

Comparative Studies 275
Spring 2005
Philip Armstrong
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Introduction to Visual Representation

Moholy-Nagy once stated that knowledge of photography is just as important as that of the alphabet, which is why “the illiteracy of the future will be ignorance not of reading or writing, but of photography.” The course introduces students to questions of visual representation by rethinking Moholy-Nagy’s claim and its implications for visual culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Weekly readings will cover a number of different themes pertinent to a broad survey of visual material, with the aim of establishing a critical vocabulary for students to discuss and write about visual representations from different perspectives. The course will also include individual and group projects.

Requirements

Attendance is mandatory, and extensive class participation is expected from all students. Absences will be noted and will affect the final grade.

Grading will be based on the following:

class presentations and participation (20%)

in-class written assignments (20%)

midterm examination (30%): Students will take a midterm that assesses their engagement with and understanding of concepts crucial to the interpretation of visual works of art. The format will consist of identifications and short answers.

final take-home paper (30%): Students will be asked to compose a detailed analysis of a visual representation, engaging the critical vocabulary they have acquired over the course of the quarter.

YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS TO RECEIVE A PASSING GRADE

Grading Scale:

A 93-100	B+ 88-89	B- 80-82	C 73-77	D+ 68-69	E 64-0
A- 90-92	B 83-87	C+ 78-79	C- 70-72	D 65-67	

More than two unexcused absences will affect your grade; .15 will be subtracted for every additional unexcused absence.

All students are responsible for reading, understanding, and following university rules regarding cheating and plagiarism, which will be strictly enforced (see Faculty Rule

3335-31-02 on Academic Misconduct in the Ohio State University Student Handbook).

Any students who feel that they may be academically disadvantaged due to the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor(s) and the Office of Disability Services in Room 150 Pomerene Hall (292-3307) to arrange accommodations.

Required Texts

The following books are available in local bookstores (they are also on reserve in the Main Library): James Elkins, How to Use Your Eyes; Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others.

All other essays included in the syllabus are available on-line from OSCAR at <http://library.ohio-state.edu/search>, under COURSE RESERVES. Hard copies are also on reserve in the Main Library.

A WebCT account has been created for the course.

WEEK 1

March 29th/31st

Introduction to the Course.

Reading: Extract from Gillian Rose, Visual Methodologies; Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, “Acts of Memory: Topolitics and Teletechnology” in Echographies of Television, pp. 56-67.

Visual Material: Chris Marker, Immemory (CD-Rom)

WEEK 2

April 5th/7th

Vision/Visuality/Visual Culture

Readings: Selections from James Elkins, How to Use Your Eyes

Visual Materials: Student projects

WEEK 3

April 12th/14th

Visual Information and Scientific Imaging

Reading: Edward Tufte, The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint (on permanent reserve, SEL library P93.5 T848); Peter Galison, “Images Scatter Into Data, Data Gather Into Images,” from eds. Latour and Weibel, Iconoclash, pp. 300-323.

Visual Materials: David Byrne, E.E.E.I. (Envisioning Emotional Epistemological Information) (2003) (CD-ROM); various Science/Social Science textbooks

WEEK 4

April 19th/21st

Montage and the Avant-Garde

Readings: Annette Michelson, “Introduction” to Dziga Vertov, Kino-Eye, pp. xv-lxi

Visual Material: Man with a Movie Camera (1929, dir. Dziga Vertov)

WEEK 5

April 26th/28th

Visual Culture and Cyber-Culture

Reading: Pierre Lévy, “The Nomad Planet,” in Collective Intelligence, pp. xix-xxviii

Thur 28th

MIDTERM EXAMINATION

WEEK 6

May 3rd/5th

Visual Politics

Visiting Lecture: Kristen Hassen (Comparative Studies)

Readings: Carol Squiers, "The Corporate Year in Pictures," in Richard Bolton, ed., The Contest of Meaning, pp. 207-219; Martha Rosler, selections from If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism; Elijah Anderson, "Introduction" to Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in Urban Community, pp. 1-6.

Visual Material: Flag Wars (2003, dir. Lynda Goode Bryant); Martha Rosler, The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems

WEEK 7May 10th/12th**Visual Anthropology**

Readings: Edmund Carpenter, from Oh! What a Blow that Phantom Gave Me (for on-line version: <http://faculty.virginia.edu/phantom/>) and "The Tribal Terror of Self-Awareness" in Paul Hockings ed., Principles of Visual Anthropology, pp. 481-491.

Visual Material: Oh! What a Blow That Phantom Gave Me (2003, dir. John Bishop and Harald Prins).

WEEK 8

May 17th/19th

Race and Ethnicity

Visiting Lecture: Olivia Caldeira (Comparative Studies)

Readings: Malek Alloula, from The Colonial Harem (from The Visual Culture Reader, ed Mirzoeff, pp. 317-322); Jane Kramer, "Taking the Veil," The New Yorker (Nov 22, 2004): 59-71.

Visual Material: Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault (photographs); Slaying the Dragon (1988, dir. Deborah Gee)

WEEK 9

May 24th/26th

Vision and Desire

Readings: from Lynda Nead, The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, Sexuality (in ed. Mirzoeff, The Visual Culture Reader, pp. 485-494); Richard Meyer,

“Rock Hudson’s Body,” in Deborah Bright ed., The Passionate Camera: Photography and Bodies of Desire, pp. 340-360

Visual Material: Writing Desire (2001, dir. Ursula Biemann).

WEEK 10

May 31st/2nd

Representations of War

Readings: Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others

Visual Material: Extracts from Triumph of the Will (1934, dir. Riefenstahl); Full Metal Jacket (1987, dir. Kubrick); La Grande Illusion (1937, dir. Jean Renoir); Ernst Friedrich, War Against War.

June 9th

FINAL PRESENTATIONS