

Alliance to Advance Liberal Arts Colleges (AALAC)
Faculty Workshop 2024
Wellesley College

Proposed Workshop: Redesigning an Introductory Course to Film and Media Studies

Project Description:

Faced with the challenge of emerging media technologies, how does a liberal arts education provide undergraduate students with media literacy skills? Current debates about AI technologies, for instance, are only the most recent enactments of longstanding conversations about media technologies, industries, aesthetics, and ethics which are prominent to the field of film and media studies.

How should an introductory course account for both the proliferation of media practices as well as histories of media as diverse as photography, cinema, broadcast TV, video games, or digital platforms? What are the key terms for the study of film and media as we enter the second quarter of the 21st century? How might a critical studies course integrate creative media practices? Our proposed workshop probes such questions while bearing in mind issues of racial and gender inequality in media representations and industries.

The introductory course serves a diverse student population, fulfilling distribution requirements, drawing students into a new interdisciplinary academic field, and providing humanistic perspectives to topics covered in computer science, data science or engineering. The introductory course responds to keen interest in media technologies and aesthetics, historicizing present debates, enabling students to develop critical distance in their understanding, usage, and consumption of media, and to comprehend diversity of media experience across different cultures and communities. An introductory course in film and media needs to combine conversance with cutting edge scholarship and pedagogical awareness.

At different stages of our careers, we are all active scholars in various subfields, and members of departments that integrate critical studies with film and media production. This curricular integration speaks to a highly digitized student population and offers a productive pedagogical tool to develop media literacy skills. Our departments have turned the constraints of small faculty bodies, often three to four instructors, into an asset, creating laboratories for curricular innovation and versatility. We propose to bring our experience and expertise in a collaborative conversation that recognizes the urgency of updating the introductory course in film and media studies in the second quarter of the 21st century.

Three interconnected questions drive the workshop: 1) how to give students a comprehensive understanding of various media, bridging analog and electronic forms?; 2) how might an introductory course fulfill departments' mission of integrating critical studies and production?; and 3) what are the most impactful ways of designing an inclusive curriculum?.

The three-day workshop to be held at Wellesley in 2024 will include three panels centered on these questions, and two round tables led by keynote speakers with experience and investment in curricular design. The immediate result of the workshop will be a template syllabus to be implemented by

participating faculty in the 2024-2025 academic year. After participating faculty teach a first version of the course, a follow-up meeting will take place in 2025 at Swarthmore. In addition to immediate curricular development, we contemplate a corresponding textbook; we are in preliminary conversations with Routledge whose acquisition editor has expressed a keen interest in the project.

Liaison: Codruța Morari, Associate Professor of Cinema and Media Studies, Wellesley College

Organizers: Codruța Morari Wellesley College
Patricia White, Swarthmore College

Participating Departments and Faculty: The participating departments/programs propose majors that combine critical studies with production, offering either an integrated model or different tracks. Their curricula, despite different staffing configurations, include both film and new media studies courses, as well as a more broadly comparative media studies focus.

Cinema and Media Studies Program, Wellesley College

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