

HSAR 705b, FILM 810b

**Beyond Repetition:
Saturation, Location, and Trajectory in Art and Media**

David Joselit and Francesco Casetti

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W. 9.25-11.15; Loria 358

Repetition is one of the most common, and yet misunderstood strategies of modernist art and cinema. As Gilles Deleuze insists in his important book of 1968, *Difference and Repetition*, the goal of repetition is usually not the multiplication of the same but the marking of difference. This class will be devoted to tracking those image strategies—saturation, location, and trajectory—by which the “same” visual content accomplishes different effects, through its circulation. The term saturation suggests quantity within circulation; location suggests the question of circulatory spaces and trajectory indicates the movement, or performance of individual images. We seek to establish an aesthetic theory of circulation through the careful development of these terms. Each week philosophical and aesthetic readings will be assigned as well as study of works of art and cinema.

Course requirements:

Regular attendance and active participation in discussions are required (40% on final grade)

A paper (15-25 pages in length) whose topic should be chosen in consultation with Professors Casetti and Joselit

1/11: Introduction

1/18: Repetition: or the game is open, the game is over

Starting from a re-reading of Freud’s classical *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, we will explore the multifaceted nature of repetition – going to the heart of the term: the very conflict of life and death. Examples from World Wide Web.

Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1950)

1/25: *Beyond my own voice: the Aesthetics of collage*

Art and media are often associated with an idea of “fidelity”-- fidelity to an intention, to a style, to a specific event or materiality. This session will explore practices such as collage and bricolage, in which a plurality of voices and texts merge and mingle. Examples: mash-up trailers

Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel”, in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 260-300

2/1: *Is the aura still living? Or the re-enchantment of the world*

We will re-read Benjamin’s classical text against the grain: not as a goodbye to the aura, but as a premise for its return. The “homage” by Gus Van Saint to Hitchcock’s masterpiece, *Psycho*, will drive us to a rediscovery of the “authenticity” in the world of inauthentic.

Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Second Version, in Walter Benjamin, *Work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility, and other writings on media*, (Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, eds., Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

2/8: *Circulation and appropriation: strategies in reading*

We will explore the very notion of “reading,” as inflected by a tension between respect toward the text and a need of interpretation – and moreover, a desire of appropriation. Reading is the basis of writing, in an endless circularity.

Michel de Certeau, “Reading as Poaching”, in *The Practices of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 165-176

2/15: *Repetition as relocation: the film theatre and the museum*

A peculiar form of repetition is to give a text or an artwork a second *place*. What does “the same” mean in a new environment?

André Malraux, *Museum without walls*

2/22: *Repetition as a new start*

Sometimes, to revisit an older text means to give it not only a new audience, but also the possibility of a new life, totally different from the previous one. There are film series that, instead to expand the story through prequels and sequels (Star Wars), re-read and re-start the narrative, exploring new paths (Rambo).

Robert Stam, "Introduction. The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," in Robert Stam, Alessandra Raengo, *Literature and Film. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2005), pp. 1-52; Francesco Casetti, "Adaptations and Misadaptations: Film, Literature, and Social discourses", in R. Stam, A. Raengo (eds), *A Companion to Literature and Film* (Malden, Oxford, Blackwell, 2005), pp. 81-91

2/29: *Beyond Reproduction of the Social: The Aesthetics of Waste*

This session will address "non-productive" forms of repetition, through an emphasis on the reiteration of mass produced products in assemblages that emphasize waste, the traces of use, and even ecological disaster

Marx, *Capital*, volume 2

Walter Hopps, ed, *Kienholz: A Retrospective* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art; in association with D.A.P. Publishers, 1996), pp. 24-53

Readings on Isa Genzken

3/21: *Repetition and Comedy*

Building on the model of repetition as a non-productive supplement, this week, inspired by Henri Bergson's association of laughter with repetition, we will explore its comic potential to "shame" its targets out of asocial mechanistic or automatic behavior, and back into a sense of the living, of the communal.

Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (London: MacMillan, 1911)

Joselit essays on Sherrie Levine and *Painting as Travesty*

3/28: *Biological Repetition: Siblings*

Juliet Mitchell has argued for a "lateral" form of psychoanalytic theory that favors the replicative model of the sibling as opposed to the vertical Oedipal model that privileges above all the relationship between parent and child. This form of lateral repetition/replication is the subject of this week's class

Juliet Mitchell, *Siblings* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), pp. ix-xvi; 1-31

Lisa Tickner, "Mediating Generation: The Mother-Daughter Plot," in Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher, eds *Women Artists at the Millennium* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 87-120

Mignon Nixon, "o+x," *OCTOBER* 119 (Winter 2007): 6-20

4/4: *Repetition as Subjectivity*

Subjectivity, as Judith Butler influentially argued, is constantly reiterated through its embodied “performance.” We are subjects because of our compulsion to repeat.

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 79-150

Judith Butler, “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion,” in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 121-140

Texts on Cindy Sherman and Ryan Trecartin

4/11: Rerouting Repetition: Rancière and the Redistribution of Senses

Rancière has influentially argued that social change must come through an interruption of the kind of performative repetition that Butler identifies as the core mechanism of subjectivity. His model for doing so is the “redistribution of the senses” which is closely related to the return to “affect” that many contemporary artists and critics have identified.

Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 7-47

Texts on Matthew Barney

4/18: Repetition as Postcolonial Alterity

Alterity signifies a different break within repetition: an encounter with an incommensurable other. As with laughter according to Bergson, Michael Taussig argues that such traumatic alterity is met with forms of recuperative repetition, what he calls in the title of an important book, *Mimesis and Alterity*.

Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (Routledge: New York, 1993)

Texts on Colecott, Yinka Shonibare