



Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln
Academy of Media Arts Cologne

Catalog of Basic Seminars at the KHM

As of August 2026

For the pre-diploma, students have to select five seminars from the catalog of basic seminars, covering at least three different categories.

The basic seminars are linked to technical courses; they are offered in the following categories:

- Animation
- Cinematography / Camera
- Code
- Creative Producing
- Documentary Film
- Drawing
- Feature Film / Directing
- Installation
- Live Production
- Material & Process
- Netze
- Photography
- Schreiben
- Sound
- Video, Performance, Montage
- 3D Composition

Animation

Winter semester

This seminar is primarily intended to introduce students with little or no prior experience to the fundamentals of animation. Building on observation and hands-on experimentation, participants will develop and animate their first short sequences. While the main focus of the practical exercises will be hand-drawn animation, all major animation techniques—including 2D and 3D animation—will be considered.

Animation is understood as an abstract interpretation of perceived reality, employing techniques such as simplification, exaggeration, and stylization to reveal the essential qualities of movement. Through a series of short assignments, students will gradually become familiar with the creative principles and techniques of animation. In addition to the representation of movement, the seminar will also address layout and staging as key components of animated filmmaking.

Participants will be encouraged to adopt an experimental approach to their work, drawing inspiration from and engaging with other media, including live-action film, theatre, dance, video games, and architecture.

Cinematography / Camera

Duration: two semesters, beginning in the winter semester

GS Camera 1 / Documentary Cinematography

Weekly seminar during the winter semester

The Camera 1 seminar teaches the fundamentals of cinematography in documentary film, both practically and theoretically. Students will shoot their first small, practical camera exercises to learn how to handle the camera and approach a documentary situation. In addition, we will also examine visual composition theoretically using examples from documentary films and discuss the fundamental compositional possibilities and principles.

The content of this seminar is linked to “Documentary Miniatures 1” and is highly recommended for students enrolled in that course.

Analog Capture

Intensive Seminar, Winter Semester

In this 16mm workshop, we explore the fundamentals of analog visual composition. In this five-day theoretical and practical workshop, each participant will have the opportunity to shoot their own footage after receiving an introduction to the camera and learning the basics. The workshop is aimed at all students who would like to work with analog film in their future projects.

The workshop is explicitly recommended for students enrolled in the “Documentary Miniatures” seminar and for anyone who would like to take the “Camera 2 – Scenic Cinematography” seminar in the following semester.

The workshop is intended for students in Diplom 1.

GS Camera 2 / Cinematic Composition

Weekly seminar during the summer semester

In this seminar, students will learn the fundamentals of cinematic composition and the practical use of the Arri Alexa camera and all conceivable accessories. We will begin by exploring the technical requirements of cinematic camera work, its creative possibilities, and cinematic resolution. This is followed by an in-depth exploration of the Arri Alexa, its practical operation, and an introduction to the responsibilities of the camera assistant and all other roles that support the cinematographer in their work on a film set.

The highlight of the seminar is a group exercise during the intensive week. Here, the focus is on applying newly learned techniques and standard on-set procedures. The fundamental craft of cinematography—including lighting design, image composition, camera movement, and scene resolution—will be practiced and applied in a hands-on manner. This seminar is strongly recommended for all students participating in the “Feature Film Workshop 1” seminar.

Code

Winter semester

In an increasingly media-driven society, a basic understanding of algorithms and programming languages is the key to digital sovereignty. Digital spaces for information and communication now dominate our perception of reality and our self-image as portrayed in the media. Even more important, however, is that we are creating entirely new spaces for experience, action, and decision-making based on algorithmic constructs. Algorithms are already composing music, generating interactive visual worlds, and writing poetry. We must therefore understand analytical and generative algorithms as a fundamental cultural technique, whose dangers and aesthetic layers must be equally explored.

This seminar teaches the technical and artistic fundamentals of programming in Python. Generative algorithms for text generation form the core of the methods used. In addition to teaching key data and control structures within a simple development environment, the seminar focuses in particular on introducing programming as an artistic practice. However, the seminar can only help students overcome the initial hurdles. Code can only become one’s own artistic signature once the craft is mastered to such an extent that the focus shifts from mere functionality to exploring its aesthetic potential. In generative processes in particular, it is essential to maintain a balance between freedom and control. In which aspects of the creative process is it beneficial to relinquish control in favour of spontaneity, and in which areas is it advantageous to maintain control in order to achieve specific aesthetic outcomes?

Creative Producing

Duration: two semesters, starting in the winter semester

With their first project, KHM students often also become producers — for their own work or for projects by fellow students. Under certain conditions, the new project regulations also allow them to become the producers of their works.

The foundational seminar *Creative Producing 1 + 2* provides, over the course of two semesters, the economic, organisational, legal, ethical and ecological foundations necessary for audiovisual production: from the initial idea to budgeting, financing and project organisation, through to rights clearance, final delivery and distribution.

At the centre of the seminar is the balancing act between artistic ambition, available resources, feasibility and the legal framework. Production is understood as an integral part of artistic practice. The aim of the seminar is to enable students to act with greater confidence, agency and autonomy in handling their projects.

Documentary Film

Duration: two semesters, starting in the winter semester

This Weekly three-hour seminar focuses on the conception and production of documentary work. Through various exercises, students are introduced to research, sourcing material and team building. They practise perception and precise observation, from which they develop their own documentary practices. The course covers audiovisual realisation, initial experience in camera work or collaboration with a cameraperson and sound technician; furthermore, it covers montage and editing theories, as well as dramaturgy and narrative styles in documentary film.

At the end of the first semester, a short documentary is shot on 16 mm and digitally finalised in the second semester. The various edited versions are discussed in the seminar and reviewed collectively. The introductory seminar also includes an interview workshop and an introduction to sound.

Alongside the fundamentals of documentary filmmaking, examples of historical and contemporary documentary filmmaking are presented and discussed.

Drawing

Every semester

Drawing is a foundation of all foundations. It not only trains the hand but, above all, sharpens the ability to observe. As Goethe put it: *“Drawing compels attention, and attention is the highest of all skills and virtues.”* Alongside language and gesture (dance), drawing is one of the fastest and most direct forms of expression. It develops close observation while providing students with a tool for articulating ideas visually—from the first sketch or notation to a fully developed drawing and the depiction of movement.

This seminar focuses primarily on studies of the human body, both in static poses and in motion. Students will also explore a range of drawing techniques and materials that leave marks on a surface. No prior experience is required.

Feature Film / Directing

Duration: three semesters, starting in the winter semester

Each seminar session takes place weekly – with the exception of the shoot, the acting workshop, and the editing session.

The Feature Film Directing program consists of three consecutive and progressive semesters and aims to guide students through all stages of filmmaking and equip them with the necessary knowledge and tools for their own projects.

In **“Crew and Stories—Feature Film Directing I”**, first-semester students are introduced to the roles and processes on set, as well as the tools for writing their first short scenes.

In **“Staging and Resolution – Feature Film Directing II”**, students gain in-depth insight into working with actors, acting methods, staging, and the resolution of scenes through the camera.

This is followed by an intensive one-week workshop on directing actors during the break between semesters, and then the staging and filming of the scene developed in the first semester in Studio B with acting students. In the third and final part, **“Post-Production – Feature Film Directing III”** of the GLS Feature Film Directing program, the filmed scenes are edited under supervision and discussed as a group. The resulting scenes undergo all stages of post-production and are ultimately screened.

Installation

Intensive Seminar (2 weeks), every third semester

Artistic installations explore the relationships between objects, sounds, and projections. They are part of a dynamic performance practice in which artists and viewers continually re-experience and reconstruct the space. The installation, as the focal point and source of these transformative processes, is both a challenge and an invitation: in its configuration, it embodies a multitude of artistic techniques and strategies; in its form, it offers viewers a complex sensory experience.

In this seminar, we will experiment with materials, projections, sounds, and objects, as well as with proportions, sound levels, and light intensity. The concept of installation will be discussed within the context of a multidisciplinary artistic practice, in which we will explore various techniques and identify and analyze characteristic features of perception—such as the concept of immersion. The Transmediale Space, which is available to students in the seminar for their experiments, provides the framework for this. In parallel with the practical work, we will discuss the works of the students and contemporary artists.

Topics: Relational Space | The Installation as an Experimental Setup | Participation and the Role of Viewers/Participants | Embodied View | Video Mapping and Materiality | Multichannel Video | Sound Space | Immersion | Environments | Cave Systems | VR.

Live Production

Every semester

Live Production is a weekly seminar that teaches the fundamentals of live television, including multi-camera recording and/or livestreaming, camera operation for live TV, camera switching, and live editing on the Tricaster or Blackmagic ATEM2 video switcher. In addition, exercises are regularly held on location or in Studio A (e.g., Science Slam, Jazz against the Machine, ADHOC, Moers Festival, and many more).

The goal is to teach students about the production processes involved in live television and to explore their possibilities and limitations. We also focus on the design, development, and production of student-created show formats.

Material & Process

Summer semester

The basic seminar material & process aims to examine materials and material processes, in interaction with technologies and their aesthetics, in a personal and social context.

The basis of every artistic work is material, whether haptic and physical as material, carrier and medium or/and structural and immaterial as coding. The consideration and examination of the interdependencies of material in their fundamental principles, in their translations and overlaps between the digital and the physical, will be carried out in the seminar through experiments and material studies. Material processes and algorithmic sequences are part of practical exercises and theoretical introductions.

The focus is on observing and getting to know material as an independent element, as well as on working with materials and their processes. Students can develop their own experiments and models using basic techniques and existing equipment. Analog materials and tools for processing material on a digital and mechanical level (e.g. CNC production such as laser cutters, milling machines or printing techniques such as Riso) are available. The principles discussed in the seminar can become the basis for works and concepts on a sculptural and/or digital level.

Netze

Winter semester

Although the Internet is the largest infrastructure ever built in human history, it remains largely invisible, difficult to fully perceive. It's everywhere and nowhere at once—shaping how we access information, what we see, how we communicate, where we go, and what we desire. This seminar asks: what is the Internet, really? What does it consist of, how did it come to be, and how is it changing?

We begin by exploring its physical infrastructure of the Internet is today—cables, servers, protocols—where this infrastructure emerged from, as well as the ways it is made visible, represented, or hidden. We touch briefly on how it works, but our focus is on how it shapes everyday life. We move through a loosely chronological series of sessions that examine key moments in its development looking at the early days of networked communication—military

research, cybernetics, and systems thinking—before exploring how dreams of community, freedom, and decentralisation became tied to these emerging technologies. We look at how the web became commercialised and centralised—with the rise of targeted advertising, data extraction, tracking technologies, and platform capitalism—whilst at the same time continuing to promise decentralisation, both in Web 2.0 and Web3. Finally we look at the environmental impact of digital infrastructures and the broader environmental metaphors we use to think about networks—from graphs and clouds to forests and underground rhizomes.

The seminar encourages a critical and curious approach to the internet—not just as a tool we use, but as a technical, social, political, ideological, and cultural system we live within. Through discussion, reflection, and engagement with a range of historical materials, artworks, and guests, we explore how the internet shapes our everyday lives, global economies, political realities and even emotional and bodily experiences, and how we might begin to better perceive and reimagine its potential in the world.

Photography

Duration: two semesters, starting in the winter semester

The basic seminar in photography provides a profound understanding of the fundamentals of artistic photography. Students are introduced to the possibilities and conditions of photography, enabling them to develop their own artistic approaches. How can an idea be realised photographically, and what creative tools are available? How does the photographer relate to their environment, and how does this affect the resulting images? What statements can be made? How can photographs be presented?

On a technical level, the course covers knowledge of photographic techniques (exposure metering, aperture, shutter speed, depth of field) as well as the use of analogue and digital cameras. Additionally, the possibilities for further processing and post-production are covered, such as the various scanners, printers and the UV-printer. An introductory overview of the image editing programmes Photoshop, Lightroom and Capture One complements the technical instruction.

The aim of the basic seminar is to integrate theory and practice as closely as possible and to acquire technical skills in photography. On the one hand, to have more options in the artistic exploration of photography; on the other, to be better equipped in the applied field.

A group exhibition featuring the students' work takes place during the summer term.

Schreiben

Duration: three semesters, beginning in the winter semester

The three seminars are to be spread over three semesters in accordance with the duration of the foundation course (1. "Sprache als Material" (Language as Material); 2. "Formen des Erzählens" (Forms of Storytelling); 3. "Schreiben in den Medien und Gattungen" (Writing in the Media and Genres), but they do not necessarily build on one another.

Schreiben: Sprache als Material (Language as Material)

This seminar covers the fundamentals of literary language work. Drawing on students' own observations and various forms of note-taking (notes, lists, diaries, sketches, webcam recordings, etc.), it explores how the world can be transformed into text, and the impact and function of individual sentences and words in this process. A word never stands alone. It always refers to other words, which influence its meaning. Language as material. (Life) material that flows into literature. This seminar will explore how this process unfolds. Is it possible to observe "incorrectly"? Should one consider literary coherence while taking notes? Is a note already a structured form? Must one adhere to rules during the process of shaping the note (form, tone, length)? And what would those rules be? Different readings by renowned writers (from personal diaries to note recordings) shed light on the path from experience through perception to literature. Through a variety of writing exercises students will deal with these questions while training and getting to know their own perceptions.

Schreiben: Formen des Erzählens (Forms of Storytelling)

This seminar builds upon the approaches from the seminar "Sprache als Material (Language as Material)," but places a stronger emphasis on narrative text forms. Plot, narrative styles, perspectives, and character descriptions will now be examined in greater detail. How is a text structured dramaturgically, and what techniques does it employ to achieve this? Who is speaking, to whom, and why? What distinguishes first-person from omniscient narrative perspectives? What is the relationship between narrative time and the time being narrated? Is a story constituted by its characters? What makes a character a character? And how do we situate them in time and space? How do we create suspense? And how do we find the tone that suits the respective narrative? Using various narrative models, students are assigned writing assignments of varying lengths, which are discussed during the seminar. In this way, they learn not only to compose and present literary texts, but also to discuss them, offer constructive criticism, and revise their own work.

Schreiben: Schreiben in den Medien und Gattungen (Writing in the Media and Genres)

This introductory seminar focuses on teaching writing in specific genres and for various media contexts. Whether it's a screenplay, a poem, a play, a novel, or various online formats—the specific media conditions and genre-specific traditions each place different demands on literary writers. When it comes to writing for theater and film, these include, for example, the ability to write dialogue, to think about dramaturgy and narrative arcs, and to construct stage and film situations in a literary manner. Thus, in theater or film, the literary space is always larger than the textual architecture, and temporal structures are determined by the modes of perception inherent to the medium. A poem, on the other hand, works with sound, rhythm, conciseness, and imagery in a way that is quite different from prose. This introductory seminar aims to provide an overview of the spaces defined by media and genre, as well as their traditions, in relation to the present, which is constantly reshaping these spaces. The goal is to have the students' first media- and genre-related texts discussed in class.

Sound

Winter semester

Sound, music, and noise are essential components of the artistic exploration of audiovisual media. Crafting sound (layers) is a central element, whether as an independent composition in the fields of music or sound art, or in conjunction with other media such as film, video, installations, radio, and performance.

The introductory seminar on sound covers the technical, artistic, and scientific fundamentals of working with sound in both theory and practice. This includes topics such as sound propagation, auditory perception, auditory physiology, sound conversion, sound synthesis, digital audio technology, and film sound. In addition to these fundamentals, the course aims to cultivate a heightened aesthetic perception of sound events and their conscious use in the creative process of audiovisual media as well as (sound) art projects.

Participation in the introductory seminar on sound is a prerequisite for independent work in the Klanglabor and for borrowing audio equipment from there. The introductory course on sound is held regularly.

Video, Performance, Montage

Winter semester

The foundation seminar "Video, Performance, Montage" is offered during the winter semester and is complemented by an advanced specialist seminar in the summer semester. Both seminars explore the artistic possibilities of performative strategies in relation to, and in distinction from, those of the medium of video. The focus lies on the interdisciplinary and synergistic connection between the two fields: How does the perception of the time-based image change when it is viewed through a performative mask, and what happens to the transitory "now" of the performative act when it is confronted with a recording apparatus?

Drawing on various strategies of audiovisual and performative montage, the seminars theoretically reflect on and experimentally investigate how autonomous semantic units can be interwoven, differentiated from one another, and layered in such a way that a complex semantic space emerges which extends beyond the meaning of the individual elements. Particular emphasis is placed on collaborative working methods: Different artistic perspectives, materials, and methodological approaches are not standardised, but introduced into the working process as productive differences.

At the same time, students are introduced to the history of performance, the diverse forms of artistic moving-image practice, and the forms of montage that become operative within them. Historical and contemporary developments in fine art, experimental film, performance, pop culture, and video art provide the broader context. Key festivals such as the Venice Biennale, documenta, the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, and Videonale, as well as institutions including HAU Hebbel am Ufer and PACT Zollverein, are presented and discussed.

Through process- and group-based assignments, participants learn to formulate, contextualise, and realise questions at the intersection of visual art and performance. The seminar also introduces theories of film history, montage, and performance by authors such as Walter Benjamin, Judith Butler, Sergei Eisenstein, Erika Fischer-Lichte, and Peggy Phelan. Their practical application is explored through photographic documentation, scores, collective texts, and sound and video recordings.

Independent artistic work is at the centre of the seminar. This is supported by regular presentations, practical assignments, and collective discussions. The aim of the seminar is to develop communicative sensitivity and heightened awareness of artistic, media-related, and sociopolitical processes, and, in connection with this, to support the initial stages of an individual artistic practice and position.

As part of this process, students are encouraged to use readily accessible tools in their projects, including mobile phones, microphones, sound and lighting systems, as well as open-source hardware and software. This promotes independent, accessible, and unrestricted experimentation and, through the technological interfaces involved, facilitates the transition towards transdisciplinary work in related fields such as installation and sound art.

Building on the foundation seminar, an advanced specialist seminar is offered in the summer semester. In this seminar, the artistic processes initiated during the winter semester are developed further, and students are invited to devise a shared concept for a performance or video project that brings together the knowledge and skills they have acquired. From the initial ideas through to realisation, the project traces the process of artistic production in an exemplary manner.

3D Composition

Duration: two semesters, beginning in the winter semester

This seminar is aimed at students with limited prior knowledge who wish to learn the fundamentals of artistic image synthesis for their projects and who are curious about computer-generated forms and the principles of vector mathematics. The seminar covers the technical and philosophical aspects of simulation, ranging from phantasmagoria and special effects in film to non-representational qualia-based abstractions, while also addressing the associated sociopolitical implications. Is the deception of the eye merely an innocent trick, or could it have profound and lasting effects?

GS 3D Composition I — weekly seminar in the winter semester

The first part introduces the principles of representing three-dimensional space and the tools suited to this purpose. The process begins with the creation of geometry using digital tools, followed by an introduction to related sub-disciplines such as animation and simulation. Particular emphasis is placed on adequate preparation for creating forms or animations intended for video, games or VR/AR environments. The seminar teaches students how to identify and assess the necessary skills and technical requirements at the early stages of a project, enabling them to realize the artistic potential of computer-generated worlds and scenarios.

GS 3D Composition II — weekly seminar in the summer semester

The second part involves applying the acquired skills to create an artistic work. Students are given the chance to further explore developing forms and images from raw data and are encouraged to experiment with node- or code-based practices. The seminar concludes with students presenting their works in the form of a screening or exhibition.