

Experimental Film and Video Summer 2026

Dr. Didem Pekün
didempekun@gmail.com



Maya Deren

Office Hours:

You can email me anytime, but allow me three working days (Mon-Fri) to respond (If I do not respond within a week, feel free to send another email).

Course Description:

The aims of the course are to foster an understanding of experimental film as a diverse form, with a range of styles and genres, to root this diversity in its various historical and social contexts, and to introduce students to some analytical tools appropriate for study of their own and other filmmakers' work. This is a semi survey semi practical course to familiarize students with the major movements, figures and pieces in the Experimental

Film and Video history. The course is formed of two sections; while the students will be informed of the history of the genre they will also make their own short experimental video. On first day of the week we will cover historical movements and theoretical discussions and the second day will focus on production.

Learning Outcomes

- Distinguish between, and critically evaluate, the principle 'modes' of experimental filmmaking.
- Be able to read an experimental film 'text' closely and write about how it communicates meaning.
- Understanding experimental film production in its social and historical context.

Assignments:

Presentations	30%
Participation to discussions and attendance	15%
Projects (due end of term)	55%

Presentations:

As of the second day of the second week of class, you will present a film / a filmmaker to the class assigned by the instructor. Your presentation should provide an introduction to the film, its filmmaker, and the circumstances surrounding its production. You should also explain the significance of this film to the historical avant-garde.

What makes this film / filmmaker important?

What is their philosophy with regards to 'experimenting with form'?

How do they respond to their specific political and social context, if they do?

Are some of the questions to explore in your presentations.

Please check your school email regularly.

Attendance counted.

If you want to suggest any changes to the screenings, discuss this with your instructor. Suggestions will be taken into consideration, but not necessarily implemented.

Course Material:

Main bibliography: (Most of the references below are in the library either as a hardcopy or ebook)

- London, Barbara, *Video Art; the First Fifty Years*
- Rees, A. L. *Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film*. London: Tate Gallery Pub., 2011.
- Rees, A. L. *A history of Experimental Film and Video*, London: BFI Publishing, 1999
- Sitney, P. Adams. *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–2000*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

- Turvey, Malcolm. *The Filming of Modern Life: European Avant-Garde Film of the 1920s*. October Books. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011.

WEEKLY TOPICS

Week 1 / 24 June 2026

Introduction to the Course

Production: Start thinking of a film project you'd like to do for this term. Team up.

Week 2 / 29 June 2026

A/ First Films, First Experiments

Reading: *A History of Experimental Film and Video* pp. 1-14

- Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." In *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Toby Miller and Robert Stam, 229–235. Malden, Mass. and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Viewing:

- *Dickson Camera Test* (Edison Manufacturing Company, USA, 1891)
- *Men Boxing* (Edison Manufacturing Company, USA, 1891)
- *Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze* (W. K. L. Dickson, USA, 1894)
- *Caicdeo King of Slack Wire* (W. K. L. Dickson, USA, 1894)
- *Annabelle Butterfly Dance* (W. K. L. Dickson, USA, 1894)
- *Athlete with Wand* (W. K. L. Dickson, USA, 1894)
- *Boxing Cats* (W. K. L. Dickson, USA, 1894)
- *The Kiss* (W. K. L. Dickson, USA, 1896)
- *Workers Leaving the Factory* (Auguste and Louis Lumière, France, 1895)
- *Demolition of a Wall* (Auguste and Louis Lumière, France, 1896)
- *Star Theatre* (American Mutoscope and Biograph, USA, 1901)
- *The Black Imp* (George Méliès, France, 1905)
- *Long Distance Wireless Photography* (George Méliès, France, 1905)

B/ Production: Schedules, writing a proposal, pre-production, shoot plan, conceptual elaboration.

Week 3 / 6 July 2026

A/ Dada and Surrealism

Reading:

- Turvey, "Dada, *Entr'acte* and *Paris, Qui Dort*" and "Surrealism and *Un Chien Andalou*."
- *A History of Experimental Film and Video* pp. 37-39

Viewing:

- *Entr'acte* (Rene Clair, France, 1924, 15 min.)
- *Anemic Cinema* (Marcel Duchamp, France, 1926, 7 min.)
- *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali, France 1927, 12 min.)
- *L'Age d'Or* (Luis Buñuel, France, 1930, 63 min.)
- *La Coquille et le Clergyman [The Seashell and the Clergyman]* (Germaine Dulac, France, 1928, 28 min.)

B/ Production: Start shooting. Present your project to the class.

Week 4 / 13 July 2026

Abstraction, Film, and the Machine

Reading:

- Turvey, “Abstraction and *Rhythmus 21*,” and “‘Cinema Pur’ and *Ballet Mechanique*.”

Viewing:

- *Rhythmus 21* (Hans Richter, Germany, 1923, 3 min.)
- *Symphonie Diagonale (Diagonal Symphony)* (Viking Eggland, Germany, 1924, 5 min.)
- *Retour a la Raison* (Man Ray, France, 1923, 3 min.)
- *Ballet Mecanique* (Fernand Leger, France, 1924, 19 min.)
- *Mechanical Principles* (Ralph Steiner, USA, 1929, 11 min.)
- *Philips Radio* (Joris Ivens, Netherlands, 1931, 36 min.)

B / Production: In class presentation of footage / projects.

Week 5 / 20 July 2026

Personal Camera

Reading

- Sitney, P. Adams. “*Meshes of the Afternoon* and Ritual and Nature.” In *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–2000*, 3–42. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Films

- *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Maya Deren, USA, 1943, 14 min.)
- *At Land* (Maya Deren, USA, 1944, 15 min.)
- *Study in Choreography for Camera* (Maya Deren, USA, 1945, 4 min.)
- *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (Maya Deren, USA, 1946, 15 min.)
- *Meditation on Violence* (Maya Deren, USA, 1948, 12 min.)
- *The Very Eye of Night* (Maya Deren, USA, 1958, 15 min.)

Production: Festivals / galleries and beyond of experimental films.
Exhibiting.

Week 6 / 27 July 2026

Video Art -

Reading: Barbara London, The First 50 years. Introduction

Viewing:

- *Undertone* excerpt (Vito Acconci, USA, 1972, 9 min.)
- *Vertical Roll* (Joan Jonas, USA, 1972, 20 min.)
- *Television Delivers People* (Richard Serra, USA, 1973, 6 min.)
- *Five-Minute Romp Through the IP* (Dan Sandin, USA, 1973, 5 min.)
- *Triangle in front of square in front of circle in front of triangle* (Dan Sandin, USA, 1973, 2 min.)
- *Female sensibility* (Lynda Bengalis, USA, 1973, 15 min.)
- *Boomerang* (Richard Serra/Nancy Holt, USA, 1974, 10 min.)
- *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (Dan Graham, USA, 1975, 23 min.)
- *Cycles of 3s and 7s* (Tony Conrad, USA, 1976, 3 min.)
- *Sweet Light* (Bill Viola, USA, 1977, 9 min.)
- *Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained* (Martha Rosler, USA, 1977, 39 min.)
- *Baldessari sings [Sol]* LeWitt (John Baldessari, USA, 1972, 4 min.)

Production: Rough cuts presentation

Week 7 / 3 August 2026

In class screening of final projects

11-12 August 2026

Organization of screening.