

Proposal for NOVA FCSH: Epigraphic Essay Film (or Video Essay) Workshop

September 27, 2019. Morning session: 10h30-12h30 and afternoon session: 14h00-16h00.

The essay film often approximates the literary form of the essay through filmic means, that is, as scholar Laura Rascaroli has argued, through formal audiovisual mechanisms and methods in an *interstitial* manner. In this workshop we will experiment with making mini essay-films—short-form digital video essays for online distribution—in service of the discipline of film and moving image studies *interstitially*, in ways that likewise turn on an “art of gaps.” For this purpose, we will marry some of the techniques of digital found-footage filmmaking (or remix) with those of an emergent, caption-based, narrational technique, that of the “epigraphic video.”

In written discourse, epigraphs are usually short excerpts (mostly quotations) from other texts that are set at the beginning of a book, a chapter or an essay. Some writers utilize quotations very productively to focus themselves, or their readers, toward the theme, purpose, or concerns of the work in quite *open* and often *poetic* ways. But the notion of the epigraph comes from the Greek word *epigraphēin*, meaning “to write on,” and, recently, epigraphic forms have been taken up, *inter alia*, in audiovisual film and media studies in literal ways, with quotations set as captions or subtitles directly on, or over, the media forms being explored, often with open or poetic framing effects. There are some examples of these new “epigraphic” practices online here for you to explore: <https://vimeo.com/album/5800359>.

In the morning session of the workshop, Catherine Grant will explore her own approaches to these practices, sharing her editing techniques and thought processes with you.

During the afternoon workshop sessions, we would like you to make your own very short “epigraphic” video (or essay film) on any subject. We will give more detailed instructions, guidelines and supervision for this exercise during the sessions. But the basic brief for the exercise is given below. In the run up to the workshop, we suggest you do the following:

1. Locate and preferably rip or capture some of the audiovisual material you may like to work with (you can use the free software Handbrake to rip from DVDs (download it freely from <https://handbrake.fr>, or screen capture programmes to copy material (see the list of free software here: <https://www.techradar.com/uk/news/the-best-free-screen-recorder>), or the free programme ClipGrab (available here: <https://clipgrab.org>), to download it from web video hosting sites (you can download directly from the Internet Archive, of course: <https://archive.org>);
2. Or you can refilm your material using any kind of video camera;
3. Bring the sequence with you on a USB stick. The workshop classroom computers will be equipped with Final Cut Pro. But you may like to experiment with editing software on your own computers. Some free programmes are listed here: <https://www.techradar.com/uk/best/the-best-free-online-video-editor>; here: <https://www.techradar.com/uk/best/best-video-editing-software-premium-free#the-best-free-video-editors>; and here: <https://www.techradar.com/uk/best/best-video-editing-software-premium-free>.

At the afternoon sessions of the workshop, working alone or in pairs, you will create a 2 minute-long “epigraphic” video essay. To do this, you will have to edit together an audiovisual sequence composed of pre-existing audiovisual material (say, from a film or films) and a short quotation from a written text. The quotation should not refer specifically to the sequence/artefact. You will work—using video editing software or desktop documentary or other “time-based” digital capture techniques—to make the quotation appear onscreen in some dynamic and productive interaction with the sequence - before, during or after it. The completed work should also include closing credits in which you acknowledge your sources. It will be exported ready for screening preferably as a .mov or .mp4 file. Possible techniques for the whole exercise will be demonstrated at the workshop.