

JOURNALISM 250 Visual Communication Spring 2014

8:00-9:40am Friday MZ361 Professor David Blumenkrantz

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Visual Communication is interwoven with Visual Literacy, defined as the ability to find meaning in imagery, and Visual Culture, which focuses on aspects of culture that rely on visual images. Both are indispensable components of contemporary life, essential to a wide range of disciplines, sciences and enterprises including anthropology, sociology, psychology and engineering, as well as governmental and commercial interests. This course is primarily concerned with evaluating numerous forms of visual communication in the mass media, including typography, photographs,

newspaper layout, magazine and Web design, editorial cartoons, comic strips, animated cartoons, print and television advertisements, public relations, television programs, and motion pictures, to determine their obvious and implied messages.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Describe how images are processed physiologically by the eye and brain
- Explain how key theories of perception and communication relate to visual literacy
- Explain the role that Semiotics, Gestalt and other psychology-based cognitive processes play in perception, and the relationship of images to meaning
- Analyze visual messages through the application of various perspectives
- Compare the personal, social and political impact that various types of visual messages have on consumers
- Compare and contrast the intent and effectiveness of design principles
- Explain the significance of persuasion, and identify uses of distortion, stereotyping and propaganda in visual messages
- Evaluate the ethical considerations inherent in visual communication, and the tremendous responsibility that goes with the creation and dissemination of visual messages in the mass media

TEXT

[Persuasion: A Basic Guide to Visual Communication](#), an eBook written and edited by the instructor, can be downloaded for free on Moodle.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Course material is presented through a series of visual demonstrations and lectures, along with various discussion formats, group activities and presentations. Weekly quizzes-- posted on Moodle and based directly on the textbook-- will be assigned as homework, scheduled in advance of the lectures. There is one major writing assignment, and a semester-long Internet image cataloging project.

COURSE OUTLINE

- Jan. 24 **Introduction to course objectives and expectations.** Explanation of eBook, Moodle, quizzes and Pinterest project
- Homework: Visual Communication Theories quiz
- Jan. 31 **Visual Communication Theories:** Visual culture and literacy, Laswell's Communication Model, Huxley's Visual Comm Circle Dance, Viewers make meaning, Gowan's Four Functions of Art
- Homework: Visual Cues quiz
 - Pinterest: Visual Cues
- Feb. 7 **Visual Cues:** Physiology of seeing: eye and brain functions, the four elements of vision
- Homework: Semiotics, Gestalt and Cognitive Processes quiz
 - Pinterest: Semiotics, Gestalt and Cognitive Processes
- Feb. 14 **Semiotics, Gestalt and Cognitive Processes**
- Homework: Visual Persuasion quiz
 - Pinterest: Visual Persuasion
- Feb. 21 **Visual Persuasion:** Advertising, public relations, television and film, propaganda, documentary
- Homework: Dominant Culture & Stereotyping
 - Pinterest: Dominant Culture & Stereotyping
- Feb. 28 **Dominant Culture & Stereotyping:** Cultural and visual imperialism, negotiated, dominant and oppositional readings, media bias, political and corporate control, the perpetration and recontextualization of stereotypes
- Homework: Convergence Media quiz
 - Pinterest: Convergence Media
- March 7 **Convergence Media:** Screen culture, multiscreen generation, multitasking, backpack journalism, visual social media, convergence in movies and television, crowdfunding, "smart TVs," the ascension of cable programming, Singularity theory
- Homework: Photographic Representation quiz
 - Pinterest: Photographic Representation
 - EXTRA CREDIT: Virtual Shadow eBook review

- March 14 **Photographic Representation:** The Decisive Moment, The Myth of Photographic Truth, ethical issues in photojournalism, responsive photography, directorial and digital manipulation, body types, war photography, issues of ownership, mobile photography, smart phones and citizen journalism
- Homework: Political Cartoons
 - Pinterest: Political Cartoons
 - Kevin Carter/Photojournalism Ethics writing assignment
- March 21 **Political Cartoons:** The personal and social impact of comic strips and editorial cartoons; methods used by editorial cartoonists (satire, caricature, visual puns and humorous allusions)
- Homework: Typography quiz
 - Pinterest: Typography
- March 28 **Typography:** Media-conscious uses of type, early writing systems and printing technologies, printing democratizes literacy, the personal computer, basics of typography (styles, families, categories)
- Homework: Graphic Design quiz
 - Pinterest: Graphic Design
- April 4 **Graphic Design:** History of graphic design, the elements and principles of design
- Pinterest: Information Graphics
 - Homework: Information Graphics quiz
- April 11 **SPRING BREAK**
- April 18 **Information Graphics:** Early maps and infographics, various forms of information graphics, weather maps, the influence of *USA Today*, logos and icons, functionalism and corporate identity, interactive infographics
- EXTRA CREDIT: World Clouds
 - Pinterest “Favorites” assignment
- April 25 **Analyzing Visual Messages:** lecture and assignment
- May 2 Pinterest “Favorites” presentations
- May 9 Pinterest “Favorites” presentations; Analyzing Visual Messages assignment due
- May 16 **FINAL EXAM**

GRADING: Based on weekly Moodle quizzes, the Pinterest Catalog Project, two writing assignments, and the final exam.

LATE WORK: Accepted one week after deadline, but only worth half credit. The online quizzes must be taken before the lectures, so they cannot be accepted late.

ATTENDANCE: Three points deducted for each unexcused absence, tardy, or for leaving early.

TECHNOLOGY: Smart phones or other cell phones are not allowed in the classroom. Those who cannot abide by this will be asked to leave, without a second warning. The only exception is when they are used for taking notes. The instructor may require students who do this to submit their notes via email.

PINTEREST VISUAL COMMUNICATION CATALOG PROJECT

ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVE: To create a comprehensive catalog of images found in the media that fit into a variety of categories consistent with the curriculum of this course.

Open a <http://pinterest.com> account. If you already have one, make sure that the new boards you create for this assignment are labeled in a consistent and easily identifiable manner, and are placed at the top of your page in the correct order. Make sure to read the information on copyrights, to familiarize yourself with Internet sharing norms.

Go to [Prof. Blumenkrantz's Pinterest site](#)

Create Boards for each of the following 10 categories:

Visual Cues
Semiotics, Gestalt & Cognitive Processes
Visual Persuasion
Dominant Culture & Stereotyping
Convergence Media
Photographic Representation
Cartoons
Typography
Graphic Design
Information Graphics

3) During the course of the semester, "pin" at least 2 visual examples onto each board, as instructed at the end of each chapter in the eBook. You cannot pin the same image on more than one board. For each image write a brief description-- 1 or 2 sentence-- explaining how this image fits into the theories we've covered. Include a link to the original website where you found the image, or to a more interesting or definitive online site.

4) To receive credit for each time you pin something, you must post the link to your board in Moodle for that week's assignment.

Student Learning Outcomes of the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

The Department of Journalism strives to prepare its students to become well-educated, principled citizens who are capable of initiating careers as skilled journalists, public relations practitioners and other related communication professionals. The department will help students to achieve the following objectives by the end of their program of study:

1. Students will be able to write for a diverse audience, using proper grammar and punctuation, word usage and spelling, sentence and storytelling structures across multiple journalistic formats.
2. Students will be able to gather and analyze information, including basic numerical concepts, using journalistic storytelling techniques, such as interviewing, observation, and researching primary and secondary sources.
3. Students will be able to think critically, creatively and independently.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity.
5. Students will apply tools and technologies appropriate for the news media professions in which they work to communicate for and with diverse audiences.
6. Students will be able to understand and apply the historical, theoretical, legal and societal contexts for producing news media for consumers, ranging from local to global.

PLAGIARISM: DEPT. OF JOURNALISM STATEMENT

The Journalism Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated, and anyone caught cheating will be reported to the dean of students and will receive a failing grade in the course. For a further explanation of disciplinary procedures, consult pages 647-648 of the 2012-2014 CSUN catalog, also available online. Please also remember that much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws. Passing this information off as your own is a violation of CSUN's plagiarism policy, and carries the penalties outlined above.

JOURNALISM DEPT. POLICY STATEMENT ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Students in this course are strongly encouraged to broaden their journalistic experiences, with the instructor's help, by including in their work people and subjects such as ethnic, racial and religious minorities; the elderly, disabled and poor; gay men and lesbians; and other similar groups. The intent is to ensure that student work reflects the diversity of the community.