



JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY

COURSE CODE: "CMS 321"
COURSE NAME: "Contemporary Visual Culture"
SEMESTER & YEAR: Fall 2018

SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR: Francesco Lapenta

EMAIL: flapenta@johncabot.edu

HOURS: TTH 4:30-5:45 PM

TOTAL NO. OF CONTACT HOURS: 45

CREDITS: 3

PREREQUISITES: Prerequisite: Junior Standing. Recommended: COM 111

OFFICE HOURS:

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course investigates current trends in visual communication, as well as the methods for how to analyze and contextualize these. Contemporary aspects of media and visual culture will be examined together with modern and historical texts for a well-rounded engagement with the medium as well as the narratives and issues it articulates. Drawing on TV, film, internet memes, contemporary art, digital media, and popular culture, the course may include topics like the impact of celebrity, selfies, postmodern visual practices, identity politics and social movements, memes, and viral media. Students will engage in advanced level visual research and analysis that will foster competencies useful for further cultural studies or media careers.

SUMMARY OF COURSE CONTENT:

Students will closely read theoretical texts while testing their findings against experience through exhibition visits and an analysis of varied visual media. Additionally, students will engage in a practice-based project in which they either make a viral meme (as a .gif, .mov or .jpeg) or propose a curatorial project (in the form of an essay). The course will address five aspects of visual culture: theorizing contemporary century visual culture; resistance; celebrity and the selfie; "The Curating of Everyday Life"; and hyperreality (the politics of time and space in the 21st Century). Each topic will include the reading and analysis of texts, and the visual analysis of films, art objects, mainstream media, and internet culture.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- * Identify key terms in the history of visual theory, such as "panopticism" and the "simulacrum" and apply them to a range of visual media.
- * Analyze key texts and respond to them both verbally and in writing.
- * Contextualize key political movements which have impacted on visual culture.
- * Apply established theoretical frameworks to contemporary visual culture.
- * Propose a framework for analyzing internet culture, memes and viral imagery.
- * Identify issues around the management and "curating" of visual culture in the 21st Century.
- * Critique the role of images in shaping political discourses.

TEXTBOOK:

Book Title	Author	Publisher	ISBN number	Library Call Number	Comments
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The Visual Culture Reader, 3rd edition.	Mirzoeff, N.	Routledge	9780415782623		
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REQUIRED RESERVED READING:

NONE

RECOMMENDED RESERVED READING:

NONE

GRADING POLICY

-ASSESSMENT METHODS:

Assignment	Guidelines	Weight
Midterm	Covering the first half of the course	20%
Final Exam	Accumulative	20%
Paper: Close Reading a Visual Object	10-page paper closely analyzing a cultural object with relation to two of the theories covered during the course.	20%
Create a Curatorial Project or Internet Meme	Create a curatorial project (with pdf proposal) or group of internet memes (as a still image, gif or video) relating to ideas raised during the course. Submit a 5-7 page accompanying paper.	25%
Participation and Attendance	A combination of class participation, attendance and evidence of reading required texts.	10%
Journal	You are required to keep a journal and take physical notes during class. No computers will be allowed, except for specified in class workshops.	5%

-ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

AWork of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course

BThis is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

CThis is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

DThis level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

FThis work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

-ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

More than three absences will result in the loss of a letter grade if not adequately excused.

ACADEMIC

HONESTY

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING OR OTHER DISABILITIES
John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

SCHEDULE

Course Schedule

Week 1: Theorizing a 21st Century Visual Culture.

From Reading List:

Ackbar Abbas, "Faking Globalization," *The Visual Culture Reader*

Brian Holmes, "Do it Yourself Geo-Politics," *The Visual Culture Reader*

Handouts: (excerpts from): Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991.

Look at: Adelita Husni Bey, Jon Rafman

Watch: *Black Mirror*, Series 3 (excerpts)

Week 2 From Genius to Celebrity to Selfie -- The Role of the Image in Constructing the Self

From Reading List:

Amelia Jones, "The Body And/In Representation," *The Visual Culture Reader*

Handouts: (excerpts from):

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 'Plateau 11: 1837 - Of the Refrain', in *A Thousand Plateaus*, London: Athlone, 1988

Jean Baudrillard, 'The Hyperrealism of Simulation', *Art in Theory: 1900-2000*

Look at: Michelangelo, Cindy Sherman, The Kardashians, the Selfie

Watch: Vaporwave Videos, Ed Atkins (artist's video)

Weeks 3-4: The Curating of Everyday Life

From Reading List: Lisa Nakamura, "Digital Racial Formations and Networked Images of the Body"

Handout: (excerpts from) Karen Archey, "Post Internet Curating: An Interview with Carson Chan," *Rhizome*, 2016

Harald Szeemann, "The exhibition in the exhibition, Lorenzo Benedetti," *Cura* magazine, 18, 2014

Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, 1985

Look at: Gallery Visits: Frutta Gallery, Gavin Brown Enterprises (in Trastevere)

Discuss: What do we do with the cultural manager or curator in the age of the internet?

Weeks 5-7: Surveillance and Resistance + Midterm Exam

From Reading List: Mark Fisher, "It's Easier to Imagine the End of the World Than the End of Capitalism," *The Visual Culture Reader*

Theodor Adorno. 'On Commitment.' *Art in Theory*, 1900-2000

Handouts: Claudia Mesch, and Michely Viola, eds. *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*. IB Tauris, 2007

Michel Foucault, 'What is Critique'?, in Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth eds. *The Politics of Truth* (New York: Semiotext(e), (1997)

Michel Foucault, 'Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison', Vintage, 1977

Look at: Chto Delat?, Pussy Riot, Tania Bruguera, Teatro Valle Occupato

Watch: Adam Curtis, Oliver Ressler, (excerpts from) *The Filth and the Fury* (2000)

Weeks 8-9: The Body and Identity Politics

From Reading List: Fred Moton, "The Case of Blackness," *The Visual Culture Reader*

Lisa Nakamura, "Digital Racial Formations and Networked Images," *The Visual Culture Reader*

Malek Alloula, "From the Colonial Harem," *The Visual Cultural Reader*

Handouts: Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), ch. 1

(excerpt from) Shulamith Firestone, 'The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution', Macmillan, 1970

Look at: Theaster Gates, Martine Syms

Watch: Jayson Musson 'Art Thoughtz'

Week 10: Analyzing Contemporary Culture. Discussion of

Research Methods, Group Presentations critiquing a contemporary cultural object.

Weeks 11-12: Hyperreality -- The Politics of Time and Space in the 21st Century

From Reading List: Boris Gruys, 'On Art Activism', June 2014, Eflux

Handouts: (excerpts from) Jean Baudrillard, 'Simulations', *Semiotext(e)*, 1981

Gilles Deleuze, 'Cinema 1: The Movement-Image', 1986

Martin Heidegger, 'Basic writings: from Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964)', 1977

Williams, Alex, and Nick Srnicek. '# ACCELERATE MANIFESTO for an Accelerationist Politics.' *Critical Legal Thinking* 14, 2013

Uncivilization, the Dark Mountain Manifesto, 2009

Watch: Don't Hug Me I'm Scared, YouTube, Episode 2, On Time

Film Theory: The HIDDEN LORE of Don't Hug Me I'm Scared!, YouTube

Week 13-14: Conclusion -- The Digitization of the Self and Society

Films, discussion and concluding remarks.

Final Exam and Hand-In of Internet Meme or Curatorial Proposal. Presentation to class of memes.

From Reading List:

Eyal Weizman, "Urban Warfare; Walking through Wall," *The Visual Culture Reader*

Faye Ginsberg, "Rethinking the Digital Age," *The Visual Cultural Reader*

Handouts:

Geert Lovink, "On the Social Media Ideology," September 2016, *EFlux*