

**CMN 538-CF: Visual Rhetoric**

Spring 2013  
Tuesdays, 2-5 pm  
4103 Lincoln Hall

**Professor Cara Finnegan**

**Office:** 3038 Lincoln Hall

**Phone:** 217-333-1855 (office; voice mail)

**Office Hours:** Mondays, 2-4 pm and by appt.

**E-Mail:** [caraf@illinois.edu](mailto:caraf@illinois.edu) (best way to reach me)

**Course web site for readings & reading/assignment schedule:**

<https://learn.illinois.edu/course/view.php?id=1263>

**About Me:** [www.carafinnegan.com](http://www.carafinnegan.com)

**Library Resources for Rhetorical Studies:**

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/cmz/guides/course/rhetresource.html>

**Course Description**

As an art of the appearances, rhetoric in both its ancient and contemporary guises offers a rich and varied set of conceptual resources for exploration of the role of visibility in public life. The goal of this seminar will be to assemble, explore, and assess the variety of conceptual resources available to the visual rhetoric scholar from within rhetoric's own theoretical and critical traditions. Ultimately, we will collectively identify ways to thicken scholarship in visual rhetoric.

This seminar assumes some familiarity with rhetorical studies as a field of study in the humanities. I know that some of you are new to rhetoric; I assume your presence in the seminar means you have interest in learning more about it. (If not, then probably this course is not for you.) If you have not had a course in rhetoric before (or if you wish to review key ideas about rhetoric), I strongly encourage you to read the following materials very early in the term. We will not discuss these readings in class, but they will help you as we work through key ideas in the course:

Keith and Lundberg's *The Essential Guide to Rhetoric* (Bedford, 2008)

Jasinski's *Sourcebook on Rhetoric* (Sage, 2001) introduction chapter, "On Defining Rhetoric as an Object of Inquiry" (available on Moodle)

Lucaites, Condit, and Caudill, introduction to *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader* (Guilford, 1999) (available on Moodle)

**Course Readings**

All course readings are available at our Moodle site (address above).

## Useful Reference Reading

The following books may be helpful to you as reference material, especially if you intend to focus your work in rhetorical studies:

Sloan, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 2001), available full text online at library

Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style* (Oxford, 2011)

Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric* (Sage, 2001)

## Seminar Participation

You are successfully participating in the seminar when you (a) read carefully and bring detailed reading notes and questions to class; (b) engage productively in class—that is, ask questions, raise issues, deliberate with others in the room; (c) listen and respond to others critically yet charitably; (d) avoid behaviors that block productive classroom conversation, such as monopolizing discussion, remaining silent, or offering comments that are merely informational or (un)appreciative.

## Assignments (250 total points)

Scholar Profile Paper (30 points): You will draw the name of a visual rhetoric scholar from a hat. Before our second class meeting, you will find and read 3 journal articles or book chapters by that scholar (co-authored work is okay, book reviews are not). Scholars often work on a variety of topics, so select articles that primarily are focused on visual topics. (Note: The library's Communication & Mass Media Complete and JSTOR databases will be very helpful to you.) Then, write a 6-7 page, double-spaced essay in which you briefly summarize the arguments of each essay and explicate what you understand to be key elements of that scholar's work. Topics you might address include: What themes or topics of research cut across the scholar's work? What concepts/theories ground this scholar's work? Does this scholar work on historical or contemporary topics in rhetoric (or both)? What type of media does the scholar engage (e.g., photography, film, etc.)? How does the scholar describe her/his methods (if s/he does)? How would you describe these methods? (Note: your job is to engage the scholar's work, not the scholar, so please do not contact the scholar with questions about her/his work.) We will use the papers to ground our second class period's discussion; for this reason, no late papers will be accepted.

Visual Essay/Discussion Leader (50 points): For an assigned week, you and a partner will create a visual essay inspired by that week's readings and share it with the class as a way to frame our discussion of that week's readings. The essay may take a variety of forms (e.g., sequence of images; concept map or other infographic; Wordle/tag cloud; video; etc.) and use any kind of delivery system you find appropriate (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, tumblr, paper, etc.). Whatever you produce, you should focus

on prompting our collective thinking about the concepts of the week. Essays will not be evaluated for their “techi-ness” or visual virtuosity, but for the way that they thoughtfully invite conversation about that week’s topics. In addition, you and your partner will be expected to take the lead in discussion on that day, so prepare discussion questions/points/prompts to go with your visual essay.

Final Paper Project Assignment (3 options; must choose by Spring Break) (150 points)

*Critical Analysis of Visual Rhetoric:* Student produces a seminar paper of approx. 25-30 pages that examines a particular case of visual rhetoric. Essay should include literature review of relevant scholarship, historical contextualization of the case, and development of a critical argument using relevant conceptual resources. Choose this option if you are most interested in exploring the rhetorical components of a *specific instance or example of visual discourse*.

*Concept Paper:* Student produces a conceptually-focused paper of approx. 15-20 pages that identifies a concept relevant to visual rhetoric that we have not addressed in the course and produces a substantive literature review exploring this concept’s relevance for visual rhetoric studies. Choose this option if you are most interested in working through problems of visual rhetoric at the *theoretical/conceptual level* rather than at the level of specific cases.

*Annotated Syllabus/Teach a Class:* Student produces a substantive, annotated 12-week undergraduate syllabus of pedagogical resources in visual rhetoric as they relate to a specific topic (e.g., health, environment). The student will then teach a 40-minute seminar on April 23, based upon some element of that syllabus (including assigning homework to students). The syllabus and class should generally be a response to the question, “How might the resources of visual rhetoric be brought to bear on X topic?” You should focus on adapting ideas from the course to your own specific areas of interest. Choose this option if you are most interested in thinking about *how the resources of this course might be brought to bear on issues or topics in your particular field of interest*, and/or if your primary interest is in thinking about ways to *engage issues of visual rhetoric in the classroom*.

Regardless of which option you choose, you will be asked to turn in the following documents to update me on the progress of your projects.

Project proposal (30 points) due March 12.

Progress report/bibliography (40 points) due April 2.

Final project presentation (conference-style 8-minute presentation of research; ungraded but required) due April 30. (Teach-a-class project doesn’t do this.)

Final draft project (100 points) due April 30.

### **Miscellany**

- (1) Use Chicago Manual of Style (15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> edition) for all class writing. For CMS help see <http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/citations.html#chicago>
- (2) I will not read essays that do not conform to minimum standards of grammar, spelling, mechanics, and citation for graduate-level work. Proofread all papers carefully. Double-space everything.
- (3) All written work should be turned in on paper and in person unless we have mutually agreed otherwise. I do not accept graded assignments via email.
- (4) Students who are found to have violated the University's academic integrity policies should expect to fail the course.
- (5) Barring a documented, serious family or medical emergency, I will give no incompletes for this course.
- (6) If you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, feel free to contact me to discuss your specific needs.
- (7) Laptops, iPads, etc. are welcome in class for notetaking, referring to articles, and other activities directly related to class discussion. I reserve the right to declare "screens down" at any point during class. Please turn off your cellphones or set them on silent mode when you come to class. No text messaging during class.
- (8) You should not miss a meeting of a graduate seminar. If something terrible happens to you or to someone you love, or if you have a time-bound professional commitment (e.g., a conference), let me know that you will need to miss a class session.

Schedule (see Moodle)