Communication 215-001
Visual Communication
Burnett 203
TR 9:30 AM-10:45 AM

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Office hours: TR 11 AM-12 PM

Course Description

This course begins with the principle that visuality informs, creates, maintains, distorts, and changes the lives and experiences of nearly everyone. Thus, what cultural scholars have labeled “visual culture” refers to the ways in which we interpret visual information, make, challenge, and alter taken-for-granted meanings, create objects of observation, and become visual objects in the eyes of ourselves and others. Visual culture challenges the dominant role of the written word in academic settings, and emphasizes visual culture’s multimodality: films, screens, photography, interfaces, television, and mundane mediated experiences, among others. Students are expected to immerse themselves in a variety of visual events and experiences. Moreover, students are expected to produce high quality work that showcases their ability to interpret, evaluate, and produce various forms of images.

This course will be challenging. I expect regular participation, close readings, well-developed arguments, as well as innovative productions. Students are expected to take the developmental process seriously. I have a very high expectation for participation and constructive criticism at the college level.

ACE 2D Learning Outcome

ACE 2: Demonstrate competence in communication skills by producing and/or interpreting visual information. Courses certified under ACE 2D would be assessed according to either production or interpretation. This course offers examples of both, production and interpretation, as well as the pedagogical relationship between production and interpretation.
Course Objectives
1. To immerse oneself in a variety of situations that ask that one think critically about the role of visuality, image, perspective, and performance
2. To critically reflect on instances when images influence, create, and distort reality
3. To develop quality products that demonstrate skillful use of visual media
4. To develop a strong sense of the persuasive power of images through written criticism

Required Texts

Mission of the Department of Communication Studies
The mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, technology, and culture. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages ranging from face-to-face to digital media contexts. The department’s research and teaching devote particular attention to scholarly initiatives aimed at understanding and explaining the role of communication in (a) facilitating civic engagement, mediating public controversies, and organizing for social change, (b) constituting individual and family health, promoting healthy behaviors, and helping persons navigate relational challenges, and (c) creating, maintaining, and challenging personal, social, and community identity in a complex and diverse world.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me (the instructor or teaching assistant) for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation as determined by Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). This includes students with mental health disabilities like depression and anxiety. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide individualized accommodations to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with SSD, which is located in 232 Canfield Administration (472-3787).

The SSD office will determine student needs, as these are the professionals most capable to help students.

Course Policies
Learning Environment: We will maintain our classroom (including Canvas) as a productive place to learn. Students are responsible for fostering an environment open to observing, discussing, and reflecting upon our own and others’ communicative behaviors. Students are required to be conscious of their role in providing a place where every class participant, given all differences, will feel free to participate. This is especially important in the following contexts: discussion posts and comments, selection of topics and presentation material, and participation accountabilities. Disrespect, including, but not limited to, racism, sexism and misogyny, ageism, homophobia and heterosexism, xenophobia, and classism will not be tolerated.
Furthermore, given that this is a university course, you will be required to think critically about topics that may be controversial. In all situations, I expect differences in opinion to be handled respectfully, diplomatically, and with tolerance. I expect students to be respectful of others. I will not tolerate discriminatory insults regarding race, ethnic background, national origin, religion, language proficiency, gender, sexual orientation, age, or ability. Students choosing to engage in such behavior will fail the assignment and possibly the class. Further action may also be taken. Civil participation is uniquely important. This means that students must reflexively consider the implications of their communication interactions in order to ensure an open and safe learning environment. If, at any time, you feel threatened, intimidated, or bullied by another classmate please notify me immediately.

**Participation and Attendance**: Students are expected to show up to class on time, having read the material, and prepared to engage in conversation and class activities. Habitual failure to show up prepared and on time will result in the loss of points as deemed appropriate by instructor. Furthermore, students with six or more unexcused absences should not expect a passing grade in this course.

**Due Dates and Deadlines**: All assignments must be submitted as scheduled. I do not accept late assignments. I do not allow students to make up assignments without a proper, documented excuse (family/medical emergency, University-sanctioned activity, or religious observance). Please look over the course schedule and arrange for any curriculum accommodations resulting from religious/spiritual observances or university-sanctioned activities. It is the student’s responsibility to arrange for these accommodations ahead of time.

**Media and Format**: I will not accept assignments turned in via email and all written assignments must be compatible with Canvas (.doc or .docx) unless stated otherwise. If you submit something with an incompatible format (e.g., .pages) then you will surely receive a zero (0) for that assignment. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that all assignments are turned in properly and on time.

**Communication**: All communication regarding course assignments (deadlines, assignment clarifications, etc.) will be handled through email or in person during office hours. Please allow 48 hours for an email response, and do not expect a response after 5:00 PM on Friday.

**Office hours and Appointments**: Students may come to my office without an appointment during office hours. Students may also schedule an appointment if they cannot come in during office hours. Please come prepared with notes and questions.

**Academic Integrity and Honesty**: Students are not allowed to copy, plagiarize, falsify, misrepresent, or otherwise cheat in their work. This includes submitting one’s own work from another course. **Students may not submit work from another class**. All assignments should, in addition to being authored by the student, be original work. Assignments in violation of Academic Integrity and Honesty policy will receive an automatic zero (0) and the student may
have to face further action. For more information, please refer to the university’s policies: http://comm.unl.edu/GradePolicy.pdf

**Grades and Grade Changes:** Grades will not be changed once assignments have been returned unless a mathematical error is made. However, I am willing to discuss methods of improving grades in future assignments. Additionally, I will not issue Incompletes (I) for this course.

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>100-97</td>
<td>96-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96-94</td>
<td>93-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>93-90</td>
<td>88-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>86-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86-84</td>
<td>83-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>83-80</td>
<td>79-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79-77</td>
<td>76-74</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>76-74</td>
<td>73-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>73-70</td>
<td>69-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>69-67</td>
<td>66-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>66-64</td>
<td>63-60</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>63-60</td>
<td>59-52</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59-52</td>
<td>below</td>
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**Assignments**

1. **Reading Responses:** 28% (7 x 4 points each)
   Each week, students are expected to write a 300-word response. Responses should be typed and printed, and submitted in hardcopy on Tuesday at the start of class. Students should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the reading, and use this response to brainstorm ideas for their creative visual projects and visual media criticism.

   There are 10 opportunities to turn in 7 reading responses throughout the semester. This means that only the 7 highest scores will be counted, and the 3 lowest scores will be dropped.

2. **Visual Media Criticism (ACE 2D Interpretation Signature Assignment):** 32% (Rubric x 4)
   Some time before Week 5, students are to attend a visual event and clearly identify an artifact of analysis. A visual event can be attendance to a performance, such as a play, a film (in a theatre), a museum, an art gallery, a concert, or a protest. An artifact of analysis can be a film, a painting or series of paintings in a museum or gallery (preferably by the same artist), and/or a photograph or series of photographs in a museum or gallery (preferably by the same artist). An artifact can also be the experience of the performance itself—the embodied experience of a play, a poetry performance, and/or a concert. Students are expected to critically immerse themselves in visual culture, rather than be passive observers.

   Students will have approximately 6 weeks to write a visual media criticism. The criticism should present a central argument or thesis statement. The thesis statement should be backed by visual and interpretive evidence. Moreover, the student is to interpret and evaluate visual artifacts in order to highlight their role within contemporary visual culture. Visual media criticisms should be 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced, have one-inch margins, be written in Times New Roman, and submitted in hardcopy during class (preferable) or via Canvas as a Word doc or docx by **Thursday, March 15 at 11:59 PM**. Use APA, MLA, or Chicago style for in-text citations and reference pages. Late work will not be accepted. Often, too many students wait until the last moment to turn in this assignment and encounter technical difficulties. In order to avoid a zero for submitting work past the deadline, plan on submitting your work during class or at least three hours before the Canvas deadline.
Additionally, students should provide evidence that they attended the visual event **before** Week 5. The best forms of evidence for this assignment are photographs of the student in attendance at the event **received before Week 5** and/or a dated ticket stub or receipt from a theatre or museum as proof of attendance dated **before Week 5**. Evidence may be turned in hardcopy during Week 5 or via Canvas messages. Students who do not submit appropriate evidence of attendance will automatically lose 4 of 32 possible points.

3. **Creative Visual Project (ACE 2D Production Signature Assignment): 32% (Rubric x 4)**

Students are to create a visual project that they will turn in during Finals Week. The visual project can be a short film (no more than 15 minutes), an original and recorded performance such as a play or poetry performance (no more than 15 minutes), a series of approximately 20 visual works produced throughout the semester (e.g., digital photographs), or a blog with a central motif that emphasizes visuality over textuality (i.e., no captions or written explanations), and creativity over commonplace (i.e., no pinterest boards) created throughout the semester (from Week 8 to Week 16). Other forms and media may be used with prior instructor approval.

The creative visual project materials and/or performances will be turned in during finals week, **Thursday, May 3, 10:00 AM-12:00PM, in Burnett 203**. Original materials will be turned in for grading, but students may pick up their originals after final grades are submitted.

Students are responsible for accessing the technology needed in order to accomplish their goals. My recommendation is to work with the tools you already have access to, such as digital cameras, camcorders, laptops, and camera phones. Additionally, Media Services in the Love Library, Second Floor, rents equipment to students. For more information, call (402) 472-6039 or go to [https://libraries.unl.edu/multimedia-equipment-software](https://libraries.unl.edu/multimedia-equipment-software). Students choosing to turn their projects in via Canvas: know that only the following formats will be accepted: jpeg tiff gif avi flv mov and mp4. Hardcopies, such as flashdrives, DVDs, or CDROMs may be turned in during finals week, **Thursday, May 3, 10:00 AM-12:00PM, in Burnett 203**.

4. **Progress Reports: 8% (2 x 4pts each)**: Students will be given two weeks during the semester to work on Creative Visual Projects (Weeks 12 and 13). During these weeks we will not meet during class. Instead, students are expected to turn in two Progress Reports (due on March 29 and April 5, before 11:59 PM via Canvas) worth 4 points each. In less than one page (approximately 300 words), Progress Reports are to detail the work done during each week. Moreover, students should describe and reflect on their concrete goals, including application of course material and the use of class time as pertinent to their Creative Visual Project.

### Breakdown of Assignment Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses:</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Media Criticism:</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Visual Project:</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Report 1:</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Report 2:</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Course Schedule

Week 1. January 9, 11: Course Introduction

Week 2. January 16, 18: Images, Power, and Politics
   Read: Chapter 1, *PL*
   Due: RR1

Week 3. January 23, 25: Viewers Make Meaning
   Read: Chapter 2, *PL*
   Due: RR2

Week 4. January 30, February 1: Modernity
   Read: Chapter 3, *PL*
   Due: RR3

Week 5. February 6, 8: Realism and Perspective
   Read: Chapter 4, *PL*
   Due: RR4
   Deadline to attend visual event for Visual Media Criticism (due Week 10)

Week 6. February 13, 15: Copies and Reproductions
   Read: Chapter 5, *PL*
   Due: RR5

Week 7. February 20, 22: Media in Everyday Life
   Read: Chapter 6, *PL*
   Due: RR6

Week 8. February 27, March 1: Brand Culture
   Read: Chapter 7, *PL*
   Due: RR7

Week 9. March 6, 8: Postmodernism
   Read: Chapter 8, *PL*
   Due: RR8

Week 10. March 13, 15: Science and Visual Culture
   Read: Chapter 9, *PL*
   Due: RR9, March 13
   Due: Media Criticism, March 15
Week 11. March 20, 22: Spring Break

Week 12. March 27, 29: Work Week
No Class, Decolonial Dialogue Seminar. Use regularly scheduled class time to work on Creative Visual Project.

Due: Creative Visual Project Progress Report 1, due via Canvas, March 29.

Week 13. April 3, 5: Work Week
No Class, Western Social Science Association Conference. Use regularly scheduled class time to work on Creative Visual Project.

Due: Creative Visual Project Progress Report 2, due via Canvas, April 5.

Week 14. April 10, 12: Globalization and Visual Culture
Read: Chapter 10, PL
Due: RR 10

Week 15. April 17, 19: Film as Ideology
Read: Zizek

Week 16. April 24, 26: Film as Allegory
Read: Saldaña

Creative Visual Project due during Finals Week: Thursday, May 3, 10:00 AM-12:00PM, in Burnett 203
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Production</strong></th>
<th><strong>High Proficiency</strong> 4</th>
<th><strong>Proficiency</strong> 3</th>
<th><strong>Some Proficiency</strong> 2</th>
<th><strong>No/Little Proficiency</strong> 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency with media</td>
<td>Clearly exhibits high proficiency with specific media used in the creation of visual information/ artwork/ design work</td>
<td>Exhibits proficiency with specific media used in the creation of visual information/ artwork/ design work</td>
<td>Struggles with specific media used in the creation of visual information/ artwork/ design work</td>
<td>Cannot employ specific media used in the creation of visual information/ artwork/ design work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity aligns with intended communication</td>
<td>Clearly exhibits ability to creatively manipulate formal and conceptual elements of visual information/ artwork/ design work</td>
<td>Exhibits ability to creatively manipulate formal and conceptual elements of visual information/ artwork/ design work</td>
<td>Struggles to creatively manipulate formal and conceptual elements of visual information/ artwork/ design work</td>
<td>Cannot creatively manipulate formal and conceptual elements of visual information/ artwork/ design work</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interpretation</strong></th>
<th><strong>High Proficiency</strong> 4</th>
<th><strong>Proficiency</strong> 3</th>
<th><strong>Some Proficiency</strong> 2</th>
<th><strong>No/Little Proficiency</strong> 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Clearly expresses how and what the artifact or performance communicates</td>
<td>Expresses how and what the artifact or performance communicates</td>
<td>Struggles to express how and what the artifact or performance communicates</td>
<td>Cannot express how and what the artifact or performance communicates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Evaluation</strong></th>
<th><strong>High Proficiency</strong> 4</th>
<th><strong>Proficiency</strong> 3</th>
<th><strong>Some Proficiency</strong> 2</th>
<th><strong>No/Little Proficiency</strong> 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Clearly communicates the formal or conceptual elements present in visual information using oral or written forms</td>
<td>Communicates the formal or conceptual elements present in visual information using oral or written forms</td>
<td>Struggles to communicate the formal or conceptual elements present in visual information using oral or written forms</td>
<td>Cannot communicate the formal or conceptual elements present in visual information using oral or written forms</td>
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