

University of Calgary  
Department of Communication, Media and Film

FILM509 L01/COMS 643 S01  
ADVANCED SPECIAL TOPICS IN FILM STUDIES/METHODS IN FILM STUDIES:  
**MICROHISTORY AS MEDIA HISTORY –  
THE CASE OF VACHEL LINDSAY**  
WINTER 2020

**WEEK 10 REVISION: REMOTE EDITION**  
**\*revised sections on page 2, with headers in this font**

**Instructor:** Ryan Pierson  
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**Web Page:** <http://D2L>  
**Office Hours:** By Skype appointment

### Course Description

This course will take steps toward constructing a “microhistory” of the first book of film theory, Vachel Lindsay’s *The Art of the Moving Picture*. Published in 1915, just as the feature film was beginning to take hold of cinemas, this book briefly gained some attention, but its fortunes soon fell as the fortunes of the movies rose. Today, the book is considered a curiosity and seldom studied. We will work through the book’s (many) curiosities, asking what they reveal about the culture in which Lindsay was writing and thinking.

### Objectives of the Course

In the process of limning the contours of Vachel Lindsay’s world, and using that to discern the contours of the larger historical world from which he drew, students will gain fluency with:

- the history of early film culture (and turn-of-the-century middle class culture more generally)
- how to parse a work of aesthetic and political theory: figuring out how a theorist thinks, what their characteristic moves and concerns are, what to do with apparent inconsistencies of thought, etc.
- the work of doing microhistory, as a craft of research and storytelling: what can narrowing our historical focus tell us about a time or place?

### Textbooks and Readings

Our books for the course will be:

Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (a recent paperback is available from Penguin Random House, but as our “Bible” for pagination we will be referring to the 1916

MacMillan edition, available scanned on archive.org:

<https://archive.org/details/artofmovingpictu00lind/page/n6>

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Miller*

Allan Langdale, ed., *Hugo Münsterberg on Film: The Photoplay and Other Writings*

Supplementary readings will be available on D2L.

### **Communication**

I will still be available by email, and will respond to all emails by the end of the next business day. I will also be available for appointments by Skype for conversations. Email me and I will offer my Skype handle.

### **Summary of new course content delivery**

Course content for each week will still be available on D2L, and will still be required.

### **Assignments and Evaluation (revisions in bold headers)**

#### **Presentation, 20% (ongoing)**

“Presentations” will take place as discussion board posts, for each given week, on the course material for the week. These can be as elaborate as you want (with slides, pictures, etc.), but they should be the equivalent of a 10-15 minute presentation. These will be due at regular Wednesday class time, 11:30 a.m.

#### **Reading responses + participation, 40% (weekly)**

Since the point of the reading responses was to generate discussion, and discussion is now taking place online, these two assignments have been folded into the same category. Simply post a response to the week’s “presentation” post. These posts need to be 300+ words. Due the following Monday, 11:30 a.m.

#### **Essay proposal, 10% (due April 1)**

Instead of conference-style presentations, students will submit a proposal for their essays. The proposal should detail the topic/area the essay will cover, a sense of what the argument is expected to be, and what sources the essay will be using. These proposals should be roughly a half-page to 1.5 pages in length. They should also contain a tentative bibliography.

Final project (Apr. 20), 30%

Your major assignment for this course needs to perform some kind of sustained historiographic work related to the course topic. This may take the form of a research paper in which you make a historical argument about Vachel Lindsay’s thought; it may be a more theoretical paper that reflects on problems of film and media historiography more generally. Such work may also take other forms, like an annotated bibliography or a database. If you decide to take one of these less orthodox routes, it is important that you approach me early in the term, so that we can decide on the parameters for the assignment and appropriate criteria for evaluating your work. Expectations for this assignment will differ from undergraduate students to graduate students.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** NO

**Submission of Assignments: Weekly assignments will be submitted via D2L. Proposals and papers will be submitted via email.** Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

#### **Policy for Late Assignments**

For late assignments, one-third of a letter grade will be subtracted from the assignment for each 24-hour period.

#### **Student Accommodations**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/). Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

#### **Expectations for Writing**

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface

correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

### **Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film**

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using letter grades.

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

<b>Grade Point Value</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Department grade scale equivalents</b>	<b>Letter grade % equivalent for calculations</b>
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A-	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good—clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail - unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

## Graduate Grading System

Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Faculty of Graduate Studies:

Grade	Grade Point Value	Graduate Description
A+	4	Outstanding
A	4	Excellent - superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.
A-	3.7	Very good performance
B+	3.3	Good performance
B	3	Satisfactory performance
B-	2.7	Minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies
C+	2.3	All grades below "B-" are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted toward Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements. Individual programs may require a higher passing grade.
C	2	
C-	1.7	
D+	1.3	
D	1	
F	0	

### Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student>

[success/writing-support](#) or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to [https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm\\_source=ssc&utm\\_medium=redirect&utm\\_campaign=redirect](https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect)

### **Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation**

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright ([www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf)) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

### **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### **Research Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

### **Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal**

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

### **Student Support Services and Resources**

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health

Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at [itsupport@ucalgary.ca](mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca) or by calling 403-220.5555.

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS:

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Week 1 (Jan. 13 & 15):

**What is Vachel Lindsay's theory of film?**

Read:

Lindsay, AMP

Week 2 (Jan. 20 & 22):

**What is Vachel Lindsay's theory of film? (cont'd)**

Read:

Lindsay, AMP

Week 3 (Jan. 26 & 29):

**What is microhistory?**

Read: Ginzburg, CW (chapters 1-32 for Jan. 26; chapters 33-62 for Jan. 29)

Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory"

Week 4 (Feb. 3 & 5):

**1910s cinema culture: the transitional era**

Read:

Charlie Keil, "A Story and Unified in Its Action: The Demands of Narrative"

Ryan Pierson, "Boredom and Visions in Vachel Lindsay's Film Theory"

Week 5 (Feb. 10 & 12):

**Lindsay and class: Progressivism**

Read:

Luckett, CC introduction and chapter 1

Barbara & John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class"

Poems by Lindsay: "General William Booth Enters into Heaven"; "Springfield Magical"; "King Arthur's Men Have Come Again"; "To Reformers in Despair"; "Why I Voted the Socialist Ticket"

Harriet Monroe, "Introduction to *The Congo and Other Poems*"

Week 6 (Feb. 16 & 19):

TERM BREAK, NO CLASSES

Week 7 (Feb. 25 & 27):

**Lindsay and “Little Magazines”**

Read:

Kirsten MacLeod, *American Little Magazines* (excerpts)  
Lindsay, *War Bulletin* #3; *The Village Magazine*

Week 8 (Mar. 3 & 5):

**Lindsay and race**

Read:

Beth Corzo-Duchardt, “Primitivism and National Distinction: The Jeffersonian Legacy in Vachel Lindsay’s Film Theory”  
Rachel Plau DuPlessis, “Hoo Hoo Hoo: Some Episodes in the Construction of Modern Whiteness”  
Lindsay, “These Ten Lectures...”; “The Congo”; “A Poem on the Negro”; “A Letter and an Answer”  
W.E.B. DuBois, “The Looking Glass”

Week 9 (Mar. 9 & 11):

**The Arts and Crafts movement I: decoration and architecture**

Read:

Christopher Long, “Ruskin’s Two Paths and the Arts and Crafts Movement”  
Anna Nau, “Ruskin, Morris, and the Arts and Crafts Idea”  
Lindsay, “Ruskin Revival”

Week 10 (Mar. 16 & 18):

**The Arts and Crafts movement II: literature and utopianism**

Read:

John Freeman-Moir, “Crafting Experience: William Morris, John Dewey, and Utopia”  
Ron Sakolsky, “Utopia at Your Doorstep: Vachel Lindsay’s *Golden Book of Springfield*”  
William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (excerpts)  
Lindsay, *The Golden Book of Springfield* (excerpts)

Week 11 (Mar. 23 & 25):

**The “New Localism”**

Read:

Lockett, CC chapters 4 & 5  
Martin Johnson, “Every Town Has Its Main Street: the Banal Localism of the Civic Film”  
Lindsay, “The New Localism: An Illustrated Essay for the Village Statesman”



Week 12 (Mar. 30 & Apr. 1):  
SCMS CONFERENCE, NO CLASS

Week 12 (Apr. 6 & 8):

**Lindsay and the museum**

Read:

Peter Decherney, "Vachel Lindsay, Nationalism, and the Universal Film Collection"

Andrew Yale, "Versatile Media, Poetic Elasticity: Vachel Lindsay's Aesthetics of

Design"

Lindsay, introduction to 1922 edition of *The Art of the Moving Picture*

Week 13 (Apr. 13 & 15):

**Writing week**

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE APRIL 20**