LMC 4730: Experimental Digital Art

Hip Hop-Based Design Thinking and Experimental Digital Art Across Music and Medium

Fall 2020, Tues/Thurs, 3:30 - 4:45 EST

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Office Hours: Thursday 12:00pm - 1:30 EST. Held virtually each week and by appointment

Prerequisites: (Undergraduate Semester level CS 1322 Minimum Grade of C or Undergraduate Semester level CS 1331 Minimum Grade of C) and (Undergraduate Semester level LCC 2100 Minimum Grade of C or Undergraduate Semester level LCC 2700 Minimum Grade of C or Undergraduate Semester level LMC 2700 Minimum Grade of C or Undergraduate Semester level LMC 2000 Minimum Grade of C)

Topical Course Description

Christiane Paul explains the curation of digital art as an engagement with a variety of aspects of the *production*, *presentation*, and *reception* of the work of art as it has been created through the use of digital technologies. The work of art can range from a painting, to a sculpture, to an album collection of music; all of which can be curated in a variety of environments: an online exhibit, a music streaming service, a virtual archive, or a public museum's digital installation.

Using the music produced by an artist as the access point for exploration and project design, this course interrogates these three facets of curation. In *Hip Hop-Based Design Thinking and Experimental Digital Art Across Music and Medium*, we will interrogate the ways in which cultural artifacts - such as, music, film, memes, gifs, video games, fan art, and interactive media - are *produced* and *presented/advertised* using digital technologies and modalities as tools of innovation and expression. We will also explore the idea of audience reception when digital technologies are applied.

The course is designed to interrogate relationships between popular culture and new media technologies; and to produce representational collections of art such as (but not limited to) album covers, music videos, films, photography, animation, concerts/festivals, and virtual reality experiences. We will investigate best practices as well as the challenges associated with ensuring *authenticity* and *impact* of an artist's work. The course also introduces students to hip hop-based design thinking as a pedagogical approach. Students will be expected to apply these approaches to projects analyzed and designed in the course.

Last, the course investigates the intersections of social justice, artistic representation, and the use of digital innovation as one of its outcomes, and assumes the creation of digital art as a cultural endeavor. Paired with assigned readings, screenings, and guest speakers, the course uses these artist "access points" as exemplary case studies , students will investigate the digital and social media campaigns (and the art created to represent it) of group-selected artists or films. Students will interrogate design challenges and analyze best practices employed through digital technologies to present and promote their selected campaign. Aside from the necessary skills in the software and computational media methodologies, which many of the students already have

based on the course prerequisites, students will become familiar with 7 universal elements of design called the OUTKAST Imagination. This will be done through an introduction to the cultural history of hip hop. In order to legitimately explore these campaigns, it is integral to include an interrogation of hip hop – its history, its innovations, challenges, sensibilities, elements, and norms, but more specifically its relationship to design, media art, popular culture, and "the digital".

Areas of focus include:

- The foundations of digital art; the technical aspects and aesthetics of digital art; understanding the nature of digital works, how to collect and manage digitized works such as art forms and media including but not limited to video games, photography, architecture, music and sound, dance, theater, photography, film, and other web and new media art.
- The history and innovation of hip hop culture, popular music, and the production of works of art using new media technologies
- The relationship between hip hop, popular culture, and digital art
- The use of hip hop-based design thinking as a cultural approach to the ideation, problem-solving, design process, and production of digital art created to express themes and ideas generated from music lyrics (ie album covers, short and long-form videos, film and animation, photography, concerts, meme culture, social media)
- Designing a fictitious digital art campaign for an existing artist.

Overall the course will diachronically examine music, film, and media collections as a curatorial model for representing digital art. Many artists will be presented as case "lessons" in order to focus on a particular issue, contribution, or how an artist's contribution may have created a cultural shift because of the application of digital technologies. Finally, the course is listed under the general topic of "Experimental Digital Art". Generally speaking, the course will examine ways in which forms and media of communication create and are created by other cultural constructs and impacted by digital technologies in order to create artifacts in areas ranging from augmented and mixed reality to scientific visualization. It will also examine significant movements, styles, and trends in digital art, emphasizing its key conceptual, formal, aesthetic and technical elements.

Course Aims

For major aims shape the structure of the course.

1. To use popular music and culture as the mode of representation for exploring the conceptual, speculative aesthetics, and technical elements of digital art.
2. To exit the course with a fundamental understanding of digital art. To draw on a rich dataset of media artifacts for analysis and enhance students' knowledge base of techniques for designing works of art that utilize digital technology as part of the creative process.
3. To provide students with a set of skills and tools for creating media products that intersect media, culture, and social impact. Particular attention is given to issues of representation, identity, authenticity, politics, memory, racism, class, and how works of art are curated through digital technologies to express these concepts.

4. To examine how music and music-centered artifacts serve as a medium for representing aspects of Black cultural expression and how they create and are created by other sociocultural constructs. Conceptualize experimental digital art as a pedagogy for facilitating voice, collaboration, inclusion, and resilience.
5. To understand digital art as the result of a creative process producing fixed creative works that are to be consumed and archived; as performances to be experienced and therefore memorialized through documentation and recording; as the result of an execution of an application that is shareable and remixable through media such as social media (ie meme culture).

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Through a series of modules, readings, guest lectures, and interactive activities students will have assignments that lead to opportunities to experiment with the design/manipulation of a variety of images digital art products

The learning outcomes of the course are:

Historical Analysis: Students will study cultural texts, screen documentary film, and interrogate examples of visual art to form a working definition of what digital art is, its relationship to culture, and ground its affordances within principles of design and curation.

Enhancement of Graphic Design Literacies: The films, reading, and assignments are designed to enhance the technical capacities of the students. Students will build upon their knowledge base with opportunities to experiment with illustration techniques, manipulation of images, animation, web design, the use of photography, video, and film, and modeling of virtual environments within physical environments like concerts. Students will apply the fundamentals of design with software such as Adobe Creative Suite

Media Production and Team-Building: Students will examine the legacies of contemporary and historical graphic designers and their impact. Students will work as part of a production team to learn the conceptual and technical elements of producing a digital art campaign aimed at having social impact. These projects will enhance their technical skills while also teaching them about organization, project management, communication, and the ethics of teamwork.

Enhancement of Social Justice Literacies. Graphic designers play a key part in producing artifacts that have long-term impact on the ways in which the social world is represented through the media. Students will engage in projects that can help facilitate their civic engagement capacities and social justice literacies as they are youth influencers living in a technological world. Students will understand Hip Hop culture as a pedagogy of inclusion and resilience, but also as a community of practice inclusive of geographical social networks such as Atlanta, Georgia, nuanced by localized, environmental traditions, and how the politics of space and place impact works of art.

GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Preparation:

Preparation. The course is delivered as an online seminar/studio course where lectures, assignments, and group breakout sessions are delivered and submitted asynchronously and

scheduled discussions are conducted in real time via Cisco Webex. We have an aggressive reading, writing, listening, viewing, and discussion schedule that you will be expected to ACTIVELY meet and participate in. You may also be assigned presentations as they relate to discussion topics, posts, and the final semester assignment.

An **open mind** is your most important tool for this course. Many of our topics will challenge your comfort zone and force you to be critical of the material and your thoughts on the material. But keep in mind that I don't care about what you think or how you feel. I only care about whether or not you can develop an informed opinion that is substantiated by the analysis, research, and overall scholarship. The number one rule is preparation. On days we meet, tap in on-time ready to participate. The number two rule is to push yourself out of your comfort zones as there will be many times the content and readings will challenge your thinking in new ways! In addition to the schedule attached, students may receive a weekly agenda preceding the next class meeting. This agenda will announce updates on readings, assignments, preparations, due dates, and any adjustments I have made to the schedule.

Attendance: Attendance is absolutely vital to your success in my class; a roll is circulated in every class period. If you have more than three unexcused absences, chronic tardiness, failure to have read enough to engage in the discussions, and other disruptions such as texting, talking on the phone, falling asleep I will consider this an absence and as apathy towards the class and the material. You will be marked absent for the day.

- *Reasons for absences*. The attendance policy does not make any distinction about the reasons for your absences. Only absences officially exempted by the Institute (e.g., due to participation in official GA Tech athletics, to religious observance, to personal or family crisis confirmed by documentation from the Dean of Students) will not be counted among your allotted absences. These exemptions are difficult to get.
- *Responsibility for missed work*. Students are responsible for finding out what they may have missed while absent from class and what policy the instructor has for making up missed work. However, if you are not present to participate in a group presentation or the final group production, you will fail the course.
- *Absence penalties*. Each additional absence after the allotted number deducts one-third of a letter grade from your final grade. Missing six (6) classes results in automatic failure of the class.

Think ahead. If you know in advance that you must miss a certain class meeting be sure not to miss more than three others. If you need to leave a class session early, please inform me before the start of the session and sit near the front of the room so that your departure can be minimally disruptive.

Personal Electronics: My preference is that you do not use devices such as laptops, tablets, etc. They are sometimes an interruption to the engagement of the materials and a distraction to discussions. On most days, you will be asked to put the machines away and utilize the required journal/sketchbook for the course. If you are found to be using a device for any purpose not necessary to the immediate conduct of the course, you will be marked absent for the day. If I ask you to put your device away, I expect you to graciously do so. **You may not, without my written consent, audio or video record lectures.**

All devices should remain on vibrate. If you are expecting an important call, remember to sit near the door so there is little to no interruption when you exit.

Social Media. You may be tempted to tweet, snapchat, or post on Instagram or Facebook about the course and the discussions. This is the perfect class to do so. However, I'd like for us to do this in a way that curates the posts in an easily-navigable way. **The IG/Twitter handle for the course is @hiphophighered. The hashtag is also #hiphophighered.**

Please note that the Georgia Tech policy requires you to wait twenty minutes for the instructor to arrive before concluding that the class is not meeting (this policy is included here primarily for your information).

Required Texts

The required text for this course is [Christiane Paul's Digital Art, Third Edition (2015) (Links to an external site.)](#) and [Context Provider: Conditions of Meaning in Media Arts (2011) (Links to an external site.)](#). We will also read [Sweat the Technique: Revelations on Creativity From a Lyrical Genius (Links to an external site.)](#). Supplementary chapters, journal articles, TED Talks, and commentaries will either be uploaded to Canvas, or you can find them online.

Required Materials

You will need to purchase a journal and/or sketchbook for in-class reflections, notetaking, and outlining of production notes. Please complete the software evaluation survey.

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Individual assignments

Design Discussion Posts (6 @10 points each)

Students are required to post a written, illustration, or video response to the course's discussion thread. These posts should be a paragraph. No more than two. A video should be no more than 3 minutes. For this assignment, the goal is to frame the assigned readings for the week by raising (but not necessarily answering) key questions, concerns, arguments, and positions taken by the author or producer of the film. These posts will either serve as discussions to close out the week or to help guide discussions for the upcoming seminar. Another approach you might take is to respond to another student's post. You might add to it, challenge it, but do not attack it.

Unless told otherwise, please post your response by 8am the Monday before class in order for it to count as your post for the week.

Group Assignments

2 Seminar Presentations (40 points)

We will set up a regular schedule a group will make a 15-minute presentation to the class. These are to be value-added presentations, by which I mean that you should bring in information and ideas that are directly related to but also complementary to the topic and reading of that class session, not duplicate the information and ideas in the readings. The best procedure is probably to do the reading for the session and thus find something you'd like to know more about or that

isn't discussed sufficiently (or perhaps at all) in the reading material. Do some research and work up a presentation for the class. If you would like suggestions of topics, I will be happy to provide some at any point. Please note that you are not required to inform me of your topic ahead of time, though you certainly may if you wish to.

You should include any visual or audio materials that will help you communicate your ideas and information, as you'll see me do, and you have the right to ask the class to do a short reading, viewing, or listening assignment as long as you can provide us with the material sufficiently ahead of time.

If something comes up and you need to be absent on a day you are supposed to make one of these kinds of presentations or one related to your project, you must make an arrangement with another student to exchange days and inform me of the change.

Media Project Case Study (20 points)

Teams will randomly select a popular artist(s) who has impact in their specific industry. Considering the use of digital art as a tool and as a medium for media projects, design teams will be required to curate a presentation that analyzes the digital art used to facilitate the overall marketing of an artist's project. The presentation must consider an examination of the cover art and its significance to the project; music videos, long-form videos, theme videos, and the digital manipulation or animation of images contained; fan art; photography, typography used, the images, and how they align with the project's theme. Who are the graphic designers and what information did you find about the approach they took and why? Consider the interactivity, presentation, and overall reception of the art through virtual or augmented reality and concert production if there is evidence that the artist used digital technologies as the medium. Is there evidence of a social media campaign? If so, what images were designed, what were the posting patterns, etc. The team's presentation should be between 15 and 20 minutes, include examples, and delivered through PowerPoint.

Producing an Artist's Digital Campaign – (30 points)

As a member of one of seven production design teams, students will produce a digital art campaign for a music/media artist – fictional or real. The campaign must begin with an understanding of the work of art through an analysis of his/her lyrics or story. From there the team is required to design new cover art (such as an album cover) that includes illustrations, photography, and typography; produce a 2-min video/trailer, and three social media memes that serve as a visual portal for the project's content. The team will design a website with no more than two pages for hosting the artist's project. The site will also serve as the template for submitting and presenting the final campaign. An exemplary campaign will integrate animation and be scaled for integration of virtual reality. The final presentation will focus on decisions, best practices, and challenges for ensuring authenticity of the project as well as impact.

GRADING SYSTEM

Lastly, do not underestimate the course as an "easy A" just because we will do things like analyze popular media texts, watch films, and listen to music. You will be expected to meet all of the set deadlines according to the assignments. You will be responsible and held accountable for the readings. You will be expected to submit your very best work without typos. That doesn't

mean that you have to write like Ernest Hemingway, incorporate metaphors like Toni Morrison, or design like Basquiat. But you WILL be expected to follow the assignment rubrics, consider my suggestions for improvement, and submit exemplary work. Work that meets the basic requirements of the assignment will mostly receive a grade of "C". **I reserve "A" and "B" for work that is distinctively high-quality content.**

I use a point-based grading system. These points are accumulated according to rubrics designated for each assignment. Your grade will be based on the following criteria.

Point Disbursements

Class Participation and Attendance	140 points
2 Virtual Design Presentations	40 points
Design Discussion Posts	60 points
Media Case Study	20 points
Final Project	30 points

Total Possible Points: 290

The Communication Center

The Communication Center is located in Clough Commons, Suite 447. It is an excellent resource for any student (undergraduate or graduate) who wants help with a communication-related project. You can visit the center for help at any stage of the process for any project in any discipline. The knowledgeable and friendly tutors are available to help you develop and revise your projects. They are not available to "fix" your projects. Please do not ask the tutors to proofread or edit your projects. For information on making an appointment please visit this website:

<[http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/make-appointment (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site. (Links to an external site.)](http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/make-appointment)>. If you need assistance with the appointment system, you can call 404-385-3612 or stop by the center. All services are free and confidential.

DILAC (Digital Integrative Liberal Arts Center)

DILAC is located in room 318 of Skiles Classroom Building, in a makerspace built to encourage individual work, discussion, critique, and collaboration. It is staffed for regular business hours and happy to assist you in developing project ideas, equipment use, or anything else you might need. There is a wide array of cutting-edge equipment, including GoPros, Arduinos, and all major VR platforms. DILAC also is equipped with powerful computers and the necessary software for high-level digital work. For more information such as hours of operation and equipment use, see [here (Links to an external site.)](#).

Students With Disabilities

Any student who feels that he/she may need an accommodation for any sort of disability, please make an appointment to see the instructor during office hours. Students with disabilities should also contact Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) to discuss reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor call (404) 894-2564 (voice) / (404) 894-1664 (voice/TDD) or visit Suite 210 in the Smithgall Student Services Building. For more information visit the following website: http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/. (Links to an external site.)

Academic Honesty

All work you turn in for this class must be your own work, with all outside reference sources properly cited and acknowledged.

The "Student Conduct Code of the Rules and Regulations" (Georgia Institute of Technology General Catalog, Section XIX) states, "Academic misconduct is an act that does or could improperly distort student grades or other student academic records" and offers the following descriptive list:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or verbal information in the preparation of any essay, laboratory report, examination, or other assignment included in an academic course;
- Substitution for, or unauthorized collaboration with, a student in the commission of academic requirements;
- Submission of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another person or persons, without adequate credit notations indicating authorship (plagiarism);
- False claims of performance or work that has been submitted by the claimant;
- Alteration or insertion of any academic grade or rating so as to obtain unearned academic credit;
- Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any institute document relating to the academic status of the student.

The Code continues, "While these acts constitute assured instances of academic misconduct, other acts of academic misconduct may be defined by the professor." Consult the Honor Code online at http://www.honor.gatech.edu/ or in the General Catalog to remember your primary commitment to academic honesty. Students who engage in academic dishonesty may receive a 0.0 on the assignment or fail the course. In addition, the instance will be reported to the Dean of Students who may take further action.

Module Schedule

The semester is divided into four TRACKS, each with its own set of modules. Each module includes lecture topics, readings, screenings, and assignments for the week. The dates in red indicate a class meeting on that particular day or week.