ENWR 3640: Remix Culture

Location | Time | Fall 2017
Instructor: Dr. Steph Ceraso
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Office Hours: TBD & by appointment

"As an artist you're only as good as your archive."

-Paul D. Miller (a.k.a. DJ Spooky), *Sound Unbound*

Course Description:

Videos made of other videos. Songs made of other songs. Memes. Photoshop Collages. Unless you live under a rock, it's hard to go a day without encountering media that could be described as a remix. But have you ever thought about remixing as an art form? A political act? A philosophy?

In this course we will explore the remix as a transformative compositional practice. Remixing is literally a kind of re-vision—a way of re-seeing and re-making the world around us. Though remixes are often associated with digital culture, the concept of remixing is part of a long artistic tradition that includes a range of pre-digital experimental art and literature (e.g. Pablo Picasso and James Joyce could be considered "old school" remix artists). Together we will examine the act of remixing through theoretical, historical, aesthetic, and political lenses to cultivate a deep understanding of the rhetorical and affective power of this genre. We'll wrestle with questions like: How does remix culture complicate notions of authorship, originality, and creativity? What are the ethical and legal implications of creating things out of other people's creations? Why does remix culture matter?

While your other writing courses may have warned you about the consequences of plagiarism, this course invites you to PLAYgiarize (a term coined by Raymond Federman). That is, you will be combining and manipulating pre-existing media in ways that allow you to express new ideas and arguments. You get to participate in remix culture all semester by producing different kinds of remixes with text, audio, images, material objects, and video. No previous experience with digital editing software is necessary. Beginners welcome!

What You'll Learn How to Do

-identify, describe, and apply key theories, concepts, and techniques of remix culture
-make connections between remixing practices and more traditional writing practices (e.g. revision, thesis statements, developing arguments, transitions)
-design and produce original remix projects for different audiences using various technologies (e.g. digital audio and video editors)
-assess your own and your peers' work in written reflections and discussions
-collaborate with peers to develop small and large-scale projects
-recognize the value of remix as a powerful form of argument and expression

Course Texts:
-*Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling* by Eduardo Navas
-Additional readings and media will be provided as links or PDFs

Learning Activities [detailed guidelines for each assignment will be provided in class]

Participation: 20%

> This course provides you with the opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss readings and media, and assess your own and your peers' projects as they progress. You will also do a lot of informal writing. For instance, every other week you will contribute entries to our "DIY Remix Handbook," a collaborative google doc that will serve as a space to describe, explain, and share how you taught yourself to use particular technologies, apply remix techniques, etc. Participating actively in this course is crucial because doing so will allow you to develop and expand your capacities as a thinker and composer, and help to provide a lively, collaborative learning experience.

Culture Jamming Cut-Up: 10%

> Using the remix technique of *détournement*, your task is to sample and remix a message from the mass media in order to subvert its meaning. This project must be created with paper or cardboard materials (print advertisements, cereal or toy boxes, greetings cards, pamphlets, etc.). In an artist statement, describe and explain the choices you made as a remix artist and how your decisions changed the meaning, message, and/or tone of the original media.

Song/Speech Mashup: 20%

> This project invites you to demonstrate your knowledge of remix theory and sampling. In 3 minutes or less, create an audio mashup that includes a well-known speech and a song of your choice. Experiment with different combinations of music and various soundbites from the speech until you find a combination that is interesting and provocative. Reflect in an artist statement about why you chose to manipulate the music and speech in this way, as well as how your mashup alters/intensifies the meaning or tone of the original media you used.

1 Minute Video Remix: 20%

> Respond to and/or critique a popular TV show by composing a 1 minute remix out of footage from that show. You might focus your remix on a particular theme of the show, or point out a problematic pattern or idea. There is one creative constraint: all visuals must come from the show (you cannot use any outside videos to enhance your remix). However, you may add any music or sound you wish. In your artist statement, you will explain your compositional choices and their effects, and discuss any readings or examples that you used as inspiration.

"UVA Remixed" Project: 30%

> Working in teams of 4, create a textual, audio, and video remix based on an issue that matters to UVA students. While all three parts of the project must be about the same issue, they should not all make the same argument; rather, each kind of remix should focus on different angles of the issue. In addition to writing a collaborative artists' statement, teams will present their work at an end-of-semester "Remix Showcase." This public event will be attended by a panel of judges that will evaluate each team's work and performance. Stay tuned for details!

Course Schedule

Week 1: What Counts as a Remix?

Tuesday:
-In-Class Activity: create a remix out of materials I provide you with; come up with a preliminary definition of remix based on what you made

Thursday [bring laptop!]:
-In-Class Activity: "writing sprints" based on responses to short video excerpts (from "Embrace the Remix" + "Everything Is a Remix")

Week 2: Kickin it Old School (a.k.a. Historical Perspectives)

Tuesday:
Homework:
-"William S. Burroughs' Cut-Ups" (from Language is a Virus)
-Key Word Descriptions: playgiarism, *détournement*
-In-Class Activity: create your own cut-ups out of the provided magazines and newspapers and be prepared to discuss your process/method with the class

Thursday:
Homework:
-learn about 1 "old school" remix artist [you may choose from the list or come up with your own] and find at least 1 example of their work to bring to class
-In-Class Activity: teach your group about the remix artist you researched, show an example remix or two, and explain why your examples count as remix

Week 3: Is Authorship Dead?

Tuesday:
Homework:
-"Death of the Author," Roland Barthes
-*Remix Theory* (Ch4), Eduardo Navas

-In-Class Activity: Imagined Dialogue: Barthes v. Navas

Thursday:
Homework:
-"The Ecstasy of Influence," Jonathan Lethem
-*Remix Theory* (Ch3), Eduardo Navas
-In-Class Activity: with your group, create "new" and improved statements about remix using the handout of quotes based on the remix theorists we've read so far

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Week 4: Culture Jamming Exhibit

Tuesday:
Due: Culture Jamming Cut-Up + Artist Statement
-In-Class Activity: create gallery of cut-up projects in classroom; write responses to peers' projects on comment cards

Thursday [bring earbuds + laptop!]:
Homework:
-download and install Audacity; watch at least 5 audio editing tutorials [from lynda.com]
-In-Class Activity: intro to Audacity; create a voicemail message out of audio samples

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Week 5: Something Borrowed, Something New

Tuesday:
Due: Entry in DIY Handbook
Homework:
-"In Through the Out Door," Paul Miller
-*Remix Theory* (Introduction, Ch1, + Ch2), Eduardo Navas
-In-Class Activity: TBD

Thursday:
Homework:
"Music as a Controlled Substance," + "The Crisis of Configurability," Aram Sinnreich
-In-Class Activity: TBD

Week 6: What the $%!# Is Plunderphonics?

Tuesday:
Homework:
-"Some Kid in His Bedroom: The Artist/Audience Binary," Aram Sinnreich
-"Plunderphonics, or Audio Piracy as a Compositional Prerogative," John Oswald
-Wikipedia entry for Plunderphonics
-In-Class Activity: analyze the plunderphonics example assigned to your group [use handout questions to guide your discussion]

Thursday [bring earbuds and laptops!]:
-In-Class Activity: Peer Workshop (bring draft of song/speech mashup)

Week 7: Song/Speech Mashups!

Tuesday
Due: Entry in DIY Handbook
-In-Class Activity: team assignments for "UVA Remixed" project

Thursday
Due: Song/Speech Mashup + Artist Statement
-In-Class Activity: listen to and discuss mashups

Week 8: Re-Vision Video Workshop

Tuesday:
-In-Class Activity: Clemons Library Workshop on Video Editing

Thursday:
-In-Class Activity: Mid-term class evaluation

Week 9: Is Sampling a Crime?

Tuesday:
Due: Entry in DIY Handbook
Homework:
-Watch "RiP: A Remix Manifesto" (documentary)
-Wikipedia Entry on "Copyleft"
-"Measuring Fair Use"
-In-Class Activity: work on fair use case studies questions with groups

Thursday:
Due: Proposal and Project Management Plan
-In-Class Activity: TBD

Week 10: Copyright or Copyleft?

Tuesday:
Homework:
-"Playing with Plagiraism: Remixing What Sticks," Dustin Edwards
-"Copyright and American Culture," Siva Vaidhyanathan
-In-Class Activity: Stand Where You Stand Debate: Copyright v. Copyleft

Thursday:
Homework:
-"Plagiarism, Originality, Assemblage," J. Johnson-Eilola and S.A. Selber
-In-Class Activity: peer teaching: video editing group work

Week 11: 1 Minute TV Remixes!

Tuesday:
Due: Entry in DIY Handbook
-In-Class Activity: "UVA Remixed" project team meetings

Thursday:
Due: 1 Minute Video Remix + Artist Statement
-In-Class Activity: watch and discuss video remix projects

Week 12: What Makes Something Go Viral?

Tuesday:
Homework:
-"What Is Convergence Culture?" + "If It Doesn't Spread Its Dead," Henry Jenkins
-"Composing for Recomposition: Rhetorical Velocity and Delivery," Jim Ridolfo and Danielle Devoss
-In-Class Activity: viral media analysis + meme creation

Thursday:
Homework:
-"Composition and the Circulation of Writing," John Trimbur
-In-Class Activity: mapping the relationship between remix and writing

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Week 13: "UVA Remixed" Workshops

Tuesday:
Due: Entry in DIY Handbook
-In-Class Activity: revision exercise—bring one of your team's remixes in to work on during class

Thursday:
-In-Class Activity: peer review—bring one of your team's remixes in for feedback (it should not be the same remix you used in Tuesday's workshop)

Week 14: What Is a Hacktivist?

Tuesday:
Homework:

-"The Rise of Hacktivism," Dorothy Denning
-"The Soul of the New Hacktivist," Somini Sengupta
-In-Class Activity: TBD

Thursday:
Homework:
-"The Brilliant Life and Tragic Death of Aaron Swartz," David Amsden
-Watch "The Internet's Own Boy" (documentary)
-In-Class Activity: film discussion

Week 15: "UVA Remixed" Meetings

Tuesday:
-No Class: Team meetings with Dr. Ceraso + showcase preparation

Thursday:
-No Class: Team meetings with Dr. Ceraso + showcase preparation

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Week 16: What Counts as a Remix? (Take 2)

Tuesday:
-In-Class Activity: repeat definition activity from first day of class; final details for showcase

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Finals Week: Remix Showcase + "UVA Remixed" Projects Due!

Course Policies and Resources

Attendance
Much of the learning that occurs in a seminar happens in the classroom, so it's essential that you be present in order to participate fully. All students are allowed **two absences** during the term for illness or personal leave; there's no need to contact me or provide excuses as long as you stay within this two-class limit. Missing your third class without a documented excuse (such as a doctor's note) will result in a half-grade penalty to your final grade (e.g. If you have an "A" and miss 3 classes your grade would automatically drop to a "A-").

Grades
You can find information about the UVA scale for "ENWR Grading" here:
http://its.virginia.edu/sis/grading/gradethresholds.html

Assistance
Your success in this class is important to me. If there are any circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so we can work together to develop strategies that address your needs and enable you to meet the requirements of the course. I am always happy to assist you in any way I can. If you are in need of official university learning accommodations, please email the Student Disability Access Center at SDAC@virginia.edu.

Academic Integrity
Because this course is based on playgiarism, it's nearly impossible to cheat. We will be talking about the ethics of sampling and citation all semester long, so what is not acceptable should become very clear to you well before the first graded assignment. However, I'm always happy to answer specific questions about your work as they come up. If you are unsure about what constitutes academic fraud at UVA, see the Honor Committee's statement here: http://www.virginia.edu/honor/what-is-academic-fraud-2/.

Clemons Media Library
This is a great place to go to talk to staff who have training in audio and video editing programs. You can set up individual consultations (we will be doing a group workshop on video editing at Clemons, too). You can also reserve rooms for group projects (like "UVA Remixed"). I highly recommend familiarizing yourself with the available resources at Clemons: http://cal.lib.virginia.edu/booking/dml.

Writing Center
The Writing Center, located in 314 Bryan Hall, provides experienced tutors who will work with you individually by discussing drafts of your projects in detail. You can set up an appointment or check availability using the online scheduler: https://virginia.mywconline.com/.