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CMST 4169:
VISUAL RHETORIC
Spring 2015
Online

Course objectives:

This course provides an overview of theories of looking in our everyday lives. Our study will encompass diverse media including photography, film, television, video, and the Internet. We will consider a range of visual practices engaged in by consumers and producers of visual information and art from photojournalists to activists, artists, and professionals working in advertising and the popular culture industries. We will also consider the use of visual data in the sciences, law, and medicine. The main objective of this course is to develop a working vocabulary for observing, discussing, explaining, and critiquing visual practices. More broadly, we will interrogate the relationship between visual representations and materiality reality and consider the different registers in which we relate to images, including meaning, affect, power, and sociality. Ultimately, we will consider the political and ethical challenges faced by members of visual cultures and generate appropriate strategies for critical thinking, ethical practice, and artful living under these conditions.

Required Texts

Marita Sturken Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*
Your textbook is available at the LSU Bookstore located in the Student Union.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

A student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate general knowledge of the field of critical surveillance studies and awareness of recent developments in scholarly thinking about contemporary cultures of surveillance.
2. Articulate critical and informed positions on the relationship between surveillance technologies and the cultures that use them.
3. Understand the relationship between power and knowledge that motivates surveillance practices and shapes the development and use of surveillance technologies.

4. Read and think critically. Articulate ideas about readings in a compelling and communicative manner.
5. Pursue independent research and share findings with the class.
6. Use technology effectively in class participation.
7. Practice facility in linking political, social, and economic factors in the development of surveillance cultures and people's voluntary or compulsory participation in those cultures.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Since this is an online course, we will not meet physically in a classroom; however, you are expected to keep up with assigned readings, participate in online forums and complete exams.

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Services (112 Johnson Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Online Participation	100 points
Midterm	200 points
Final	200 points
Total possible points	500 points

In calculating your final grade, the points you earn on each assignment will be added together, and the sum will be graded on the following scale:

A = 500 – 450; B = 400 – 449; C = 350 – 399; D = 300 – 349; F = 299 or below.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. **INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES:** As the instructor, I will post a note to the class every Monday by noon. Since we are not meeting in person, these notes provide a means for me to address you on a regular basis throughout the course of the semester. The notes will appear in Moodle with that week's readings and forum. I will use the notes to: provide context for the assigned readings, offer guiding questions for you to consider while you read, and in some cases include material not covered in the readings.

You can think of the instructor's notes and Moodle forum discussions as loosely connected. Instructor's notes frame the week's readings and introduce a suggested thread for class discussion, which takes place in the forum.

2. **EXAMS:** The Midterm and Final Exam are multiple-choice and based on assigned reading material.

3. **DISCUSSION FORUMS:** During the course of the semester, there will be a total of ten discussion forums conducted on Moodle. I will post a guiding question or set of questions on Wednesdays by noon (of the weeks we have scheduled forums). **You are expected to post a response and two replies to other students' posts by 5 pm on Thursdays.**

Participation in the discussion forums on Moodle is critical for maximizing student-learning experiences in any online course. In this course, students are required to be a part of an online community of learners who collectively interact, through discussion, to enhance and support the professional performance of each other. Part of the assessment criteria for the course includes evaluating the quality and quantity of your participation in the discussion forum.

As the course instructor, I will facilitate student discussions in Moodle forums but I will not address every single post. In most cases, I might share a related idea, intervene when the discussion goes off-track, or tie student comments together to help deepen student learning. Consequently, I will not directly answer questions in the discussion area unless they are addressed to me. I will check the discussions regularly between Tues and Thursday.

Some characteristics I consider to be part of excellent discussion contributions are outlined below. I will consider these characteristics when assessing the quality and level of student participation.

- Submit initial post(s) early in the session, and subsequent responses to the posts of other learners at timely intervals throughout the duration of the session. The goal is to have a dynamic discussion around the topic that lasts throughout the entire session.
- Posts and responses should be thorough and thoughtful. Just posting an "I agree" or "Good ideas" will not be considered adequate. Support statements with examples, experiences, or references. Be brief — keep each post and response to one or two short paragraphs. Keep in mind that fellow learners will be reading and

responding to you, too.

- Posts should be within a range of 75-150 words. If a post does not meet the minimum word count of 75, I will not count it toward your grade.
- Make certain that all posts and responses address the question, problem, or situation as presented for discussion. This does not mean you should not extend the topic, but do not stray from the topic.
- Discussions occur when there is dialogue; therefore, you need to build upon the posts and responses of other learners to create discussion threads. Make sure to revisit the discussion forum and respond (if necessary) to what other learners have posted to your initial responses.
- When relevant, add to the discussion by including prior knowledge, work experiences, references, web sites, resources, etc. (giving credit when appropriate).
- Contributions to the discussions (posts and responses) should be complete and free of grammatical or structural errors.

Discussion Participation Rubric

Criteria	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Exemplary
Quantity and timeliness	Does not submit at least one initial response early in the session and/or does not submit at least two peer responses closer to the end of the session. 1 points	Submits at least one initial response early in the session, and at least two peer responses closer to the end of the session. 1.5 point	Submits one initial response early in the session, and two or more thoughtful peer responses early in the session, and more than two peer responses closer to the end of the session. 2 points
Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of content	Post(s) and responses show little evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content and applicability to lived experience. 2.5 points	Post(s) and responses show evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content and applicability to lived experience. 3 points	Post(s) and responses show evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content and applicability to lived experience, and include other resources that extend the learning of the community. 4 points
Generates learning within the community	Posts do not attempt to elicit responses and reflections from other learners and/or responses do not build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper. 2.5 points	Posts attempt to elicit responses and reflections from other learners and responses build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper. 3 points	Posts elicit responses and reflections from other learners and responses build upon and integrate multiple views from other learners to take the discussion deeper. 4 points
Total Points Possible: 10			

Course Schedule

Jan 15: What is Visual Culture?
Setting expectations, defining key terms, course overview

Unit One: Images, Power, and Politics

Jan 20: The myth of photographic truth
Ch 1, *Practices of Looking* pp 9-26
Slides: "Reality & Images"
Slides: "Reality Effect"

Jan 22: Semiotics or how we negotiate the meaning of images
Ch1, *Practices of Looking* pp 26-46
Slides: "Semiotics"

Unit Two: Viewers Make Meaning

Jan 27: Aesthetics and taste
Ch 2, *Practices of Looking* pp 49-69

Jan 29: Anne Demo, "The Guerilla Girls' Comic Politics of Subversion" (Moodle)

Feb 3: Encoding/decoding
Ch 2, *Practices of Looking* pp 69-75
Phaedra Pezzullo, "Cancer and co-optation" (Moodle)

Feb 5: Reception studies
Ch2 2, *Practices of Looking* pp 75-89
Charles Morris and John Sloop, "What Lips These Lips Have Kissed": Refiguring the Politics of Queer Public Kissing" (Moodle)

Unit Three: Spectatorship, Power, and Knowledge

February 10: Spectatorship, discourse, and power
Ch 3, *Practices of Looking* pp 101-111

Feb 12: Rachel Dubrofsky, "'Therapeutics of the Self': Surveillance in the Service of the Therapeutic" (Moodle)

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Feb 19: The gaze and the Other
Ch 3, *Practices of Looking* pp 111-120
bell hooks, "Eating the Other" (Moodle)

Feb 24: Dana Cloud, "'To Veil the Threat of Terror': Afghan Women and the Clash of Civilizations in the Imagery of the U.S. War on Terrorism" (Moodle)

Feb 26: Gender, sexuality, and the gaze
Ch 3, *Practices of Looking* pp 120-136

March 3: Midterm

Unit Four: Realism and Perspective

March 5: Realism and the history of perspective
Ch 4, *Practices of Looking* pp 141-180
Slides: “History of Realism”

March 10: Perspectives of judgment in the documentary mode
Eric Jenkins, “Seeing Katrina”

Unit Five: Media in Everyday Life

March 12: Democratic potential of the mass media
Harold and DeLuca, “Behold the Corpse” (Moodle)
Screen: *The Untold Story of Emmett Till*

March 17: Critiques of the mass media
Ch 6, *Practices of Looking* pp 223-247
Screening: Clips from *Triumph of the Will* and *The Great Dictator*

March 19: National and global media events
Ch 6, *Practices of Looking* pp 247-260
Case Study: Arab Spring
Simone Natale, “Talking of Revolution, Again: Interview with Fred Turner” (Moodle)
William Youmans and Jillian York, “Social Media and the Activist Toolkit” (Moodle)

March 24: Democratic possibilities and limitations of social media
Case Study: #BlackLivesMatter
George Yancy and Janine Jones, Introduction to *Pursuing Trayvon Martin* (Moodle)
George Yancy and Judith Butler, “What’s Wrong with ‘All Lives Matter’?” (Moodle)

Unit Seven: Advertising, Consumer Cultures, and Desire

March 26: Commodity fetishism and the commodity self
Ch 7, *Practices of Looking* pp 265-304

March 31: Aesthetic critiques of consumer culture
Screen: Clips from *Bomb It*

April 2: Embodied critiques of consumer culture
Screen: Clips from *What Would Jesus Buy?*

SPRING BREAK April 6-10

Unit Eight: Postmodernism, Indie Media, and Popular Culture

April 14: Postmodernism: reflexivity, pastiche, parody, and the remake
Ch 8, *Practices of Looking* pp 307-343

April 16: Postmodernism (continued)

Lisa Cartwright and Stephen Mandiberg, “Obama and Shepard Fairey: The Copy and Political Iconography in the Age of the Demake” (Moodle)

Screen: *Exit Through the Gift Shop*

Unit Nine: Scientific Looking, Looking at Science

April 21: History of Scientific Looking

Ch 9, *Practices of Looking* pp 347-384

April 23: Images in biomedicine & security culture

Carol Stabile, “Shooting the Mother: Fetal Photography and the Politics of Disappearance” (Moodle)

Shoshana Magnet and Tara Rodgers, “Stripping for the State: Whole body imaging technologies and the surveillance of othered bodies” (Moodle)

Unit Ten: The Global Flow of Visual Culture

April 28: Concepts of globalization

Ch 10, *Practices of Looking* pp 389-426

Screen: Clips from *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*

April 30: Final Exam