

AUCA, Journalism and Mass Communication Department, Fall 2010

Visual Communications
MC 290
ID 02557

Instructor: Dr. Jyldyz Kuvatova,
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Course Status: required
Credits: 3
Language of teaching: English
Lectures: Tue @ 8 am in Rm. 1/321
Seminars: Thu @ 8 am in Rm. 1/321
Consultations: (by appointment)

There is a road from the eye to the heart that does not go through the intellect.

G.K. Chesterton, essayist and novelist
(1874-1936)
Course Description

In our increasingly visual global society, visual literacy is more important than ever. This course will help you develop your visual literacy skills to make you a more informed reader of images. This is essentially a theoretical/analytical course, but it has a practical purpose. Just as reading texts is a critical part of preparing to be a writer, reading images is essential to becoming an adept producer of compelling images in journalism, public relations, or entertainment.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, you will:

1. be familiar with the history and technologies of visual communication;
2. have gained theoretical tools for reading and analyzing images;
3. have practiced reading, analyzing, and discussing images;
4. have honed your critical thinking skills.

Class Format:

We will have lectures and seminars. It is expected that much of your learning occurs outside of class time. It means that you should be prepared for quizzes and presentations and also look for illustrations of the theoretical material you learn during the lectures in your everyday life. I encourage you to bring in issues/ visuals/ ads related to visual communications and we'll share them with the class.

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You will have a quiz at the beginning of nearly every seminar session.

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On the (two) weeks when you don't have quizzes, you'll be required to prepare a brief analytical presentation.

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Respectful, constructive participation by students - especially in the seminar sessions - is not only expected, but required.

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The final exam will be comprehensive, meaning it will cover all of the material from the entire semester.

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Starting in the middle of the semester, you will compile a collection of images and your written analyses of them. The scrapbook will be due at the end of the semester.

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My expectations of you are that you will perform as you would in a professional environment - courteous, respectful, thoughtful, thorough and punctual. The grade you earn will depend much on your attitude, your work ethic, your smarts, and your willingness to think outside the box. The bottom line is you can expect to work hard in this class.

Required Textbook & Readings:

1. The course reader.

Highly recommended:

AP Style guide, The New York Times, The Washington Post, local newspapers and magazines, Advertising Age, PR Tactics, photo websites.

Resources:

Library of the American University - Central Asia
National Library
Internet, World Wide Web, international e-mail contacts
Database EBSCO

Grading:

Quizzes 10 percent
Analytical presentations 10 percent
Seminar participation 10 percent
Final exam 30 percent
Scrapbook 40 percent

Total points:
100 percent

By Percentages:

A = 100 to 90; B = 89 to 80; C = 79 to 70; D = 69 to 60; F = didn't try hard enough.

Note:

I reserve right to award a + or - to the grade based on attitude and performance.

Final grades are NOT negotiable. It is your responsibility to keep up with your grades during the semester.

Grading Standards:

Your assignments will be graded on:

- Content
- Creativity
- Organization
- Grammar

A = Outstanding. This grade is for work of professional caliber (publishable/usable). The writing is clear and well organized; it requires virtually no editing. It is complete and leaves no

significant questions unanswered. The work is turned in by or before deadline, needing no changes before submission to clients or editors.

B = Good. This grade is for work that could be raised to professional standards without extensive alteration. Writing and execution is grammatically correct but may lack the thought and depth of "A" work. The main questions are answered but may miss the proper emphasis, best sources, or creativity in thought. The work is turned in by deadline and needs minor

revisions in such areas as reorganizing, rewriting, reformatting or providing more or better sources. "B" work doesn't necessarily have anything wrong, but it could be better.

C = Adequate. This grade is for work that indicates a problem at least in one area, such as research, strategy or organization. It does not measure up to professional quality but could be saved by revision. Work is incomplete by deadline and/or needs more than minor revision before submission to a client or supervisor. The paper may have weak ideas, concepts or presentation. In summary, the work is an adequate first draft but isn't yet ready to show a client or supervisor.

D = Unacceptable performance. This grade is for work that is clearly unacceptable even in a classroom setting. The work is unorganized, confusing and sloppy. The conceptual underpinnings are flawed and indicate poor research or strategic judgment. Work may miss the deadline.

F = Failing. This grade is for work that is not completed in a professional, timely way. For whatever reason, it has the appearance that the student did not take the assignment seriously. Such performance is often the result of personal or time-management problems.

(Borrowed/revised from C. Marsh et al.)

Class Policies

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Following is a brief summary of what is considered academic dishonesty:

- submitting material as your own work, when it is not
 - cheating in class during exam periods or aiding another student to cheat
 - failing to cite the work of another in a paper or presentation - whether the student is directly quoting a source or paraphrasing
 - submitting falsified medical excuses
 - working on an assignment with other students without the instructor's permission
 - downloading sources from the Internet and using them as your own (whether the student has paraphrased the information or used it word for word) without citing the source.
- Plagiarism, at least will result in a failing grade for the affected assignment and the submission of the affected assignment to the university's legal counsel. For further information on the penalties please see the university's policy on academic misconduct.

Assignments: Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date unless otherwise specified. I will not accept late assignments. They will be graded as zeros. No assignment (or part of an assignment) from another class will be accepted in this class. If it is discovered that a student has attempted to do this, it will result in an automatic grade of "zero" on the project. All materials submitted for this class should be new and completely original. It is the student's responsibility to get copies of handout given in class.

Attendance and Preparation: Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory. Each class attendance will earn you three points by default. You are allowed two days of "sick-vacation" leave, as it is reasonable you may need to miss two days of class for some reason during the semester. After your two freebies, you will begin losing points and must tell your instructor in advance if you cannot show up. Call or send an email - but don't ask a friend to pass along the information. Also, please note: two tardies = one absence. I also expect you to have read the assigned material before class (textbook or readings). Students are excused for religious holidays and must apprise instructor in advance.

Reader and Participation: Students should read the course's Reader and check the course online resource regularly. Readings, class assignments, discussion questions and additional information will be filed / uploaded to the course online resource. I will often hand out/ announce discussion questions in class that will pertain to the readings due to the next class. The course schedule is filed distributed, uploaded to the online resource and will be updated during the semester, as will updates and other announcements. It is crucial that you check your email account during the week.

Communications: Office hours are the best time to get help on projects, to talk about careers and discuss your ideas about what we're doing in class. Email is best for questions requiring short answers (e.g., due dates, format, etc.).

Extra Credit: Bonus (up to 5 percent) will be given for creativity, originality, and independence of thinking.

Exam: Exam will cover material from lectures, handouts, seminar discussions, materials filed in the Reader, guest speakers, films/ videos and the text. No hats or caps may be worn during exam periods. Students may not leave the exam room during the exam. Make-up exams are rarely given and are given at the discretion of the professor. Students MUST consult with the professor well in advance of the exam date and provide a legitimate and documented reason for rescheduling. (Family vacations, appearances in weddings, etc. are not considered legitimate reasons to reschedule an exam.)

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Tentative Class Schedule:

The schedule may change at the professor's discretion. Should the schedule be changed, the

professor will provide as much notice as possible.

Date Lecture/Discussion Topic Readings (due by date listed)

Week 1

August 24 Lecture: Know More, See More: The Importance of Visual Literacy. Course Overview and Introduction.

August 26 Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings.

Week 2

August 31 Lecture: no classes (Independence Day)

September 2 Seminar: Brief lecture: Light. Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings

Week 3

September 7 Lecture: The Eye, the Retina, and the Brain; What the Brain Sees.

September 9 Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings

Week 4

September 14 Lecture: Sensual and Perceptual Theories of Visual Communications

September 16 Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings

Week 5

September 21 Lecture: Visual Persuasion in Advertising, PR, and Journalism

September 23 Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings

- Crain, "Twilight of the Books."
- New World Encyclopedia, "Visual Culture."
- Joyner, "Journalism in a Post-literate World."
- Discovery Magazine, "How to Build an Invisibility Cloak."
- Popular Mechanics, "Why Invisibility Cloaks Aren't As Close As You Think."
- Sacks, "The Mind's Eye: What the Blind See."
- Sacks, excerpt from The Island of the Colorblind
- Rogers, "Yellow Skies, Blue Trees."
- Wallace, "Gestalt Principles & Learning."
- "Cognitive Theory: Children's Comprehension of Visual Images in Television."
- "Semiotic Analysis: An Intended-Perceived Study Using Visual Semiotics."

- Spoof ads from Adbusters website:
<http://www.adbusters.org/gallery/spoofads>
- Petchesky, "Fetal Images and Reproductive Politics."

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Week 6

September 28

Lecture: Images that Injure

September 30

Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings

Week 7

October 5

Lecture: Analyzing Visual Messages

October 7

Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings. Analyze the images you brought.

SCRAPBOOKS ASSIGNED

Week 8

October 12

Lecture: Typography & Graphic Design

October 14

Seminar: No quiz. Analytical presentations of fonts, logos, or movie posters. Discussion on typography and graphic design.

Week 9 - Fall Break (October 18 - 22)

Week 10

October 26 Lecture: Informational

October 28

Graphics

Seminar: No quiz. Analytical presentations of news stories and their info graphics. Discussion.

Week 11

November 2

Lecture: Comics & Cartoons

November 4

Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings. Scrapbook check: Turn in scrapbooks

-Joffe, "Power of Visual Materials."

- Haller, "The Misfit and Muscular Dystrophy."

- Clawson, "Poverty As We Know It: Media

Portrayals of the Poor."

- Strate, "Beer Commercials: A Manual on Masculinity."

-Lester "Procedure for Analyzing Visual Messages," 8 pages.

-Krughoff, "The Ripper Correspondence: A Visual ...Analysis," 15 pages.

- Bring one image to the seminar and be prepared to analyze it with the class.

- Typographia's 2007 Awards for Best Fonts:
<http://typographica.org/001124.php>

-Heller, "Al Gore's New Logo."

-You can view the logo at:

http://adage.com/adages/post?article_id=126250

-Heller, "A Laboratory for Sign Language."

- Pizzichinia, "La Dolce Vita."

- Choose one typeface, logo, or movie poster, analyze it, and bring it to your seminar.

-Tufte: "The Power of Graphics.

- Wiseman, "Steel Rain," online at:

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/graphics/world/gcluster/flash.htm>

- Find a news story that is illustrated with an info graphic; bring it to your seminar.

- Excerpt from Satrapi, Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood

-Hull, "Postmodern Philosophy Meets Pop Culture Cartoon."

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Week 12

November 9

Lecture: Photography

November 11

Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings.

Week 13

November 16

Lecture: Movies, Videos & TV

November 18

Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings.

Week 14

November 23

Lecture: Graffiti, Public Art & Public Protest

November 25

Seminar: no classes (Thanksgiving Day)

Week 15

November 30

Lecture: Computers & the Web

December 2

Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings.

Week 16

December 7

Lecture: Review of major concepts of the course

December 9

Seminar: Quiz on the readings/ Discussion of the readings /prep for the final exam. SCRAPBOOKS DUE

- Additional readings, TBA.
- Lowrey, "Normative Conflict in the Newsroom: The Case of Digital Photo Manipulation."
- Winslow, "Toledo Blade Discovers Dozens ..."
- View <http://photoshopdisasters.blogspot.com/>

and be prepared to discuss

- Richmond, "Unscripted TV: Real or Really phony?"
 - Poniewozik, "Faking Reality TV".
 - Huddleton, "Unmasking the Monster: Hiding and Revealing Male Sexuality in John Carpenter's Halloween."
 - Lachman, "Graffiti as a Career and Ideology."
 - "Legal vs. Illegal on Tehran's Walls."
 - Thiel, "Graffiti and Global Culture."
 - Kensicki, "Building Credibility for Nonprofit Organizations through Webpage..."
 - Patterson, "Creative Destruction: An Exploratory Look at News and the Internet."
- FINAL EXAM - Tuesday, December 14 @ 8 am

