VISUAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA CULTURE

GRADO EN COMUNICACIÓN Y MEDIOS DIGITALES

Professor: VINCENT DOYLE
E-mail: vdoyle@faculty.ie.edu

Academic year: 18-19
Degree course: FIRST
   Semester: 2º
Category: BASIC
Number of credits: 6.0
Language: English

PREREQUISITES

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

For visual culture, visibility is not so simple. Its object of study is precisely the entities that come into being at the points of intersection of visibility with social power, that is to say, visuality.

   --Nick Mirzoeff, "The Subject of Visual Culture"

Much of what we know about the world comes to us not firsthand, by word-of-mouth, or as words on a page, but as moving or still images relayed to us via electronic media technologies. These images and technologies are neither neutral nor innocent. They are often shaped by economic and political interests and help construct our knowledge of ourselves and near and distant others in ways we are not always aware of. This course will attempt to elucidate how images are infused with meanings and emotions, how audiences, media users and fans respond to them, and how our visual culture has changed as the result of the advent of digital media.

Although the emphasis of the course is theoretical, we will endeavor in class and in the written and creative assignments to apply the concepts gained from the study of theory to the analysis of a wide range of examples, considered not only from the perspective of their textual and aesthetic properties but also from the standpoint of their socio-political implications, particularly with regards to major markers of identity such as gender, class, race, sexuality, and national belonging.

The course aims to contribute to the development of a critical consciousness about the production and consumption of all kinds of visual and digital media texts. It serves as a foundation both for further study in media criticism and for a more self-reflexive, innovative, informed, and ethical practice of visual and digital media production.

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS
- Theoretical Proficiency: at the end of the course, students will be familiar with the major theoretical approaches employed in critical/cultural and visual/digital media studies, including semiotics, structuralism, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminist theory, critical race theory, and queer theory.

- Interdisciplinarity: students will gain an interdisciplinary understanding of visual and digital media culture in relation to social, political and economic issues.

- Students will be able to apply key concepts used in communication to analyze and produce visual and digital media content in political, corporate, artistic, and media spheres.

- Research and analysis skills: students will gain familiarity with qualitative methods for analyzing visual texts and their social, cultural, economic and political implications.

- Critical thinking: the course promotes critical thinking through dialectical, seminar-based teaching methods and hands-on activities.

- Creative skills: the course develops students' ability to express complex concepts via the production of images.

METHODOLOGY
Student success in this course is predicated on coming to class having carefully prepared the assigned readings/viewings. You should expect the readings to be challenging and require your full attention. To help you develop these reading skills, you will fill in a "reading map" before every session that will be used to shape the interactive lectures, discussions and in-class activities. Class sessions will focus on one or two main topics, theories, or debates related to visual and digital media culture and will aim to illustrate, explicate, extend, and critique key course concepts. Students will put theories and concepts into practice through short exercises, response papers, and group and individual creative projects. Through these assignments, they will work on critical thinking, analysis, writing, and creative skills, demonstrate their command of course materials, and develop their ability to apply key course concepts to the analysis of issues and questions that interest them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching methodology</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Estimated time a student should prepare for and participate in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>10.0 %</td>
<td>15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>20.0 %</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>16.67 %</td>
<td>25 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>16.67 %</td>
<td>25 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other individual studying</td>
<td>36.67 %</td>
<td>55 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>150 hours</td>
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</table>
PROGRAM

REPRESENTATION, IDEOLOGY, IDENTITY AND THE SUBJECT
In this section of the course, we will focus on some of the theories and concepts that have had the most impact on how we think about images and their social consequences. This section of the course will be evaluated using a critical response paper and group creative exercise. Key Concepts: Meaning, Texts, Semiotics, Sign, Code, Denotation, Connotation, Myth, Ideology, Representation, Hegemony, Interpellation, Discourse, Identity, and the Subject.

SESSION 1
Introductions and Course Overview

SESSION 2
Opening Workshop (session 1 of 2): Producing Images, Producing Meaning
In this workshop, we will look at how brand images are made and make some of our own. Working in teams, you will be given an image-making challenge that will serve as a starting point for the course.
Read before class:

SESSION 3
Opening Workshop (session 2 of 2): Producing Images, Producing Meaning
In this workshop, we will look at how brand images are made and make some of our own. Working in teams, you will be given an image-making challenge that will serve as a starting point for the course.
Read before class:

SESSION 4
How We Make Sense of Things
This session will introduce many of the key concepts of the course: culture, meaning, representation, subjects, and identities.
Read before class:

SESSION 5
The 'I' and the 'We'
To what extent do our identities depend on socially constructed categories? In this session, we will examine a number of theories that account for how the "I" is a function of the "We".
Read before class:

SESSION 6
Introducing Semiotics
What is language, fundamentally, and how does it work? What is the structure of the sign? What are the main kinds of signs? What similarities and differences exist between the major approaches to the study of signs?
Read before class:

SESSION 7
A Semiotic Approach to Representation
This session will review and summarize what we have seen so far and set the stage for the more complex material to come. We will analyze examples of visual and digital media culture in class to get lots of practice with our new vocabulary.
Read before class:

SESSION 8
Introducing Ideological Criticism
The Marxist concepts of ideology and hegemony have been used in media studies and visual culture to argue that media and popular culture have an important role in maintaining power relations in society. In this session, we will critically examine the usefulness and limits of these concepts for understanding visual and digital media culture.
Read before class:

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SESSION 9
Applying Semiotics and Ideological Criticism to Advertising
Advertising has emerged as one of the most powerful forces shaping identities under consumer culture. How does advertising work? What formal and ideological strategies does it employ?
Read before class:


SESSION 10
Hey you! Advertising's Interpellation of Subjects
With this session, we delve into how advertising and other visual media construct subject positions.
Read before class:

B.C.: Williamson Chapter 2

SESSION 11
Women and the Gaze
We continue our discussion of how visual texts construct subject positions with this closer look at the history of how women have been represented in the cinema.
Read before class:


SESSION 12
Black Spectatorship
How have black people, and particularly black women, been represented by popular culture? How do the subjects of these representations respond to them?
Read before class:

B.C.: hooks - Oppositional Gaze

SESSION 13
Discourse and the Subject
This session will summarize and extend the discussion of representation and subjectivity so far in the course. The reading introduces an important new concept: discourse.

Read before class:

**T.N.: Hall The Work of Representation pt 2**

**AUDIENCES, FANS, AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE**

This section of the course will shift our attention towards how audiences and fans of visual and digital texts actively interpret, respond to, and make use of, media in everyday life. Key concepts: dominant/negotiated/contested readings, audiences, fans, users, participatory culture, and digital labour. This part of the course will be evaluated using a short critical response paper and individual creative project.

**SESSION 14**

**The role of audiences in producing meaning**

The reading for today serves as a bridge between the first part of the course on representation and the subject and the second part focused on how audiences and fans interpret visual and digital media.

Read before class:

**B.C.: Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 2 Viewers Make Meanings from Practices of Looking 2018**

**SESSION 15**

**Power and Resistance**

How powerful is popular culture? To what extent do audiences actively resist, appropriate, or resignify the messages of mainstream media?

Read before class:

**B.C.: Fiske Jeaning of America 1989**

**SESSION 16**

**From Active Audiences to Participatory Culture**

The advent of digital media has revolutionized the concept of the audience. What does the concept of "participatory culture" challenge the traditional split between producers and consumers?

Read before class:

**B.C.: Jenkins Tarantino's Star Wars**
SESSION 17

New Models of Media Circulation
We continue our exploration of how the concept of the audience has been transformed by digital media and the fan communities it makes possible.

Read before class:


SESSION 18

New Gender Roles and Representations
How does playing a video game differ from watching a movie? We will explore this question with a focus on the construction of gender roles.

Read before class:


SESSION 19

New LGBTQ Representations and Activisms
Television portrayals of LGBTQ people have exploded in recent years, as have efforts to hold producers accountable. Does social media provide an effective mechanism for fans to communicate directly with producers?

Read before class:


SESSION 20

The Dark Side of Participation
The two short readings for today confront us with the question: who benefits from online participation?

Read before class:
SESSION 21

Critiques of Participatory Culture

We sum end this section of the course with a critique of participatory culture. What does the tendency to celebrate participation leave out of the picture?

Read before class:


SESSION 22

The (Un)Holy Alliance between Teenagers and Brands

No reading assigned for today. We will watch and discuss a documentary.

Watch (in-class):


DIGITAL PERFORMANCES OF IDENTITY

In this final section of the course, we will explore the impact of digitalization and social media on global visual and digital media culture, with a particular focus on "the selfie." How have researchers, artists, and digital media users understood and responded to the new possibilities for self-representation afforded by these new technologies? This section of the course will be evaluated using a creative self-representation assignment and a short critical response paper. Key concepts: social media, self-representation, front- and backstage identities, context collapse, and micro-celebrity.

SESSION 23

Digital Self-Representations

How we portray ourselves online is not just about self-expression. The introductory reading for this section of the course gives an overview of some of the social factors involved when we post on Instagram and perform our identities on social media.

Read before class:


T.N.: Kidd Self-Representation Online
SESSION 24

Imagining the Audience

Social media platforms make it possible for us to reach large numbers of people. What implications does this have for how we manage our self-presentations across different contexts? Is it possible to remain "authentic"?

Read before class:


R.A.: Marwick and Boyd

SESSION 25

Instafame and Microcelebrity

Social Media has made possible the emergence of new forms of celebrity. But does this mean that anyone can become famous?

Read before class:


T.N.: Marwick Instafame

SESSION 26

Influencer Culture

Selfies, and the (mostly) women who take them, are often devalued as frivolous and narcissistic. What if we took seriously the labour often involved in producing them?

Read before class:

- Abidin, Crystal. "Aren't these just young, rich women doing vain things online?: Influencer selfies as subversive frivolity." Social Media+ Society 2.2 (2016): 1-17.

R.A.: Abidin Influencer Selfies

SESSION 27

Dating and Social Media

Social media has had a profound impact on how we date. How do people "read" social media profiles for relevant information about potential partners?

Read before class:


R.A.: Aziz Visual Transactions

SESSION 28

Video screening TBD

No reading assigned for today. We will sum up this section of the course by watching and discussing an example of visual and/or digital media culture.

Watch (in-class): TBD

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SESSIONS 29 - 30
Final Presentations
Mandatory Readings:

- All the readings above are considered mandatory and will be made available electronically.

Additional recommended readings:


EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation of student performance will be based on the following: quality of class preparation and participation; three creative projects (one of them a group project); and three analytical essays connected to the creative projects. A detailed description of each assignment will be distributed and discussed in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Before Class (Reading Maps)</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Evaluated using reading maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Participation</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>See criteria below</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Creative Project 1 10 %  Group image-making project
Creative Project 2 10 %  Fan art
Creative Project 3 10 %  Self-portrait
Analytical Essay 1 15 %  4-6 pages (1000-1500 words)
Analytical Essay 2 15 %  4-6 pages (1000-1500 words)
Analytical Essay 3 20 %  4-6 pages (1000-1500 words) + artist statement (150-200 words)

EVALUATION CRITERIA
CLASS PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION
(midterm feedback on preparation and participation will be provided to each student)

A: 9.0-10.0
- Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed readings exceptionally well, relating them to other material (e.g., other readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.).
- Offers exceptionally strong analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class material, e.g. connects pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further.
- Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.
- Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.

B: 7.5-8.9
- Demonstrates good preparation: knows reading facts well, has thought through implications of them.
- Offers interpretations and analysis of reading material (more than just facts) to class.
- Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports opinions that may be counter to the majority view.
- Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.

C: 6.0-7.4
- Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them.
- Offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the reading), without elaboration or very infrequently.
- Contributes to discussion sporadically, if at all.
- Demonstrates only occasional involvement.

D: 5.0-5.9
- Present, not disruptive.
- Shows little evidence of having prepared for class.
- Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much.
- Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion.

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F: 0
- Shows no evidence of having prepared for class.
- No apparent involvement in discussion.

ANALYTICAL ESSAYS
A: 9.0-10.0
- Demonstrates that the writer has not only mastered the concepts of the course, but has applied them in an imaginative and incisive way.
- The thesis statement is easily identifiable, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, and crystal clear.
- Demonstrates a command of language and expresses worthwhile ideas or perceptions clearly, effectively, in detail, and with virtually no mechanical errors.

B: 7.5-8.9
- Demonstrates that the writer has understood the concepts of the course, has a sense of their complexity, and has applied them with some originality.
- The thesis statement is clear, responsive to the assigned topic, and supported with logical argumentation and use of evidence.
- The paper is organized into a coherent essay with few mechanical errors.

C: 6.0-7.4
- Demonstrates that the writer has understood most of the concepts of the course, but needs to pay more attention to detail in reading and/or writing.
- The thesis statement lacks clarity or is too obvious and provides little around which to structure the paper.
- The paper contains significant mechanical errors.

D: 5.0-5.9
- Demonstrates that the writer has only minimal but sufficient understanding of the concepts of the course.
- Significant gaps in the writer’s comprehension indicate the need for more study.
- The paper shows the writer’s basic compositional skills are below satisfactory for university work.

F: 0.0
- Demonstrates that the writer has little, if any, understanding of the concepts of the course.
- Because of the writer’s lack of skill or concern, the work includes gross errors as well as a conspicuous lack of content.
- The paper may also fail to address parts of the assignment.

CREATIVE PROJECTS
A: 9.0-10.0
- Originality: Expresses a highly original perspective and demonstrates critical thinking that imaginatively challenges preconceived notions and/or transcends the subject matter.
- Knowledge: The project is fully coherent with course objectives and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of relevant course concepts.
- Tools/Techniques: Demonstrates masterful and/or inventive use of tools or techniques that are consistent with the purpose of the project.
- Reflection: The analytical essay clearly and completely explains the purpose of the creative project, the process followed, and the results obtained.

B: 7.5-8.9
- Originality: Offers an original perspective and shows evidence of critical thinking.
- Knowledge: Demonstrates correct knowledge of relevant course concepts.
- Tools/Techniques: Demonstrates skillful use of tools / techniques that are consistent with the purpose of the project.
- Reflection: The analytical essay almost always explains clearly the purpose of the creative project, the process followed, and the results obtained.

C: 6.0-7.4
- Originality: Some aspects of the project express a clear perspective, but the main idea may be unclear or lack originality due to the need for more critical thinking.
- Knowledge: Demonstrates partially correct or incomplete knowledge of relevant course concepts.
- Tools/Techniques: Demonstrates appropriate choice and use of tools / techniques that are consistent with the purpose of the project.
- Reflection: The analytical essay explains the purpose of the creative project, the process followed, and the results obtained, but not always clearly.

D: 5.0-5.9
- Originality: Expresses an unclear and/or unoriginal perspective with little to no evidence of critical thinking.
- Knowledge: Reflects a lack of knowledge about the course concepts most relevant to the project.
- Tools/Techniques: Demonstrates inappropriate choice or use of tools / techniques that are not consistent with the purpose of the creative project.
- Reflection: Attempts to explain in writing the purpose of creative project, its process, and results are missing, unclear and/or incomplete.

RETAKE POLICY
- A student who receives a grade below 5.0 ("suspenso") in the first evaluation period has the opportunity to be evaluated during the second, third, or fourth evaluation periods. The maximum score for retakes is capped at 8.0 out of 10.
- Students who do not comply with the 70% attendance rule will lose their 1st and 2nd chances and go directly to the 3rd evaluation period (which means they will need to enrol again in this course next academic year).

Course-specific procedures for the second evaluation period:

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- You will be required to hand in (by the scheduled date of the exam) any and all work on major writing and creative assignments that you have not previously submitted. You must complete all major assignments in order to pass the course.
- In the case of written or creative work for which you did not receive a passing grade, you are expected to hand in extensively revised work. Any missing or failed group work will be replaced by an individual written assignment meeting the same course objectives.
- In addition to the above, you may be required to sit for an in-person written and/or oral exam to be administered in Segovia on the scheduled day and time of the summer examination.

Students in the third evaluation period are expected to contact me at the start of the semester to draw up an attendance and evaluation plan.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

It is each student's responsibility to follow IE’s policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism is, whether intentional or not, a serious academic offence that can result in failing an assignment, failing the course, being denied the opportunity to go on exchange, or even expulsion from the University.

PROFESSOR BIO

Professor: VINCENT DOYLE
E-mail: vdoyle@faculty.ie.edu

The relationships among media, society, culture, politics, social movements and public discourse have long fascinated Vincent Doyle. Originally from Ottawa, Canada, he began his university studies in political science, but soon gravitated towards communication, media studies, and cultural studies because of his interdisciplinary interests. “I study communication,” he says, “because it helps me to understand how we are all products of history, language, and the institutions that shape our realities.” With knowledge and understanding, Prof. Doyle believes, we develop the capacity to make better decisions and acquire a sense of belonging and accountability to an intellectual community that nourishes our human desire to improve our lives and the world around us.

Prof. Doyle is a Fellow of the Sexuality Research Fellowship Program of the U.S. Social Science Research Council, the recipient of two top paper awards from the International Communication Association (ICA), and a member of the editorial board of the ICA journal, Communication, Culture & Critique. He is the author of Making Out in the Mainstream: GLAAD and the Politics of Respectability, a critical, behind-the-scenes look at LGBT media activism in the United States (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016). Prior to his appointment at IE University, he was Visiting Assistant Professor of Media and Cultural Studies and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow at Macalester College, in St Paul, Minnesota (USA).

Academic Training
Ph.D. in Communication, 2005, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
M.A. in Communication, 1997, McGill University, Montreal
B.A. with Specialization in Communication, 1991, Concordia University, Montreal

Other Courses Taught at IE University:
Visual and Digital Media Culture (Bachelor in Communication)
Consumer Culture (Bachelor in Communication)
Globalization (Master in Corporate Communication)
Creative Work in the Cultural Industries (Master in Visual and Digital Media)
Cultural Industries and New Technologies (Master in Corporate Communication)
Diversity, Culture and Media (Master in International Relations)
Culture, Literature, Art and Image (Bachelor in Communication)
Globalization (Bachelor in Communication)
Sociology and Culture of Consumption (Bachelor in Communication)
Cross-Cultural Communication (Bachelor in Communication)
Intellectual Underpinnings of Visual Culture (IE Module)
Sociology of Consumption (Bachelor in Communication)

OTHER INFORMATION

CODE OF CONDUCT IN CLASS

1. **Be on time**: Students arriving more than 5 minutes late will be marked as “Absent”.
   Only students that notify in advance in writing that they will be late for a specific session may be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

2. **If applicable, bring your name card and strictly follow the seating chart**. It helps faculty members and fellow students learn your names.

3. **Do not leave the room during the lecture**: Students are not allowed to leave the room during lectures. If a student leaves the room during lectures, he/she will not be allowed to re-enter and, therefore, will be marked as “Absent”.
   Only students that notify that they have a special reason to leave the session early will be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

4. **Do not engage in side conversation**. As a sign of respect toward the person presenting the lecture (the teacher as well as fellow students), side conversations are not allowed. If you have a question, raise your hand and ask it. If you do not want to ask it during the lecture, feel free to approach your teacher after class.
   If a student is disrupting the flow of the lecture, he/she will be asked to leave the classroom and, consequently, will be marked as “Absent”.

5. **Use your laptop for course-related purposes only**. The use of laptops during lectures must be authorized by the professor. The use of Social Media or accessing any type of content not related to the lecture is penalized. The student will be asked to leave the room and, consequently, will be marked as “Absent”.

6. **No cellular phones**: IE University implements a “Phone-free Classroom” policy and, therefore, the use of phones, tablets, etc. is forbidden inside the classroom. Failing to abide by this rule entails expulsion from the room and will be counted as one absence.

7. **Escalation policy**: **1/3/5**. Items 4, 5, and 6 above entail expulsion from the classroom and the consequent marking of the student as “Absent.” IE University implements an “escalation policy”: The first time a student is asked to leave the room for disciplinary reasons (as per items 4, 5, and 6 above), the student will incur one absence, the second time it will count as three absences, and from the third time onward, any expulsion from the classroom due to disciplinary issues will entail 5 absences.

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