

COURSE SYLLABUS

Visual Culture

Course code: Visual Culture, ART 250

Semester and year: Fall 2021

Day and time: Monday, September 6th – Monday, December 13th // 14:45 to 17:30

Instructor: MA Björn Steinz

Instructor contact: bjorn.steinz@aauni.edu

Consultation hours: By appointment online or on Mondays 17:30 to 18:00

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Intermediate
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	Toefl iBT 71
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	JC Required; HSC, PS Elective, CEA

1. Course Description

This course aims to introduce students to Visual Culture with a main focus on photography, film, multimedia and other forms of visual communication. Students will become familiar with international photography, both historical and contemporary and how imagery is used to communicate with an audience. The course places special emphasis on how visual images are constructed and how to identify and understand the visual functions of each element and their effect and impact on the viewer. We will focus on formal analyses, discuss the huge impact of technology on our Visual Culture nowadays - in compare to the past - and place emphasis on putting visuals into their social, cultural and historical context to understand them better. Students will also analyse, explore, question and discuss the relationship between the photographer/artist, viewer, subject and the various functions of photography and Visual Culture in society.

Those who complete the course will have significantly improved their understanding of photography as a main part of Visual Culture and visual communication.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will gain a wide understanding of what Visual Culture represents.
- Students will be introduced to the basic vocabulary of visual communication and the way images are constructed.
- Students will gain a historical perspective on the development of visual communication.
- Students will explore the connection between still and moving images.

- Students will have a good understanding of the relationship between the image-maker, the subject and the audience.
- Students will develop an understanding of the ways in which images and other media can be analysed in relation to their cultural, social and historical context

3. Reading Material

Throughout the semester, excerpts from selected books, topical articles, links to videos and other materials will be posted on the course web site. Below a list of books related to the course structure :

"After Photography" / Fred Ritchin

"Ways of Seeing" / John Berger

"Believing Is Seeing: Observations on the Mysteries of Photography" / Errol Morris

"Visual Culture" / Howells, Negreiros

"Understanding a Photograph" / John Berger

Videos:

Much of this course involves "visual" learning experience. Several videos of related topics will be either posted on the web site (links) or on reserve at Library. When noted as such, these videos are considered **required** "watching" for the course.

Of particular interest is the BBC series, "Ways of seeing 1-4" by John Berger which will give students a clear and concise overview of the history of Visual Culture. Link:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pDE4VX_9Kk&list=PLn6KyJ4PmZsPhigNqPIWGEoCgBHJbhib3

Gallery Visit:

If the Covid-19 situation will allow it: Throughout the semester we will be visiting one current exhibition in Prague. Students will write a critique of the exhibit.

Required Course materials for Students:

Access to and use of a computer and internet outside of class
 Journal for ideas, thoughts, gallery notes etc.

4. Teaching methodology

The course is conducted in lecture/discussion format with periodic seminar work and specific class presentations. Lectures are usually accompanied by slide and/or video presentations related to material presented.

Interactive aspects are adapted from communicative methodology and are particularly applied in the presentation of new vocabulary/terminology and in oral analysis of both still photographic and video/film work.

Students are required to give two presentations (one individual, one group presentation) during the semester and will have regularly written assignments related to content discussed in class.

Some material will only be available in class so it will be difficult to make up the material you miss when absent. Additional support is offered to students through prearranged meetings with the instructor. More than 2 absences during the course will negatively influence your final grade. Late assignments are **NOT** accepted and will be just graded with a reasonable explanation such as illness or anything similar. Each student is expected to attend all class sessions and participate in discussions and any group activities.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Class 1, Monday, September 6th	<p>Topic: Introduction lecture</p> <p>Description: Introduction of my own visual work, a journey into my photography. What to expect ? What is the goal of the course ? What is Visual Culture and how does it differ to other cultural studies ? Discussion of resources needed for this course.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: For next class: Please bring one example which is working for you as a strong visual, it can be from all different kind of media related to Visual Culture - such as painting, video, photography etc. and please explain us why you chose that particular image, what influenced your choice and why does it represent Visual Culture for you.</p>
Class 2, Monday, September 13th	<p>Topic: Theory 1: How do we read an image ?</p> <p>Description: Introduction to the general vocabulary, elements and principles used for visual analysis and the construction of images. // Students presenting their Visual Culture examples.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Watch John Berger's "Ways of Seeing, Episode 1/2", Analytical paper about the Visual Culture example</p>
Class 3, Monday, September 20th	<p>Topic: Theory 2: How do we read an image ?</p> <p>Description: Guidelines for reading visual text and understanding certain principles in Visual Arts analysis. Film projection about the art world - "My kid could paint that".</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Please analyse the documentary "My kid could paint that" in an opinion paper.</p>

<p>Class 4, Monday, September 27th</p>	<p>Topic: The "selfie" syndrome</p> <p>Description: How the "digital revolution" in imagery changed our Visual Culture in the last years ? "I was there": The influence of mobile cameras and social media platforms as Facebook and Instagram on our visual perception.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Watch John Berger's "Ways of Seeing, Episode 3/4, Read: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" by Walter Benjamin. Write down your thoughts about how we can apply the knowledge from the documentary to our digital age in an one page opinion paper</p>
<p>Class 5, Monday, Oktober 4th</p>	<p>Topic: Visual journalism and story telling</p> <p>Description: Examples of in-depth visual journalism and storytelling</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: No assignment.</p>
<p>Class 6, Monday, Oktober 11th</p>	<p>Topic: Commercial, advertising and fashion imagery</p> <p>Description: What the industry is doing to sell their products with focus on the Benetton campaign from the 1990s and art director Oliviero Toscani</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Written assignment about the world of advertising</p>
<p>Class 7, Monday, Oktober 18th</p>	<p>Topic: Field trip</p> <p>Description: Gallery visit to a current exhibition in Prague.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Write an exhibition critique/review</p>
<p>Monday, Oktober 25th</p>	<p>NO CLASS // Mid-term break</p>
<p>Class 8, Monday, November 1st</p>	<p>Topic: Images and Ideology Photographs are not neutral; they are susceptible to the abuse of power.</p> <p>Description: Politics, propaganda, power and manipulation. What does an image mean ? How images are used and misused for communicating a certain message to an audience.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Looking for images which are "fakes" under the topic "What does an image mean ?" Short opinion paper what the image represents or does not represent.</p>

<p>Class 9, Monday, November 8th</p>	<p>Topic: Blind photographers</p> <p>Description: How a visually challenged person can express his imagination with photography and transfer his inside world into images ? Where is the sense if the photographer will never be able to see his own images ? Different examples about visual impaired people working with images.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Read the article "The Mind's Eye" ? Written assignment</p>
<p>Class 10, Monday, November 15th</p>	<p>Topic: Guest lecture</p> <p>Description: Presentation and Q&A with a working Visual Culture expert giving us an inside look at his/her profession and daily work.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Opinion paper related to the guest lecture</p>
<p>Class 11, Monday, November 22nd</p>	<p>Topic: Wilhelm Brasse - the photographer of Auschwitz</p> <p>Description: "Auschwitz" - with focus on the portraiture work of photographer Willhelm Brasse who was forced by the Nazis's to take portraits of thousands of incoming prisoners. Film projection "The Portraitist" about Wilhelm Brasse.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Think.</p>
<p>Class 12, Monday, November 29th</p>	<p>Topic: The „Che“ image by Alberto Korda</p> <p>Description: The most reproduced photograph in the world „Che“ by Alberto Korda and the story behind it. How the image was created and why it became an icon of photography and an used and misused symbol for revolution and freedom.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Written assignment related to the film</p>
<p>Class 13, Monday, December 6th</p>	<p>Topic: Performance and conceptual visual art</p> <p>Description: A journey into performance and conceptual art with Joseph Beuys, Sophie Calle, Duane Michals, Marina Abramovic and more.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Prepare for the last group presentations</p>
<p>Class 14, Monday, December 13th</p>	<p>Topic: Home final exam</p> <p>Description: Testing the knowledge gained during the semester</p>

6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Attendance and Class Participation	42	20%	Daily contribution to class and preparation based on reading assignments, videos, websites, etc., Ability to explain the studied topic to peers and identify key issues.	1/2/3
Presentations	45	30 %	Students presentation in class (One presentation of each student and one group presentation)	1/2/3
Writings	45	30 %	Essays, Analysis, Critique, Concepts etc. Constructive feedback on your peers' work.	1/2/3
Final Exam	18	20 %	Testing all knowledge attained throughout the semester.	1/2/3
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments / Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Assignment Nr. 1 - Prepare a short presentation about your chosen Visual Culture example and explain us your choice. Why, where, who, what and when ?	15 %
Assignment Nr. 2 - Analytical paper about the Visual Culture example	3,75 %
Assignment Nr. 3 - Opinion paper about the film "My kid could paint that"	3,75 %

Assignment Nr. 4 - Analysis and opinion paper about the series "Ways of Seeing" by John Berger.	3,75 %
Assignment Nr. 5 - Essay about the controversial advertisement work by Oliviero Toscani and his Benetton campaigns during the 90's.	3,75 %
Assignment Nr. 6 - Look for images which are "fakes" under the topic "What does an image mean?".	3,75 %
Assignment Nr. 7 - Exhibition critique.	3,75 %
Assignment Nr. 8 - Essay about visual impaired photographers.	3,75 %
Assignment Nr. 9 - Opinion paper about the „Che" image by Alberto Korda. Why the image became one of the most published photographs ever ?	3,75 %
Assignment Nr. 10 - Please work in groups of max. 3 students and prepare a presentation about a "Visual Culture" topic, that can be the introduction of a movement, an artist or an unusual point of view to "Visual Culture" in general.	15 %

8.

Assessed area	Percentage
Participation: Corporation during class such as discussion and analysis of the material introduced during the lectures which will give the students a deeper understanding about the theoretical and practical aspects of Visual Culture.	20 %
Writings: Students will analyze in essays the work of artists, movements and films introduced during class. Critical thinking and a personal opinion is of high importance in those writings.	30 %
Students' presentations in class. Each student will present twice during the semester a theme related to Visual Culture.	30 %
Final Exam: All theoretical knowledge introduced during the semester will be part of the final exam. Technical and compositional principles have the same importance as introduced photographers/movements and their work.	20 %

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams.

Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question".

All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

Attendance

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, is highly expected and encouraged. Students in Prague are not allowed to join classes online (just in the case of illness or similar issues exceptions are possible). Students who are absent 35 percent of classes will be failed. Students might also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (by arriving late or leaving early) as specified in the syllabus. Each student is expected to attend all class sessions and participate in discussions and any group activities.

Absence excuse and make-up options

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), and the student wishes to request that the absence be excused, the student should submit an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence to the Dean of Students within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

Late work: Late assignments are NOT accepted and will be just graded with a reasonable explanation such as illness or anything similar.

Electronic devices

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

Eating is not allowed during classes.

Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the student's Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the student will fail the exam or assignment and be expelled from the exam or class.

Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center

Plagiarism is "the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work." (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin's White Paper 'The Plagiarism Spectrum' (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another's work, word-for-word, as one's own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one's own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources

9. AGGREGATOR: The "Aggregator" includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.

10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text's original wording and/or structure.

At minimum, plagiarism from types 1 through 8 will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the student's Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, and to improve their academic writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at:
<http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

Course accessibility and inclusion

Students with disabilities should contact the Dean of Students to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive.

Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

9. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95 - 100	Excellent performance. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90 - 94	
B+	87 - 89	Good performance. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 - 86	
B-	80 - 82	
C+	77 - 79	Fair performance. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 - 76	
C-	70 - 72	
D+	65 - 69	Poor. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 - 64	
F	0 - 59	Fail. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by and when: Björn Steinz, 3rd of July 2021.

Approved by and when: AK 26/7/21