

**ALEXANDRA PETRUS**

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

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- 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*  
 Thesis Committee: Dr. Gundolf S. Freyermuth,  
 Dr. Jeffrey L. High
- BA California State University, Long Beach** 2017  
*Film and Electronic Arts (Directing), German*  
 Semester abroad at Hamburg University of Applied  
 Sciences (Spring 2016)  
 President's Honor List, Distinguished Baccalaureate

**GRANTS & FUNDING**

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- 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 collaborate 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 the short-term research project, "The Shallow  
 and Deep" about extractive practices of AI image generation 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.

<b>Annenberg Graduate Fellowship</b> <i>University of Southern California</i> Guaranteed 5 year fellowship totaling over \$500,000 to cover all tuition and health costs, plus living expenses toward the completion of my doctorate.	2022
<b>Prototype Funding</b> <i>Film- und Medienstiftung NRW</i> <i>(Film and Media Fund North Rhein Westphalia)</i> Game <i>Berlin Maniacs</i> awarded €80,000 to develop a prototype over six months	2020
<b>Concept Funding</b> <i>Film- und Medienstiftung NRW</i> Game <i>Berlin Maniacs</i> awarded €20,000 to develop a game concept over four months	2020
<b>Senior Film Funding Selection</b> <i>Hollywood Foreign Press Association</i> Short film script <i>Mourning Dove</i> won first-place selection for \$3,000 funding	2016
<b>Richard and Johanna Baker Endowed Scholarship</b> <i>California State University, Long Beach College of the Arts</i> Highest College of the Arts scholarship of \$4,200 awarded only to one student per year	2016

## PUBLICATIONS

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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).

## EVENTS AND CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

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### 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.

**Games, Politics & Psychology: Community Building in Games & Virtual Worlds**

*Technische Hochschule Köln*

“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.

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**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**California State University, Long Beach**

since Jan 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 50-minute discussion sections
- Grading and administration for 50 students

CTCS 191 Introduction to Television, Lead

Spring 2024

- Professor: Dr. Anikó Imre
- Lead one 50-minute discussion section

- Administration for 75 students
- CTCS 564: Global Television Summer 2024
  - Professor: Dr. Anikó Imre
  - Lead one 50-minute discussion section
  - Administration for 75 students
- CTCS 467 Television Symposium, Lead Fall 2024
  - Professor: Mary McNamara
  - Development of syllabus
  - Administration for 50 students
- CTCS 503: Hollywood and Empire Spring 2025
  - Professor: Dr. Thomas Pringle
  - Grading and administrative assistance (25%)
- CTCS 505: Survey of Interactive Media Spring 2025
  - Professor: Dr. TreaAndrea Russworm
  - Grading and administrative assistance (25%)

### **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”: 04/25/2022.
- 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**

2014 – 2015

Teaching Assistant, Film and Electronic Arts

FEA 299 Media Aesthetics

- Professor: Tom Blomquist
- Organizational support and paper grading

FEA 331 Production Design Practicum

- Professor: John Muto
- Organizational support and exam grading

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#### **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

**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

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#### ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK

**Introduction to Computer Science – C++ (CS11)** 2025  
*Long Beach City College*

**35mm Photography** 2013  
*University of California, Los Angeles*

**16mm Filmmaking** 2012  
*University of Southern California*

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#### 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
- Guided by Emmy-winning documentarian Kia Simon
- 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 – 2020

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

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## **CREATIVE WORK**

*San Balthazar*

2023

- Transmedia worldbuilding project as part of Alex McDowell's World Building Institute
- Development of a factionary 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
- Indiegogo 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

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**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

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**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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Media Arts + Practice Division  
900 W 34th St, Los Angeles, CA 90007  
ngovil@usc.edu

**Dr. Prof. Vicki Callahan**

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

**Dr. Prof. Jeffrey L. High**

Department of Romance, German, Russian Languages and Literature  
California State University Long Beach  
1250 Bellflower Blvd, Long Beach CA 90840  
Jeffrey.high@csulb.edu

**Dr. Prof. André Czauderna**

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