

Introduction to Visual Anthropology
ANTH 227/ ARTH 287V
Spring 2008

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Lecture: Tuesday and Thursday 1:15-2:40

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the field of visual anthropology. It has two major strands: 1) it examines the use of visual material in anthropological research and in the presentation and consumption of anthropological knowledge, focusing particularly on photography and film, and 2) it addresses visibility itself as a domain of anthropological inquiry, exploring ways of seeing in culturally and historically specific contexts. Particular attention will be paid to the relationships between seeing, being seen, and modern formations of identity.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students should have a grasp of some of the complex interrelationships between vision and its historical and sociocultural contexts. Most importantly, students should have developed through the course the ability to read critically and to articulate ideas both verbally and in the form of written arguments.

Required Reading:

- All assigned reading **must** be completed by the date for which it is assigned. Completion of the readings is essential to your understanding of the lecture material, to your ability to be an active participant in class, and to your enjoyment and sense of achievement in the course.
- The required texts are available at the bookstore
 - Kratz, Corinne, *The Ones That Are Wanted: Communication and the Politics of Representation in a Photographic Exhibition*. University of California Press (2001)
 - Harrison, Kathryn, *Exposure*. Random House Trade Paperbacks (2006)
- In addition, there are a number of required readings available through Blackboard on electronic reserve.

Blackboard:

The course will utilize Blackboard in several ways. The syllabus will be available on Blackboard, along with access to electronic reserves. I will use it for distributing messages to the class, including details of assignments and reminders of deadlines. I will also use it to draw your attention to useful resources.

Class format:

Classes meet twice a week and involve lectures, discussion, and engaging with visual material. Students are expected to have completed the assigned readings before each lecture and be prepared to participate in class discussion. While the lectures work closely with the assigned reading material, doing the readings should not be considered a satisfactory substitute for attending class, nor the class a substitute for the reading. They are designed to complement each other. Attendance is mandatory and class preparation and active participation are required for the satisfactory completion of the course.

Class conduct:

Laptops may be used in class exclusively for the purpose of taking notes. Any other use creates a distracting visual disturbance for other students. It is as disrespectful to the class as conducting a conversation during the lecture. Cell phones and ipods may not be used in class.

E-mail etiquette:

For the purpose of ensuring I don't overlook your message, please use the course number or name in the subject line. Messages should begin and end with a salutation and be sure to sign your name.

Office Hours:

I am available to meet with students during my scheduled office hours (Tuesday 11:00-1:00pm) and at other times by appointment. Please take advantage of this opportunity to seek clarification or assistance.

Assignments and Grading:

Your grade will be based on four elements:

1. *National Geographic* layout analysis (20%) **Due Date: Thursday, February 21**
2. Photo analysis (20%) **Due Date: Thursday, March 13**
3. Short Essay (30%) **Due Date: Thursday, May 1**
4. Final Exam (30%)

A detailed handout on each of the assignments will be introduced in class and made available on Blackboard.

- **Final Exam.** Questions for this will be distributed in advance of the exam to enable you to focus your revision and to prepare responses in advance. The exam will be cumulative, addressing material from throughout the course.

Assignments should be submitted in class on the due date. Keep a back-up copy of all submitted work. Assignments handed in after the due date will be penalized unless accompanied by a medical certificate or other evidence of exceptional circumstances. Extensions

may be arranged before the due date but a medical certificate or evidence of exceptional circumstances will be required. NB. Being overworked does not constitute "exceptional circumstances." It is your responsibility to plan your workload so you have time to finish all your assignments by the required due date.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism means copying or paraphrasing someone else's work and presenting it as one's own or without sufficient acknowledgement of another person's work. Plagiarism is a form of cheating even if there is no intent to deceive.

Copying from textbooks or articles without sufficient acknowledgement is plagiarism. Paraphrasing a book or article without sufficient acknowledgement is plagiarism. Copying another person's unpublished work is plagiarism.

Students are encouraged to discuss work and assignments with me and with each other but *any assignment or research paper you present must be your own work.*

I recommend that you read the Student Academic Honesty and Integrity Code in the Bulletin (<http://bulletin.binghamton.edu/>). Knowing what constitutes academic dishonesty will enable you to identify it and thereby avoid such practices.

ANTH 227 / ARTH 287(V) Lecture Schedule

Week 1 What is Visual Anthropology?

January 29: Introduction

PART 1: Seeing and Knowing: Observation, Memory, Evidence, Objectivity, and ScienceJanuary 31: **Visual Documents: Photographs**

How is photography used ethnographically? Why is it the subject of debate? A brief introduction to photography, with particular attention to "documentary" photography and to the "photo essay."

Required Reading:

- Lutz, Catherine and Jane Collins, "A World Brightly Different: Photographic Conventions 1950-1986," *Reading National Geographic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 87-117.

Week 2 Visual Documents: *National Geographic* Photographs

The National Geographic magazine will serve as a familiar focus for a broader discussion of documentary photography, with particular attention to the conventions of realism and to the politics of representation.

February 5 & 7

Required Reading:

- Lutz, Catherine and Jane Collins, "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of *National Geographic*," in *Visualizing Theory*, Lucien Taylor, ed. Pp. 363-384.
- Kratz, Corinne, *The Ones That Are Wanted: Communication and the Politics of Representation in Photographic Exhibition*. Berkeley: University of California. Prologue & Chapter 1, and Appendix A.

Week 3 Politics of Representation

February 12 & 14

Required Reading:

- Kratz, Corinne, *The Ones That Are Wanted: Communication and the Politics of Representation in Photographic Exhibition*. Berkeley: University of California. Chapters 2, 3, & 4

Bring to class a photograph of yourself under the age of 4. Bring it in an envelope with your name on the outside to facilitate easy return.

We'll discuss alternatives if you don't have access to such a photo.

Week 4 Ethnographic Film

February 19 & 21

Screening: *Taking Pictures**The Ax Fight*

***National Geographic* analysis due Thursday 21st February in class**

Week 5 Family Snapshots

February 26 & 28

Required Reading:

- Holland, Patricia "Introduction: History, Memory and the Family Album" in *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography*, Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, eds. Virago Press. Pp. 1-14, 1991.
- Begin reading for next week: Harrison, Kathryn, *Exposure*

Week 6 Issues of Interpretation and Ethics

March 4 & 6

Required Reading:

- Complete reading: Harrison, Kathryn, *Exposure*
- Sontag, Susan, "In Plato's Cave," in *On Photography*. London: Penguin, 1977. Pp. 3-24

Week 7 Interpretation and Ethics ctd.

March 11 & 13

Required Reading:

- Elkins, James, "Just Looking," in *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*. New York: Harcourt. Pp. 17-45.

Photo analysis due Thursday March 13 in class**Week 8**March 18 **Realism and Magic****Required Reading:**

- Slater, Don, "Photography and Modern Vision: The Spectacle of 'Natural Magic'," in *Visual Culture*, Chris Jenks, ed. New York: Routledge, 1995. Pp.218-237.

March 20 **Visualizing Knowledge: Statistical Evidence****Required Reading:**

- Tufte, Edward, "Visual and Statistical Thinking: Displays of Evidence for Making Decisions," in *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 2005. Pp. 27-53.

Spring Recess March 21-30**Week 9 Visualizing Knowledge: Medical Imaging**

April 1 & 3

Required Reading:

- Jordanova, Ludmilla, "Medicine and Genres of Display," in *Visual Display: Culture Beyond Appearances*, Peter Wollen and Lynne Cooke, eds. Discussions in Contemporary Culture #10. New York: New Press, 1995. Pp. 202-217.
- Mitchell, Lisa, and Eugenia Georges, "Baby's First Picture: The Cyborg Fetus of Ultrasound Imaging," in *Cyborg Babies : From Techno-Sex to Techno-Tots*, Robbie Davis-Floyd and Joseph Dumit, eds. New York : Routledge, 1998. Pp. 105-124.
- Dumit, Joseph, "Ways of Seeing Brains as Expert Images," in *Picturing Personhood: Brain Scans and Biomedical Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pp. 109-138.

PART 2: VISION AND MODERN FORMATIONS OF THE SUBJECT

Week 10 Surveillance

April 8 & 10

Required Reading:

- Foucault, Michel, "Panopticism," in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, eds. London: Open University Press, 1999. Pp. 61-71.
- Tagg, John, "A Means of Surveillance: The Photograph as Evidence in Law," in *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographs and Histories*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. Pp. 67-102.

Week 11April 15 **Disciplined Subjects**

Required Reading:

- Staniszewski, Mary Anne, "The Museum," in *Believing is Seeing: Creating the Culture of Art*. New York: Penguin, 1995. Pp. 170-178.

April 17 **Seeing and Being Seen**

Required Reading:

- Berman, Marshall, excerpt from "Baudelaire: Modernism in the Streets," in *All That is Solid Melts into Air*. New York: Penguin, 1988. Pp. 148-155.

April 18-21 - Passover

Week 12April 22 **Consumption and Self-Formation**

Required reading:

- Saisselin, Rémy, "Paris and the Aesthetics of the Flaneur," in *The Bourgeois and the Bibelot*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984. Pp. 17-30.

April 24 **Taste & the Stylization of Life**

- Codd, John, "Making Distinctions: The Eye of the Beholder," in *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar, and Chris Wilkes, eds. Sydney: Macmillan.

Week 13April 29 & May 1 **Advertising**

Screening:

- 'Advertising & the end of the world,' Sut Jhally, 1998 (47 min.)

Short Essay Due May 1 in class

Week 14 Review

May 6 & 8 Review of the central ideas of the course and exam preparation.