Visual Politics-Revised Oct 12
Fall 2009
Thurs 12-2

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Office Hours
Tues 4-5
Thurs 4-5

Course Description

The seminar will introduce students to key debates over visual culture and politics. The course will explore the visual as a site of power and reconfiguration, order and change. Scholars have argued for decades that appearances of order and coherence are themselves ruses of power masking the heterogeneity that persists within all social formations. We will explore the role of the visual in creating the appearance of order, coherence, and affinity as well as the visual as a site of change and social transformation. Three themes run throughout the course. The first considers the visual as a site of power both at the level of the state and in everyday politics. The second turns to the invisible and unseen. The third, explores processes of agency and change. Throughout the course we will address a series of substantive issues as a way of integrating and interrogating the arguments offered. Such topics will include a weeks on memorialization, mapping, and borders. Readings will be drawn from across the social sciences and humanities. Students will be required to connect the reading to a wide range of visual material. Throughout we will consider how foregrounding the visual prompts us to rethink existing accounts of power and change.

Readings

Xeroxes / pdfs
A packet of Xerox reading will be available at East Side Copy. The essays will also be distributed electronically via Blackboard.

Books to Purchase

1. James Scott, Seeing Like a State
2. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life

Assignments and Grading

Regular class attendance and participation is assumed. The class will have a lighter reading load than typical graduate seminars because students will be expected to select visuals to accompany discussion each week. There will be two assessments: students will write a short (5-8 pages) analytic paper engaging with a sub-set of the readings from the course. The second assessment will be a longer 10-12 page essay analyzing a contemporary site of visual politics. The papers will be worth 50% each. Class participation will be used to decide borderline grades.
Week 1: Sept 10  The Instability of Perception: What We “See” is Not Necessarily What We Get

1. Daniel Tammet, Born on a Blue Day, chaps 1, 10.

Week 2: Sept 17  The Gaze: State Power and Legibility

1. James Scott, Seeing Like a State, Intro, chaps 1-4, 8.

Recommended
1. Michael Foucault, Discipline and Punish
2. Bernard Smith, Imagining the Pacific In the Wake of the Cook Voyages
3. James R. Ryan, Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire
5. Elsbeth Brown, The Corporate Eye

Week 3: Sept 24  The Cultural Apparatus/Society of the Spectacle


Recommended
4. Spike Lee, *Bamboozled*

**Week 4: Oct 1 The Implicit/ Everyday Visuality**


Recommended:
2. Uta Brandes and Michael Erlhoff, *Non Intentional Design*
3. Nigel Holmes, *Wordless Diagrams*

**Week 5: Oct 8 The Ordinary / Everyday**

3. Lauren Berlant, “Brainstom,” blog

Recommended
1. Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Unknown*
2. Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*
3. Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*

**Week 6: Oct 15 Counter Politics 1: Bearing Witness---Emmett Till**


**Recommended**
2. bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze,” In *Black Looks*

**Week 7: Oct 22 Ethics of Showing**


**Week 8: Oct 29 Memory / Memorialization**

1. Kevin Bruyneel, "U.S. Race Politics and the 'King's Two Bodies': The Paradox of Memorializing Change in Culture and Institutions.” Msc as pdf.

**Recommended**
3. Shahira Fahmy, “Emerging Alternatives or Traditional News Gates: Which News Sources were used to Picture the 9/11 Attack and the Afghan War?"
Week 9: Nov 5  Agency and Change / Whose Agency?


Week 10: Nov 12  The Unseen/Unrepresented

4. John Elderfield, Manet and the Execution of Maximilian, MOMA, Intro, Chap 1, and postscript.
6. “The Falling Man” on You Tube

Recommended

Week 11: Nov 19  The Avant-Garde

1. Peter Berger, Theory of the Avant-Garde

Recommended

Week 12  Nov 26  THANKSGIVING
Week 13: Dec 3  Mapping and Re-Mapping

1. Denis Cosgrove, “Carto-City,” in Janet Abrams and Peter Hall, ed., Else/Where: Mapping New Cartographies of Networks and Territories

Recommended

2. Alex Zukas, Terra Incognita/Terra Nullius: Modern Imperialism, Maps, and Deception.
3. Katherine Harmon, You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination

Week 14: Dec 10  Borders or Something Else

TBA

Recommended

1. Irit Rogoff, Terra Infirma

Week 15: Dec 17  Conclusion: Rethinking the Political Visually