



Advanced Trajectory

**Participatory Cultures: Civic
Engagement in Media and
Performance**



This booklet provides information about the advanced trajectory (verdiepingspakket) Participatory Cultures within the BA programme Media and Culture. An advanced trajectory is a coherent selection of four courses. Having completed both basic trajectories (basispakket 1 and 2), it is now time to further deepen your knowledge and skills. In the trajectory Participatory Cultures, all four courses are taught in English and have an explicitly interdisciplinary and creative approach. This booklet describes what is on offer in this trajectory, how the programme is composed, and what knowledge and skills you will develop. After completion of this trajectory, you take the Research Seminar (Onderzoeksseminar) and finally write your BA thesis on a topic in line with this trajectory.

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Picture cover
Markus Spiske ©

FOR WHOM?

The trajectory Participatory Cultures is meant for students with a broad interest in the role media and performance play in shaping civic and social engagement within the context of our participatory culture and society. Students in this trajectory are interested in subjects like media and ecology, performance and gender, and participatory practices and artistic activism. This trajectory is particularly recommended for students who prefer to study multiple objects — theatre, installation art, film and television and digital media — rather than only one, and are interested in the dynamic relationship between media, performance, and societal issues and transformations. Moreover, this trajectory caters to students who like to be challenged in employing *creative* research methods. Besides more traditional formats such as writing academic papers, students also create video essays, memes, fan fiction, and urban interventions, while also organizing public events. Additionally, students will meet professionals from the field of media and performance.

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PROGRAMME

[Green Media and Civic Engagement](#) (block 1): how can media engage the public with today's environmental challenges and how do we conceptualise the impact of (green) media from a media-comparative perspective?

[Audience and Spectatorship](#) (block 2): how does performance – in the broadest sense – construct spectatorship and invite different modes of looking, feeling, engaging, and behaving?

[Fan Cultures and the Civic Imagination](#) (block 3): how do online media practices in the intersections between fan culture, participatory citizenship and political activism bring about new forms of knowledge production and community building that bolster the civic imagination?

The City as Stage (block 4): how do activist and artistic interventions in urban space actively and critically re-think and reconfigure the city and public space?

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS



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Green Media and Civic Engagement

Contemporary media are used not only to entertain, but also to persuade people, raising their awareness and changing or reinforcing their attitudes and behaviour for the good of society. "Green media" seek to contribute to ecological thought and to make people become consciously ecological citizens. This course introduces students to key environmental issues as these are articulated in computer games (ecogames, eco-modding), virtual reality, social media, data visualisations, transmedia, film (arthouse, Hollywood, video essays), documentaries, television series, and theatre and dance performances. The underlying questions are: how can media address today's environmental challenges? How do we conceptualise the impact of (green) media from a media-comparative perspective? How can green media facilitate social change on a micro, meso, and macro level? How do green media construct (playful forms of) civic engagement by positioning users in medium-specific ways? What is the environmental impact of media production, distribution, and reception? Examining the ways in which green media can influence the public's awareness of

environmental issues, this course is a critical starting point for students researching and studying the growing field of green media studies as a subdiscipline within the environmental humanities.



Stranger by Emke Idema <https://www.emkeidema.nl/stranger/>

Audience and Spectatorship

How to engage an audience, making them reflect and experience, is a fundamental question for makers and performers of all kinds, from actors and dancers to politicians and activists and designers of public space. This question has been answered in many different ways through various different strategies. Audiences have been pampered as well as offended, placed in the dark, all around, in public space, addressed collectively or individually, equipped with headphones and VR goggles, or sent out on tours in cities. In this course, we will examine in which ways performances — both inside and outside the theatre — address audiences. Different modes of address invite different modes of looking, allow for different modes of engaging and behaving (while excluding others), and suggest different modes of interpreting. Special attention will be paid to the relationship between performance and media and how we may observe a

general transformation 'from audience to participant' in both. Key concepts include address, focalisation, immersion, distance, and participation.

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Tweet by Mary Veron, February 27, 2022

Fan Cultures and the Civic Imagination

Unlike the hierarchically organized modes of production of traditional media, networked digital platforms offer users more direct access to cultural production and civic participation. In this context, fan culture has become a leading presence not just in the development of online culture, but also in matters of activism and civic engagement. The course examines how online media practices in the intersections between fandom, political

activism, participatory citizenship and online communities bring about new forms of knowledge production, community building, and activism. Students in the course carry out a pilot study of an online community by combining digital ethnography with critical discourse analysis to gain insight into the relationship between popular culture and the civic imagination.



Public Intervention in April 2020, by Support Art Workers initiative in Greece <https://www.supportartworkers.org/en/>

[The City as Stage: Critical Interventions in Public Space](#)

With over half of the world's 7 billion people living in cities and their number growing by the minute, social, economic and environmental tensions continue to increase proportionally. Crime, pollution, social inequality, and the discrimination of oppressed groups (racial minorities, women, LGBTQ+, the disabled, neurodiverse etc.) are just a few of the

pressing issues that come to mind. At the same time, there has been a significant upsurge in social movements and activism over the past years, taking the form of protests, assemblies and interventions in public space (Black Lives Matter, student mobilizations, cultural workers' initiatives, Extinction Rebellion, etc.). Such practices raise important questions, such as: who owns the city? How do we shape the urban landscape? And how can we appropriate it in new ways?

This course focuses on activist and artistic interventions in urban space and how they actively and critically re-think and reconfigure the city as a form of public space. It investigates how cities can be used as platforms where new notions of citizenship, community, and the public sphere are being performed. Students will create their own critical intervention in public space.

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@ Getty Images

METHODS AND SKILLS

Each course introduces the student to different methods relevant for analysing media and performance objects and practices. Extra attention is paid in this trajectory to creative (research) methods. Moreover, the student learns how to develop research questions, to design a research proposal, and to conduct their own research. These essential research skills prepare the student for writing a BA thesis in the following year.

| BLOCK | COURSE | FOCUS | METHOD | RESEARCH SKILLS |
|-------|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | Green Media | Media and ecology | Comparative media analysis Discourse analysis Creative method: video essay | Formulating research questions; contextualising research in academic discourse; conducting a comparative analysis |
| 2 | Audience and Spectatorship | Construction of spectatorship | Critical textual analysis Creative method: creative response | Formulating research questions; creating a theoretical framework; conducting an analysis of spectatorship |
| 3 | Fan Cultures | Fan culture Online communities | Online ethnography Discourse analysis Creative method: memes and fan fiction | Formulating research questions; combining ethnographic research with critical discourse analysis; mapping and analysing online communities |
| 4 | The City as Stage | Artistic interventions in public space | Practice-led inquiry Critical reflection Creative method: intervention in public space | Formulating research questions; contextualising research in academic and social discourse |

BESIDES?

Besides two *basispakketten* and a *verdiepingspakket* (like this advanced trajectory **Participatory Cultures**), each bachelor programme entails a *profileringsruimte* (profiling space) of 60 ECTS. Half of this space is needed for a mandatory *profileringspakket* — a profiling trajectory — which may consist of one of the following options:

- a minor programme – a package of four thematically related courses – within Utrecht University;
- a second advanced trajectory within Media and Culture (Screen Cultures or Critical Data Studies);
- studying abroad (a valuable option for those who would like to live abroad for a while and get a sense of the international orientation of academic life).

In exceptional cases, the student may choose a combination of four courses not entailed in the options above as their profiling trajectory. For this option, the student first requires advance permission by the examination board.

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The other half of the profiling space may consist of

- an [internship](#) (7.5 or 15 ECTS);
- a [workshop](#) (Interactive Storytelling, Audiovisual Media, or Utrecht Data School);
- an [honours programme](#);
- a (second/third) advanced trajectory within Media and Culture;
- free courses.

We advise students following this trajectory to choose an internship and/or a workshop. Both are relevant for professional orientation, learning by experience, and developing a deeper understanding of how theory and practice relate to one another.

AND THEN?

With the knowledge and skills mentioned above, students will be well prepared at the end of this advanced trajectory to prepare for and write a BA thesis on a topic that relates to the issues addressed and discussed during the programme. Ideally, the BA thesis meets the standards of admission for one of the one-year academic master's programmes offered by the Department of Media and Culture Studies. This trajectory is particularly suited to prepare yourself for the MA [Arts and Society](#). Depending on how you have designed your profiling space, the following programs can also be an interesting option for you: [New Media & Digital Culture, Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy](#) or [Film and Television Cultures](#). Students may also consider the two-year programme of the research master [Media, Art and Performance Studies](#).

MORE INFORMATION?

For additional information, please contact the coordinator of the Advanced Trajectory Participatory Cultures: Dan Hassler-Forest (d.a.hassler-forest@uu.nl)