Seminar Description:
Over the last two decades, visual studies has gained wide currency as a field of research and teaching in universities both in the United States and abroad. Scholars from disciplines as diverse as art history, American studies, literature, anthropology, film and media studies, history and gender studies have focused attention on both the cultural specificity of vision and on the ever-widening array of images and objects available for viewing.

This course will provide a critical introduction to the history, methods and central debates within the field. How have scholars and critics taken up – or in some cases dismissed - the study of visual culture and to what ends? What are the limits and possibilities of the interdisciplinary models on offer? We will explore these questions through a sustained engagement with selected texts that are rich in methodological orientation and that address such subjects as definitions of the image, the experience of seeing, the science of vision, constructions of visuality and the experience and creation of visual objects.

Books For Purchase:
Baxandall, Patterns of Intention
Jonathan Conlin, Civilisation
Kepes, Language of Vision
Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader
Gillian Rose, Visual Methodologies (3rd edition)
Ludmilla Jordanova, The Look of the Past
Berger, Ways of Seeing
Bleichmar, Visible Empire
Bukatman, Poetics of Slumberland
Kittler, Optical Media
Jenkins, Convergence Culture
Heiferman, Photography Changes Everything
Meyer, What Was Contemporary Art?
Joselit, After Art
Conekin, Lee Miller in Fashion

DVD:
Kenneth Clark, Civilisation
Readings and Seminar Participation: Readings are extensive. Our primary task as individuals is to read with care. As a group, our goal is to engage in a discussion that helps illuminate the readings. Seminar participation will be considered an essential component of the class.

Expectations and Requirements: Students are expected to complete all required reading prior to seminar meetings and to discuss the texts and critical issues at hand during each session. Each student must also post a “response” to the week’s readings on the class electronic blackboard by no later than 5 am Thursday morning, although posts earlier are welcomed. Students are also expected to read each other’s responses before class and thus we may need to adjust the deadline for submission based on the needs of the group. Students may also use the blackboard to respond to each other’s responses if they choose. A response can be a critical summary of the readings, a series of questions, complaints, rants. The idea behind them is to ask each student to take some time reflecting on the week’s readings and share those thoughts with the class.

Special Lectures: As part of this seminar you are expected to attend at least two special events and preferably all.

September 12, 5:00-7:00: Victor Navasky, author of The Art of Controversy, in conversation with Jon Wiener, UC, Irvine. Doheny Intellectual Commons.


October 17, 12:30-2:00: Becky Conekin, Yale: "Lee Miller in Fashion," SOS 250.

October 19: VSGC CV and Grant-Writing Workshop, USC

FINAL PROJECT: You must listen to at least two podcasts a week from the BBC Series, “A History of the World in 100 Objects.” In addition, please screen Kenneth Clark’s Civilisation series by the 12th week of classes.

The final exercise in this class is to take any object or lesson about the visual you want to prepare (perhaps related to your own research) and make a short film or powerpoint or other sort of slideshow of this “lesson” about the object or problem.
In other words, your final project is to “visualize” a lesson about the visual past. In addition, you are to write a 10-12 page paper, “Visualizing Knowledge” which reflects on the methods and approaches you used in making your project. This paper will consider the different “theories and methods” and definitions of Visual Studies. Students in this context are asked to reflect upon whether Visual Studies represents a separate discipline (and thus could be a field in which one could get a Ph.D.) and/or to consider what it means that Visual Studies is considered an interdisciplinary field.


**Part I: Definitions**

**Week One: August 29: Defining a Field and a Crisis**

**Complete for Class: Readings and Posting**

Post an image(s) on the blackboard for class and explain (in writing) “why the image” and “Why Visual Studies” for you? And consider this in response to the week’s readings. Due by 5 am, August 28th


**Week Two: September 5: Defining Visual Studies: RESCHEDULE for Rosh Hashona**

- Krios, “What are Images and What are they For?” online at http://www.kunst-als-wissenschaft.de/multimedia/KroisEn.pdf


Week Three: September 12: Materialism and The Image: Benjamin’s Marxism

EVENT: Victor Navasky at 5:00: In conversation with Jon Wiener


Watch at least one episode of “Ways of Seeing”

Week Four: September 19: Context and The Social Eye

• Martin Jay, from Downcast Eyes, pp.1-147.

• Michael Baxandall, Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures (Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 1-104.


• Gillian Rose, pp. 202-221.

Week Five: September 26: The Sensory Horizon: Food, Durability and Ephemerality: Special Guests: Jessica Keating, USC EMSI-VSRI postdoc and Melissa Calaresu, Cambridge

• Articles by Keating and Calaresu, to be posted


Emsi/VSRI Conference at the Huntington, 27-28 September

PART II: The Question of Media

Week 6: October 3: Media Specificity, Special Guest, Scott Bukatman
  • Bukatman, Poetics of Slumberland
  • Boxer, Krazy Kat Criticism: http://lareviewofbooks.org/article.php?id=639&fulltext=1

Week 7: October 10: Guest, John Blakinger, doctoral candidate, Stanford
It's All in Your Mind: Kepes and the Origins of Visual Studies

Kepes, Language of Vision


Week 8: October 17: Fashion Meets Photography
Guest: Becky Conekin, Yale University
Conekin, Lee Miller In Fashion

Week 9: October 24: Photography as History
Guest: Matt Amato, History, USC
Heiferman, Photography Changes Everything
Chapter from Alan Trachtenberg and selection from Amato dissertation

Week 10: October 31: Intermediality: Special Guest: Henry Jenkins
Kittler, Optical Media
Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*

**PART III: CONTEXTUALIZATION IS ALL**

**Week 11: November 7: Seeing The Past**
Jordanova, *The Look of the Past*
Conlin, *Civilisation*
Discussion of Clark Series

**Week 12: November 14: Getty Visit with Daniela Bleichmar**
Read: *Visible Empire*

**Week 13: November 21: The Global Contemporary Art and Visual Culture**
Meyer, *What Was Contemporary Art?*
Joselit, *After Art*
**Lawrence Alloway, “Art and the Communications Network,” *Canadian Art*, no.100, January 1966.
**Martin, “Art World, Network and Other Alloway Keywords”

**Week 14: Thanksgiving**

**Week 15: Final Visual Presentations: To be re-scheduled**
10 page paper due electronically by June 10 at 5pm.