

Spring 2016
CMST 4169
Visual Rhetoric
Syllabus

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Description:

Throughout the history of western society vision has played a key role in the evolution of human thought from Plato's cave to the transparent observer that is the foundation of Enlightenment philosophy. Visuality is key to understanding how we come to know the world. Bear in mind that we are not talking about the physical act of seeing, but the socially constructed process through which we are taught to see. Visuality is a product that emerges from political practice, cultural narratives and everyday performances. From the time we are children we are trained to focus and place visuality in a primary role in how lives. It can be a practice steeped in both subversion and control. We also come to know ourselves as objects of display as we swim in a sea of symbols in which human bodies are presented for mass-consumption. Here are our specific goals in the class:

- Understand the visual as a social process
- Understand the manipulation of vision as a strategic action
- Understand vision as both form of subversion and control
- Understand the centrality of vision to American culture
- Apply theoretical lenses to texts of your choosing

Text:

Lester Olson, Cara Finnegan and Diane Hope. *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*. New York: Sage, 2008.

Internet Courses:

This is an Internet based course. You should post your academic work on Moodle.

Virtual Participation: Participating in class via virtual discussions is important for your success because many of the concepts covered on the exams will be covered in our online discussions. You are responsible for having readings completed on the day that they are assigned, and your engaged participation will make the class lectures go more smoothly and will influence your final discussion questions and answer grade. Answers to discussion questions are due within 2 days after the day they are assigned.

You must have access to the Internet every day. You should be able to access the LSU Library via the Internet, and also to access your LSU e-mail account. Even if you are traveling, this does not excuse you from class. Course discussions, class announcements, exams, assignments and

most class activities take place in this electronic space. We will have a couple of meetings for your discussion of ideas.

1) Feb. 24th 3:20 Coates 202.

2) April 20th 3:20 Coates 202.

This is a writing intensive course because of its electronic nature. Be prepared to read and write extensively, and to devote at least 2 to 3 hours a day to these activities.

Your time is flexible. The beauty of Internet courses is that students have some freedom as to when to read or write, but there are boundaries. You must post discussion to the bulletin board and submit written work and other activities within a set time frame specified in the assignment.

Back up your work elsewhere. Things get lost in cyberspace, and you need to be able to recover work that is lost. When you send me your work, you must submit it in the proper format. Due to the large number of files I will be receiving, I need clear and specific identifiers so I don't have to open multiple files to find your work. I will be explicit in describing the proper format for each assignment, but in general, each file should have an indicator of which assignment it is, and who is sending it.

One very important technical note: if you use Microsoft Word 2007, when you save a file do not simply hit the save command. Make sure you have saved it as a .doc file (previous version of Word), *not* a .docx file. Otherwise, I will not be able to read it, and I cannot grade it.

Late Work: Work more than two days late will receive a one letter grade reduction, and another letter grade reduction for each additional two days. Please keep up with your work

Course Policies

Plagiarism: Do not inappropriately represent the work of others as your own. See the LSU Student Handbook. <https://grok.lsu.edu/article.aspx?articleid=17072>

Disability Access: The Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act of 1973: 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 Affairs so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations during the first two weeks of class.
<http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/orientation/students-with-disabilities/>

Personal Success: I am committed to making your experience at LSU an enriching one. It is my hope that this class will be enjoyable, and that you will take the insights that you accumulate and apply them in your future endeavors.

Assignments:

Essays: You will be required to write ten essays (350-375) words at the end of each section. You will find the questions at the end of each module outline. Each module will be followed by two essays. Each essay is worth 80 pts. You must include your essay word count. You will be graded on the fundamentals of composition, organization, grammar, spelling, etc.

Final Exam: There will be one cumulative final examination for the term. It will be composed of two essay questions and be worth 200 total points. Details to be provided as finals approach.

Grading:

1000-980: A+
979-929: A
928-900: A-
899-880: B+
879-829: B
828-800: B-
799-780: C+
779-729: C
728-700: C-
699-680: D+
679-629: D
628-600: D-
599 and below F

Course Schedule:

Module One

Performing and Seeing

Read Articles 1-4

Complete Essay 1 by **1/20 12pm**

Complete Essay 2 by **1/27 12pm**

Module Two

Vision and Memory

Read Articles 5-9

Complete Essay 3 by **2/7 12pm**

Complete Essay 4 by **2/15 12pm**

Module Three

Vision as Resistance

Read Articles 10-13

Complete Essay 5 by **2/25 12pm**

Complete Essay 6 by **3/5 12pm**

Module Four

Vision and Consumption

Read Articles 14-16

Complete Essay 7 by **3/15 12pm**

Complete Essay 8 by **3/28 12pm**

Module Five

Vision and Authority

Read Articles 17-20

Complete Essay 9 by **4/10 12pm**

Complete Essay 10 by **4/20 12pm**

Final Exam

Due Date TBA

Lecture Outline for Module One

- I. Performance as Rhetoric
 - A. Since the work of Erving Goffman scholars have recognized that everyday practices are performances.
 - B. Public performance can involve space, time, objects, bodies and mannerisms.
 - C. Public performances often embody much larger metanarratives.
 - D. Performance can either replicate or challenge dominant narratives.

- II. Performance as identity
 - A. Intersubjectivity represents the idea that people come together to define reality through communication and action.
 - B. The way we define reality shapes the way we define ourselves and others.
 - C. The performance paradigm looks at how everyday practices constitute peoples identity.

- III. Performance and Vision
 - A. As the following essays demonstrate people use media such as photography, video and iconography to perform their identities.
 - B. Performance often involves the strategic appropriation of images to support or contest given narratives.
 - C. The essays each deal with differing actors creating a vision of everyday life that then shapes the ways other see their world.
 - D. It is important to note that in each case the act of seeing is central to shaping the dominant cultural narrative that the performance embodies.

Essay One: Select three of the essays from Module One and provide a systematic overview of each argument. Explain how the authors shape the way we understand vision as a form of rhetoric and/or performance. Explain whether or not you agree with the conclusions of the authors. Make sure to include citations from the essays in your answer.

Essay Two: Select an online text and execute your own analysis. You should use one or more of the paradigms outlined in Module One. Your text can represent any aspect of performative culture and you are encouraged to be creative and engaged. Once again, make sure to cite from the article(s) that you find the most influential. Examples could include actions at Art Installations at the Paris Climate Talks or a Flash Mob in China or the USA.

<http://www.artcop21.com>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7F7FD269F9DA24F8>

<http://iamkoream.com/korean-flash-mob-in-china-performs-a-defiant-arirang/>

<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/video/flash-mob-madness-louisiana-mall-18148917>

Lecture Outline for Module Two

- I. Memory as a Rhetorical Process
 - A. Memory is a collective practice.
 - B. The epideictic function of rhetoric argues that the importance of rhetoric about the past is for those who live in the present to form a sense of common purpose and bonding.
 - C. Memory is central to the evolution of national identity because it preserves values.

- II. Memory as a Visual Process
 - A. Memory will find substance through visual documentation of the past.
 - B. One of the key functions of national iconography is the preservation of memory.
 - C. Photographs may function as ideographs by preserving a chain of meaning within the collective culture.
 - D. Memorials provide a living space that preserves certain narratives.

- III. Memory and postmodernism
 - A. Postmodernism suggests that texts may be read from multiple angles and have multiple interpretations.
 - B. Many of the articles you will read deal with the idea that texts about the past may have multiple voices speaking through them.
 - C. When the events depicted in the visual image are particularly disturbing or traumatic, the reader may have a complex reaction to the image.
 - D. Often texts steeped in trauma will produce a certain degree of ambiguity.

Essay Three: Select three of the essays from Module Two and provide a systematic overview of each argument. Explain how the authors shape the way we understand vision as a form of

rhetoric and/or performance. Explain whether or not you agree with the conclusions of the authors. Make sure to include citations from the essays in your answer.

Essay Four: Select an online text and execute your own analysis. You should use one or more of the paradigms outlined in Module Two. Your text can represent any aspect of visual memory and you are encouraged to be creative and engaged. Once again, make sure to cite from the article(s) that you find the most influential. For example, you could review the defacing of public monuments in cities such as Berlin and or countries such as Saudi Arabia exploring the debate over public symbols.

<http://www.visitberlin.de/en/article/berlins-top-10-attractions>

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/2007/01/30/holocaust-memorial-in-berlin-defaced-by-neo-nazi-sympathizers.html>

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/30/world/europe/germany-gypsy-memorial-vandalized.html?_r=0

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/medina-saudis-take-a-bulldozer-to-islams-history-8228795.html>

<http://time.com/3584585/saudi-arabia-bulldozes-over-its-heritage/>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/8828541/Monument-defaced-as-Israeli-anger-mounts-over-Gilad-Shalit-swap.html>

Module Three Lecture Outline

- I. Vision and Subversion
 - A. Just as visual images may lead to a stronger sense of collective, they can also challenge dominant narratives.
 - B. Resistance is a means for marginalized groups to challenge the ways they have been represented.
 - C. Resistant images are often violent and psychologically challenging.
- II. Existing Images and Resistance
 - A. Existing images that often tell one kind of story can be shifting to another context, thereby changing its meaning.
 - B. This process of taking images from the dominant visual code and using them is sometimes called appropriation.
 - C. One goal of marginalized groups can be to permanently recode or change the meaning of an image.
- III. Resistance Visual Images can also be Created
 - A. Groups can use certain spaces to confront dominant codes with a new visual iconography.
 - B. Individuals can also use their bodies as a space for generating visual resistance.
 - C. Visual images can often be much more shocking than the written text because they present the viewer with more affective information.
 - D. Visual images can be used to challenge stigma.

Essay Five: Select three of the essays from Module Three and provide a systematic overview of each argument. Explain how the authors shape the way we understand vision as a form of rhetoric and/or performance. Explain whether or not you agree with the conclusions of the authors. Make sure to include citations from the essays in your answer.

Essay Six: Select an online text and execute your own analysis. You should use one or more of the paradigms outlined in Module Three. Your text can represent any aspect of confrontational visual imagery and you are encouraged to be creative and engaged. Once again, make sure to cite from the article(s) that you find the most influential. For example, you could examine the resistant practices of groups like Occupy Wall Street or Anonymous.

<http://occupywallst.org>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/the-triumph-of-occupy-wall-street/395408/>

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/11/28/pre-occupied>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_\(group\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_(group))

<https://whyweprotest.net>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4158110/>

Module Four Lecture Outline

- I. Vision and Consumption
 - A. Consumer models manipulate desire as a way to generate interest in products.
 - B. Consumption discourse also produces heightens levels of desire.
 - C. Consumer discourse manipulates the narratives that individuals use to guide their lives.
 - D. Consumer discourse generates myths about who we are.

- II. Consumer and Visuality
 - A. Consumer discourse has always been intertwined with visual discourse because we are trained to use vision as a means to mediate desire.
 - B. Visual objects often heighten affective response and thus can be used to capture consumer attention.
 - C. Visual image campaigns can also become iconic through advertising.

- III. Visuality and Product Association
 - A. Certain products may become indistinguishable from their visual field.
 - B. Certain ad images may themselves become as powerful as any political field through image management.
 - C. Visual ads often generate an ideal concept of life toward which we are driven to aspire even though these visions are fictitious.

Essay Seven: Select three of the essays from Module Four and provide a systematic overview of each argument. Explain how the authors shape the way we understand vision as a form of

rhetoric and/or performance. Explain whether or not you agree with the conclusions of the authors. Make sure to include citations from the essays in your answer.

Essay Eight: Select an online text and execute your own analysis. You should use one or more of the paradigms outlined in Module Four. Your text can represent any aspect of advertising visual imagery and you are encouraged to be creative and engaged. Once again, make sure to cite from the article(s) that you find the most influential. For example, you might study the debates in advertising and marketing found in the cases of McDonalds or Chipotle.

<http://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/mcdonald-s-unveils-brand-vision/296448/>

<http://www.businessinsider.com/american-children-see-253-mcdonalds-ads-every-year-2013-11>

<http://thevillagesuntimes.com/2016/01/11/chipotle-faces-criminal-investigation/>

<https://chipotle.com/back-to-the-start>

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/coke-ceo-launches-calorie-count-transparency-campaign-to-fight-obesity/>

<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2013/01/30/coke-misinformation-campaign.aspx>

Module Five Lecture Outline

- I. Vision and Governance
 - A. The public functions in a more coherent fashion when it sees itself.
 - B. Political leaders often try to project themselves as a visual extension of the larger public.
 - C. Those who manage political campaigns are increasingly aware of the fact that most voters make their choices based upon image than upon policies.

- II. Vision and the Nation
 - A. Visual images function as metaphors for the nation.
 - B. Visual images can come to dominate a policy.
 - C. Visual images can come to represent and political system.

- III. Visual Politics in the Media Age
 - A. Visual media have changed the way that we process political systems.
 - B. Postmodern candidates often become floating signifiers and can come to mean differing ideologies over time.
 - C. Visuality is one of the primary ways that we assign meaning to political candidates.

Essay Nine: Select three of the essays from Module Five and provide a systematic overview of each argument. Explain how the authors shape the way we understand vision as a form of rhetoric and/or performance. Explain whether or not you agree with the conclusions of the authors. Make sure to include citations from the essays in your answer.

Essay Ten: Select an online text and execute your own analysis. You should use one or more of the paradigms outlined in Module Five. Your text can represent any aspect of political visual

imagery and you are encouraged to be creative and engaged. Once again, make sure to cite from the article(s) that you find the most influential. For example, the current presidential election debates here in the USA or others abroad such as Canada.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/debates.php>

<http://www.elections.ca/home.aspx>

<http://www.vox.com/2015/8/6/9109669/2015-canada-federal-election>

Final Exam: Two essay questions to be announced