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## Studying Cinema through Producing, Streaming, and Evaluating Online Film Commentary Videos

**Project Number:** 6000909

**Principal Investigator:** Prof. Jamie Jing ZHAO

**Grant Type:** TSG

### **Abstract:**

This proposed project is primarily intended to support the content development and improve the learning efficacy of the PI's course: GE 1102 Cinema: East and West, which accommodates approximately 80 undergrad students. It integrates critical reflection and peer review with creative production in the enhancement of theoretical cinema and media studies courses, thereby fostering greater students' participation, enthusiasm, and engagement. It also makes use of the recent surge of online video-streaming platforms and associated participatory cultures to advance the "flipped classroom" model, a strategy vigorously endorsed by the University. This approach promotes students' experiential learning, practical application of knowledge and skills, and real-time peer evaluation within a hybrid teaching and learning environment.

Scholars have noted the key role of online film commentary videos in engaging audiences dialogically and enabling the sharing of different voices (Anderson, 2018; Burgess & Green, 2009; Lothian, 2017). Meanwhile, research has highlighted streaming platforms' participatory, data-collecting, and knowledge-exchange nature to facilitate "live" interactions and feedback, further transforming traditional one-dimensional film consumption and critique models into interactive, constructive forms of communication (O'Leary, 2020; Smith, 2021). Nevertheless, against such a background of digitization and platformization, cinema, media, and other literary and cultural studies courses remain largely taught in more conventional academic discourses and means (Jancovich, 2003).

Drawing upon existing research in contemporary streaming, platform, and participatory cultures, the project aims to devise an integrative approach for teaching and learning in entry-level undergrad cinema and media studies courses. The PI seeks to transform two assessment methods used in the course—written film journals and group oral presentations—into a collaborative creative group project centered on online film commentary video production, streaming, viewing, and reviewing. This assignment asks students to produce a short film commentary video, enabling them to apply the basic filmmaking and film critique techniques acquired throughout the course when analyzing a film assigned. All student-produced videos will be uploaded to a video-streaming website developed for the course. Furthermore, students will curate and select videos created by their peers, engaging in the sharing of viewing experiences and providing feedback in the comment section on the site. The video creators will be able to interact with their audiences on the site, facilitating self-reflexive and peer-evaluative conversations concerning integrated videomaking, film analyzing, and viewing processes.

Through these means, the project cultivates pedagogical methodologies aimed at fostering student



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interest and enhancing their involvement in virtual classrooms and collaborative group work. It encourages learners to actively apply videomaking skills and knowledge in the creation and consumption of commentary videos. By leveraging digital tools and platforms, the project transforms students into “media prosumers” and explores “collective intelligence” (Jenkins, 2006) in flipped classrooms. The online videos and conversations will serve as valuable resources for instructors to evaluate the efficacy of virtual and digital tools in promoting a diverse range of creative and critical perspectives. The project’s outcomes and implications will be transferrable to other disciplines that prioritize both theoretical/analytical knowledge and practical skills in teaching and learning processes within digital and virtual environments.