

The 2nd Annual SUMMER INSTITUTE for Audiovisual Criticism

Goethe University, Frankfurt
July 6-10, 2026

The **Summer Institute for Audiovisual Criticism** is an annual five-day workshop devoted to the development of audiovisual essays for both undergraduates and graduate students. The workshop is organized by four leading international film and visual studies scholars: **Bernd Herzogenrath** (Goethe University, Frankfurt), **Brian Price** (University of Toronto), **Alessandra Raengo** (Georgia State University), and **Domietta Torlasco** (Northwestern University). Each faculty member will deliver one lecture on the year's common topic and students will work together to make audiovisual essays collaboratively under the supervision of the organizers. The goal of the workshop is to help students think critically with, and not only about, sounds and images—**to do criticism by means of a composite audiovisual language**. We understand criticism to be a form of philosophy and aim at developing forms of audiovisual expression that can function as philosophical inquiries.

This year we will attend the question: **WHAT IS A VIDEO ESSAY?** The question calls, not for a straightforward answer, but for a multidimensional process of exploration. In other words, if somebody says they know exactly what a video essay is, do not believe them. As a verb, to "essay" means, as we know, to "attempt, try, make a tentative or experimental effort." If we take that seriously, we are challenged to understand the essay, in its more traditional sense as a form of academic writing, as an attempt in relation to knowledge. Thus, the way we attempt hinges on what we understand knowledge to be: as a static acquisition, a written statement with epistemic or legal force, something inalterable that allows us to feel good about saying, this is wrong vs. something contingent so that knowing becomes a form of staying with things as they move, as they change in time. Perhaps the video essay allows us to explore different ways of knowing by making. Perhaps it allows us to see more clearly the essayistic knowledge already embedded in filmmaking as an epistemological practice.

Our meeting will take place at **Goethe University, Frankfurt, July 6-10, 2026**. We welcome students from across the humanities, but film and media students as well as education students are strongly encouraged to participate. We will select students by means of an application that includes a CV and a brief statement of interests (350 words). No tuition. No registration fees. Please submit materials, or general inquiries about co-sponsorship **by May 18** to d-torlasco@northwestern.edu. Notifications will be sent by May 25.