



**CMN 340: Visual Politics
Fall 2012**

Tuesday-Thursday 2:00-3:20 pm, 1065 Lincoln Hall

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What is this course about?

Visual images saturate our world and shape our experience of public life. This course explores the role of visual images in U.S. culture, paying special attention to the ways that images function persuasively as political communication. Students will learn tools for analyzing historical and contemporary images and artifacts such as photographs, prints, paintings, advertisements, and memorials. Throughout the course we will study how visual images participate in a variety of *rhetorical actions*, or actions that humans perform when we use symbols to persuade: remembering and memorializing; confronting and resisting; consuming and commodifying; governing and authorizing; and visualizing and informing.

“Visual politics” may be defined as *power relationships and social relations made visible through the production, reproduction, and circulation of visual images and performances of looking*. As we discuss how visual politics get communicated, we will address a number of topics of interest to scholars in communication, including: public memorials; images of presidents and leaders; photography and photojournalism; gender, race, class, and sexuality; the role of art; and science/information images.

When you have completed this course, you will be able to do the following:

- read and understand current research in visual communication studies;
- analyze different kinds of visual images according to specific criteria of form, content, and genre;
- learn and employ a lexicon (critical vocabulary of terms) to describe, interpret, and evaluate specific instances of visual communication in the public sphere;
- explain the roles specific visual images have played at particular moments in U.S. history; and
- construct clear, persuasive arguments about visual politics in writing.

How is the course organized?

The course is organized into five units of one, two, or three weeks that address a specific set of rhetorical actions (e.g., *remembering and memorializing*). Within a given week, you will read one or two pieces of scholarly research and explore primary source materials related to a specific visual case study. Typically, we will discuss the scholarly research and related concepts in class on Tuesday, while on Thursday we will use those concepts as lenses through which to explore the visual case study. Materials for the case studies will be posted on the Moodle site.

What will we read and view?

The following textbook is required for this course. You can find it at IUB and elsewhere. There is also a copy of the textbook on reserve at all times at the Undergraduate Library.

Lester Olson, Cara Finnegan, and Diane Hope, eds., *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*. Sage, 2008.

Additional readings and viewing materials for the course are available at our Moodle site. See the reading and assignment schedule for specifics.

What Assignments Will You Do?

Two non-cumulative exams (20% and 25% of final grade, respectively). These in-class exams will feature objective and essay questions designed to assess your grasp of ideas from the readings, your skills in applying them to specific images and case studies we have explored, and your ability to synthesize these ideas in light of new examples. All students will take the exam on the day and time it is to be administered and only on that day and time. *Except in cases of severe emergency (e.g., loss of life or limb, not work, family, or vacation plans), there will be no exceptions to this policy.*

Final Exam (cumulative; 30% of final grade). The final exam will feature objective and essay questions designed to assess your grasp of ideas from the readings, your skills in applying them to specific images and case studies we have explored, and your ability to synthesize these ideas in light of new examples. Half of the exam will address material covered in class since the last exam; half of the exam will be cumulative and cover all course material. All students will take the final on the day and time for which it has been scheduled by the University and only on that day and time. *Except in cases of a demonstrated conflict with another final exam, there will be no exceptions to this policy.*

Visual Politics Journal (25% of final grade). Six times during the semester you will post short essays to Moodle. I call this the Visual Politics Journal, and it has two parts: an image/essay component and a “for further reading” component.

Image/Essays: Four times during the semester you will post a 500-word essay (approx. 2 double-spaced pages) accompanied by an image of your choice to Moodle. Your essay should summarize the main arguments of the readings for that Tuesday, define any concepts introduced in the readings, and illustrate how the image you selected reflects ideas, concepts, or arguments laid out in the reading. Your work should reflect norms of college-level composition in terms of clarity of writing, academic integrity, and accurate spelling and mechanics. You will post your journals to Moodle before class, on an assigned schedule; the journal posts will serve as the basis for our discussion of articles each Tuesday. You should embed your selected image into the essay, or provide a link. Good journal posts are concise, lively, well-argued, and explicitly cite ideas from our readings and class. Your work will be evaluated on a 5-point scale corresponding to the following letter

grades: 5=A; 4=A-/B+; 3=B/B-; 2=C/C-; 1=D; 0=not completed or excessively late (see below re: "late work"). Journal posts are due by class time (2 pm) on Tuesdays.

"For Further Reading": Each of the unit introductions in the *Visual Rhetoric* textbook features a list called "Suggestions for Further Reading." Twice during the semester, you will select an essay from the lists in units we have already covered and write about it. Using the library's Communication & Mass Media Complete database, locate the article, download it, and read it. Then, write a journal post of 500 words in which you summarize the article's main arguments and explore how the article reflects concepts we discussed in class, case studies we engaged, and the like. The "For Further Reading" posts will be evaluated according to the same 5-pt scale described above. Your first "For Further Reading" post must be completed and uploaded to Moodle no later than 5 pm on Friday, Oct. 12; your second post must be completed and uploaded to Moodle no later than 5 pm on Tuesday, Dec. 11.

During the first few weeks of the course you will receive instruction on how to post journal entries, how to cite sources, how to include and cite images, and the like. I recommend drafting your posts in a word processor first, then cutting and pasting the text into the Moodle site when it is time to post.

At the end of the semester, your lowest essay grade will be eliminated. Then your Visual Politics Journal grade will be calculated via a combination of the scores of the five remaining posts (5% each post, for total of 25% of final grade).

What are my responsibilities as a student in this course?

Engagement

Each course I teach offers an opportunity to create an intellectual community. The more engaged we all are, the better that community will be. What does it mean to be "engaged"? Engaged students stay on top of what's happening in class from day to day. They come to class having read, viewed, and thought about the materials. During class, they participate in discussions, ask questions, and offer their ideas. Outside of class, engaged students take advantage of opportunities for feedback on their work. They take advantage of campus resources that may help them improve their performance in class (e.g., the library, the Writer's Workshop). They use my office hours. They ask friends for notes if they happen to miss a class.

Although we are a relatively large group, there will ample opportunity for you to participate in class activities and discussions.

Attendance

You are expected to attend all class meetings and to be on time for class. You are allowed 2 “free” absences during the semester (= one week of class, or 7% of class sessions). Apart from University-sanctioned absences (University-recognized religious holidays, authorized and documented participation in athletic events or other official University activities), I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. Anything over 2 absences will be considered “excessive absence.” *Every absence beyond the second absence will result in the reduction of your final course grade by 1%* (Example: If your final grade is a 90% but you have 4 absences, your final grade will become 88%; that’s the difference between A- and B+). Make sure you keep track of your absences; I will. For more serious issues related to attendance, see the “Family and Medical Emergencies” policy below.

Late Work

You are expected to post/turn in all assignments on the day that they are due. Grades on late work will be reduced by a full letter grade for each working day an assignment is late. Late work will not be accepted at all past the fourth working day; any missing assignments after that point will be given a grade of zero. Anticipate problems in advance and communicate with me to avoid misunderstandings. For more serious issues related to late work, see the “Family and Medical Emergencies” policy below.

Technical problems (including but not limited to power outages, computer crashes, viruses, unavailable systems and networks, etc.) *do not in themselves constitute legitimate excuses for late or missing work.* Save early drafts of your work, so that if you lose it you will be able to reconstruct what you have lost.

Family/Medical Emergencies Policy

I recognize that in rare cases an extended illness or family emergency may inhibit a student’s ability to attend to normal student responsibilities and deadlines. Students with such emergencies should let me know immediately. In addition, in such cases it is to your benefit to contact the Emergency Dean; the Emergency Dean will in turn contact your instructors. If I receive confirmation from the Emergency Dean about your situation, I will make suitable accommodations for making up late work. Otherwise, all normal course policies apply (see “attendance” and “late work” above).

Academic Integrity

As a student at the University of Illinois, you are obligated to uphold the University's Academic Integrity policies as outlined in the *Student Code*. My ethical and professional obligations as a faculty member require me to investigate violations of academic integrity when I encounter them. Cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, *the intentional or unintentional misrepresentation of someone else's work as your own*, will not be tolerated. Students found to have plagiarized all or parts of assignments will receive severe penalties, ranging from (at minimum) a zero for the assignment to failure of the course.

Be warned: plagiarism is *not* only "copying" someone else's work word for word. There are actually two types of plagiarism: (1) *cheating*, which is the passing off of someone else's work as your own (whether that "someone else" is a classmate, friend, web site, or published author) and (2) *source misrepresentation*. This second type of plagiarism is often overlooked by students but is equally problematic. Examples of this type of plagiarism include: failure to cite a paraphrased source, use quotation marks around exact quotations, or turn in a list of sources cited.

A special warning about online sources: Although resources found in the library's databases and on the web can be helpful, and we will consult them frequently in this course, be aware of the pitfalls of using such sources. It can be tempting to cut and paste information you locate in an online source directly into your own work; however, without proper documentation, this constitutes plagiarism. Be meticulous and careful about your use of sources. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, see me and consult the University's Academic Integrity policy (Part Four of the *Student Code*) at:

http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article1_part4_1-401.html

Ignorance of these policies is not an excuse for committing an act of academic dishonesty.

Accommodation Policy

If you feel that you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, feel free to contact me to discuss your specific needs.

Exam Policy

All students will take exams on the day and time they are to be administered and *only* on that day and time. As noted above in the description of assignments, there will be no exceptions to this policy except in cases of severe emergency (e.g., loss of life or limb) or, in the case of the final exam, demonstrated conflict with another final exam time.

Technology in CMN 340

You are welcome to bring electronic devices to class and use them to take notes, access readings we're discussing, and the like. You are *not* welcome to do social networking, check email, text, tweet, or otherwise perform non-class-related activities during class. Here's my best advice: If you aren't using it to perform a task specifically related to what we are doing in class at that very moment, *put it away*. I reserve the right to declare "screens down" at any moment during class. In addition, if I perceive it's necessary, I will directly confront individual students engaging in disruptive technology use. I also deputize each and every one of you to do the same thing; for example, if a student sitting in front of you is using Facebook and distracting you from concentrating on what we're doing in class, you are welcome (in fact, encouraged) politely to ask that student to stop. And if you are the disruptive student? Your presence in the class implies that you accept the terms of this syllabus, which means that you are obligated to assent to that student's request.

How do I best read/study for this course?

This semester you will encounter a wide variety of materials, including scholarly research articles, popularly circulated texts (e.g., web sites, articles from magazines and newspapers), video clips, and lots and lots of images. Of these, it's likely you are least familiar with published scholarly research. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you read the assigned scholarly essays for each week and prepare your study guides:

- *Take your time and read carefully.* Scholars typically do not write for a popular general audience, but for an audience of experts in a specific field and experts-in-training (that's you!). While the best scholarly writing is both complex and clear, it will not read as fast and easy as a newspaper article written at a sixth-grade reading level. Therefore, you will need to make time to read carefully. Don't rush.
- *Follow the structure and organization of the essay closely.* While there is no cut-and-dried template for the scholarly research we will read this semester, most scholarly essays contain these five parts:

- an introduction that presents the topic of the essay, justifies the need for this research, and offers a preview of the writer's argument/thesis;
- a "literature review" that notes what other scholars have said on the subject and introduces concepts, terms, or theories that inform the essay;
- a "context" or "history" section that introduces the topic/visual artifacts in question and situates them in historical, social, and cultural context;
- an interpretation/analysis section, where the writer proves her/his argument or thesis using evidence;
- and a conclusion section that wraps up the piece and explains what the study tells us about communication more generally.

Not all essays will contain these materials in precisely this order, and in some cases you might have to infer some of these parts from your reading, but if you look out for these parts you're guaranteed to get a good overall grasp of the essay.

- *State-Situate-Prove (SSP)*. For each essay you read, make sure that you can identify the SSP: the specific places in the article where the author *STATES* (presents) the thesis or argument; *SITUATES* (places) the argument in terms of concepts s/he's using and other research on the topic; and, most importantly, how the author *PROVES* the argument. Note especially how evidence is used. Take good notes and come prepared to ask questions, especially about portions of the essay that confuse you. When you come to class each Tuesday, I will expect each of you to be able to tell me the SSP for the articles we're discussing.

Lexicon. As you read each essay, pay special attention to vocabulary and definitions. One of our goals this semester is to develop a lexicon, or vocabulary, for talking about visual politics. For example, terms like *icon* or *perspective by incongruity* are used by scholars to explain specific ways that visual images communicate; you will be expected to understand what these and other terms mean and asked to apply them to our visual case studies. Be sure to note any new or recurring vocabulary terms or concepts introduced in the essays we read. You should keep a separate glossary in your notes where you can collect a list of these terms over the course of the semester.

Reading and Assignment Schedule
Visual Politics
Fall 2012

Key: VR=Olson, Finnegan, & Hope, *Visual Rhetoric*
 MOO=Links/PDF files online at Moodle course site

T Aug. 28	<p><u>Course Introduction: What is Visual Politics?</u></p> <p>Read for next time: VR: "Visual Rhetoric in Communication" (1-14); review syllabus thoroughly, esp. p. 6-7 on "how to read"; log in to Moodle site; MOO: Visual Case Study materials</p>
R Aug. 30	<p><u>Visual Politics and Visual Rhetoric</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: HOPE: Shepard Fairey & Barack Obama</i></p> <p>Read for next time: VR: MOO: Rose, "The Good Eye" (PDF)</p>
T Sept. 4	<p><u>Learning to See/Read Visual Materials</u></p> <p>Journal Group 1 due</p> <p>Read for next time: MOO: Visual Case Study materials</p>
R Sept. 6	<p><u>Learning to See/Read Visual Materials</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: Visualizing the 2012 Drought</i></p> <p>Read for next time: VR: "Remembering and Memorializing" (99-103); MOO: Foss, "Ambiguity as Persuasion" (PDF); VR: Blair, "Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics" (139-155)</p>
T Sept. 11	<p><u>Remembering and Memorializing: Public Memorials</u></p> <p>Journal Group 2 due</p> <p>Read for Next Time: MOO: Visual Case Study materials</p>
R Sept.13	<p><u>Remembering and Memorializing: Public Memorials</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: World War II Memorial</i></p> <p>Read for Next Time: VR: Hariman & Lucaites, "Public Identity...Iconic Photography" (175-198)</p>

T Sept. 18	<p><u>Remembering and Memorializing: Photography and History</u></p> <p>Journal Group 3 due</p> <p>Read for Next Time: MOO: Visual Case Study materials</p>
R Sept. 20	<p><u>Remembering and Memorializing: Photography and History</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother"</i></p> <p>Read for Next Time: Prepare for Exam #1</p>
T Sept. 25	<p><u>Exam #1</u></p> <p>Read for Next Time: VR: "Confronting and Resisting" (199-203); MOO: Johnson, "MLK's 1963..." (PDF)</p>
R Sept. 27	<p><u>Confronting and Resisting: Civil Rights</u></p> <p>Read for Next Time: VR: Harold & DeLuca, "Behold the Corpse" (257-272)</p>
T Oct. 2	<p><u>Confronting and Resisting: Civil Rights, cont.</u></p> <p>Journal Group 1 due</p> <p>Read for Next Time: MOO: Visual Case Study materials</p>
R Oct. 4	<p><u>Confronting and Resisting: Civil Rights, cont.</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: Elizabeth Eckford and Little Rock</i></p> <p>Read for Next Time: VR: Brouwer, "Precarious Visibility Politics" (205-225); Morris & Sloop, "What Lips" (79-98)</p>
T Oct. 9	<p><u>Confronting and Resisting: Body Politics</u></p> <p>Journal Group 2 due</p> <p>Read for Next Time: MOO: Visual Case Study Materials</p>
R Oct. 11	<p><u>Confronting and Resisting: Body Politics</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: Occupy Wall Street</i> Note: 1st "For Further Reading" post must be uploaded no later than 5 pm, 10/12/12</p> <p>Read for Next Time: VR: Demo, "Guerrilla Girls" (241-255)</p>
T Oct. 16	<p><u>Confronting and Resisting: Activist Art</u></p> <p>Journal Group 3 due</p> <p>Read for Next Time: MOO: Visual Case Study Materials</p>

R Oct. 18	<p><u>Confronting and Resisting: Activist Art</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: The artist JR</i></p> <p>Read for Next Time: VR: “Commodifying and Consuming” (273-278); Hope, “Memorializing Affluence” (313-325)</p>
T Oct. 23	<p><u>Commodifying and Consuming: Advertising</u></p> <p>Journal Group 1 due</p> <p>Read for Next Time: MOO: Visual Case Study materials</p>
R Oct. 25	<p><u>Commodifying and Consuming: Advertising</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: Apple and iPod</i></p> <p>Read for Next Time: Prepare for Exam #2</p>
T Oct. 30	<p><u>Exam #2</u></p> <p>Read for Next Time: VR: “Governing and Authorizing” (327-331); MOO: Strachan & Kendall, “Political Candidates’ Convention Films”</p>
R Nov. 1	<p><u>Governing and Authorizing: Campaigns and Elections</u></p> <p>Journal Group 2 due</p> <p>Visitor: Professor Jens Kjeldsen from Norway: “Scandinavian Visual Politics”</p> <p>Read for Next Time: MOO: Visual Case Study materials</p>
T Nov. 6	<p><u>Governing and Authorizing: Campaigns and Elections (VOTE!)</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: Campaign 2012</i></p> <p>Read for Next Time: VR: Erickson, “Presidential Rhetoric’s Visual Turn” (357-374)</p>
R Nov. 8	<p><u>Governing and Authorizing: Presidential Images</u></p> <p>Journal Group 3 due</p> <p>Read for Next Time: MOO: Visual Case Study materials</p>
T Nov. 13	<p><u>Governing and Authorizing: Presidential Images</u></p> <p><i>Visual Case Study: Visual Politics of the Obama White House</i></p> <p>Read for Next Time: MOO: Jack, “A Pedagogy of Sight” (PDF)</p>
R Nov. 15	No class: CF at Nat’l Comm. Assn convention
T Nov. 20	No class: Thanksgiving Break

R Nov. 22	No class: Thanksgiving Break
T Nov. 27	<u>Visualizing and Informing: Science Images</u> Journal Groups 1 & 2 due Read for Next Time: Visual Case Study materials
R Nov. 29	<u>Visualizing and Informing: Science Images</u> <i>Visual Case Study: Visual Rhetoric of Science</i> Read for Next Time: MOO: Tufte, "Cognitive Style" (PDF)
T Dec. 4	<u>Visualizing and Informing: Graphics and Information</u> Journal Group 3 due Read for Next Time: Visual Case Study materials
R Dec. 6	<u>Visualizing and Informing: Graphics and Information</u> <i>Visual Case Study: PowerPoint Goes to War</i> Read for Next Time: Prepare for Final Exam
T Dec. 11	<u>Final Exam Review (last day of classes)</u> All extra credit due today; last "For Further Reading" post must be uploaded no later than 5 pm today.
F Dec. 14	<u>Final Exam 7pm, 1064 Lincoln Hall</u>