

Instructor: Janelle Blankenship

Department of English, Film Studies Program

Centre for Theory & Criticism: Graduate Course Proposal

Bergson: Cine-Perception

This course explores Henri Bergson's meditations on moving image machines, screens, and "cinematographic consciousness", also tracing the impact of his philosophy of perception on avant-garde film theory, from Jean Epstein to Gilles Deleuze. Vivian Sobchack has argued that figures shape and transform the very problematic they try to portray. How do moving image metaphors, thought-figures and optical technologies like the cinematograph, stereoscope, kaleidoscope, shadow play, 'dark screen,' panorama, high-speed photograph, phantasmagoria, and magic lantern dissolving views structure Bergson's thoughts on the spectator's sensory apparatus/awareness? What does the vitalist philosopher have to say about the human mind and perception as a "cinématographe intérieur"? The course will lay a critical foundation for understanding the relevance of Bergson's work for contemporary film and media theory. Course readings include Bergson's translated works *Creative Evolution* and *Matter and Memory*, lectures, and interviews, and seminal texts on Bergson's media epistemology. Other theorists include Jean Epstein, Georg Lukács, Germaine Dulac, Walter Benjamin, Jakob von Uexkuell, Gilles Deleuze, David Rodowick, and Elizabeth Grosz.

Requirements:

Seminar Participation: 30%

Presentation plus written summary (5 pages): 25%

Final Research Paper (20 pages): 50%

Tentative Readings:

Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* [*L'Évolution créatrice* 1907] trans. Arthur Mitchell (Dover Publications: 1998 - reprint of the Henry Holt and Company, 1911 edition)

Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* [excerpt], trans. F.I. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1910) [1889] [excerpt]

Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* [*Matière et mémoire* 1896] trans. N.W. Paul and W.S. Palmer (Zone Books/MIT Press: 1990)

Henri Bergson, "The Perception of Change" First and Second Lectures [1911 lecture: ('La perception du changement')] in *Henri Bergson: Key Writings* Ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey and trans. Melissa McMahon (New York/London: Continuum, 2002): 248-266.

Henri Bergson, "The Possible and the Real" [1920 lecture] in *Henri Bergson: Key Writings* Ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey and trans. Melissa McMahon (New York/London: Continuum, 2002): pgs. 223-232

Henri Bergson - *L'évolution du problème de la liberté. Cours au Collège de France 1904-1905* [translated excerpt]

Henri Bergson, "Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic" (1900) trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell [Dover republication of the New York, 1911 edition]

"Bergson talks to us about Cinema" by Michel Georges-Michel from *Le Journal*, February 20, 1914 [Interview translated by Louis-Georges Schwartz and published in *Cinema Journal* Vol. 50, No. 3 (Spring 2011), pp. 79-82]

Jimena Canales, "Movement before Cinematography: The High-Speed Qualities of Sentiment", *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 3 (December 2006): 275-294.

Maria Tortajada, "Technique/Discourse: When Bergson Invented His Cinematograph" in *Cinéma & Technologie*, Vol. 31, No. 1-2-3 (2011): pp. 131-151.

Akira Lippit, "Henri Bergson" [Evolutions], in *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) pp. 83-92

Elizabeth Grosz, "Deleuze, Bergson and the Concept of Life" *Revue internationale de philosophie* 2007/3 (no. 241)

Elizabeth Grosz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming" *parallax* Vol. 11, No 2: (2005): pp. 4-13 [Suggested reading]

Keith Ansell Pearson, "Bergson's Encounters with Biology: Thinking Life" *Angelaki* 10:2, (2005): pp. 59–72.

Paula Amad, "The Counter Archive of Cinematic Memory: Bergsonism, *la durée* and the Everyday" in *Counter-Archive: Film, Everyday and Albert Kahn's Archive de Planet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 96-132.

Guy Fihman, "Deleuze, Bergson, Zénon d'Elée et le cinéma" in *Le cinéma selon Deleuze* Ed. Oliver Fahle and Lorenz Engell (Weimar/Paris: Verlag der Bauhaus-Universität/Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997), pp. 62-73.

Georg Lukács, "Thoughts toward an Aesthetic of the Cinema," trans. Janelle Blankenship in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory*, ed. Anton Kaes, Nicolas Baer and Michael Cowan (University of California Press, 2015): pp. 377-380.

Janelle Blankenship, "Futurist Fantasies: Lukács's Early Essay 'Thoughts Toward an Aesthetic of the Cinema,'" *Polygraph* 13 [2001]: pp. 21-36.

Maria Tortajada, "The Cinematographic Snapshot"/"Paradigm of the Continuous and the Discontinuous: The Notion of Instant" in *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemology in the Modern Era* Ed. Francois Albera and Maria Tortajada and trans. Lance Hewson (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2010), pp. 79-96.

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986)

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Gelata (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989)

Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1990) [excerpt]

Gilles Deleuze, "The Brain is the Screen: Interview with Gilles Deleuze on 'The Time-Image'". *Discourse* trans. Melissa McMahon Vol. 20, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 47-55.

D. N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997) [excerpt]

John Mullarkey, *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009) [short excerpt]

Jakob von Uexkuell, "Perception Time" in *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2010) trans. Joseph O'Neale with afterword by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, pp. 70-72.

Jakob von Uexkuell, "Environment [Umwelt] and Inner World of Animals," trans. Mellor and Gove in Burghardt G.M. (ed.). *Foundations of Comparative Ethology* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold), pp. 222-245.

Walter Benjamin, "News about Flowers" trans. Michael Jennings, In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*. Vol. 2, 1927–1934, part 1, Ed. Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, Gary Smith (Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999). pp. 155–57.

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in an Age of Technological [Mechanical] Reproducibility" [Second and Third Versions], *Selected Writings: 1935-1938* (Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002) Vol. 3: 101-133 and *Selected Writings: 1938-1940* (Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003) Vol. 4: 251-282.

Tom Gunning, "Loïe Fuller and the Art of Motion" in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida* ed. Richard Allen and Malcom Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp.

Jean Epstein, "Magnification," *October* 3 (Spring 1977), pp. 9-15; "On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie," *Afterimage* 10 (Autumn 1981), pp. 20-23; "The Senses I (b)," *Afterimage* 10 (Autumn 1981), pp. 9-16.

Alexis Carrel, "Physiological Time", *Science* Vol. 74, No. 1929 (Dec. 18, 1931), pp. 618-621.

Alexis Carrel, Foreword, Lecomte du Nouy's *Biological Time* (New York: McMillan Company, 1937), pp. vii-vix

Lecomte du Nouy's *Biological Time* (New York: McMillan Company, 1937) [excerpt]

Sir David Brewster, "On the Application of the Kaleidoscope to the Fine and Useful Arts," *A Treatise on the Kaleidoscope* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1819), pp. 113-117.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," *The Atlantic Monthly* 3, No. 20 (June 1859): pp. 738-748.

Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 292-300.

Michelle Pierson, "Jacob's Bergsonism," *Optic Antics: The Cinema of Ken Jacobs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 196-212.

Tentative Outline

Week 1: Bergson's Bodies/Machines: Time, Perception and the "Attention of the Spectator"

Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* [excerpt], trans. F.I. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1910) [1889]

Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1900) trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell [Dover republication of the New York, 1911 edition]

Henri Bergson - *L'évolution du problème de la liberté. Cours au Collège de France 1904-1905* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2017] [short translated excerpt on the stereoscope]

Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," *The Atlantic Monthly* 3:20 (June 1859): pp. 738-748.

[Suggested Reading: "'Fantômes de vivants' et 'recherche psychique'" (1913)] in *Henri Bergson: Intégrale des œuvres*

Week 2: Bergson's Bodies/Machines cont.: Kaleidoscopic Shifts and a "Photographic View of Things"

Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* [*Matière et mémoire* 1896] trans. N.W. Paul and W.S. Palmer (Zone Books/MIT Press: 1990)

Henri Bergson, "The Perception of Change" First and Second Lectures [1911 lecture: In *Henri Bergson: Key Writings* Ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey and trans. Melissa McMahon (New York/London: Continuum, 2002): 248-266.

Sir David Brewster, "On the Application of the Kaleidoscope to the Fine and Useful Arts," *A Treatise on the Kaleidoscope* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1819), pp. 113-117.

Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey* (1830-1904) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 292-300.

Week 3: Screening Movement, Scientific Film and a “Cinematographical Consciousness” I

Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* [*L'Évolution créatrice* 1907] trans. Arthur Mitchell (Dover Publications: 1998 - reprint of the Henry Holt and Company, 1911 edition)

“Bergson talks to us about Cinema” by Michel Georges-Michel from *Le Journal*, February 20, 1914 [Interview translated by Louis-Georges Schwartz and published in *Cinema Journal* Vol. 50, No. 3 (Spring 2011), pp. 79-82]

Paula Amad on the “Bergsonian” Screening Room at Albert Kahn’s *Archives de la Planète* - Paula Amad, “The Counter Archive of Cinematic Memory: Bergsonism, *la durée* and the Everyday” in *Counter-Archive: Film, Everyday and Albert Kahn’s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

Maria Tortajada, “Technique/Discourse: When Bergson invented his Cinematograph” in *Cinéma & Technologie*, Vol. 31, numéro 1-2-3, 2011

Damian Sutton, “Early Cinema’s Living Present,” in *Photography, Cinema, Memory: The Crystal of Time* 79-85.

[Suggested: Scott Curtis, “Bergson, Cinema and Science,” in *The Shape of Spectatorship: Art, Science and Early Cinema in Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015):

Week 4: The ‘Unrolling’ of a Cinematic Film

Henri Bergson, “The Possible and the Real” [1920 lecture, Oxford]: In *Henri Bergson: Key Writings* Ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey and trans. Melissa McMahon (New York/London: Continuum, 2002): pgs. 223-232

Akira Lippit, “Henri Bergson” [Evolutions], in *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2008) pp. 83-92

Maria Tortajada, “The Cinematographic Snapshot”/“Paradigm of the Continuous and the Discontinuous: The Notion of Instant” in *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemology in the Modern Era* Ed. Francois Albera and Maria Tortajada and trans. Lance Hewson (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2010), pp. 79-96

Week 5: Life, Environment and *Élan Vital*: From Bergson to von Uexkuell

Keith Ansell Pearson, “Bergson’s Encounters with Biology: Thinking Life” *Angelaki* 10:2, (2005): pp. 59–72

Jakob von Uexkuell, "Perception Time" in *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2010) trans. Joseph O'Neale with afterword by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, pp. 70-72

Jakob von Uexkuell, "Environment [Umwelt] and Inner World of Animals," trans. C. J. Mellor, D. Gove in Burghardt (ed.). *Foundations of Comparative Ethology* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold), pp. 222-245

Jakob von Uexküll, *Theoretical Biology*, 1926 [excerpt]

Alexis Carrel, "Physiological Time", *Science* Vol. 74, No. 1929 (Dec. 18, 1931), pp. 618-621; Lecomte du Nouy's *Biological Time* (New York: McMillan Company, 1937) [excerpt and Alexis Carrel, foreword, vii-vix]

[Suggested: Elizabeth Grosz, "Deleuze, Bergson and the Concept of Life" *Revue internationale de philosophie* 2007/3 (no. 241)]

Week 6: Cinema and Eternal Variability: German Bergsonians Georg Simmel and (Early) Georg Lukács

Georg Simmel, "Sociology of the Senses", excerpt and "The Berlin Trade Exhibition" in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, edited by David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 2000); short translated excerpts from his work on the philosophy of history [1905], Rembrandt [1916], Kant, naturalism and historical understanding referencing "living pictures," cinematography, panopticon wax pictures, stereoscopy, and instantaneous photography

Georg Lukács, "Thoughts toward an Aesthetic of the Cinema," [1911/1913] trans. Janelle Blankenship in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory*, ed. Anton Kaes, Nicolas Baer and Michael Cowan (University of California Press, 2015, pp. 377-380.

Janelle Blankenship, "Futurist Fantasies: Lukács's Early Essay 'Thoughts Toward an Aesthetic of the Cinema,'" *Polygraph* 13 [2001]: pp. 21-36.

Week 7: "The Plastic Form" and Photogénie: French Impressionism/Symbolism

Reading: Jean Epstein, "Magnification," *October* 3 (Spring 1977), 9-15; "On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie," *Afterimage* 10 (Autumn 1981), 20-23; "The Senses I (b)," *Afterimage* 10 (Autumn 1981), 9-16.

Edgar Allan Poe, "Fall of the House of Usher" (1839); Tom Gunning, "Loïe Fuller and the Art of Motion" in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida* ed. Richard Allen and Malcom Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 75-90

Jacques Rancière, “The Dance of Light: Paris, Folies Bergère, 1893“ pp. 93-109

Germaine Dulac “Visual and Anti-Visual Films,” trans. Robert Lamberton, in P. Adams Sitney (ed.), *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism* (New York, Anthology Film Archives, 1987): pp. 31-35.

[Suggested Reading: “Light, Motion, Cinema!: The Heritage of *Loïe Fuller* and Germaine Dulac” *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*: 46(2005), 1, S. 106 – 129];

Screening: Jean Epstein, *Fall of the House of Usher* (1928); Germaine Dulac *Thèmes et variations* (1929)

Week 8: Bergsonian Vitalism at the Bauhaus: *Miracle of Flowers*

Janelle Blankenship, “Film-Symphonie vom Leben und Sterben der Blumen”: Plant Rhythm and Time-Lapse Vision in Das *Blumenwunder*’, *Intermedialités* no. 16 (Autumn 2010), pp. 83–103

Rudolf Arnheim on the film’s interior world: Rudolf Arnheim, “Accelerated Motion” and “Slow Motion” in *Film as Art* [1932], Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006: 114-117

Ernst Bloch, “Decelerated Time, Accelerated Time, and Space”, in *Literary Essays*, trans. Andrew Joron and others [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998]: pp. 482-486

[Suggested Reading: Erwin Wolfgang Nack, “Mysteries of Plant Life on the Screen,” *Interciné: International Review of Educational Cinematography*, vol. 13, 1931, p. 636-668

Screening: *Miracle of Flowers* (1926)

Week 9: “Cellular Tissue” and “The Optical Unconscious” – Walter Benjamin

Walter Benjamin, “News about Flowers” trans. Michael Jennings. In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*. Vol. 2, 1927–1934, part 1, Ed. Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, Gary Smith (Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999). pp. 155–57.

Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in an Age of Technological [Mechanical] Reproducibility” [Second and Third Versions], *Selected Writings: 1935-1938* (Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002) Vol. 3: 101-133 and *Selected Writings: 1938-1940* (Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003) Vol. 4: 251-282

Weeks 10-12: “The Brain is the Screen”: Deleuze’s Bergsonism

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986)

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Gelata (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989)

Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1990) [excerpts]

Gilles Deleuze, “The Brain is the Screen: Interview with Gilles Deleuze on ‘The Time-Image’”. *Discourse* trans. Melissa McMahon Vol. 20, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 47-55.

D. N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997) [excerpts]

Valentine Moulard-Leonard “Cinematic Thought: Deleuzian Image and the Crystals of Time” in *Bergson-Deleuze Encounters: Transcendental Experience and the Thought of the Virtual* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), pp.

Elizabeth Grosz, “Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming” *parallax*, 2005, vol. 11, no. 2, 4–13

John Mullarkey, *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* [short excerpt]

[Suggested reading: Guy Fihman, “Deleuze, Bergson, Zénon d'Elée et le cinéma” in *Le cinéma selon Deleuze* Ed. Oliver Fahle and Lorenz Engell (Weimar/Paris: Verlag der Bauhaus-Universität/Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997) and Jimena Canales, “Movement before Cinematography: The High-Speed Qualities of Sentiment”, *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 3 (December 2006): 275-294.]

Week 13: “Nervous Magic Lantern”: Experimental Filmmaker Ken Jacobs’ Bergsonism

Reading: Michelle Pierson, “Jacob’s Bergsonism,” *Optic Antics: The Cinema of Ken Jacobs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 196-212.

Screening: *Nervous Magic Lantern* (Ken Jacobs, Spiral Nebula, 2005), *Anaglyph Tom* (2008: anaglyph with 3-D)