful and experimental attitude toward the technologies we use.

Melanie Kohnen: Participation

As part of this class, you will actively use a variety of social networking sites and other digital media to participate in class discussions and to complete assignments. You will develop and improve skills in written, oral, visual, electronic, and non-verbal communication by learning about photography, sound editing, web design, and online presentation tools.

This class is a discussion-based seminar. Consequently, your participation in class is crucial to the overall success of the class (and to your final grade). You are expected to keep up with the readings and come to class prepared for discussion.

All members of your group will receive more or less the same grade [for the group project]. I reserve the right to add or deduce points if I notice that some members of the group have done more or less than their fair share of the work. It is your responsibility to make sure that everyone contributes in an equal and fair way.