ILVS 70 / FAH 92-03: Introduction to Visual Studies
Spring 2015

Jeremy Melius  
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Monday 6:00-9:00pm, 11 Talbot Avenue, Seminar Room  
Office Hours: Monday 4:00-5:30pm, 11 Talbot Ave., third floor, or by appointment

Course Description:

This course provides a critical introduction to the complexities presented by the ubiquity of images in contemporary cultural life. It does so through an exploration of the various, sometimes competing approaches that thinkers have taken in seeking to conceptualize visual experience. Rather than offering a single, unified method, the course instead poses the question, “what is visual studies?” by investigating the ways in which disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, art history, and literary studies have sought to interpret a diverse range of historical phenomena. The goal is not only to become familiar with fundamental concepts of this capacious interdisciplinary field, but also to develop a precise and flexible vocabulary of one’s own with which to address the visual.

Learning Objectives:

- Become familiar with various scholarly approaches to visual perception, representation, and experience
- Learn to analyze, interpret, and write effectively about visual artifacts and theories of the visual
- Develop a critical understanding of visual studies as an emerging field

Course Requirements:

Attendance and active participation. Brief weekly comments (1-2 pages each) on readings and/or selected visual materials, due in advance. Three longer writing assignments (5-8 pages each).

Course meetings will be largely discussion based. All readings should be read in advance of the session to which they correspond. It is imperative that you keep up with the readings and that you read actively, taking notes not only on a given text’s arguments but also on your own responses, so that you will be able to participate fully.

Grading:

- Participation and weekly comments 30%
- Longer writing assignments 70%
Academic Integrity:

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity, and Tufts holds its student strictly accountable. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. The consequences for violations can be severe. It is critical that you understand the requirements of ethical behavior and academic work as described in the university’s Academic Handbook. If you ever have a question about the expectations concerning a particular assignment in the course, be sure to ask me for clarification. Students suspected of academic integrity violations will be reported to the Dean of Student Affairs Office.

Student Accessibility Services:

Tufts University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Any student who may need accommodations in this class on account of a documented disability should please speak with me during office hours as soon as possible. For information on the process of requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services, Dowling Hall, Suite 720, 617-627-4539, Accessibility@tufts.edu.

Electronics Policy:

At Tufts, professors set their own policies for the use of electronics in the classroom. In order to foster an atmosphere conducive to discussion, electronic devices may only be used with the instructor’s permission. I hope you can share my commitment to making our time together in the classroom free from distractions. Classes may not be recorded without written permission from me. I am happy to discuss these and other policies at any time.

Required Texts:


The rest of the readings are available as PDFs on Trunk, unless otherwise indicated. All readings should be read in advance of the session to which they correspond. Readings are required unless otherwise indicated. Please be sure to print out texts under discussion and bring them to class. Note well: the reading load varies. Please plan accordingly.

A selection of additional recommended titles will be put on reserve at Tisch Library.
Schedule of Discussions and Readings:

Please note: the following plan is provisional. This is the kind of course where it may be desirable to alter the emphasis and “coverage” of sessions as we go along. We may well end up covering fewer topics than announced below in order to give the topics we do cover the thought they deserve.

Week 1 / 1.22  
**Introduction: Perception and Experience**  

Week 2 / 1.26  
**Mediation: An Anthropology of Images**  

Week 3 / 2.2  
**Mediation: The First Image**  

Week 4 / 2.9  
**Image and Belief**  


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<th>Week 5 / 2.19</th>
<th>Ethics of the Image: Faces</th>
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<td>Emmanuel Levinas, selection.</td>
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*Eyes Without a Face*, dir. Georges Franju (1960)

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**FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS 2.19**

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<th>Week 6 / 2.23</th>
<th>Seeing Gender, Seeing Race (7pm-9pm)</th>
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**Week 7 / 3.2**

**Politics of the Image: Violence and Authority**

Michel Foucault, “Las Meninas,” The Order of Things (1966), 1-16.


-VISIT TO TUFTS UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY TBD -

**Week 8 / 3.9**

**Michael Nyman Exhibition, Tufts University Art Gallery**

*Man with a Movie Camera*, dir. Dziga Vertov (1929)


**Week 9 / 3.16**

NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

**Week 10 / 3.23**

NO CLASS (rescheduled for gallery visit)

**Week 11 / 3.30**

**Mediation: Writing Photography**


- SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE 3PM FRIDAY 4.3 -
Week 12 / 4.6  Vision and Cultural Difference  


Week 14 / 4.20  NO CLASS: UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

Week 15 / 4.27  Conclusions: What is Visual Studies?  


Additional Readings TBD.

- FINAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE 3PM FRIDAY 5.1 -