[Contemporary Visual Cultures]

A&S 100–002 :: Fall 2013
T/TH 12:30–1:45 :: Keeneland 2

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Office Hours :: T/TH 2:00–3:15 and by appointment
“To me photography can be simultaneously both a record and a mirror of self expression . . . the camera is generally assumed to be unable to depict that which is not visible to the eye and yet, the photographer who wields it well can depict what lies unseen in his memory.”

— Eikoh Hosoe

“Timing in photography is almost everything. You have to pay attention to where the light comes from, you have to pay attention to your background. If your background is too loud, or makes too much of itself…that’s the problem of the photographic process. It records everything that’s in the viewfinder, whether it’s important or not.”

— Fred Herzog

“This is a picture I did not take of a gentleman standing in the magazine section of a drugstore late at night, peering through his bifocals at the small-print biographies toward the back of a special “100 Best Pictures” issue of National Geographic, his finger scanning down the page, his mouth quietly whispering the name— McCurry.”

— Michael David Murphy, Unphotographable

“In order to obtain a perfect image of nature only three to thirty minutes at the most are necessary, according to the season in which one operates and the degree of intensity of the light. …. The Daguerrotype is not merely an instrument which serves to draw Nature; on the contrary it is a chemical and physical process which gives her the power to reproduce herself.”

— Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre

“The name itself may be influencing different attitudes toward these self-generated photos, because a ‘selfie’ can have multiple connotations. The ‘ie’ at the end makes selfie a diminutive, which generally implies some affection and familiarity. From one semantic perspective, a selfie is a ‘little’ self, an aspect of identity. Alternatively, the diminutive can refer to the photograph rather than the self, which is quite different. Where a little self is a small bit of the self; a little portrait speaks to the sense of immediacy, insignificance and impermanence of a single photo.”

— Pamela Rutledge, “Making Sense of #Selfies”

Sophisticated mobile devices, capacious digital storage, and the growth of social media have enabled what some have called the “era of constant photography.” While human beings have always created and interacted with visual materials, contemporary visual cultures have reached unprecedented saturation. In this course, we will explore the rhetorical and communicative aspects of contemporary visual cultures. From selfies and street art to everyday signage and documentation, we’ll critically consider the role that visuals play in who we are, what we know, and how we see the world.

Over the next 10 weeks, therefore, we’ll explore foundational theories and ideas in photography and visual culture alongside contemporary, web- and mobile-based instantiations of each. We’ll pay greater attention to visuals in everyday life, we’ll look at them in new ways—squinting, turning our heads slightly for a different perspective. We’ll critically write about visual cultures while we simultaneously contribute to visual cultures.

We won’t look at the world the same way again.
[OBJECTIVES]

Students will —

**Practice** critical communication skills:
- Recognize and work with important genres and styles of visual communication
- Consider the prevalence of visual communication in everyday experience
- Practice using common tools and technologies of visual communication

**Analyze** visual cultures:
- Critically interact with visual communication in everyday experience
- Explore multiple perspectives of the terms “visual” and “culture”
- Analyze specific artifacts, tools, and instantiations of visual communication to better understand rhetorical, social, and political implications of contemporary visual cultures

**Research** tools, technologies, and critical theories of visual communication:
- Plan and implement appropriate research practices
- Recognize appropriateness of different critical methods for researching visual cultures
- Explore visual communication as a way of thinking, knowing, and being

**Produce** visuals and writing that critically explores visual cultures:
- Apply rhetorical and design principles to producing written artifacts
- Apply principles of fair use, copyright and documentation conventions for digital and visual media
- Recognize rhetorical possibilities of different modes and make sound choices when combining modes

[KEYWORDS]
Sources

Selected academic journal articles, photo essays, and blog posts provided via syllabus [hyperlinked]
McLuhan, M., & Fiore, Q. (1967). The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects.

Assessment

Deliverables

Exploring Everyday Visual Cultures 200
Exploring Visual Cultures in Your Profession 200
Exploring Visual Cultures in Social Media 250
Visual Autoethnography 350

Course Total: 1,000

Grading Scale

A 900–1,000
B 800–899
C 700–799
D 600–699

Details

Grading Policy

Deliverables are assessed according to criteria distributed through Blackboard.

Storage and Backup

This course will require the consistent use of one or more of the following methods of digital storage and backup:

Dropbox :: SugarSync :: Evernote :: Google Drive

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Proper citation is a hallmark of good scholarship. Crediting someone else's work—whatever form that work takes—is a nice thing to do.

It's nice to be nice to people.

Don't use someone else's work without giving them credit. Don't submit work for this class that you did for another class. Don't falsify data. If in doubt, see Section 6.3.1 of UK's University Senate Rules on academic offenses and procedures. But mostly? Be nice to people and give credit where it's due.
Attendance, Withdrawals, and Incompletes

Come to class—it’s fun!

Don't be late—you'll miss important stuff!

If you miss more than 3 classes—for any reason—your final grade will be lowered by 50 points (5% of the course grade) for each missed class beyond the limit (for example, 4 absences will result in a 50 point reduction from your final course total).

Let me know early in the semester if you will miss class for university business or religious holidays. Please see the University Catalog for more information on withdrawals and incompletes.

Students Needing Accommodations

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during scheduled office hours (or via appointment). In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Room 2, Alumni Gym, 257-2754, email address jkarnes@email.uky.edu) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities.

In other words, please see me so that we can focus most effectively on your learning!

Writing Center

The UK Writing Center offers free one-to-one assistance on all of your writing projects for all of your classes. Also? The Writing Center is full of awesome people.

They are located on the 5th floor of the W.T. Young Library and are open from 9:00am to 9:00pm, Monday through Thursday, and 9:00am to 3:00pm on Friday.
Important Dates

- Exploring Everyday Visual Cultures                  9.17
- Exploring Visual Cultures in Your Profession       10.1
- Exploring Visual Cultures in Social Media          10.22
- Visual Autoethnography                             11.5

[ Complete readings before the class for which they are assigned, take notes, and prepare to interact in class. ]

Week 1

8.29  How French secretly filmed prison camp life in WWII
      Size Comparison of EVERYTHING
      26 Years of Growth: Shanghai Then and Now
      Visual Dictionary
      Nocturnal Stencil

Week 2

9.3   Missed Connection
      Making it up: why the camera has always lied
      Dispose | Explore the most recent issue (at minimum)
      Sightseer | Read “Field Notes,” explore images
      Endbahnhof

9.5   Contexts, Image Making, and Understanding
      Contextual Ambivalence: Images + Inscriptions
      Humans of New York | Unphotographable (explore 5–10 posts)
      Internet K-Hole (contains potentially offensive material; be sensible)
      Shorpy | Mlkshk | Vinepeek

Week 3

9.10  McLuhan | Cover to p. 87
9.12  McLuhan | p. 88 to end

Week 4

9.17  Barthes | Cover to p. 40
      Exploring Everyday Visual Cultures Due
9.19  Barthes | p. 40 to p. 80

Week 5

9.24  Barthes | p. 80 to p. 119
9.26  Writers’ Rooms Series (choose and explore 3–5 posts)
      Korea — Korea
      Subway Readings
      Call in Sick
      Ridiculously Long Men’s Restroom Lines at Tech Conferences: A Photo Essay

Week 6

10.1  Sontag | p. 181 to p. 208
Tomboy Style: Summer in the Suburbs
A Photographic Memory
Daguerrotypes of China
Exploring Visual Cultures in Your Profession Due

10.3 Berger | Cover to p. 64
The Case of the Trombone and the Mysterious Disappearing Camera
Granddad’s Archive

Week 7

10.8 Berger | p. 65 to p. 112
Instagram Now Lets Users—and Marketers—Post Canned Video
The era of constant photography

10.10 Berger | p. 113 to end
Why Vine Just Won’t Die

Week 8

10.15 Shaping organizational image-power through images: Case histories of Instagram
On the Constant Moment
Twitter: Asiana Airlines

10.17 Sontag | p. 3 to p. 24
Vivian Maier | Read “About” and view 2–5 Portfolios
Internet K-hole Interview

Week 9

10.22 Sontag | p. 27 to p. 48
Exploring Visual Cultures in Social Media Due

10.24 Feast of the Transfiguration
Landscapes of Protest
Interview: Fred Herzog — “In His Own Words”

Week 10

10.29 Sontag | p. 51 to p. 82

10.31 Sontag | p. 85 to p. 112

Week 11

11.5 Sontag | p. 115 to p. 149
Visual Autoethnography Due

11.7 Sontag | p. 153 to p. 180