

Spring 2014
Media, Culture, and Communication
MCC-UE 1412-001
Waverly Room 431
Tues/Thurs 11-12:15

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Office hours: Thurs 2-4 and
by appt

Introduction to Visual Culture

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Visual images pervade our everyday lives. We negotiate the world through visual culture, and the world itself is negotiated politically through visibility and visual images. This class is an introduction to the key issues of visual culture. It will examine the politics of images, the role that images play in producing cultural meaning, visibility and power relations, and how images are forms of visual communication. We will examine how images circulate through digital media, remakes, and viral networks, and the cross-fertilization of images between various social arenas, such as art, advertising, popular culture, news, science, entertainment media, video games, theme parks, and design. We will also examine the visual culture of New York in our discussion and assignments, in order to better “read” the visual images and visibility we live among and within.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are required to attend all classes, complete the readings for each class session, and complete all assignments. If you miss more than 4 classes without a reasonable excuse, your grade will be lowered.

You should make an effort to meet with me in person at some point in the semester. I am available for consultation via e-mail, in office hours, and by appointment.

WEBSITE:

All reading materials and assignments will be posted on NYU Classes.

READINGS:

Mandatory:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Second Edition) (Oxford University Press, 2008)

Recommended:

Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *The Visual Culture Reader* (Third Edition) (Routledge, 2013)

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Second Edition) (Routledge, 2009)

ASSIGNMENTS:

There are 4 short papers, a visual project, and a final paper. The short papers will each be an analysis of a visual site, image, text, etc. The visual project will require you to create a presentation (minimum of the equivalent of 20 powerpoint slides) that deploys images (and not text) to narrate its argument. The final paper will be a research paper on a topic related to visual culture, 8-10 pages. Students will submit proposals for approval prior to working on these research papers.

These assignments will be worth the following portion of your grade:

4 short papers 10% each
Participation 10%

visual project 20%
final paper 30%

Please type and double-space your written work and number your pages. I recommend you use Chicago style for your citations; the short version is here:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. If you send me a document via e-mail, please put your name in the file name and on each numbered page.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

You are responsible for the material covered in lecture and in the reading. You will be evaluated on (1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your written work and class participation) (2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms (3) and your ability to creatively explore these theories and methodologies. All of your written work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales (1) how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class (2) how well it structures and articulates its argument.

Evaluation Rubric

A= Excellent

This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B=Good

This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C=Average

This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory

This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F=Failed This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams, making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others, and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you cheat on an exam, submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors, receive help on a take-home examination that calls for independent work, or plagiarize.

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in has been your own and no one else's, and that you have not turned in any work for which you have received credit in another class, and that you have properly cited other people's work and ideas. Do not take this policy lightly! Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course. If you have questions about these policies, or proper citation of scholarship, please come speak with me in person. (see http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity)

STUDENT RESOURCES

- Henry and Lucy Moses Center for students with disabilities (<http://www.nyu.edu/csd/>)
- Writing Center: 269 Mercer Street, Room 233. Schedule an appointment online at www.rich15.com/nyu/ or just walk-in.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1:

Tues Jan. 28—Introduction

Thurs Jan. 30—Reading Images

Reading:

Practices of Looking, Introduction and Chapter 1

Paper 1 given: Do an analysis of the visual landscape that you encounter on your way to NYU.

1) MODERNITY

Week 2:

Feb. 4—Perspective and Visual Technologies

Reading:

Practices of Looking, Chapter 4

Feb. 6—Modernity and the City

Reading:

Practices of Looking, pp. 93-104

Ben Singer, “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism”

Wolfgang Schivelbush, “The Railway Journey” (excerpt)

Paper 1 due.

Week 3:

Feb. 11—Mechanical Reproduction and Visual Technologies

Reading:

Practices of Looking, Chapter 5

Walter Benjamin, “The Age of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (excerpt)

Feb. 13—Photography and its Origins

Reading:

Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (excerpt)

Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive”

2) DISCIPLINE, POWER

Week 4:

Feb. 18— Empire, Race, and the Image

Reading:

Nicholas Mirzoeff, “The Shadow and the Substance”

Anne McClintock, “Soft-Soaping the Empire”

Paper 2 assignment given.

Feb. 20— Modern Institutions and Looking

Reading:

Vanessa Schwartz, “Public Visits to the Morgue”

Week 5:

Feb. 25— Discipline and the Gaze

Reading:

Practices of Looking, pp. 104-139

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (excerpt)

Paper 2 due.

Feb. 27— Viewers Make Meaning

Reading:

Practices of Looking, pp. 69-91

3) SCALE, VISUALITY

Week 6:

March 4— Visuality

Reading:

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, Introduction

March 6— Surveillance

Reading:

Kelly Gates, *Our Biometric Future* (excerpt)

Ariella Azoulay, “The (In)Human Spatial Condition: A Visual Essay”

Week 7:

March 11— Image Icons

Reading:

Practices of Looking, pp. 34-40

Robert Harriman and John Lucaites, *No Caption Needed* (excerpt)

Paper 3 assignment given.

March 13— Spectacle

Reading:

Practices of Looking, Chapter 6, pp.389-97

SPRING BREAK March 17-21

4) INSTITUTIONS

Week 8:

March 25—The Politics of Museums

Practices of Looking, pp. 417-430

Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, Chapter 9: Discourse Analysis

Paper 3 due.

March 27—Collecting and Exhibition

Reading:

Practices of Looking, pp.49-69

Jennifer Gonzalez, *Subject to Display* (Introduction)

James Clifford, “On Collecting Art and Culture”

Week 9:

April 1—Consumerism and Advertising

Reading:

Practices of Looking, Chapter 8

Proposals for final projects due.

April 3—Scientific Imaging

Reading:

Practices of Looking, Chapter 9

5) MEMORY

Week 10:

April 8—Memory and the Image

Reading:

Geoffrey Batchen, “Forget Me Not” (excerpt)

Marita Sturken, “The Camera Image and National Meanings”

Paper 4 assignment given.

April 10— Family Pictures

Reading:

Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory”

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (excerpt)

Marcelo Brodsky, *Buena Memoria*

Week 11:

April 15— Memorials and Sites of Memory

Reading:

Marita Sturken, “The Wall, The Screen, and the Image”

James Young, “Memory, Counteremory, and the End of Monument”

Paper 4 assignment due.

April 17—Taboo Images

Reading:

Barbie Zelizer, “Atrocity, the As If”

Tom Junod, “The Falling Man”

6) PLAY

Week 12:

April 22—Postmodernism and Irony

Reading:

Practices of Looking, Chapter 8

April 24—Digital Identity

Reading:

Jennifer Gonzalez, “Morphologies: Race as a Visual Technology”

Susan Murray, “Digital Images, Photo Sharing, and Our Shifting Notions of Everyday Aesthetics”

Week 13:

April 29—Virtual Windows and Screens

Reading:

Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window* (excerpt)

May 1— Visual Cultures of Resistance

Reading:

Douglas Crimp, *AIDSDemoGraphics* (excerpt)

Alison Trope and Lana Swartz, “The Visual Culture of Occupy”

Week 14:

May 6— The Viral

Reading:

W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror* (excerpt)

Tom Finkelpearl, “Internet Interactive Communication: White Glove Tracking”

May 8—Conclusion

Final Papers due Monday May 12