



CMST 4169
Visual Rhetoric
Syllabus

Spring Semester 2019

Faculty Information

Professor: Stephanie Houston Grey, PhD

Let's Connect: Available by appointment on campus face-to-face, via e-mail, phone or online. Older technology is very reliable, but we can also try more modern forms, if need be!

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Course Description

What does it mean to see? How do we “visualize?” What are the persuasive or affective impacts of images and why do they occur?

Throughout the history of western society vision, has played a key role in the evolution of human life and thought. From Paleolithic cave art portraying animals and hunters, to Plato's Parable of the Cave with its conception of thought lost to ephemeral images, to the rational observer and transparency of communication of Enlightenment philosophy, humans have reflected on images and the act of seeing. Today, visibility is dominant in the arenas of persuasion, as internet memes supplant public argumentation and YouTube and Instagram displace even other electronic media. At such a time, the study of the persuasive and social effects of the visual seems an urgent quest.

In this course, we will examine “the visual” not as the physical act of seeing, but the socially constructed process through which we are taught to recognize and order images. As we shall “see,” visibility emerges from political practice, cultural narratives and everyday performances. Further, we will examine visibility as a practice steeped in subversion, control or both. By examining images, articulating their effects, and weighing their social role, we may come to recognize even our own identities as, in part, displays constructed in the images made by ourselves and others. Even as we swim in a sea of symbols, we are the potential subjects of mass consumption.

Learning Objectives

In this course, you will:

- Recognize visuality and visual communication as social processes with persuasive effects
- Evaluate images as strategies for subversion or control, to trace their potential impacts on thoughts, actions and social conditions
- Reconsider American culture as a carnival of images with “spectacular” visual effects, to better recognize the persuasive and immersive qualities of contemporary life
- Apply selected theories of visual persuasion to artifacts of your choice, to advance your inquiry into the role of the image in culture

Text(s)

Required:

Lester Olson, Cara Finnegan and Diane Hope. *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*. New York: Sage, 2008. You can rent the book if you need to save \$!

https://www.amazon.com/Visual-Rhetoric-Communication-American-Culture/dp/141294919X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1546976773&sr=1-1

Optional:

Photography Books:

I encourage you to develop your **visual literacy** by investing in some books of photographs on topics that may be of interest to you. I don't require you buy them, because these kinds of books are often expensive. Here's a list of great works for your consideration! Viewing these works can help you better understand, appreciate and use the language of images. If you can afford it pick out a couple to collect, or check them out from the university or your local library. You can also browse in a bookstore to get some ideas of what you like!

<http://resourcemagonline.com/2016/05/25-photography-books-that-will-inspire-you/66559/>

Online Image Banks:

Rather than investing, an efficient way to access great collections of images is online:

Getty Images: <https://www.gettyimages.com/collections/image-bank>

Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>

National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/photography.html>

Google Arts and Culture: <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/>

A Web-Based Course

As this is a web-based course on the Moodle platform. You are responsible for completing the readings, participating in discussions and other activities electronically, and completing assignments by the due dates set. We will be using discussion boards to take the place of traditional classroom discussion, so it is up to all of us to keep the discussions both lively and respectful. Let's make our course a model of civil discourse!

Here are some things to note about the web-based format.

You must have access to the web every day. You should be able to access the course materials, the LSU Library and your LSU e-mail. Even if you are traveling, stay in touch.

This course takes place on Moodle. Course discussions, class announcements, exams, assignments and class activities all take place in this electronic space.

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

This is a video-making and creative course. If you have technical difficulties, please contact student IT services for assistance. Contact information is provided in the course site.

We have due dates! Web-based courses provide a degree of freedom as to when to complete your work, and that is wonderful; however, note that the assignments for the course have due dates that must be met. This is a key part of your responsibility as a student.

Back up your work. Things can get lost in cyberspace, and you need to be able to recover your work. Keep your work organized on your hard drive and consider a cloud service or another means to make a fuller backup of all your files, just in case your trusty laptop fails.

Use the proper format. When you send me your work, you must submit it in the proper format. Your professor receives many files and wants to recognize each assignment right away.

The file name should be like this: cmst4169_assignmentname_yourlastname.

Privacy: All curricular materials for the course (except those from open sources such as the creative or wiki commons) are the professor's private work. Your personal videos and the videos made by your classmates are private (don't share them!) unless otherwise agreed to in writing.

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/>

Commitment to Your 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. Do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail or cell phone to arrange for a personal meeting via Phone, Skype or on campus. We all want you to be successful in this course! – Dr. Grey.

Assignment Overview – See Guidelines Document for Details

Your work in CMST 4169 includes: discussions, image analyses and feedback assignments, a video introduction, a video conclusion and a final exam/project.

Details about these assignments, including guidelines and rubrics, and included in the separate Guidelines and Rubrics documents. Be sure to review this document with care!

Grade Distribution and Scale

Assignment Category	Number of Graded Items	Point Value per Item	Total Points
Discussions	8	40	320
Image Analysis and Feedback	3	125	375
Video Introduction	1	25	20
Video Conclusion	1	75	60
Exam/Final Project	1	225	225
Total Course Points:			1000

Grades follow the scale below:

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



Modular and Key Concept Outline

\Use this to help you bring the readings together!

Module One: Performance and Seeing

- 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.

Module Two: Memory and Memorialization

- 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.

Module Three: Confrontation and Resistance

- 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.

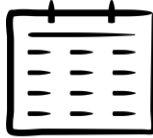
Module Four: Commodifying and Consumption

- 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.

Module Five: Governing and Authorizing

- 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.



Course Schedule

Turn in Assignments by 11:00 pm of due date.

Introduction and Module One, Jan 9 - 28

Performing and Seeing

Introductory video posted by 1/18

Read Articles 1-4

Complete Discussion 1 by 1/21

Complete Discussion 2 by 1/28

Module Two Jan. 29 – Feb. 20

Memory and Memorialization

Read Articles 5-9

Complete Discussion 3 by 2/7

Complete Discussion 4 by 2/15

Image Analysis and Feedback Assignment One by 2/20

Module Three Feb. 21 – March 11

Confrontation and Resistance

Read Articles 10-13

Complete Discussion 5 by 2/25

Complete Discussion 6 by 3/8

Image Analysis and Feedback Assignment Two by 3/18

Module Four March 19 – April 11

Commodifying and Consumption

Read Articles 14-16

Complete Discussion 7 by 3/26

Complete Discussion 8 by 4/2

Image Analysis and Feedback Assignment Three by 4/11

Module Five and Conclusion April 12 – May 2

Governing and Authorizing

Read Articles 17-20

4-15 – 4-21 Spring Break

Concentrated Study Period 4/24 – 4/28

Concluding video posted by 4/29

Final Essay by May 2