

Comparative Media Studies

Established as a graduate program in 1999–2000, Comparative Media Studies (CMS) aims to integrate the study of contemporary media (film, television, digital systems) with a broad historical understanding of older forms of human expression. The program embraces theoretical and interpretive principles drawn from the central humanistic disciplines of literary study, history, anthropology, art history and film studies, and aims as well for a comparative synthesis that is responsive to the distinctive emerging media culture of the 21st century. Students in the program are taught to explore the complexity of our media environment by learning to think across media and to see beyond the boundaries imposed by older medium-specific approaches to the study of audio-visual and literary forms.

The comparative and cross-disciplinary nature of both the graduate and undergraduate programs is embodied in a faculty drawn from Art and Architecture, Anthropology, Foreign Languages and Literatures, History, Literature, Music and Theater Arts, Philosophy, Writing and Humanistic Studies, Science Technology and Society, Media Arts and Sciences, Political Science, and Urban Studies and Planning programs. Approximately 35 faculty members teach subjects in CMS.

The graduate program consists of a two-year course of study leading to a master of science degree. The program aims to prepare students for careers in fields such as journalism, teaching and research, government and public service, museum work, information science, corporate consulting, media industry marketing and management, and educational technology. Our recent graduates are working in such fields as higher education, teaching, journalism, and photojournalism, and at media and technology consulting firms and media production companies.

Research

Themes

CMS research themes cross academic disciplines and involve both traditional and emerging communications media, establishing a focus for public presentations, research agendas, and curricular initiatives. The primary research themes are:

- Convergence culture: understanding the new media landscape
- The education arcade: the pedagogical potentials of computer and video games
- Informed citizenship and the culture of democracy
- Global culture and media
- Media in transition
- Transforming humanities education

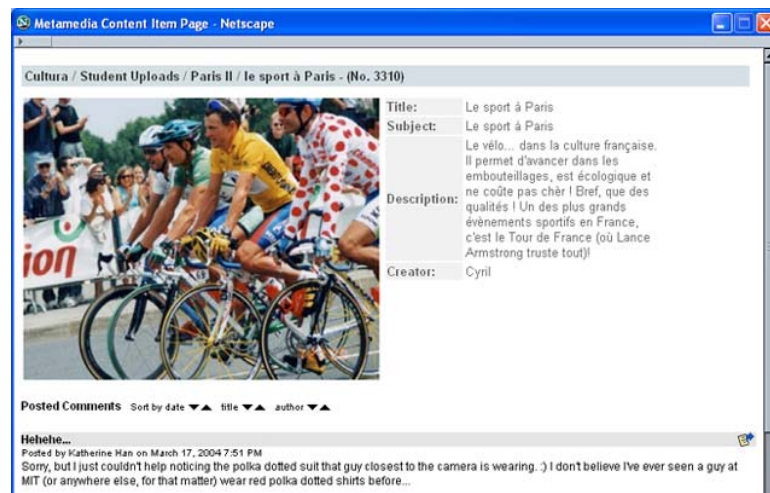
Projects

The Education Arcade Project seeks to identify the pedagogical potential in games as a medium and to seek ways to utilize games for learning, in and out of the classroom. This year the Education Arcade developed a prototype for an American history game, *Revolution*; debuted a new augmented reality game *Hi-Tech Who Done It: Mystery @ The Museum* as a short course at the Boston Museum of Science; began conversations on the development of a Shakespeare game, *Prospero's Island*; continued to develop location-based augmented reality games for education use; helped set up the Teacher's Arcade to support the use of commercial games in the classroom; documented best practice in media literacy training around games; and hosted a major national conference on educational gaming at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), a major trade show for the games industry.



Townsppeople in Revolution, a multiplayer role-playing game set in Colonial Williamsburg.

The Meta-Media Archive Project, funded by the D'Arbeloff Award for Excellence in Education, continued development of interactive archive models for use across a broader range of topics in the humanities and social sciences. Intended to serve as modules that teachers and students could use to explore rich subject areas, create rhetorical multimedia documents, and collaborate over the internet, early Meta-Media Archives have stretched instructors' and students' notions of textbook, research paper, and classroom. Recent projects used in classes include a multimedia archive of American and British Authors; *Flaneurs savants* (knowledgeable wanderers), a walking tour of the Marais neighborhood in Paris designed for use of hand-held devices; and *Cultura*, which connects MIT students taking French classes with students taking an English class at a university in Paris, France.



Through Cultura, students at MIT and in Paris engage in online discussions and exchange images to better understand the differences and similarities in American and French culture.

Japan in World History, funded by the D'Arbeloff Award for Excellence in Education, has created a large database of cross-cultural visual images of Japan from 1853, when Commodore Matthew Perry forced feudal Japan to abandon its “closed country” policy, to the late 19th century. Ford international professor of history John Dower and Kochi Prefecture-John Manjiro professor of Japanese language and culture Shigeru Miyagawa used this archive in teaching their course Visualizing Cultures in the spring semesters of 2003 and 2004, and a website of the material was launched on OpenCourseWare in September 2003.



Portrait of Perry, a North American, ca. 1854, unknown Japanese artist, woodblock print, © Nagasaki Prefecture.

CMS is also working on a variety of research efforts and projects with the Royal Shakespeare Company, including the development of a computer game inspired by *The Tempest*, expansion of the Shakespeare Electronic Archive and Hamlet on the Ramparts, and experimentation with new rehearsal and performance techniques and technologies.

Fundraising

A continued goal of activities this past year was to develop and implement sustainable and scalable business, teaching, and research models within which faculty and graduate students could explore interdisciplinary research themes and educational priorities. As it continues to solidify administrative and academic infrastructures, CMS has focused on cultivating a broader range of sponsored research and gifts from corporations, individuals, and foundations.

A generous gift made in December 2003 by Ron Crane, an alumnus of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) and a founder of 3Com, supported graduate students doing research for the Education Arcade.

Greg Shaw, another EECS alumnus and early supporter of the CMS program, established the Greg Shaw Technologist in Residence Fund. This year Philip Tan was named as the first CMS technologist in residence. Tan was an undergraduate and graduate student in CMS; he also serves as the project manager for the Education Arcade.

Gerald Katell, an MIT alumnus and CMS Advisory Group member, continued payment on the \$1 million pledged to endow the Gerald L. Katell (1962) Fellowship and Education Fund in Comparative Media Studies. This fund was used to support undergraduate students doing research for the Education Arcade.

Governance

Professor of literature and comparative media studies Henry Jenkins is the director of Comparative Media Studies. Professor of comparative media studies William Uricchio is associate director. The program is under the auspices of three Humanities sections—Literature, Writing and Humanistic Studies, and Foreign Languages and Literatures. Administratively, CMS is housed in the Literature Section.

The program is governed by a Steering Committee, chaired by Professor Uricchio in fall 2003 and Professor Jenkins in spring 2004. Other committee members for 2003–2004 were: Professor Peter S. Donaldson, head of Literature; Professor James Paradis, head of Writing and Humanistic Studies; senior lecturer in writing and humanistic studies Edward Barrett; Professor Miyagawa; senior lecturer in Spanish Douglas Morgenstern; and Janet Sonenberg, associate professor of theater arts.

Graduate Admissions

CMS continues to attract a diverse group of applicants and students. Our current cohort of 18 students includes 9 women, 1 African American student, and 6 international students from Spain, India, Chile, Greece, and Canada.

We received 89 applications for admission to the program in fall 2004, including 50 women, 7 minorities, and 32 international students. We admitted 14 students, and 9 have accepted, including 4 women and 2 international students.

During fall 2003, the program hosted four on-campus information sessions, which were designed to allow potential students to meet CMS faculty and students, evaluate opportunities available through the program, and attend classes, events, and research group meetings. CMS also conducted online chat sessions to facilitate interaction with potential applicants who could not attend these on-campus sessions; online sessions were particularly popular with our international applicants.

Undergraduate Education

The undergraduate program—established in 1982 under its former name, Film and Media Studies—serves as preparation for advanced study in a range of scholarly and professional disciplines and also for careers in media or industry. The curriculum consists of more than 50 subjects arranged in three tiers and broadly subdivided into three areas or fields: comparative media, film, and digital studies.

In spring 2003, CMS was approved as a full interdisciplinary major, effective fall 2003. CMS is MIT's first full interdisciplinary major, and was approved by the Committee on Curricula, the Committee on Undergraduate Programs, and the MIT Faculty on an experimental five-year basis. We are currently introducing a new required subject, Media Systems and Texts, on the intermediate level, which will help to solidify both our course of study and our cohort of students.

As of June 2004, there were 23 CMS majors. Susan Stapleton, administrative assistant, became undergraduate administrator as of fall 2004.

During the period AY2001–2002 through AY2003–2004, 21 CMS majors, 32 minors, and 77 concentrators graduated.

CMS has also developed educational and research programs to provide additional opportunities for undergraduates to gain both academic and professional experience in media-related fields.

In 2003–2004, CMS hired 28 Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program students (UROPs) for pay and credit. This robust number of UROPs reflects the continued increase in research activity in the program. Undergraduates worked with faculty and CMS graduate students on such projects as Augmented Reality Simulations, which create hand-held educational games; The Storyteller Project, which investigates methods to create cultural media programming for children; and *Revolution*, a multiplayer role-playing game set in Colonial Williamsburg.

The undergraduate homepage is <http://web.mit.edu/cms/ugrad/>.

Events and Programs

The Education Arcade at the Electronic Entertainment Expo

On May 10 and 11, the CMS Education Arcade Project organized a series of panel discussions, as part of the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), held in the Los Angeles Convention Center. The event, sponsored by Leapfrog Enterprises and co-hosted by the Electronic Software



Participants in the E3 panel discussions included (left to right) Philip Tan; Kurt Squire, research affiliate, CMS; Henry Jenkins; Alex Chisholm, research affiliate, CMS; and Eric Klopfer.

Association, brought together game designers, educators, and technologists to speak about the potential use of games in education in and out of the classroom.

e-topia/Designing Cambridge: 21st Century Communications for Our Community

This two-day event (November 21 and 22) focused on the role of local governments and citizen organizations in providing communications services; communications experiments designed to improve community life; and, specifically, how local media served Cambridge, MA, during the 2003 elections. William Mitchell, professor of architecture and media arts and sciences was the keynote speaker. The event was

sponsored by CMS, the MIT Communications Forum, and the Center for Reflective Community Practice in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

Communications Forum

Directed by Professor David Thorburn, the Communications Forum sponsors lectures, panel discussions, and conferences on all aspects of technology and communications, public policy, and media in transition. The Communications Forum sponsored several panel discussions that attracted large audiences from the academic community at MIT and in the Boston area. Topics included "Are National Television Systems Obsolete?", "Covering Iraq: American Media vs. the World?", and "The Emerging Mediascape." For more information about the forum, see the website at <http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum>.



Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, discussed the impact of digital technology on the entertainment industry on April 8, 2004.

Colloquia

CMS sponsored weekly colloquia designed to give our graduate students, and the academic community at MIT, a rich and challenging intellectual experience as well as opportunities to interact educationally and socially. Topics included "Cartoons and Social Protest," "The Global Impact of Japanese Popular Culture," and "Unhurt Melodies and Sensuous Impasse: Romantic and Contemporary Poetic Mediality."

Honors and Awards

Professor Jenkins was awarded the Deflorez Professorship Allowance. Professor Uricchio was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for research.

CMS students also won several awards. Michael Epstein (G) was awarded a Producer's Grants from the Council for the Arts at MIT for his radio show "News Lab" on WMBR. Parmesh Shahani (G) was the recipient of MIT Public Service Center's Community Connection Award in appreciation of organizing Between the Lines, Boston's first festival of South Asian Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgendered Cinema and Identity. Sarah Kamal (G) was awarded first prize in MIT's 2Be Diversity Project for her essay "On being an Iranian in North America"; and Rose Grabowski ('05) earned the William L. Steward Jr. Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions by an individual student or student organization to extracurricular activities and events.

Visiting Scholars

CMS hosted a wealth of visiting scholars this year. US scholars included Maureen McLane, poet and writer; W. Curtiss Priest, media activist; Sylvia Sensiper, photographer; Vera Walker-Hawkins, a postdoctoral fellow who is looking at the use of technology to increase curriculum accessibility for all students; and Mark Lloyd, Martin Luther King visiting scholar, who is a leading commentator on the role of communication policy in community development.

International scholars included Christoph Ribbat, from Germany, who is the recipient of a Fedor Lynen Fellowship and is studying six American authors and their media representations; Inga Tomic-Koludrovic, a Fulbright Scholar from Croatia, who is analyzing the role of new media in the democratization of post-socialist countries; and Yuichi Washida, from Japan, who is collecting data on how people interact with media.

Publications

Several faculty affiliated with CMS published books this year, including Pablo Boczkowski, assistant professor of organization studies, Sloan School of Management, *Digitizing the News: Innovation in Online Newspapers* (MIT Press, 2004); Michael Fischer, professor of anthropology and science and technology studies, *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice* (Duke University Press, 2004); Emma Jinhua Teng, associate professor of Chinese studies, Foreign Languages and Literatures, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures, 1683–1895* (Harvard University Press, 2004); Susan Slyomovics, professor of anthropology and McMillan-Stewart professor of the study of women in the developing world, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco* (University of Philadelphia Press, in press); Charity Scribner, assistant professor of European cultural studies, Foreign Languages and Literatures, *Requiem for Communism* (MIT Press, 2004); Thomas DeFrantz, associate professor of theater arts, *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2004); Irving Singer, professor of philosophy, *Three Philosophical Filmmakers: Hitchcock, Welles, Renoir* (MIT Press, 2004).

Henry Jenkins

Director

John E. Burchard Professor of Humanities

Professor of Literature and Comparative Media Studies

More information on the Comparative Media Studies Program can be found on the web at <http://web.mit.edu/cms/>.