

The Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry Emory University

2023-2024 Great Works Seminar



October 23 & 30, November 6 & 13, 2023
6:30pm-8pm

Digital Hollywood: Performance, Technology, and Identity

Moderated by Tanine Allison, Associate Professor of Film and Media, Emory College of Arts and Sciences

Disney's *Tron* (1982) was one of the first Hollywood films to include digital graphics, but it took more than twenty years for digital filmmaking to truly become the norm. This seminar will look at some of the milestone films that chart the progression toward digital dominance, including *The Matrix* (1999), *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003), and *Avatar* (2009), as well as more recent examples. Our focus will be on the development of digital visual effects, particularly those that impact actors like performance capture and digital de-aging. We will examine how such effects reflect cultural notions of race, gender, and identity. For instance, we will discuss how the performance-capture technologies used in the *Avatar* films help to enable narratives of white saviorism. Likewise, we will ask why digital de-aging—the technology used to allow Robert De Niro and Al Pacino to play characters decades younger in *The Irishman* (2019)—has mostly been used on men rather than women.

Participants will be asked to screen films ahead of time on their own (through streaming services or rentals); part of the seminar time will be devoted to open-ended discussions of the films and their themes. I will also show many film clips in the seminar in order to fill in the history with additional examples. Readings will also be provided in order to contextualize the films and film clips.

This Great Works Seminar will meet at **The Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry @ Emory University** from **6:30pm-8pm** on the following **Monday** evenings during fall 2023: **October 23 & 30, November 6 & 13**. Participants are expected to attend all four sessions. For further information and to reserve a spot on a “first-come basis,” email the Fox Center at foxcenter@emory.edu. Everyone from the Atlanta community is welcome and invited to join us for this free seminar.

We are grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for its support of this program. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in these seminars do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.