



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

COMM460 Visual Communication

Fall 2015

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Office: UH820
Office Hours: After class (5-5:30) and by appointment

Class Time: 3:30 – 4:45, T/H
Class Location: BSB285

COURSE OVERVIEW

Visual Communication addresses the connections between visual perception, cognition, and communication in contemporary Western society. The course is designed to provide students with 1) an overview of the importance of visual perception to cognition and conceptualization, 2) an introduction to semiotic theory, 3) a general examination of media ecology, 4) an understanding of the relationship between visual media and issues of identity, community, and culture, and 5) a critical perspective on visual communication in Western culture. While being introduced to vital theoretical concepts, students should come to a more critical understanding of the role of visual media and technology in contemporary society and the interplay of culture(s).

TEXTBOOKS

All reading materials will be provided on Blackboard, or otherwise, as needed.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

Visual Communication is a seminar-style class. There is nothing to memorize. There are no quizzes. There are no tests: no midterm, no final exam. Your performance will not be evaluated, and your grade in this course will not be based, on your ability to regurgitate arbitrary facts or definitions from the course materials and lectures. (There will be very little “lecturing,” in any case.)

Your grade will ultimately be based on the effort you demonstrate in engaging with the ideas we will be confronting this semester. This is because your engagement and contribution will have a decisive impact on the success of the course as a whole. This means two things: 1) you must attend class, and 2) you must be prepared to participate. Individual grades will be computed as follows:

Participation (in class and online):	25%
Weekly Response Blog	20%
Primary Reading Discussion Lead	15%
Supplemental Reading Presentation	20%
Final Project	20%

Grades will **not** be posted on Blackboard. Your grades will be returned to you with comments on your weekly reading responses. You can keep up with your progress using the grade distribution above.

READING (AND READING, AND READING...)

We will be reading a lot this semester. A lot. The schedule of weekly readings is divided into two parts for each week: primary readings and supplemental presentation readings. **You are expected and required to read and respond to all of the *primary* readings every week.** The supplemental presentation reading options provide further information and broader perspectives on the primary readings. Those leading or giving in-class presentations are strongly encouraged to make use of the supplemental presentation readings as well as the required primary readings. I *do not* expect you to read *all* of the materials provided for the course. I *do* expect you to demonstrate an effort at understanding, which means at least in part, exploring the assigned readings and provided and making connections among them, including material from earlier weeks as we move through the semester, as well as with other material you find on your own and your previous knowledge and experience. It also, of course, means demonstrating a familiarity with the ideas in the readings in discussions (both in class and online). This material in this class can sometimes be dense difficult. The dictionary and Wikipedia will be your friends. Use them.

PARTICIPATION

In order to participate in class discussions, you must attend class. **Absences and tardiness will negatively and significantly affect your participation grade.** Sitting quietly in class and hoping others do the talking is not an option. **Silence and reticence will negatively affect your participation grade.** Do not be afraid to say something “dumb.” We are going to be reading materials that will sometimes be entirely alien. The only way to get a grip on them will be to confront them openly together as a class. Go ahead and say something “dumb” – it probably won’t be as dumb as you think (and you’ll probably find that you’re not the only one thinking it), and at the very least you may bring up interesting questions. At the same time, do not assume that you “get it.” If it seems easy or simple, you’re probably missing something. Try to figure out what you’re missing. Talk to each other. Ask questions.

Your participation, both in class and online, will be evaluated in terms of **activity, depth, and consistency**. You will also be given credit for adding or integrating your class notes onto the wiki, and for editing reading outlines on the wiki—so adding your class notes is an easy way to earn credit and help everyone out at the same time. Though I expect to see each student contributing online on a weekly basis, there are no hard-and-fast quantifiable measures that I am looking for: no minimum/maximum number of expected posts or comments, no checklist of who speaks and who doesn’t in each class, no minimum number of absences. That’s too easy. This class is not a game, not a competition. There is no score. Your job is to read, think, engage, and learn. Do *that*, and your grade will take care of itself.

The online discussions should be an ongoing process of engagement rather than a weekly burst of activity at the beginning of the week. Ignoring others’ reading responses and comments and a general lack of online interaction will significantly and negatively affect your participation grade. Do not expect to whip up a flurry of comments and activity in the last or two week of the semester in order to “make your points.”

Try not to think of the in-class and online discussions as separate events. Let them reference and engage with one another in an ongoing dialogue.

When someone comments on one of your posts, reply to them.

READING RESPONSE BLOG

Each week (by Monday) you will be expected to post a response to the primary readings on our class blog (at www.persuasioning.wordpress.com/). You will need to sign up for a WordPress account, if you don't have one already. Send me your WordPress username or the email you used to register/sign in to WordPress, and I will add you as an Author to our class blog.

While there is no minimum required length for your responses, **each week's reading response should do five things:**

- 1) Demonstrate that you've done all of the reading (not *Tuesday's* readings, *all* the week's readings),
- 2) Demonstrate that you've thought about the reading,
- 3) Make connections among the ideas in the present week's readings and among previous weeks' material,
- 4) Include at least one relevant image (see below), and
- 5) Reference (and link to) at least one other classmate's post.

Your reading response should be a well-considered, (loosely) essay-style discussion of the week's readings. As we move through the semester, your responses should make connections among readings, ideas, and discussions from previous weeks. Your reading responses should demonstrate your active efforts to make connections and to question the ideas presented in the readings and class discussions. Your understanding of the material will be demonstrated in your application of the ideas presented to your own previous knowledge and experience.

Remember that everyone in the class will be reading the primary readings: **your reading response should NOT be a summary of the readings.** A summary tells us (at most) that you read; it doesn't tell us anything about *what you think* or that you've thought about what you read.

You are not required or expected to read *all* of the weekly responses by *all* of your classmates – you have enough to read. You are, however, expected to pay attention to what your classmates are saying and to engage with one another, questioning, answering, and/or reinforcing each other's ideas and concerns on a regular basis throughout the week.

IMAGE COLLECTION

We are surrounded by images. We swim in them. We breathe them. Most of our waking lives are spent engaging with what we see and especially with visual media. One of the purposes of the reading responses is to get you to relate the course material to your own life, experience, and world. To this end, each of your reading responses should contain at least one image (i.e., photo, video clip, snap shot, scanned image, advertisement, etc.) relevant in some way to the week's reading material along with a brief explanation/discussion of the image(s) and its relation to the course. The easiest thing to do is simply work the discussion of the image(s) into your response. You may post as many images as you like, both in your individual responses and as extra posts beyond the required response. Additional images (with appropriate explanation/discussion) and other posts beyond your required reading responses will count towards your participation grade.

PRIMARY READING DISCUSSION LEAD

During the first week of the semester, each student will sign up on the Blackboard wiki for **2 separate weeks** in which you'll be responsible for introducing one (or more) of the primary readings during class and for providing an outline of that reading on the Blackboard wiki. Each primary reading will be introduced to the class in a (very) brief, informal overview that

- 1) identifies the author(s)
- 2) identifies the main argument and points of the article,
- 2) attempts to position the reading in relation to the other readings of that week, and
- 3) provides a couple of initial discussion questions.

Your overview, in other words, should simply introduce the main points and arguments of the reading and position it in relation to the other readings in order to facilitate class discussion. Remember that your classmates will have read the material themselves. **An outline of the reading(s) is to be posted on the Blackboard wiki before class.** For your introduction, **do not just read your outline.**

Outlines should be complete enough to function as study guides. In composing the outline, pay attention to the organization and structure of the argument being presented and try to present the main points of that argument succinctly. To help you develop your introduction and outline, read your fellow students' reading responses, and ask questions of your classmates. This will make your introduction and outline better, will encourage discussion and interaction, and will give others opportunities to participate. (Remember that the outlines are on a wiki: anyone can contribute, emend, or improve once the initial responsibility of posting the outline has been completed. Such contributions will count toward your online participation grade.) Work together. Have fun. This is not a competition

No students should have more than one class responsibility each week.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING PRESENTATION

During the first week of the semester, each student will sign up to present (in separate weeks) **two** of the supplemental readings (in the far right column in the reading schedule) in class. There are no tests or midterms in this course. Instead, consider these presentations to be the equivalent of a "midterm."

These readings are not required of the class; therefore, unlike with the primary readings, you cannot expect others in the class to have read them: **your job is to teach your chosen reading to the class**. In informal presentations of no more than 15 minutes and an outline posted on the Blackboard wiki (same requirements as for primary reading outlines), you will be expected to:

- 1) identify the author(s),
- 2) succinctly present and explain the main argument and points of the reading, and
- 3) position the reading in relation to the week's other materials as well as to previous ideas and perspectives covered in class.

Do not just read your outline. Find the best way can to present the argument of the reading to the rest of the class. Simply going linearly through the reading itself may not be the best or clearest way to present the ideas of the reading. Presenters are strongly encouraged to work with primary reading presenters in developing their presentations. Presenters are also encouraged to bring their readings into online discussions and supplement continuing discussion with the additional ideas and material.

FINAL PROJECT

Final projects will be developed according to student interests and may comprise a standard academic paper (an extended image analysis, for example) or a multimedia project of some form that critically applies course material. The final project will largely be of your own design. We talk about it more as we get closer to the end of the semester.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are responsible for reading and abiding by the University Principles Regarding Academic Integrity (available online: www.uic.edu/ucats/catalog/GR.shtml#o). Make sure to document all of your work and acknowledge the ideas and the work of others.

POLICY ON DECLARING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNICATION MAJOR STATUS.

Students may declare the major in Communication at any time. To remain in the major, students must earn a grade of B or higher in at least two of three introductory communication core courses (COMM 101, COMM 102, COMM 103) and subsequently maintain a minimum major GPA of 2.5 throughout the course of the major. Students who fail to earn a grade of B or higher in at least two of the three introductory communication core courses will be dropped from the major. Students who make this requirement but subsequently fail to maintain a minimum major GPA of 2.5 will be placed on probation. If, after one probationary semester, the student has not increased the major GPA to a minimum of 2.5, the student will be dropped from the major. All notifications will be made through UIC email.

	Primary Readings	Supplemental/Presentation Readings
Week 1: Introduction to Visual Communication		
Tuesday, Jan 13	Syllabus, course overview, seminar structure, & medi(t)ations on vision	
Thursday, Jan 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ackerman (1991), <i>Vision</i> Mitchell (2002), <i>Showing seeing</i> 	(x)
Week 2: Eyes & Brains		
Tuesday, Jan 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nöe & O'Regan (2013), <i>On the brain-basis of visual consciousness</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summerfield & Egner (2009), <i>Expectation & attention</i>
Thursday, Jan 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goldstone et al (2015), <i>Fitting perception into cognition</i> Miner & Goodale (2002), <i>Visual brain in action</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drew et al (2013), <i>The invisible gorilla strikes again</i> Ohman (2009), <i>Of snakes & faces</i>
Week 3: Perception, Cognition, Conception		
Tuesday, Jan 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signorile (1994), <i>The riddle of visual experience</i> Gobel et al (2015), <i>The dual function of social gaze</i> 	
Thursday, Jan 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dunning & Balcells (2013), <i>Wishful seeing</i> Palmer et al (2013), <i>Visual aesthetics</i> 	
Week 4: Language as 'Seeing' as Understanding		
Tuesday, Feb 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kövecses (2006), excerpts from <i>Language, Mind and Culture</i> 	
Thursday, Feb 5		
Week 5: Semiotics		
Tuesday, Feb 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chandler (2007), <i>Semiotics: The Basics</i>, chapters 1-2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Danesi (2009), <i>X-Power (in X-Rated!)</i> Danesi (2009), <i>V-Power (in X-Rated!)</i>
Thursday, Feb 12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Danesi (2009), <i>Logo-Power (in X-Rated!)</i> Frosh (2004), <i>Rhetorics of the overlooked (in Image Factory)</i>
Week 6: Word & Image		
Tuesday, Feb 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stephens (1998), <i>The rise of the image the fall of the word</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mina (2014), <i>Batman, Pandaman & the blind</i>
Thursday, Feb 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fox (1994), <i>Where we live</i> Tufte, (1983), <i>Graphical integrity</i> 	
Week 7: Visual Argument		
Tuesday, Feb 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tyler (1995), <i>Shaping belief</i> Rampley (2005), <i>Visual rhetoric</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McNaughton (2007), <i>Hard cases</i>
Thursday, Feb 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buchanan (1989), <i>Declaration by design</i> Tovey (1996), <i>Computer interfaces & visual rhetoric</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hahner (2013), <i>The Riot Kiss</i>
Week 8: Technologies of Seeing—Images of/and Reality		
Tuesday, Mar 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berger (1971), <i>Ways of Seeing</i> – part 1 Sontag (1977), <i>In Plato's cave</i> 	
Thursday, Mar 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sontag (1977), <i>The image-world</i> Doordan (2010), <i>Simulated Seas</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frosh (2004), <i>The archive, the stenotype & the image-repertoire (in Image Factory)</i>
Week 9: Technologies of Seeing—the Digital Real		
Tuesday, Mar 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murray (2008), <i>Digital images, photo-sharing, and our shifting notions of everyday aesthetics</i> Van Koten (2009), <i>The digital image & the pleasure principle</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hunt et al (2014), <i>Communicating social relationships via photo-messaging</i>
Thursday, Mar 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thurlow & Jaworski (2013), <i>Banal globalization?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jones (2009), <i>Dancing,skating & sex</i>

Week 10: Media & Memory		
Tuesday, Mar 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levi Strauss (2003), Highest degree of illusion • Landsberg (1997), Prosthetic memory • Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2013), Bridging collective memories & public agendas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodward (2010), I used to keep a camera in my top left-hand pocket
Thursday, Mar 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoskins (2004), Television & the collapse of memory • Barry (2006), Media memories, video game lies • Schwartz (2014), The past next door 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hong (2015), When life mattered • Hariman & Lucaites (2003), Public identity & collective memory in US iconic photography
Spring Break—No Class (March 23-27)		
Week 11: Gender & Sexuality		
Tuesday, Mar 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berger (1971), Ways of seeing: the male gaze • Hope (2004), Gendered environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McGladrey (2014), Becoming tween bodies • Burfoot (2006), Pearls & gore • Frosh (2004), The image of romance (in <i>Image Factory</i>)
Thursday, Apr 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moss (2011), The media & men • Sylvia (2014), Virtual ideals • Moog (in Fox 1994), Ad images & the stunting of sexuality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birthisel (2014), How body, sexuality, & patriarchal entanglements mark nonhuman characters as male
Week 12: Race & Ethnicity		
Tuesday, Apr 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eberhardt et al (2004), Seeing black • Hall (1981), Whites of their eyes • Berger (2005), Sight unseen (epilogue) • Apel (2009), Just joking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastin et al (2009), Identification & the influence of cultural stereotyping on postvideogame play hostility • Dennis (2009), Gazing at the black teen • Harold & DeLuca (2005), Behold the corpse
Thursday, Apr 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craig (1991), Designing ethnicity • Nakamura (2007), 'Alloksame?' (in <i>Digitizing Race</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guzman & Valdivia (2004), Brain, brow & booty • Nakamura (2014), I will do everything that I am asked
Week 13: Mediated Culture		
Tuesday, Apr 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maffesoli (2007), Tribal aesthetic • Berger (1977), Ways of seeing (publicity) • MacDonald (2005), Design and modern culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douglas (2010), It's supposed to look like shit • Anceschi (2010): Visibility in progress • Tyler (2010), It's a nice world after all
Thursday, Apr 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nancarrow & Nancarrow (2007), Hunting for cool tribes • Schroer (2013), Visual culture & the fight for visibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danesi (2009), i-Power (in <i>X-Rated!</i>) • Shifman (2014), The cultural logic of photo-based meme genres
Week 14: Surveillance Society		
Tuesday, Apr 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kember (2014), Face recognition & smart photography • Gilbert (2010), Eye to eye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chowdhury (2014), Picture-thinking
Thursday, Apr 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palu (2011), The politics of visual representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hughs (2010), Gameworld geopolitics
Week 15: Terror, Violence, & Mediated Imag(in)ings		
Tuesday, Apr 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Der Derian (2010), Imaging terror • DeLuca & Peeples (2002), From public sphere to public screen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lamb & Long (2014), Drawing fire
Thursday, Apr 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takasc (2013), Real war news, real war games • Delmont (2013), Drone encounters • Nath (2013), Seeing Guantanamo, blown up 	