IS 289: Home Movies
Spring 2019
SYLLABUS

Class meetings
Thursdays, 5:30-9:00 PM
GSE&IS Room 121

Instructor
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Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00-5:00 PM
(or by appointment – phone/Skype also OK!)

Movie watchers, ca. 1965. Photographer unknown.

Course Description
Summary of technological and social history of home movies and amateur media, with particular emphasis on small-gauge film formats. Provides basic hands-on training in identification, care and handling, and digitization techniques for small-gauge film and analog video formats. Additional topics include evolving role of amateur recordings in society and in media preservation landscape; copyright, privacy, and ethical issues specific to home movies; metadata, description, and access challenges for noncommercial media collections; and unique aesthetics and constraints of various consumer recording formats.

Course Goals and Objectives
Students in this class will gain technological, social, and historical perspectives on amateur films as they have been made throughout the 20th century. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

• Identify and assess the physical condition of the most commonly used amateur film and video formats
• Understand basic preservation needs of film and video materials
• Evaluate the legal, ethical, privacy, and interpretive issues unique to amateur media
• Demonstrate familiarity with major collections and individual examples of historical home movies
• Understand how home movies may be preserved and presented in different ways: as part of the historical record, as sources of data and evidence, and as a form of personal record-keeping
• Assess, research, and make recommendations for physical care and research access to specific collections of home movies
**Required texts**

There is no required textbook for this course; however, we will have assigned readings/viewings for each week as indicated.

**Web sites and online resources**

One hundred years of film sizes. [http://www.xs4all.nl/~wichm/filmsize.html](http://www.xs4all.nl/~wichm/filmsize.html)
The Film Preservation Guide. [http://www.filmpreservation.org](http://www.filmpreservation.org)
Timeline of Historical Film Colors. [http://zauberklang.ch/filmcolors/](http://zauberklang.ch/filmcolors/)

I also recommend the following texts if you wish to use the occasion of this course to start building a library of materials related to home movies and other amateur media. Copies of all of them will be available on the course reserves shelf in the IS Lab.


Copies of each of the above and the weekly assigned readings will be held on the IS Lab reserve shelf for this course, and/or as e-copies (PDF, DOC, etc.) in the CCLE or course web site. It is your responsibility to read/watch all assigned texts before class every week and demonstrate your familiarity with them during class discussions. Failing to do so will impact the quality both of our discussions and of your overall learning in this class.

Additional or alternate readings may be assigned during the quarter. These will be announced in class at least one week prior to the reading due date; a follow-up email will be circulated to all students enrolled in the class in the event of any changes to assignments or readings, and the course web site and syllabus will be updated to reflect the most current readings and assignments. Please be sure your email address on file with the school is current, and check CCLE regularly in order to be properly prepared for class.
# Course Outline

Part 1: Motion Picture Technologies (weeks 1-3)
Part 2: Social Dimensions of Home Movies and Amateur Film (weeks 4-6)
Part 3: Research, Ethics, Access, and Reuse (weeks 7-10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS MEETING</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>GUESTS, DUE DATES, NOTES, ETC.</th>
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</table>
| Week 1 April 4 | **Motion Picture Technologies, Part 1**  
Early home movies (1890-1935)  
Defining the amateur  
Preservation challenges for motion picture film | |
| Week 2 April 11 | **Motion Picture Technologies, Part 2**  
Mid-century amateur media (1935-1975)  
Refining the amateur  
Preservation practices for small-gauge materials | Yasmin Dessem/Chloe Patton – UCLA Library Preservation (confirmed) |
| Week 3 April 18 | **Motion Picture Technologies, Part 3**  
Transition to video and digital media (1975-)  
The omnipresent amateur  
Balancing preservation and access for home movies | |
| Week 4 April 25 | PROJECT WORK DAY | |
| Week 5 May 2 | **Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 1**  
Defining and documenting the personal  
“Home” movies and “away” movies | Paolo Davanzo/Lisa Marr – Echo Park Film Center (confirmed) |
| Week 6 May 9 | **Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 2**  
Valorization and canonization  
Case studies: Home movies & the NFR | Short essays due!  
May Haduong/Sean Savage – Academy Film Archive (confirmed) |
| Week 7 May 16 | **Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 3**  
Documenting difference in home movies  
Developing typologies and vocabularies | Candace Ming – SSHMP (confirmed) |
| Week 8 May 23 | **Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 1**  
A history of home movie scholarship (1980-present)  
The orphan film movement  
Case studies: Home movies as scientific data | Lamfanti Presents: Butt Stuff (tentative) |
| Week 9 May 30 | **Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 2**  
Building institutional collections: Scope, content, format  
Supporting new forms of research with access | Susan Nickerson – Nickerson Research (tentative) |
| Week 10 June 6 | **Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 3**  
Home movies: part vs. whole  
Image ethics and the rights of the subject | |
| Exam week June 13 | Final projects due | |
SCHEDULE

In each weekly class meeting, we’ll divide our time approximately equally between lecture, hands-on demos and activities, and viewing/parsing examples of home movies that relate to the assigned readings and discussion topics.

A note on expectations: Everyone in this class will have opportunities this quarter to touch film, use a film camera, thread a projector, splice film, inspect and prep material for digitization, scan film, and transcode digital video files. But you should NOT expect to become expert in any of these processes in just ten weeks. Expertise takes time to accrue; this is especially true for the craft knowledge of film handling and the myriad mysteries of small gauge film and amateur media formats.

Instead of expecting to develop total mastery in the space of a single term, please have the goal of cultivating curiosity, training your eyes, exploring some new areas, and adding to the list of things you’ll continue to practice and get better at as your free time and professional opportunities allow.

April 4
Week 1: Motion Picture Technologies, Part 1

• Review of syllabus
• Distribution of course materials and next week’s readings
• Defining the amateur
• Exploring terms: home movie, amateur film, non-commercial media; film, video, digital, and audio formats; other terms and usage
• A brief history of amateur media, 1890-2010 (Handout: Timeline)
• Why do (you think) people want to make their own movies?
• Why do we/would we want to watch other people’s home movies?
• Hands-on and demos: Knowing your way around the film bench
• In-class viewing: “Small-Gauge Blow-Ups” (Produced by Simon Lund and Carolyn McCartney for Cineric, Inc.) https://vimeo.com/114492797

Readings: None for Week 1!

April 11
Week 2: Motion Picture Technologies, Part 2

• Mid-century amateur media (1935-1975)
• Refining the amateur
• Preservation practices for small-gauge materials
• Hands-on and demos: Understanding, handling, and shooting reversal film
• In-class viewing: “Funeral for a Friend” (Liz Coffey, 2007) https://archive.org/details/FuneralForAFriend
• Guest speakers: Chloe Patton and Yasmin Dessem, UCLA Library Preservation

Readings:


April 18

Week 3: Motion Picture Technologies, Part 3

• Transitioning to video and digital media (1975-)
• The omnipresent amateur
• Balancing preservation and access for home movies
• Hands-on and demos: Anatomy of a film projector
• In-class viewing: “Polavision” (Eames Studio)

Readings:


April 25 – Week 4: PROJECT WORK DAY

May 2

Week 5: Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 1
• Defining and documenting the personal
• “Home” movies and “away” movies

• Hands-on and demos: Prepping film for digitization

• In-class viewing: Selections from *Free Time and Sunshine*

• Guest speakers: Lisa Marr and Paolo Davanzo, Echo Park Film Center

*Readings:*

*Mining the Home Movie: Read Chapter 17, “The Movie Queen - Northeast Historic Film,” pp. 185-190.*


**May 9**

**Week 6: Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 2**

• Valorization and canonization
• Case studies: Home movies & the NFR

• Hands-on and demos: Film vs. video media

• In-class viewing: *Think of Me First as a Person*

• Guest speakers: May Hong Haduong and Sean Savage, Academy Film Archive

*Readings:*


**May 16**  
**Week 7: Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 3**

- Documenting difference in home movies  
- Developing typologies and vocabularies  
- Hands-on and demos: Shot-level description  
- In-class viewing: Selections from the AMDB [https://www.amateurcinema.org/index.php/amdb](https://www.amateurcinema.org/index.php/amdb) and South Side Home Movie Project Digital Archive: [https://sshmp.uchicago.edu/content/visit-digital-archive](https://sshmp.uchicago.edu/content/visit-digital-archive)

- Guest speaker: Candace Ming, Project Manager/Archivist, SSHMP

*Readings:*


**May 23**  
**Week 8: Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 1**

- A history of home movie scholarship (1980-present)  
- Case studies: Home movies as data and evidence  
- Hands-on and demos: Digitizing film  
- In-class viewing: *Natural History of Psychotic Illness in Childhood*

- Guest speakers: Antonella Bonfanti (Canyon Cinema) and Jeff Lambert (National Film Preservation Foundation)

*Readings:*


**May 30**

**Week 9: Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 2**

- Building institutional collections: Scope, content, format
- Supporting new forms of research with access to collections and exemplars
- In-class viewing: Selected Nickerson Research Projects
- Guest speaker: Susan Nickerson, Nickerson Research

**Readings:**

*Mining the Home Movie: Read any two (or more, if you wish) of the following collection profiles:*

Chapter 2: The Human Studies Film Archive, Smithsonian Institution
Chapter 4: La Filmoteca de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Chapter 6: The Imperial War Museum Film and Video Archive
Chapter 8: The Florida Moving Image Archive
Chapter 13: The Nederlands Archive/Museum Institute
Chapter 15: The Library of Congress
Chapter 18: The WPA Film Library
Chapter 20: The Academy Film Archive
Chapter 22: The New Zealand Film Archive/Nga Kaitiaki o Nga
Chapter 24: The Oregon State Historical Society’s Moving Image Archives
Chapter 26: The Stephen Lighthill Collection at the UCLA Film & Television Archive


**June 6**

**Week 10: Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 3**
• Home movies: part vs. whole
• Image ethics and the rights of the subject

Readings:


Viewing: Watch *Grizzly Man* (Dir. Werner Herzog, 2005) and *Capturing the Friedmans* (Dir. Andrew Jarecki, 2003). Be prepared to discuss the filmmakers’ decision to (not) use specific footage to which they had access during the production process.

**June 13**

Exam week: Final papers/projects due.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

• **Class preparation and participation** (20%)
• **Short essay on home movies used in other contexts** (20%): Write ~1,000-1,500 words, or about 4-6 double-spaced pages, discussing and critically analyzing the (re)use of home movies/amateur footage in a documentary/narrative feature film, television episode/series, research project, or other context of your choosing. *This paper may be turned in at any point before class on Week 6.*
• **Term project** (50%): Each members of the class will contribute at least 10 hours of work at the UCLA Library Preservation Department to inspecting, documenting, researching, and rehousing home movie material from the Thelner Hoover collection. Students will have access to the collection on Monday and Wednesday afternoons (12:00-5:00 PM), or by appointment, and should arrange their working hours in advance with Preservation staff to ensure availability of work space and materials. *Discuss additional term project options with the instructor no later than Week 2 if you are not able to commit to time on campus during weekday working hours.*

• **Call for papers/Screening series/Event plan** (10%): Formulate an idea for a symposium, a curated screening series, a collection development effort, a digitization day, or some other special event related to home movies. You should to discuss your ideas with me early in the quarter to figure out what form it makes sense for your final deliverable to take; for instance, you might draft a call for papers for a symposium; write program notes or a grant application for a screening series of documentaries that include home movie footage as a central element; prepare an event budget/schedule and educational materials for a public outreach effort for a collection that includes amateur film materials; etc.

To pass this class:
• Attend class meetings regularly, and communicate with me in a timely and appropriate way when you need to be elsewhere during scheduled class time.
• Complete the readings before class and be prepared to discuss them deeply and voluntarily, not just when called upon.
• Complete and submit all written assignments.
• Produce work of acceptable graduate-level quality, or revise and resubmit assignments that do not initially meet this standard.

To earn an A in this class:

• Attend and actively participate every week (this might include virtual forms of participation, such as posting to the online discussion forums, as well as verbal acts like speaking up in class).
• Demonstrate familiarity with and reflection on the assigned readings, and show evidence of further, self-motivated reading and research on these topics and others of interest to you.
• Submit carefully written and edited assignments that reflect above-average effort and original insights, drawing on (and properly citing) existing scholarship as well as relevant resources, collections, and materials.