



Film and Media Studies Colloquium:

Graduate Student Research Panel

Featuring Hannah Goodwin and Juan Llamas-Rodriguez
 Wednesday, November 9th, 2016, 4:00 pm, SSMS 2135

Cinema at the Speed of Light: Einstein, Education, and Archives in Silent-Era Films

This paper considers a set of education films from the 1920s that were made to expose audiences to new astronomical theories, including Einstein's theories of relativity. These films frequently depart from their ostensibly pedagogical mission, taking advantage of the medium's propensity for dreams and fantasy alongside its ability to model scales of space and time with accuracy. As they move between animation, live-action, static charts, and explanatory intertitles, these films exemplify a tension between a desire for rational, scientific order, on the one hand, and a yearning to depict irrational and impossible contortions of time and space, on the other. What emerges is a peculiar cinematic cosmology that reveals as much about human dreams of mobility in time and preservation of the past as about the mechanics of the stars.

Hannah Goodwin is a PhD candidate in Film and Media Studies at UC Santa Barbara. Her dissertation, "Archives of Light: Cinematic and Cosmological Temporalities," traces connections between cinematic and cosmological discourses in the early to mid-20th century. Her research interests include film theory, film history, and science and technology studies.



Tunnels as Geopolitical Infrastructures

In this presentation, I address the symbolic efficacy of narco-tunnels across the U.S.-Mexico border. Tunnels, I contend, provide a counterbalance to the border walls theorized by Wendy Brown and contribute to what Peter Andreas terms the "expressive role" of border policing, a ceremonial practice that is less about controlling physical boundaries than about delimiting moral ones. By analyzing promotional films from the Department of Homeland Security as well as news reports on tunnel detection technologies, I trace the symbolic economy wherein tunnels participate, noting how these infrastructures shape discourses around security, sovereignty, and control. I also examine how the material characteristics of such structures provide specific affordances for their representational instances. Building upon these analyses, I argue that narco-tunnels become the infrastructure upon which the performative mediation of geopolitical struggles is built, resignified, and, ultimately, contested.

Juan Llamas-Rodriguez is a PhD candidate in Film and Media Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, working on a dissertation about life in the age of narcotrafficking. His research interests include media distribution, popular culture in the Mexico-US border, creative labor, and infrastructure studies.

