

Introduction to Visual Representation
Comparative Studies 275
Autumn 2006
M/W 9:30-11:18
Baker Systems Engineering Rm. 180

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Course Description:

Our contemporary society is characterized by a constant flow of images. On billboards, TVs, subways, and buses; in magazines, newspapers, emails, and airport terminals; the fast-paced production of images has revolutionized the way we communicate with and influence one another. At the same time, there exists a longstanding critical tradition of looking at objects and images in museums, galleries, and movie theaters that encourages us to reflect thoughtfully on the meaning and power of images. While we often find ourselves looking at and deriving pleasure from photographs, paintings, buildings, and bodies, we rarely stand back from this experience and ask how visual culture works and how it affects the way we think and interact with one another.

This course introduces students to Visual Culture, both as an *object* in the world and as a field of critical inquiry *about* that object. We will consider how paintings, photographs, films and other visual objects both *shape* and are *shaped by* the concepts, values, and meanings that constitute cultural life in contemporary society.¹ By reading critically the ways that categories of difference and identity have been inscribed in and taught through images, the course will also illumine the significant role that visual culture plays in constituting power through the “languages” of race, gender, sexuality, and class.

Required Texts

Print: All available at SBX.

- Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright. Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture. New York: Oxford University Press. 2001.
- Guerilla Girls. Guerilla Girls' Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art. New York: Penguin. 1998.
- Susan Sontag. On Photography. Picador. 2001.

Film and Video:

Representation and the Media
Frida
Birth of a Nation
Bamboozled

Electronic files:

Some of the required course readings are available as pdf files on the course website (www.CARMEN.osu.edu). You must bring hard copies of these readings to class on the day they are due to be discussed; therefore, you'll need to make arrangements to print them ahead of time.

CARMEN:

Comparative Studies 275 has its own course website, which students can access by opening their web browser (such as Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox) and going to www.CARMEN.osu. The course syllabus, requirements, assignments, announcements and some readings can be found on the web site. **Note that students must send all email communications to the instructor through this web site.** To learn more about using CARMEN, go to <http://telr.osu.edu/CARMEN-help/students/guide.html>. If you have difficulties with the interface, call 688-HELP.

Course Requirements and Grading System:

The success of students' performance in this course depends on their fulfillment of all requirements stipulated in this syllabus. Students must

- attend all class meetings
- arrive on time and stay for the full class period
- prepare for classes by completing all reading assignments by their due dates
- contribute to a productive learning environment by participating appropriately and respectfully in class discussions
- complete every assignment by its due date

Students will earn their grade based on the following grading system and breakdown of assignments and percentages:

	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	
A	93-100%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	63-66%
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%

Attendance	10%
Class Participation	15%
Midterm	15%
Reading Response Journal	35%
Final Exam	25%

Attendance (10%) and Participation (15%)

The format of the class is designed to accommodate and to promote substantive analyses and discussions of the assigned readings and visual material. While these texts will be supplemented by periodic lectures, the intention of the course is to establish a temporary formal work group, every member of which will contribute constructively to the *collective* project of exploring the course themes. It will be impossible for students to have an optimal learning experience if they do not attend every class meeting, having read every assigned text carefully and well enough in advance to allow themselves time to absorb the material. Attendance will be taken during every class meeting. Students should be certain to sign the roll sheet. Examination and quiz make-ups will only be offered in cases of

extreme emergency. In this case, students must contact the professor with written documentation of the emergency and obtain explicit permission to make up the assignment.

Midterm (15%)

Students will take a midterm that assesses their engagement with and understanding of important course concepts. The format will consist of identifications and short answers.

Reading Response Journal (35%)

Each student is required to keep a journal of responses to the assigned texts. Each response should total 250-300 words, and should briefly address the following questions with regard to one of the assigned texts for that week. (Consult assignment schedule to determine which text).

1. What is the author's main argument/s? (If the text is a work of literary or visual "fiction," what were the themes addressed?)
2. How does the author read issues of power in/and visual culture? For instance, what – if anything – does she say about the play of power in the use of specific visual technologies (photography, painting, film, etc)? What does she say about the play of power within the specific visual text(s) she examines? **Here is where you will consider how the author treats issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other categories of difference as they "appear" in visual culture.**
3. What did you find most compelling about the work? What new experience/notion/understanding of its themes did it present for you?

On days when reading responses are due, ten to fifteen minutes will be devoted to a reading response exchange, in which students will pair up and share with one another their responses for that week. This exercise is meant to encourage diligent reading habits, to facilitate critical thinking, and to provide an alternative to more traditional modes of sharing knowledge and ideas in the classroom. The instructor will collect the responses at the end of the class period and return them to students with a grade based on evidence of careful reading, effective writing, and the level of engagement with the assigned questions. Each reading response is worth 10 points total. Grades will be assigned according to the following criteria.

1. Careful reading: Worth 2 points. Considerations: whether or not the student read the text completely and carefully. If it is clear from their response that they did not, I will deduct points.
2. Clear, careful, grammatically correct writing: Worth 2 points. Considerations: whether or not the student took time to convey her/his ideas carefully and with attention to her/his writing.
3. Thoughtful answer to question 1, reflective of clarity on the text's arguments/purpose: Worth 2 points.
4. Thoughtful answer to question 2, reflective of an effort to situate the text within a discussion of power and visual culture.
5. Thoughtful answer to question 3, reflective of sincere engagement with texts and ideas presented within them: Worth 2 points.

Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will be a take-home exam, consisting of essay questions.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

Statement on Plagiarism

As defined by University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas. Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community; as such, it is the obligation of this department and its instructors to report all cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. After the report is filed, a hearing takes place and if the student is found guilty, the possible punishment ranges from failing the class to suspension or expulsion from the university. Although the existence of the internet makes it relatively easy to plagiarize, it also makes it even easier for instructors to find evidence of plagiarism. It is obvious to most teachers when a student turns in work that is not his or her own and plagiarism search engines make documenting the offense very simple.

- Always cite your sources
- Always ask questions before you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism.
- Always see your professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment.

To preserve the integrity of OSU as an institution of higher learning, to maintain your own integrity, and to avoid jeopardizing your future, DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!

Accommodation of students with disabilities

Students who wish to have an accommodation for disability are responsible for contacting the professor as soon as possible. The Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall; 292-3307; 292-0901 TDD) verifies the need for accommodations and assists in the development of accommodation strategies.

Resources

Professor: Please make use of the professor’s office hours to discuss the course material and assignments, and/or any questions or concerns you may have.

The OSU Writing Center: The OSU Writing Center offers free individual tutoring with writing consultants who can help writers working at any level. While I encourage you to take advantage of this resource, you are not required to do so, and any/all of your visits to the Center can remain confidential. The Center is located in room 485, Mendenhall Lab, on the south side of the Oval. Phone: 688-5865. Website: <http://www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/cstw/writingcenter.html>.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus if the need arises.

Schedule of Readings, Discussions, and Assignments

Introduction:

Wednesday 9/20: Administrative Issues, Course Goals, and Introductions

- In-Class Activity: Reading Teen Pregnancy

WEEK 1

The Work of Representation:

Monday 9/25:

Readings:

- Sturken and Cartwright, “Introduction” and “Practices of Looking: Images, Power and Politics,” Practices of Looking pp. 1-44.

Lecture and Discussion: *The Work of Representation*

Wednesday 9/27:

Readings:

- Sturken and Cartwright, “Viewers Make Meaning,” Practices of Looking pp. 45-71.

Video (in-class screening): *Representation and the Media*

WEEK 2

Painting the Gaze, Constructing “the Other”

Monday 10/2:

Readings:

- Sturken and Cartwright, “Spectatorship, Power, and Knowledge,” Practices of Looking pp. 72-108

Lecture and Discussion: *Foucault and Power/Knowledge*

Wednesday 10/4:

Due: Reading Response on Guerilla Girls’ Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art

Readings:

- Guerilla Girls, Guerilla Girls’ Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art

Lecture and Discussion: *Re-visioning Art History: Critical Gender Analyses*

WEEK 3

Multiple Mediations: Picturing Frida Kahlo

Monday 10/9

Readings:

- Sarah M. Lowe, "Frida Kahlo," The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940, Eds. Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, 2006. Available on CARMEN.

Lecture and Discussion: *Picturing Frida*, Part I

Wednesday 10/11: NO CLASS

Due (email to Professor Tapia): Reading Response on Isabel Molina Guzman's "Mediating Frida"

Readings:

- Isabel Molina Guzman, "Mediating Frida: Negotiating Discourses of Latina/o Authenticity in Global Media Representation," Critical Studies in Media Communication (23:3) 2006. Available on CARMEN.
- View Miramax Studios' ***Frida*** (with Salma Hayek) on your own

WEEK 4

Monday 10/16:

Lecture and Discussion: *Picturing Frida*, Part II

Capturing the Real, Framing Difference: Photography

Wednesday 10/18:

Due: Reading Response on Sontag's *On Photography*

Readings:

- Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

Lecture and Discussion: *Photography and "The Real"*

WEEK 5

Monday 10/23:

Due: Reading Response on Shawn Michelle Smith, Chapter 3 in Photography and the Color Line

Readings:

- Shawn Michelle Smith, Chapters 1-3 in Photography and the Color Line: W.E.B. DuBois, Race and Visual Culture, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Lecture and Discussion: *Photography and Race (Part I)*

Wednesday 10/25:

Due: Reading Response on Shawn Michelle Smith, Chapter 4 in Photography and the Color Line

Readings:

- Shawn Michelle Smith, Chapters 4-5 in Photography and the Color Line: W.E.B. DuBois, Race and Visual Culture, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Lecture and Discussion: *Photography and Race (Part II)*

WEEK 6

Birth of a Nation and the Birth of Film

Monday 10/30:

Readings:

- Selections from Michael Rogin, Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. Available on CARMEN.

Lecture and Discussion: *The Logics of Minstrelsy*

Wednesday 11/1:

In-Class Screening: *Birth of a Nation*

WEEK 7

Bamboozling Visions: Revisiting Race in (a) Film

Monday 11/6:

Due: Reading Response on *Birth of a Nation*

In-Class Viewing: *Bamboozled*

Wednesday 11/8:

Readings: (TBA) Reader.

In-Class Viewing: *Bamboozled* (continued)

WEEK 8

Classical Hollywood and the Gaze

Monday 11/13:

Due: Reading Response on Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

Readings:

- Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Available on CARMEN.

Lecture and Discussion: *The Male Gaze*

Wednesday 11/15:

Readings:

- Selections from Patricia White's Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability. Reader.

Lecture and Discussion: *Is the Gaze Male?*

WEEK 9

Looking at Science

Monday 11/20:

Due: Reading Response due on Kaplan's "Look Who's Talking, Indeed!"

Readings:

- Sturken and Cartwright, "Scientific Looking, Looking at Science," Practices of Looking, 279-314
- E. Ann Kaplan, "Look Who's Talking, Indeed! Fetal Images in Recent North American Visual Culture." Available on CARMEN.

Lecture and Discussion: *Visual Culture and Fetal "Positions"*

Wednesday 11/22: NO CLASS

Monday 11/27:

Readings:

- Donna Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy.” Available on CARMEN.

Lecture and Discussion: *Producing Subjects, Capturing Objects: The Politics of the Museum*

Wednesday 11/29:

Readings:

- Sturken and Cartwright, “Postmodernism and Popular Culture” and “The Global Flow of Visual Culture,” 237-277 and 315-346

Final Exam: TBA

Some language describing the focus and content of this course is taken from Timothy Quigley’s “Visual and Cultural Studies” course syllabus. <http://homepage.newschool.edu/~quigleyt/vcs/spring04/syllabus.html>