

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 367, LEC 01
Visual Communication and Culture

Fall 2018

Mon., Sep. 10 – Wed. Dec. 5 (excluding Oct. 8, Nov. 12 & 14)
Classes: Mondays and Wednesdays 14:00-15:15

Instructor: Annie Rudd
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Office Phone: (403) 220-5458 (email preferred)
E-Mail: annie.rudd@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: M 16:00-18:00 or by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to the critical study of images in society. In it, we will ask how practices of looking, and conditions of visibility and invisibility, are bound up with power relations, and what roles visual objects and experiences play in knowledge production, identity construction and performance, social discipline, political participation, and consumer culture, among other topics. Examining a broad array of images and visual practices through the lens of diverse theoretical and interpretive frames, students will build their capacities for the critical analysis of the visual.

Objectives of the Course

This course has four connected aims:

- To acquaint you with influential theories of the visual that will be relevant to your studies in communications and media studies, as well as to your consumption, interpretation, and production of images in everyday life;
- To engage you with scholarly debates and cultural discourses surrounding the visual, both in the present day and in the past;
- To enable you to develop techniques of analysis as they relate to visual material;
- To involve you directly in the practice of visual culture analysis, with writing assignments and activities that require you to interpret and critique visual materials as well as intervene in scholarly and popular debates surrounding visual culture.

Textbooks and Readings

The required textbook for this course is the third edition of *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (Oxford University Press, 2018). It is available for purchase and rental in the University of Calgary Bookstore. Please note that it is important to ensure you get the 2018 edition of this book; earlier editions differ substantially and do not contain the required readings. A copy of the textbook

is also on reserve in the Taylor Family Digital Library. All other readings will be posted to D2L.

Internet and Electronic Communication Device Information

Laptops and tablets are permitted in this class provided that they are used solely for note-taking and other in-class activities, and they do not present a distraction to you or others. The use of smartphones is not permitted in class—they must be silenced and placed in your bag during class. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in a participation grade deduction and you may be asked to leave. Note that the unauthorized use of electronic devices for audio and video recording or transmission is strictly prohibited in class as well as in office hours.

If distraction due to electronic devices is impeding class participation, a policy prohibiting the use of all electronic devices may be introduced. Therefore, it's in your best interest to ensure that you are using electronic devices exclusively for class work.

A Note on Email Communication

When emailing me about the course, please include the course code (COMS 367) in your subject line. Before you send an email, please check the course outline and D2L to make sure your question isn't already answered there. I aim to answer emails within 48 hours of receiving them—if you have emailed me and have not heard back within this timeframe, please feel free to send a follow-up message. For more detailed questions, you may want to stop by my office hours instead.

In emails and in person, you are welcome to address me as Annie, Professor Rudd, or Dr. Rudd—whichever you prefer. (In other classes, if you're not sure what to call your instructor, "Professor _____" is your best bet.)

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assignment	Due
20%	Useful Ideas Blog	Throughout the term (see posting schedule below)
20%	Critical Writing Assignment	October 12 via D2L
5%	Show and Tell	Throughout the term
20%	Participation and In-Class Work	Throughout the term
5%	Final Essay Proposal	November 14 via D2L
30%	Final Essay	November 28 via D2L

Useful Ideas Blog

Four times over the course of the semester (see schedule below), you'll be asked to submit a brief blog post via the D2L discussion board. (You're welcome to post more often if you'd like, and in that event your four best posts will be the ones for which you receive credit.) These posts will allow you to make the ideas found in the assigned readings useful to you by applying the theories, frameworks, or issues discussed in those readings to images or

other examples that interest you. They're a way for you to think concretely about the implications these readings hold for the world around you, and they're also a way for you to shape the dialogue in this course: your contributions will be worked into the discussions we have in lecture. Your posts are not expected to be lengthy or formal, but they should demonstrate that you've done the reading. They should be at least 200 words, they should reference at least one specific passage, theory, or argument in the readings to be discussed in the following class, and they should apply this material from the readings to a specific example or image. Any direct quotes from assigned readings should include author name and page number; references to or quotes from any outside readings should include full citations. Note that you will be required to submit your posts at least 24 hours before the class where we will be discussing the readings you post about. However, it's up to you whether your post deals with Monday's readings or Wednesday's readings in your assigned weeks.

Please see below for your assigned posting dates, and record them in your calendar so you don't miss a post!

Schedule of posts:

Group 1: Last names start with letters A-D	Group 2: Last names start with letters E-M	Group 3: Last names start with letters N-Z
Posts to be submitted <u>before 2pm</u> on:		
Sept. 9 or 11	Sept. 16 or 18	Sept. 23 or 25
Sept. 30 or Oct. 2	Oct. 14 or 16	Oct. 14 or 16
Oct. 21 or 23	Oct. 28 or 30	Nov. 4 or 6
Nov. 18 or 20	Nov. 25 or 27	Dec. 2 or 4

Critical Writing Assignment

With this writing assignment, you will draw on course readings and discussions in order to produce a short essay that engages with an image of your choosing. This assignment is deliberately flexible so that you're able to take your analysis in a direction that you find most interesting and useful. Your essay must be at least 800 words in length, not counting citations. More details and a grading rubric will be provided early in the term.

Show and Tell

In groups of 2-3, you'll be required to deliver a brief, engaging class presentation that looks closely at an image or example of your choosing through the lens of the day's readings. The purpose of this assignment is not to summarize the assigned readings, but to think creatively about their applications and to illustrate to the class what they tell us about the image or example you've selected. This presentation should be 5-7 minutes in length, and should end with one discussion question for the class (whose responses will not be counted as part of your maximum of 7 minutes)—please plan your presentation carefully to ensure you adhere to this time limit. You'll be required to submit your images/slides, as well as your presentation notes, via the D2L Dropbox at least 48 hours before your presentation. Please be sure to do this, as failure to provide these supporting materials on time means you won't be able to deliver your presentation or receive credit for it.

Participation and In-Class Work

Regular participation is expected and will be essential not only to your success, but to the experience that each student has in the class. Your participation will be assessed based on the frequency and quality of your contributions to class discussions and your participation in in-class activities and assignments. Given the importance of participation, regular attendance is essential. You should come to every class with the readings completed and in hand, ready to discuss them.

In class throughout the term, you'll be given short assignments to complete. Usually, these assignments will ask you to reflect on some aspect of the course content—they might, for example, ask you to discuss an assigned reading or interpret an image. There are no make-ups on these casual in-class assignments, so please plan on coming to class regularly. That said, each student gets one “mulligan”—one free pass on a missed in-class assignment.

Final Essay Proposal

You will be asked to submit a research essay proposal via the D2L Dropbox two weeks before your essay is due. This proposal must include a brief (minimum 150-word) description of your essay topic, as well as two academic sources you intend to use beyond the assigned readings for this course. The primary purpose of this proposal is to motivate you to get started on your research well in advance of the due date. Feedback will not be provided on proposals, so if you have questions about your essay topic, approach, sources, or argument, please visit office hours or inquire via email.

Final Essay

Your major assignment for this class will be a research essay. It can be a traditional academic paper of at least 2000 words (excluding citations), or a digital essay incorporating meaningful, well-chosen multimedia elements, totaling at least 1500 words (excluding citations), and published on an online platform such as Wordpress, Tumblr, or Medium. Building on the writing you have done in this course throughout the term, you will craft a well-researched, thoughtfully argued essay that offers critical analysis of one or more visual images or related phenomena, with reference to course readings as well as at least two outside readings that are scholarly in nature. A set of potential essay topics will be provided to you early in the term, but you are also permitted to propose your own topic. You can propose your topic via email or by visiting office hours. Technical details relating to the essay and proper citation will be provided in class and on D2L.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: All assignments and exams weighted more than 20% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Submission of Assignments: Submission of written work is through the D2L Dropbox. Please ensure you put your full name on all documents you submit, and also ensure that you submit your assignment using the correct Dropbox—if it's in the wrong one, it may go unread! In-class writing assignments will include a paper submission option and a digital submission option (again, via the D2L Dropbox).

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline will receive a deduction of one third of a letter grade per day (for example, an A- paper submitted one day late will receive a B+). Extensions may be granted if you have a good reason to request one and you do so well in advance of the deadline.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades. Work in the course will be given percentage grades. The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%

3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online

Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>
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Schedule of Class Topics and Readings

The course textbook, *Practices of Looking*, is abbreviated below as PL. All other readings will be posted to D2L.

Important note: All readings and dates are subject to change! Please check D2L regularly for the latest version of this schedule.

Week 1: Introductions

September 6

Introduction to the course

Readings: None today.

Week 2: Foundations

September 10

What is visual culture?

Readings: PL, pages 1-8 and 12.

September 12

Thinking about looking

Readings: PL, pages 13-24.

Week 3: Modernity, Power, and Surveillance

September 17

Modernity and spectatorship

Readings: PL, pages 89-109

September 19

Surveillance and the gaze

Readings: PL, pages 109-113 (section titled "Power and the Surveillance Gaze" only); Foucault, brief excerpts from "Panopticism"

Week 4: Spectatorship and Gender

September 24

Objectification

Readings: Berger, excerpts from *Ways of Seeing*

September 26

Gender, power, and spectatorship

Readings: PL, pages 120-133; Cohen, ["Not Safe for Work"](#)

Week 5: Othering, Visual Display, Self-Possession

October 1
Colonial gazes
Readings: PL, 113-120

October 3
Otherness and self-image
Readings: bell hooks, "In Our Glory: Photography and Black Life"

Week 6: Holiday Monday and Writing Time

October 8—no class today—Thanksgiving
October 10—independent writing day—class will not meet. Spend class time working on your Critical Analysis assignment, which is due on Friday (to be submitted via D2L Dropbox)!

Week 7: Images and their Truth Claims

October 15
Realisms
Readings: PL, 139-148

October 17
Photographic "truth" and semiotic analysis
Readings: PL, 24-41; Barthes, "Photography and Electoral Appeal"

Week 8: Technological Images

October 22
Images in circulation
Readings: PL, 185-198

October 24
Digital images, circulation, and manipulation
Readings: PL, 205-212 (section titled "Reproduction and the Digital Image"); Pappalardo, "[Pictures at an Exhibition](#)"

Week 9: Seeing Bodies

October 29
Clinical gazes
PL, 340-343 (section titled "Opening up the Body to the Empirical Medical Gaze"), 349-357

October 31
Skin
Readings: Cole, "A True Picture of Black Skin"; McGill, "Why White People Don't Use White Emoji"

Week 10: Visual Culture and Consumer Subjectivity

November 5
Consumerism and visual culture
Readings: PL, 257-265

November 7
The branded self
Readings: PL, 272-296

Week 11: Mid-Term Break! ☺

November 12—no class today

November 14—no class today

Week 12: Nationhood and Representation

November 19

Official images and national identity

Readings: Payne, "Through a Canadian Lens"

November 21

Politics and representation

Readings: Cole, "Getting Others Right"

Week 13: Politics and Media Events

November 26

Mediated public spheres

Readings: PL, 240-253

November 28

Images of violence

Sontag, excerpts from "Regarding the Pain of Others"

Week 14: Borders and Bridges

December 3

Globalization, migration, activism

Readings: PL, 402-406 (section titled "Social Movements, Indigenous Media, and Visual Activism") and 415-420 (section titled "Refugees and Borders")

December 5

Wrap-up and goodbyes

Readings: None today.