

ALEXANDRA PETRUS

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<http://www.alexandrapetrus.com>**EDUCATION**

- PhD University of Southern California** since 2022
Cinema and Media Studies
 Digital Media Certificate
 Committee: Dr. Anikó Imre (Chair), Dr. Nitin Govil,
 Dr. Thomas Pringle, Dr. Vicki Callahan, Dr. Kiki Benzon
- MA Technische Hochschule Köln, Cologne Game Lab** 2021
Game Development and Research
 Committee: Dr. Gundolf S. Freyermuth,
 Dr. Jeffrey L. High
- BA California State University, Long Beach** 2017
Film and Electronic Arts (Directing), German
 President's Honor List, Distinguished Baccalaureate

GRANTS & FUNDING

- Cinema and Media Studies Summer Research Fund** 2025
University of Southern California
 Stipend of \$2,500 awarded for summer dissertation research
- Friends of Goethe Southern California** 2025
Goethe Institut Los Angeles
 Grant of \$875 contributing to travel, lodging, and tuition costs to attend the K-16 Professional Development Program at the Deutsche Sommerschule am Pazifik at Portland State University
- H.F. Peters Scholarship** 2025
Portland State University
 Grant of \$500 covering remaining travel, lodging, and tuition costs to attend the K-16 Professional Development Program at the Deutsche Sommerschule am Pazifik at Portland State University
- Graduate Fellowship Research and Creative Project Symposium** 2025
University of Southern California
 Competitive grant from USC Annenberg Graduate Fellows totaling \$4,500 awarded for cross-departmental collaborative project "Unleashing the

Beast: Aesthetic Performativities of Labor in MrBeast’s Video Production”

AI for Media and Storytelling Project Grant 2024

USC Center for Generative AI and Society

Grant of \$3,000 awarded for research project, “The Shallow and Deep” about extractive practices of AI image generation and deep-sea mining in collaboration with Dr. Priya Jaikumar

Graduate Fellowship Research and Creative Project Symposium Grant 2024

University of Southern California

Competitive grant of \$800 awarded from USC Annenberg Graduate Fellows for my proposed project, “Utopia Now: Playing the Good Life as the World Falls Apart,” which was selected for additional funds as one of the top three submissions.

Annenberg Graduate Fellowship 2022

University of Southern California

Guaranteed 5 year fellowship totaling over \$500,000 to cover all tuition and health costs, plus living expenses toward the completion of my doctorate.

Prototype Funding 2020

Film- und Medienstiftung NRW

(Film and Media Fund North Rhein Westphalia)

Awarded €80,000 for the development of game prototype, *Berlin Maniacs*, over the course of six months

Concept Funding 2020

Film- und Medienstiftung NRW

Awarded €20,000 for the development of game prototype, *Berlin Maniacs*, over the course of six months

Senior Film Funding Selection 2016

Hollywood Foreign Press Association

Short film script *Mourning Dove* won first-place selection for \$3,000 funding

Richard and Johanna Baker Endowed Scholarship 2016

California State University, Long Beach College of the Arts

Highest College of the Arts scholarship of \$4,200 awarded only to one student per year

PUBLICATIONS

Brandis, Rüdiger and Alexandra Petrus. “Geschichte als Prozess: Digitale Spiele und die Deskonstruktion von historischem Wissen,” in *Geschichte als Kritik*, eds. Philipp McLean and Jörg van Norden (Universität Bielefeld, 2025).

Petrus, Alexandra. “I Started a Garden and Ended Up with a Global Industry: The Neoliberal Ethos of Cozy Games.” *Spectator* 44.1 (2024).

EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE

Mann, Thomas. *Thomas Mann’s Antifascist Radio Addresses, 1940–1945: Listen, Germany!* Edited by Jeffrey L. High, Elaine Chen, and Hans Rudolf Vaget. Boydell & Brewer, 2025.

Czauderna, André and Emmanuel Guardiola. “Remote Collaboration in Higher Game Development Education. Online Practices and Learning Processes of Students between Professional Routines and Psychosocial Challenges.” *Higher Education Studies* 11.2 (2021): 1–18.

Beil, Benjamin, Gundolf S. Freyermuth, and Hanns Christian Schmidt, eds. *Playing Utopia: Futures in Digital Games*. transcript Verlag, 2019.

Czauderna, André and Emmanuel Guardiola. “The Gameplay Loop Methodology as a Tool for Educational Game Design.” *Electronic Journal of e-Learning* 17.1 (2019): 207–221.

High, Jeffrey L. “Revolutionary Virtue: Schiller and Freedom from Religion.” in: Laura Anna Macor and Valerio Rocco Lozano, eds., *Schiller y la Revolución*, Special Issue of *Philosophical Readings*. Padua: 2017: 1-12.

EVENTS AND CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

First Forum

University of Southern California Cinema and Media Studies

“Graduation Begins Today: AI, Acceleration, and Alienation in Public Higher Education Infrastructures,” October 17, 2025.

Historical Materialism

Athens, Greece

“Escaping the Grind: Resisting the capitalist realism of digital games,” co-written with Rüdiger Brandis (Universität Göttingen), April 24, 2025.

Society for Cinema and Media Studies

Chicago, Illinois

“Playing at the Leisure Class: Cozy Games, Workmanship, and the English Garden,” April 3, 2025.

The Young Academics Workshop

University of Cologne

“Working Hard, Cozily: An Ideological critique of Cozy Games,” co-presented with Rüdiger Brandis (Universität Göttingen), March 18, 2025.

The Narrative Environments of Los Angeles

University of Southern California

“Progress in Decay: Revolutionary Prospective in Oceanwide’s Apocalyptic Facade,” April 19, 2024.

Culture and Conflict: Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference

University of Washington

“To Build a Homestead: New Cruel Optimisms for the Crisis-Fatigued Middle Class Millennial?” March 29–30, 2024.

Society for Cinema and Media Studies

Boston, Massachusetts

“Cozy Games as Artifact of Precarious Labor and Unwellness.” Panel chair: New Topics in Video Game Studies. March 14–17, 2024.

Motherhood to Motherhoods: Ideologies of ‘The Feminine’

Chapman University

“A (False) Biography of an Unknown Mother,” April 29, 2023.

On Digital Pasts and Futures

California State University, Long Beach

“Critical Engagement with Violent Histories in Digital Games,” Panel: Quandaries of Participation: Literary Exploration and Criticism in Digital Games, April 20, 2023.

A Republican Tragedy: The Imperiled Rule of the People in German Art and Thought

California State University, Long Beach

Moderator: Regina Range (University of Alabama) “On Signe Astrup’s *Die Vergessene Armee*,” November 18–19, 2020.

Women’s Cinematography Intensive

American Film Institute

Participant in the first highly selective Women’s Cinematography Intensive workshop at the American Film Institute, organized by Stephen Lighthill ASC. July, 2018.

Games and Literature: A Short History

California State University, Long Beach

Moderator: Gundolf S. Freyermuth (Technische Hochschule Köln), “Games and Literature: A Short History,” September 5, 2017.

“Almost Everything, Very Fast” Reading

California State University, Long Beach

Moderator: Book reading by Christopher Kloeble, April 6, 2017.

CSULB Comparative Literature Conference

California State University, Long Beach

Moderator: Dr. Robert Blankenship (CSULB), Carrie Collenberg Gonzalez (Portland State University), and Jill E. Twark (East Carolina University) “Shifting Identities in Contemporary German Cinema,” April 12, 2017.

Flake and Fassbinder Screenings

California State University, Long Beach

Coordinator, Moderator: Screening and Q&A with director Annekatrin Hendel, November 15, 2016.

Drive-by Theatre: Double Feature Brecht+60/Kleist+205

California State University, Long Beach

Moderator: Dr. Richard McCormick (University of Minnesota) “On *Hangmen also Die!*” September 29, 2016.

“Mein Leben als Apfelbaum” Screening

Taos German Summer School

Moderator: Screening and Q&A with director Harald Friedl, July 17, 2015.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

California State University, Long Beach

since Spring 2024

Lecturer, German Cinema (CINE 457/GERM 480)

- Teaching an upper-division four-unit Cinema and German cross-listed course that explores topics around German Cinema from the end of World War I until the present. Emphasis on critical histories including modernity, aesthetics of fascism, resistance, memory culture, imperialism, migration, utopia, reunification, globalization, and cosmopolitanism. See sample syllabus [here](#).

University of Southern California

Teaching Assistant

CTCS 190 Introduction to Cinema

Fall 2023

- Professor: Dr. George Carstoea
- Lead two weekly 50-minute discussion sections

CTCS 191 Introduction to Television, Lead

Spring 2024

- Professor: Dr. Anikó Imre
- Lead one weekly 50-minute discussion section
- Management of other TAs

CTCS 564: Global Television

Summer 2024

- Professor: Dr. Anikó Imre

CTCS 467 Television Symposium, Lead

Fall 2024

- Professor: Mary McNamara

- Development of syllabus
- CTCS 503: Hollywood and Empire Spring 2025
 - Professor: Dr. Thomas Pringle
- CTCS 505: Survey of Interactive Media Spring 2025
 - Professor: Dr. TreaAndrea Russworm
- CTCS 502: World Cinema after 1945 Fall 2025
 - Professor: Dr. Priya Jaikumar
- CTCS 469: Memories on Film & Media Fall 2025
 - Professor: Dr. Priya Jaikumar

Guest Lectures

CTCS 569 Narrative Politics

University of Southern California, March 24, 2025

- Presentation on computational procedures and ideology in fantasy open-world games
- Workshop: critical fantasy game pitch

CTCS 503 Hollywood and Empire

University of Southern California, April 1, 2025

- Course lecture on *Walker* (Alex Cox, 1987) and historiographic methodology, post-modernism, manifest destiny, and CIA interferences in Central and South America

Cologne Game Lab (Technische Hochschule Köln)

2021

Graduate Program Manager

- Graded undergraduate papers and exams
- Was the lead organizer and administrator of the graduate program, advising M.A. students on their general studies and theses as well as scheduling and arranging lecturer contracts

Close Reading

- Taught regular undergraduate close reading sessions on seminal articles relating to narrative media studies more broadly and digital media more specifically, including:
 - G.W. Hegel *Lectures on Aesthetics*
 - Aristotle *Poetics*
 - Sigmund Freud *The Uncanny* and *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*
 - Walter Benjamin *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*
 - Vannevar Bush *As We May Think*
 - J.C.R. Linklider *Man-Computer Symbiosis*
 - Alan Turing *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*
 - Sherry Turkle *Video Games and Computer Holding Power*.

Academic Writing

- Taught regular academic writing workshops for first, third, and sixth-semester undergraduate students

MA Students Advised

- Nitish Misra, "How does video game level pacing affect player experience": 04/25/2023

- Thai Binh Minh Do, “Learning Through Gaming: The Efficacy of Visuals and Storytelling and the Game Concept Creation for a Journey through Vietnamese Mythology”: 09/05/2021
- Ke Zhang, “Analytics- and Data-driven Development of Mobile Games: A Critical Reflection”: 05/28/2021

BA Students Advised

- Menzel Ruben, “Design of a Strategy Game Faction for the Modding Project Sins of the Prophets & an Analysis of How a Visual Identity can be Adapted into a Foreign Genre”: 07/14/2021

Cologne Game Lab (Technische Hochschule Köln)

March – Dec 2019

Undergraduate Program Manager, Lecturer

- Graded undergraduate papers and exams
- Provided organizational support to the undergraduate program

Close Reading

- Taught three close reading seminars examining seminal games studies texts
 - Roger Caillois *Man, Play, and Games*
 - Sherry Turkle *Aspects of the Self*
 - Jesper Juul *Half Real: Videogames Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*

Camp Reel Stories

June – July 2017

Mentor

- Acted as mentor to a team of high-school girls in creating a short-form documentary, *The Price of Pink*, about gendered medical and household products
- Taught the basics of production pipelines, from developing their ideas to editing

California State University, Long Beach

Teaching Assistant, Film and Electronic Arts

FEA 299: Media Aesthetics

Fall 2014 – 2015

- Professor: Tom Blomquist

FEA 331: Production Design Practicum

Spring–Fall 2015

- Professor: John Muto

AWARDS

Ubisoft Newcomer Award

2021

Deutscher Entwicklerpreis (German Developer Award)

Game Berlin Maniacs was nominated.

Best Student Film

2017

Hollywood International Moving Pictures Film Festival

For short film *Mourning Dove*

President’s Honor List

2013 – 2017

California State University, Long Beach

Highest GPA-based honor awarded all eight semesters of my undergraduate career

Distinguished Baccalaureate Award 2017

California State University, Long Beach College of Liberal Arts

Granted by both Film and Electronic Arts and Department of Romance, German and Russian for this award limited to one undergraduate student per year

Outstanding Achievement Certificate 2015

The German Summer School of New Mexico

Certificate awarded to the top 10% of students at this intensive immersion language program

French Program Award 2015

California State University, Long Beach

French language award presented to one student per class

German Program Award 2015

California State University, Long Beach

German language award presented to one student per class

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK & TRAINING

K-16 Professional Development July 2025

Deutsche Sommerschule am Pazifik (Portland State University)

Introduction to Computer Science – C++ Spring 2025

Long Beach City College

Women's Cinematography Intensive Workshop July 2018

American Film Institute

Media Technology Spring 2016

Hamburg University of Applied Sciences

Die Deutsche Sommerschule von New Mexico Summer 2015

University of New Mexico

35mm Photography Summer 2013

University of California, Los Angeles

16mm Filmmaking Summer 2012

University of Southern California

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Achtung Autobahn Studios

Co-founder since May 2020

- Art director on first project *Berlin Maniacs*, an action-adventure game about the 1968 student protest movement in West Berlin
- Established the art style and crafted the game's story and conducted historical research
- *Berlin Maniacs* was twice awarded funding from the *Film- und Medienstiftung NRW* for concept (€20,000) and prototype (€80,000)

Sneaky Little Sister 2017 – 2022

Motion Graphics Artist

- Created motion graphics content and animations for documentaries and social media campaigns
- Content revolved around socially pressing issues, from gun policies to rights for the incarcerated
- Clients included the ACLU, the Brady Campaign, and PBS
- Worked on documentary features *The Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin*, *The Unforgettable Augustus Post*, *Before You Were Born*, among others

Revelations Entertainment 2015

Office Assistant

- Assisted producers of various Morgan Freeman-backed projects
- Conducted research for the National Geographic documentary *The Story of God*

Freelance Film Production 2012 – 2022

- Worked on a variety of feature and short films and commercials in Camera & Electric departments

CREATIVE WORK

San Balthazar 2023

- Transmedia worldbuilding project as part of Alex McDowell's World Building Institute
- Development of a fictional society 300 years after a total collapse of modern infrastructure involved experimentation with AI image generation toward the development of an immersive visual- and soundscape in tandem with a boardgame

A False Biography of an Unknown Mother 2023

- Text-based interactive story that complicates binaries of mother/daughter relationships through dialoguing stories of postpartum depression and end-of-life care

Berlin Maniacs 2021

- Art director, narrative writer

- Action-adventure game about the 1968 student protest movement of West Berlin
- Twice won funding from the *Film- und Medienstiftung NRW* for the development of a concept and prototype amounting to €100,000
- First endeavor of the co-founded games studio Achtung Autobahn Studios

On and On: We Ran Away 2019

- Artist, narrative designer
- Adventure game about a pregnant woman returning home to post-war Kosovo from Italy

Apollo 18 2018

- Animator, narrative designer
- Click-and-point adventure game commissioned by the Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne about lost characters in paintings trying to find their way back to their rightful place

Lost in Transmission 2018

- Adventure game about the transmission of false information
- Created within 48 hours at the Global Game Jam

Dark Circus 2018

- A platformer exploring the worlds of Paul Klee's paintings

Mourning Dove 2017

- Wrote and directed this senior film highlighting the emotional impact of the civil war in Syria on its child victims
- Script won first-place selection for funding by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association
- Indieogo campaign was featured on *Women & Hollywood*

Olivia's 2016

- Co-directed this experimental animation about Hamburg's infamous red-light district

Sogni Intorno alla Città Ideale 2016

- Co-directed this experimental documentary about the internal monologues of early-morning train passengers—those going to work and returning from parties—in Hamburg, Germany

Friederike 2016

- Wrote and directed this short film at a 24-hour filmmaking workshop at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences

Rosemary with Ginger 2015

- Directed this dramatic One-Act written by Edward Allen Baker about the strife of two young mothers with strong ideological differences, performed live for a directing class at CSULB

SKILLS

Languages: English (Native Language), Fluent in German and French

Programs (Advanced): Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere, After Effects, Lightroom, InDesign), Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Powerpoint), Avid, ToonBoom Animation, Avid, Twine

Programs (Intermediate): Unity and Unreal Game Engines, C#, C++, JavaScript

REFERENCES

Dr. Prof. Anikó Imre

Division of Cinema & Media Studies
Media Arts + Practice Division
900 W 34th St, Los Angeles, CA 90007
imre@usc.edu

Dr. Prof. Nitin Govil

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Dr. Prof. Vicki Callahan

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Media Arts + Practice Division
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Dr. Prof. Jeffrey L. High

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California State University Long Beach
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Dr. Prof. André Czauderna

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