**COM 403: Theories of Media and Visual Communication**

**Reinhardt University – Dept. of Communication and Media Studies**

**Days: M/W**

**Time: 12:00 – 1:15**

**Room: 176 FPAC**

**Instructor: Christine Johnson**

**Office: 178 FPAC**

**Email:** [**Christine.johnson@reinhardt.edu**](mailto:Christine.johnson@reinhardt.edu)

**Phone: 470-503-0821**

**Books: Visual Communication: Insights and Strategies By Janis Page/Margret Duffy (buy or rent)**

**Practices of Looking – located in Files on Canvas**

**Course Rationale**:

COM 403 focuses on the social and cultural theories that help us understand the role of contemporary media and culture in our society. In this course, you will learn how to think critically about the history and theory of images and visual perception. The course will provide you with skills in visual analysis and inform your creative practice. The purpose of this class is to provide an overview of a complex field of study. As part of the course, you will be introduced to a number of key theories that are the foundation for a contemporary understanding of visual culture. You will also analyze how we comprehend the visual vocabulary that describes the world around us.

**Learning outcomes and course objectives**

After completing the course, students will be able to demonstrate:

1. An overview of visual and cultural theory.
2. Identify cultural theories that enable students to explore visual culture in contemporary society through analysis and writing.
3. Improved research skills by becoming familiar with key sources and developing an understanding of critical media theories and their practical application.
4. Developed reflective skills and ability to document reflections.
5. Analyze the relationship of visual culture theoretical study through writing and synthesizing them, along with their own ideas, into well-crafted papers.
6. The ability to express themselves effectively in writing and through class discussions, both formal and informal, as well as through visual media as applicable.

**“**As a field of study, and everyday notion, the theory of visual culture argues for how images influence new ways of thinking, understanding, and meditating. It is a way of looking at the world to make sense of the universe and humanity’s divergent and complex relations.” The Princeton Review

 It is intertwined with everything that one sees in [their] day to day life––advertising, landscape, buildings, photographs, movies, paintings, apparel––anything within our culture that communicates through visual means.” For transdisciplinary [theorist Irit Rogoff, “visual culture](http://www.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/temp/rogoff.pdf?ref=artshelp.com) opens up an entire world of intertextuality in which images, sounds, and spatial delineations are read on to and through one another, lending ever-accruing layers of meanings and of subjective responses to each encounter we might have with film, TV, advertising, artworks, buildings or urban environments”. Visual culture is [“a transdisciplinary and cross-methodological field of inquiry.”](http://www.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/temp/rogoff.pdf?ref=artshelp.com) - [**Mallory Gemmel**](https://www.artshelp.com/author/mallory/)

**Grading:** You will be graded on the following:

**A(s) 90%-100% -** follows the guidelines for the assignment and displays exceptional thought and originality.

**B(s) 80%-89%**-follows the guidelines for the assignment, displays considered thought, and some originality.

**C(s) 70%-79% -** follows most of the guidelines for the assignment but lacks strong thought, and originality.

**D(s) 65%-69%**-work fails to follow most guidelines for the assignment and lacks qualities of thought and originality

**F(s) 64%- 0% -** work fails to follow guidelines

## Questions: If you have questions about your grades, please make an appointment with me so we can sit down and discuss it. I will not discuss grades over the phone or via email.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the intended or unintended use of someone else’s language and/or ideas without revealing the source of that material, leading the reader/viewer to believe that the work is original. If this occurs your assignment will receive a zero.

**Attendance/Participation:**

Students are required to attend all classes; on time and for the entire class period. Attendance will be taken each time we meet. Absences for illness and/or other reasons are acceptable under the following circumstances: Illness with a doctor’s note, Prior written notification that has been accepted and signed by the instructor or religious holidays (please notify me in advance). You are allowed **TWO** unexcused absence, **TWO** tardy or early exit from class equal an absence. However, if you have more than **SEVEN** absences you will automatically fail the class.

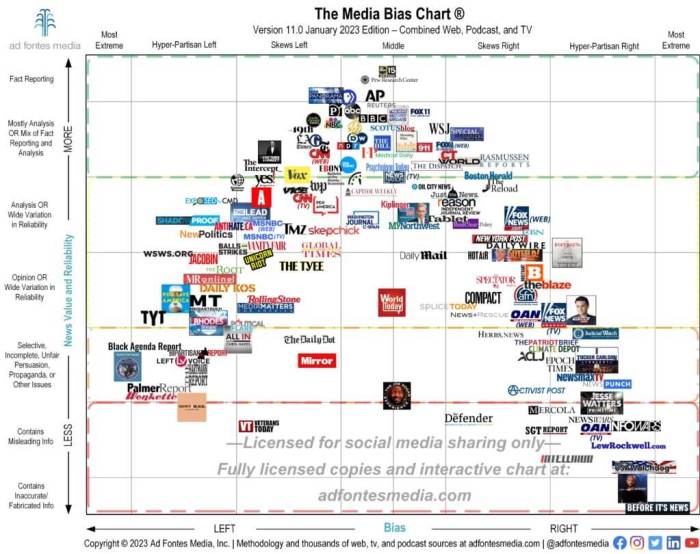
If you are absent from class, you are responsible for the material covered in class. In addition, **every absence thereafter will result in an additional 2-point deduction**.

If you are more than 10 minutes late for class you will be marked absent. It is your responsibility to keep track of your attendance. The only way you can receive points for class participation is if you come to class prepared. That means you have read the required material for class and you contribute to the class discussion.

If you have questions or comments, please raise your hand. Please respect your classmates and professor. If a student disrupts the class by talking to friends, passing notes, sleeping, doing work that is unrelated to the class, arriving late, and leaving class early 2 points will be deducted from your grade for each offense. If you have been warned to stop talking once, there will be no second warning you will simply be asked to leave the class. No discussion. If you have a grievance, you are more than welcome to talk to me about it after class. Discussing material related to the class is not an excuse for talking. You are still engaging in a behavior that is not acceptable in this class.

**Weekly question:** It will be assigned and due in the next class. They will be based on the material we have covered in the class as well as assigned readings. All assignments must be one page, typed and double-spaced, Times Roman 12 font.

**Current Events:** Please make sure you are consuming national news from multiple sources. Please take the following chart into account when consuming and commenting on current events:



**Make-up questions/papers/projects:**

There will be **no** make-ups in this course. This includes in-class assignments. Unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor or you have a doctor’s note.

**Mid-Term Exam:** The mid-term exam will be a five-page paper on the topic of your choice, that relates to the topics/theories discussed in class. Topic must be approved.

**Discussion:** Each student will lead one 15-minute discussion. Make sure you come fully prepared to lead an intelligent, fact-based discussion with prepared questions to initiate an interesting discussion. Make sure you are prepared for every class to comment on the reading for the day.

**Final Paper:** You will hand in an 8-to-10-page research paper as your final exam. It is due on the day of the exam.

**Assignments:** All assignments will be collected at the **BEGINNING** of class, if you walk in late, your assignment will not be accepted and you will receive a zero. An incomplete assignment or project will not be accepted and will receive an automatic zero. NO EXCEPTIONS.

**Cell Phones/earbuds/Electronic Devices:**

All cell phones, earbuds, computers, etc. are to be turned off, put on vibrate, or taken out of your ears **before** entering the lecture room. **Speaking on a cell phone or text messaging in the lecture hall is strictly prohibited.** The use of cell phones, or portable devices, is prohibited once you have entered the lecture hall. Unless instructed. If you have an important call, you know you will have to take during the course of the class, please let me know. Use of any devices listed above will result in 5 points being deducted from your final grade for each offense. **Lectures may not be recorded without prior written consent from the instructor.**

**Academic Resources:**

**Center for Student Success:**

**The Center for Student Success (CSS), located in room 35 of the**

**Lawson Building, provides students with the tools they need to succeed. Whether those tools involve professional guidance on resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, or help in organizing papers, budgeting time, and study skills, the center operates free of charge to all Reinhardt University students. To set an appointment or ask questions, call one of the following:**

**Dr. Emanuel at 770-720-9232 or the lab itself at 770-720-5950.**

**Students with Disabilities:**

**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be**

**guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a documented disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Academic Support Office (ASO).**

**Reinhardt University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Therefore, if you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with the Academic Support Office (ASO). ASO is located in the basement of Lawson Building. Phone is 770-720-5567. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper ASO letters/forms.**

**Academic Integrity:**

Reinhardt University expects academic honesty from all members of the community, and it is our policy that academic integrity be fostered to the highest degree possible. Consequently, all work submitted for grading in a course must be created as a result of your own thought and effort. Representing work as your own when it is not a result of such thought and effort is a violation of our code of academic integrity. Whenever it is established, that academic dishonesty has occurred, the course instructor shall impose a penalty upon the offending individual(s). It is recognized that some offenses are more egregious than others and that, therefore, a range of penalties should be available. Whenever possible, it would also be important to try to determine the intent of the offender, since the error could be a result of careless work rather than intent to deceive.

**Accommodations**

If you have a specific disability and require accommodations, please let me know immediately so you’re learning needs may be appropriately met. All student athletes and students with disabilities must show me their athletic schedules or 504 letters at the beginning of the semester. This will assist me in discussing appropriate accommodations. We will discuss how to translate 504 terms If you have not already done so, you will need to provide documentation to Academic Support in Lawson. Academic Support coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities (medical, learning, or psychological). I am happy to accommodate students who have registered their disability with Academic Support. Please note that special accommodations cannot be made retroactively. If you have a disability and require accommodations in this class, let me know early in the semester, or as soon as you are eligible.

Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should follow the university’s accommodation procedure by contacting Academic Support in Lawson.

**Sexual Misconduct:**

Reinhardt University is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and Reinhardt University policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and gender identity. Consequently, sexual misconduct-including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking - is also prohibited. The university is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore it cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, but it will consider a request for confidentiality and respect it to the extent possible. As a faculty member, I am also required to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident.

**Proxy Interactions:**

F.E.R.P.A. (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) prohibits instructors from sharing certain information about your grades and academic performance with third parties. Some students may choose to allow a third party to have access to their full academic record. I reserve the right to request that any, and all, communication between myself and your proxy include you in every respect. I further request that all proxy interactions take place in person during the office hours posted on this syllabus unless we have arranged a special appointment. Be aware that your proxy’s conduct reflects on you, and counts as an extension of your performance in class. As such, it may affect your grade.

**Title IX:**

The Title IX regulation requires schools and colleges to implement specific and continuing steps to inform students and others of the protections against discrimination on the basis of sex. The notification must state that the requirement of non-discrimination in educational programs and activities extends to employment and admission. It also must say that questions about Title IX may be referred to the employee designated to coordinate Title IX compliance or to the assistant secretary for civil rights. Schools are required to include the name, address, and telephone number of the designated coordinator in their notifications.

**\*\*\*The instructor reserves the right to modify the scheduled lectures, homework assignments, projects, and exams, as she deems necessary. Students are responsible for noting these changes in class. If a student is absent during a class or is asked to leave a class for disrupting his/her classmates, that student is still responsible for adhering to any changes made during that class. \*\*\***

**Tentative Schedule COM 403**

**Important dates:**

Fall Semester 2022 August 15 - December 4, 2022

**August 15**, Monday Classes begin

**August 16,** Tuesday Final day to add P-designated online courses

**August 22,** Monday Final day to change schedule, end of drop/add

**August 29,** Monday Last day to submit a graduation application for May 2023 degree completion without a late fee.

**September 5,** Monday Labor Day - University Closed

**October 5-7,** Wednesday-Friday Fall Break,

**October 6,** Thursday Mid-term grades due, full semester classes

**October 11,** Tuesday Final date to withdraw with grade of W, full semester classes

**October 17-28** Advising/Registration for Winter Term 2022, and spring and summer 2023

**November 22,** Tuesday Last day of classes

**November 23-25,** Wednesday-Friday Thanksgiving Holidays - classes canceled

**November 24-25,** Thursday-Friday University Closed

**Nov 28 - December 2**, Monday-Friday Final Examinations

**December 4,** Sunday End of Fall Semester / End of Term

**December 5,** Monday Deadline for posting Fall Semester grades

\*Evening classes at 6-10:50 p.m. are held Oct 5-7

**Week 1**

8/14 Introduction/Syllabus

**READ:** **Visual Communication-Chapter 1**

8/16 What is visual culture?

**READ:** **Practices of Looking Chapter 1**

**Week 2**

8/21 Images, Power and Politics

8/23 **Student lead Discussion #1** – pick images, power or politics – now pick a current example in the news – please have questions to prompt the class discussion – have 10 prepared questions on the topic

**READ:** **Visual Communication-Chapter 2**

**Week 3**

8/28 Visualizing Ethics

8/30 Visual Ethics   
**READ: Practices of Looking Chapter 2**

**Week 4**

9/4 **Labor Day – No class**

9/6 **Student lead Discussion #2** – Please pick one and develop your questions and

discussion around it Framing or Appropriation – pick one not both

**READ: Visual Communication – Chapter 3**

**Week 5**

9/11 Viewers Make Meaning

**DUE: Topic for midterm paper**

9/13 **Student lead Discussion #3** - Viewers Make Meaning – how do viewers give meaning to things? Why is this important to understand?

**READ:** **Visual Communication-Chapter 3**

**Week 6**

9/18 Ways of Seeing: Visual Rhetoric

**READ:** **Practices of Looking – chapter 3**

**Due: Outline for Midterm Paper**

9/20 **Student lead Discussion #4 – Ways of seeing things**

Modernity: Spectatorship, the Gaze and Power

**Week 7 – Research and Write week**

9/25 Research Midterm Paper

9/27 Research and write Midterm Paper

**Week 8**

10/2 The Gaze

**READ: Visual Communication – Chapter 4**

**DUE: Midterm Paper due**

10/4 Sign Language- Semiotics

**READ: Practices of Looking - Realism and Perspective -Chapter 4**

**Week 9**

10/9 Objectification of men and women in advertising

10/11 Realism and Perspective

**READ: Visual Communication – Chapter 6**

**Week 10**

10/16 Media and everyday life – TV, Film, Print, YouTube

10/18 Media and everyday life – Social Media

**READ: Visual Communication – Chapter 5**

**Week 11**

10/24 This Means That: Metaphor

**READ: Practices of Looking -Chapter 7**

10/26 **Student lead Discussion #5 – Brands**

Brands Culture

**Week 12**

10/30 Brand Game

**READ: Visual Communication Chapter 6**

11/1 Storytelling: Visual Narratives

**Week 13**

11/6 **Student lead Discussion #6**

**DUE: Final Research Paper topic**

**READ: Practice of Looking – Chapter 8**

11/8 Postmodernism: Irony and Parody

**Week 14**

11/13 Postmodernism: Irony and Parody

**READ: Visual Communication: Chapter 7**

11/15 Visual Voices: Fantasy Themes

**DUE: Final Research Outline**

**Week 15**

11/20 Visual Voices: Fantasy Themes   
11/22 Discuss the Final project

**Week 16**

11/27 Meet with Instructor individually

11/28-12/1 **Finals – Research Paper due the day of our final**