

## MIAS 298-2: Home Movies

### SYLLABUS



#### **Class meetings**

Mondays, 5:30-9:00 pm – GSE&IS 111

#### **Instructor**

Snowden Becker

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*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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 one required textbook for this course:

Ishizuka, K. L., & Zimmermann, P. R. (2007). *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (1st ed.). University of California Press.

The following additional texts are recommended, but not required:

*Living Room Cinema: Films from Home Movie Day, vol. 1.* (2007, Center for Home Movies). Available via Netflix (DVD only).

Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of Life*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

Kattelle, A. (2000). *Home movies : A history of the American industry, 1897-1979* (1st ed.). Nashua N.H.: Transition Publishing.

Tepperman, C. (2014). *Amateur Cinema*. University of California Press.

These and other assigned readings will be held on the MIT 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 all assigned texts before class every week and demonstrate your familiarity with the readings during class discussions. Failure to do so will result in loss of class participation credit for the week.

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. You should be sure your email address on file with the school is current, and check the CCLE regularly in order to be properly prepared for class.

#### Web sites and online resources

One hundred years of film sizes. <http://www.xs4all.nl/~wichm/filmsize.html>

The Film Preservation Guide. <http://www.filmpreservation.org>

The Internet Archive: Home Movies. [https://archive.org/details/home\\_movies](https://archive.org/details/home_movies)

Timeline of Historical Film Colors. <http://zauberklang.ch/filmcolors/>

## 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: Media Archaeology, Research, Ethics, Access, and Reuse (weeks 7-10)

CLASS MEETING	TOPIC	GUESTS, DUE DATES, NOTES, ETC.
Week 1 March 28	<b>Motion Picture Technologies, Part 1</b> Early home movies (1890-1935) Defining the amateur Preservation challenges for motion picture film	
Week 2 April 4	<b>Motion Picture Technologies, Part 2</b> Mid-century amateur media (1935-1975) Refining the amateur Preservation practices for small-gauge materials	
Week 3 April 11	<b>Motion Picture Technologies, Part 3</b> Transition to video and digital media (1975-) The omnipresent amateur Balancing preservation and access for home movies	
Week 4 April 18	<b>Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 1</b> Defining and documenting the personal "Home" movies and "away" movies	
Week 5 April 25	<b>Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 2</b> Valorization and canonization Case studies: Home movies & the NFR	
Week 6 May 2	<b>Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 3</b> Documenting difference in home movies Developing typologies and vocabularies	Your short essays are due before class this week!
Week 7 May 9	<b>Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 1</b> A history of home movie scholarship (1980-present) The orphan film movement Case studies: Home movies as scientific data	Jeff Lambert (NFPF)
Week 8 May 16	<b>Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 2</b> Building institutional collections: Scope, content, format Supporting new forms of research with access	Lynne Kirste (Academy Film Archive) TO BE CONFIRMED
Week 9 May 23	<b>Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 3</b> Home movies: part vs. whole Image ethics and the rights of the subject	Albert Steg (Independent archivist/collector; CHM) TO BE CONFIRMED
Week 10 May 30	NO CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY	
Exam week June 6	Final presentations and screenings of selections from class project collections	

## SCHEDULE

### March 28

#### 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: Film as material object; understanding and working with reversal film
- In-class viewing: "Small-Gauge Blow-Ups" (Produced by Simon Lund and Carolyn McCartney for Cineric, Inc.) <https://vimeo.com/114492797>
- In-class viewing: "Decomp Carnival" (from *Living Room Cinema*)

*Readings: None for Week 1!*

### April 4

#### Week 2: Motion Picture Technologies, Part 2

- Mid-century amateur media (1935-1975)
- Refining the amateur
- Preservation practices for small-gauge materials

*Readings:*

*Mining the Home Movie: Read the Foreword and Introduction, pp. xiii-xix and 1-28.*

National Film Preservation Foundation. (2004). *The Film Preservation Guide: The Basics for Archives, Libraries, and Museums*. San Francisco: NFPF. (Hard copy on reserve shelf; PDF available online at <http://www.filmpreservation.org/preservation-basics/the-film-preservation-guide>) **Read Chapters 1-3, "Why Preserve Film?" "Understanding Film and How It Decays" and "Film Handling and Inspection," pp. 1-33.**

Czach, L. (2002). Polavision instant movies: Edwin Land's quest for a new medium. *The Moving Image*, 2(2), 1-24.

Kodachrome reversal. (n.d.). In *Timeline of Historical Film Colors* (Barbara Flueckiger, ed.) Retrieved from <http://zauberklang.ch/filmcolors/timeline-entry/1277/>

### April 11

#### Week 3: Motion Picture Technologies, Part 3

- Transitioning to video and digital media (1975-)
- The omnipresent amateur
- Balancing preservation and access for home movies

*Readings:*

Becker, S. (2007). See and Save: Balancing access and preservation for ephemeral moving images. *Spectator - The University of Southern California Journal of Film and Television*, 27(1), 21–28.

Edwards, E. A., & Chandler, J. S. (1964). Format Factors Affecting 8mm Sound-Print Quality. *Journal of the SMPTE*, 73(7), 537 –543.

Goldovskii, E. M. (1964). The Dimensions of Films and Frames in Common Motion-Picture Systems/An Abridged Translation. *Journal of the SMPTE*, 73(7), 544-546.

Mueller, A. C. (1964). An Improved 8mm Film Cartridge. *Journal of the SMPTE*, 73(12), 1038-1040.

Willard, J. and Kueh, J.J. (1964). 8mm Variable-Area Sound Motion Pictures (parts 1 and 2). *Journal of the SMPTE*, 73(7), 546-547.

Hocking, S. M., & Jimenez, M. (2015, May 27). Video Preservation - The Basics | The History Project. Retrieved March 28, 2016, from <http://www.experimentaltvcenter.org/video-preservation-basics> (Skim through this; don't feel you must read from start to finish.)

**April 18**

**Week 4: Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 1**

- Defining and documenting the personal
- “Home” movies and “away” movies

*Readings:*

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

Compton, M. (2010) Collecting Georgia’s Hometown Movies: Acquisition, Ownership, Preservation, and Access. *The Moving Image*, 10(1), 89-101.

Koltyk, J. A. (1993). Telling narratives through home videos: Hmong refugees and self-documentation of life in the old and new country. *Journal of American Folklore*, 106(422), 435–449.

Sheldon, K. (2010) Meeting the Movie Queen: An Itinerant Film Anchored in Place. *The Moving Image*, 10(1), 80-89.

Steg, A. (2010). The Itinerant Films of Arthur J. Higgins. *The Moving Image*, 10(1), 115-125.

Tepperman, C. (2015). *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Moviemaking, 1923-1960*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ***Read Chapter 6: “Communicating a New Form of Knowledge”: Amateur Chronicles of Family, Community, and Travel,” pp. 169-192.***

## April 25

### Week 5: Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 2

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

#### Readings:

*Mining the Home Movie: Read Chapters 9-12, “Something Strong Within: A Visual Essay” “Something Strong Within as Historical Memory” “The Moving Image Archive of the Japanese American National Museum,” and “The Home Movie and the National Film Registry: The Story of Topaz,” pp. 98-141.*

Kattelle, A. D. (2003). The Amateur Cinema League and Its Films. *Film History*, 15(2), 238–251.

Keppler, N. (2016). What Happens to Films Selected for Preservation by the Library of Congress? Online: <http://mentalfloss.com/us/go/75176>

## May 2

### Week 6: Home movies/amateur film: Social Dimensions, Part 3

- Documenting difference in home movies
- Developing typologies and vocabularies

#### Readings:

Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of Life*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press. **Read Chapters 1-2, “Kodak Culture and Home Movie Communication” and “Social Organization, Kodak Culture, and Amateur Photography,” pp. 4-48.**

Center for Home Movies. (2010). *Digitization and Access Summit: Final Report*. (Hard copy on reserve shelf; PDF available online at <http://www.centerforhomemovies.org/homemoviesummit.html>) **Read section 2, “Cataloging and Description,” pp. 9-49.**

## May 9

### Week 7: Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 1

- A history of home movie scholarship (1980-present)
- Case studies: Home movies as data

#### Readings:

Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of Life*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press. **Read Chapter 3, “Cinema Naivete: The Case of Home Movies,” pp. 49-69.**

Massie, H. N. (1979). The early natural history of childhood psychosis: Ten cases studied by analysis of family home movies of the infancies of the children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 17(1), 29–45.

McManus, I. C., & Hartigan, A. (2007). Declining left-handedness in Victorian England seen in the films of Mitchell and Kenyon. *Current Biology*, 17(18), R793–R794.

Osterling, J., & Dawson, G. (1994). Early recognition of children with autism: A study of first birthday home videotapes. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 24(3), 247–257.

Nicholson, H. N. (2001). Seeing how it was?: Childhood geographies and memories in home movies. *Area*, 33(2), 128–140.

Saint-Georges, C., Cassel, R. S., Cohen, D., Chetouani, M., Laznik, M.-C., Maestro, S., & Muratori, F. (July). What studies of family home movies can teach us about autistic infants: A literature review. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 4(3), 355–366.

## May 16

### Week 8: Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 2

- Building institutional collections: Scope, content, format
- Supporting new forms of research with access

*Readings:*

*Mining the Home Movie: Read any five (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

Holloway, C. F. (2014). Making a case for the donor interview: Giving a voice to the Doug Betts silent home movie collection. *Oral History Forum*, 26.

Center for Home Movies. (2010). *Digitization and Access Summit: Final Report*. (Hard copy on reserve shelf; PDF available online at <http://www.centerforhomemovies.org/homemoviesummit.html>) **Read the remainder of the report.**

## May 23

### Week 9: Research, Ethics, Access and Reuse, Part 3

- Home movies: part vs. whole
- Image ethics and the rights of the subject

*Readings:*

Katz, J. S., & Katz, J. M. (1988). Ethics and the perception of ethics in autobiographical film. In *Image Ethics: The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film, and Television* (pp. 119–134). New York: Oxford.

Swanson, D. (2005). Home Viewing: Pornography and Amateur Film Collections, A Case Study. *The Moving Image*, 5(2), 136–140. <http://doi.org/10.1353/mov.2005.0037>

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

**May 30**

**Week 10: NO CLASS (Memorial Day Holiday).**

*No readings this week; work on completing digitization, upload, and any other outstanding tasks for your home movie collections.*

**June 6**

**Exam week: Final presentations and screenings of selections from class project collections**

**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:** 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. You may choose from the list provided, or use another example with instructor approval. *This paper may be turned in at any point before class on Week 6.* (20%)
- **Term project:** Working on your own or as part of a small group, you will assess, inventory, process, digitize and research a home movie collection. Final deliverables will include a brief project report with a reflective component, but please be aware that the majority of the time you spend on this project will likely be *doing*, not *writing*. (50%)
- **Proposal:** Your final deliverable for this class will be to identify a conference or publication to which you will apply to present/publish on some aspect of your work this quarter. This could take the form of a poster session, panel presentation, or conference paper; it could also be submission of a version of your final paper as an article for publication in a scholarly journal. The format of your proposal will be dictated by the requirements of the venue; for most conferences, all that's required by the CFP or poster proposal guidelines is a 250-500 word abstract and brief presenter bio. (10%)

## **EXTRA CREDIT**

We'll be setting up a collaboration site for the course by week 3, to which all members of the class will have access. You'll receive one additional point on your final grade for the class (up to a maximum of five points) for each substantive post you make about your home movie collection project, the weekly readings, or additional research you're doing for this class to the blog portion of the site.