

CIS 361: Visual Communication

Course Description

This semester we will learn to develop a deep and thorough understanding of the theories of visual literacy, visual culture, and media criticism. This course focuses primarily upon the development of digital images and the theory surrounding that production. We will also focus upon the interpretation of images and the messages that imagery attempts to communicate.

Please note that the focus of this course is not merely the development of technical skills.

Rather, this course is designed to function as thorough exploration the theories of visual communication, digital media criticism and meaning making. With these understandings, your production work will be more effective and contain more value.

Note also that this course is designed to present you with poorly-structured problems that you must solve on your own. This may make you uncomfortable. It will also make you smarter.

In the end, this course is all about the work you do on your own and how it stands on its own merit. There is no, single, "right answer" for the problems you help shape throughout the course. Instead, all of you must seek out and justify your individual solutions. Do not seek for "what the instructor wants" because it truly does not exist. We will all be learning new things together through this work.

Student Outcomes

As a student in this course, you will develop a deeper understanding of digital photography, image manipulation, and digital media development. You will also begin to grasp the more advanced concepts of effective design and visual literacy. Further, you will come to appreciate in more depth the myriad ways that imagery can be employed to communicate meaning. Finally, you will think critically upon how digital media impacts our society, and shapes our understandings of culture.

Reference Materials

The following resources are required or recommended for this course. Several Internet resources will also be provided as additional readings throughout the term. Those can always be found at <http://courses.samfee.net/>.

Hagen, R. & Golombisky, K. (2013). *White Space is Not Your Enemy: A Beginner's Guide to Communicating Visually through Graphic, Web & Multimedia Design* (3rd). ISBN-13: 978-1138804647. **Recommended.** \$31. (Kindle: \$31.)

Sturken, M. & Cartwright, L. (2001). *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (1st). ISBN-10: 0198742711. **Required.** About \$5 (Buy it used!)

[Adobe's Online Tutorials and Videos](#)

Grading and Assignments

Student assessment for this course will take the form of electronic portfolio materials, presentations, discussions, writing assignments, peer assessment, class participation and attendance. **All materials for this course must be submitted in electronic format.**

Specifically, your grade will be determined as follows:

Digital Photography Portfolio	10%
Appropriation Assignment	10%
Political Poster	20%
Advertising/Public Relations Project	10%
Postmodernism Piece	20%
Design Yourself Assignment	20%
Participation	10%

A note on Participation: this component of grading can feel subjective and confusing. Simply put - Participation reflects your engagement with the content during class, preparation before class, completion of homework assignments, and availability/contributions to your peers outside of class. Do not assume 100% Participation. Assume 75% and work to get your grade to the level you desire.

Schedule

This course meets at the dates and times as listed in WebAdvisor. There is a small lab available 24/7 via card swipe in room 216 of the Tech Center. Test your card by the end of the first week of class to make sure it working. Please note that the following readings should be completed *before class* on the day they are listed. Stay aware also of additional online readings as they are distributed in class. Links will be available at <http://courses.samfee.net/>.

January 28	Lecture: Understanding Visuals – Read S&C Ch. 1
January 30	Lab: Photography Technique & Camera Raw
February 4	Studio: Digital Photography
February 6	Studio: Photoshop Techniques I Photo Portfolio Due
February 11	Lecture: Making Meaning from Images – Read S&C Ch. 2
February 13	Studio: Professional Review of Photographic Work
February 18	Lecture: Discourse through Imagery – Read S&C Ch. 3
February 20	Discussion: Portfolio Review Appropriation Assign. Due
February 25	Lecture: Reproduction and the Media – Read S&C Ch. 4 & 5
February 27	Studio: Photoshop Techniques II
March 3	Studio: Political Posters
March 5	Presentations: Political Posters Political Poster Due
March 10/12	SPRING BREAK
March 17	Lecture/Lab: Consumer Culture – Read S&C Ch. 6
March 19	Studio: Photoshop Techniques III
March 24	Studio: Advertising and Public Relations
March 26	Discussion: What is Postmodernism? Advertising/PR Project Due
March 31	Lecture: Postmodernism – Read S&C Ch. 7
April 2	Studio: Postmodernism Projects
April 7	Studio: Photoshop Techniques IV
April 9	Discussion: What is Postmodernism Again?
April 14	Studio: Postmodernism Projects
April 16	Presentations: Postmodernism Projects Postmodern Project Due
April 21	Presentations: Postmodernism Projects
April 23	NO CLASS
April 28	Studio: Photoshop Techniques V
April 30	Studio: Design Yourself
May 5	Discussion: Visual Communication Design Yourself Project Due

Office Hours

I am very happy to meet with you to discuss practically any topic during my office hours. You can find me in Tech Center 224. Specifically, I am available:

Tues. and Thurs. 12:00 - 12:45 & 4:30 - 5:00.

Please note that I may be hard to find at other times due to other courses, committee obligations, conference calls and travel. But I am always happy to find a time to schedule an appointment. Also, I am always available by e-mail and I'll typically respond within 12 hours.

Final Notes

Final grades will be negatively impacted by more than three absences. You will lose one point from your *final* grade for the course for each absence in excess of three. There are no "excused" absences. Any late project work will be docked one full letter grade (i.e. 10 points) each day. There are no exceptions. You must turn in each assignment to receive a final grade for this class.

I won't bother to give you information unless you actually need to know it. In return, I ask that you actually read it, and make your best effort to understand and remember the details.

Using your phone in class during lecture or discussion is rude and disrespectful to both your peers and the instructor. Inappropriate use of your phone will lead to a deduction from your participation grade.

Please note that you may not record or capture any classroom interactions through any means unless you seek permission of the instructor in advance.

Taking responsibility and ownership for your data will make your experiences in computing much less taxing! Make sure you have backup copies of all your work on a flash drive or a cloud storage service. I am not the repository of your work. Therefore, I will not be able to provide them later in the term, or later in your academic career.

Finally, please note that this document represents the minimum that you need to know regarding the course. For additional details and information, you should consult the online course information at <http://courses.samfee.net/>.