

**MDA 501: Introduction to Visual Studies: Methods and Debates  
Fall 2010**

**Vanessa R. Schwartz**  
**History Department**  
**Class Meets: W, 2-5 and various special sessions**  
**TTH 105**  
**Office Hours: W: 1-2 and by appointment, SOS 170**  
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**Seminar Description:**

Over the last two decades, visual studies has gained wide currency as a topic 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 studies 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 about images, vision, visuality and visual objects.

**Required Books for Purchase:**

Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (Yale University Press, 1985)  
John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Viking Press, 1973)  
Jonathan Conlin, *Civilisation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)  
Denis Cosgrove and William L. Fox, *Photography and Flight* (Reaktion Books, 2010)  
Steve Edwards, *Photography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2006)  
James Elkins, *Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction* (Routledge, 2003)  
Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft* (MIT Press, 2006)  
Gyorgy Kepes, *Language of Vision* (P. Theobald, 1949 - out of print; please obtain used copy)  
Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation: The Complete Series*, 4 disk DVD BBC Video (1969)  
Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (Routledge, 2004)  
All readings marked with an \* are available on the class blackboard.

**Readings and Seminar Participation:** Readings are extensive and often difficult. Our primary task as individuals is to read with care and as a group, 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 blackboard by no later than 5 am Wednesday 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.

**Paper: 7-10 Pages, due Week 10.** This paper will consider the different “theories and methods” and definitions of Visual Studies. Students will be asked to write a paper that either suggests that Visual Studies represents a separate discipline (and thus could be a field in which one could get a Ph.D.) or what it means if Visual Studies is considered an interdisciplinary field.

Students are also expected to visit my office once during office hours during weeks 7, 8, and 9 to talk about the final projects.

**FINAL PROJECT:** Students will be asked to screen all of Kenneth Clark’s *Civilisation* series by the 11<sup>th</sup> week of classes. The sooner the better since we will also be compiling a list of other “visual pedagogy” films for the independent work you will be doing. 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 image or vision and/or visuality. In other words, your final project is to “visualize” a lesson. This project is due December 10 and will be presented to the group as well as given to me for further evaluation.

**Course work/papers assignments:**

Class participation and weekly responses: 30%

7-10 page paper: 30%

Final visual project: 40%

**Part I: Defining a Field: Theories of Representation**

**August 25: Week One:** Assignment for Class: Post an image(s) on the blackboard for class and explain (in writing) “why the image” and “Why Visual Studies” for you? Due August 24<sup>th</sup>.

Read for First Class: \*\*\*Carol Ginzburg, etc., "Inter/Disciplinarity," *Art Bulletin* 77:4 (December 1995), pp. 534-552

**September 1: Week Two: Defining Visual Studies**

James Elkins, *Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction* (Routledge, 2003)

\*\*\* Horst Bredekamp, "A Neglected Tradition? Art History as *Bildwissenschaft*," *Critical Inquiry* 29 (Spring 2003), pp. 418-428

\*\*\* W. J. T. Mitchell, Introduction and "The Pictorial Turn," *Picture Theory* (The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp.1-34.

Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (Routledge, 2004): Schwartz and Przyblyski, "Visual Culture's New History: Twenty-First Century Interdisciplinarity and Its Nineteenth-Century Objects," pp. 3-14; and Cohen and Higonnet, "Complex Culture," pp. 15-26.

**September 8: Week 3: Context and The Social**

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

\*\*\*Selection from Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 29-86

\*\*\* Svetlana Alpers, "Is Art History?" *Daedalus* 106:3 (Summer, 1977), 1-13.

Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (Routledge, 2004): Wilson, "Visual Culture: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?," pp. 26-33

**September 15: Week 4: Marx, The Production of Knowledge and The Image**

Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (Routledge, 2004): Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," pp. 63-70; and Marx, "Commodities and Money," pp. 42-47

\*\*\*(read online)\*\*\*Vanessa Schwartz, "Walter Benjamin for Historians," in *The American Historical Review* 106:5 (December 2001):

<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/106.5/ah0501001721.html>

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Viking Press, 1973)

\*\*\*Fernand Braudel, Selections from *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism*, translated by Patricia M. Ranum (The Johns Hopkins University Press, first published 1977), pp. 3-117.

**September 22: Week 5: From Response to Cognitivism \*reschedule class to either 12:30-3:30 or 3-6 to make possible a visit by Ethington**

\*\*\* Barbara Maria Stafford, "The Remaining 10 Percent: The Role of Sensory Knowledge in the Age of the Self-Organizing Brain," in James Elkins, ed., *Visual Literacy* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 31-57.

\*\*\*David Freedberg, "Empathy, Motion and Emotion," in: Klaus Herding and Antje Krause-Wahl, *Wie sich Gefühle Ausdruck verschaffen* (Taunusstein 2007),pp. 17-51.

\*\*\*David Freedberg, "Movement, Embodiment, Emotion" in *Histoire de l'art et anthropologie* (Paris: coédition INHA/Musée du quai Branly, « Les actes », 2009)

\*\*\* Jonathan Gilmore, "Brain Trust," *ArtFourm* (Summer 2006), pp. 121-122.

\*\*\* Philip J. Ethington, "Sociovisual Perspective: Vision and the Forms of the Human Past," in Barbara Stafford, ed, *A Field Guide to a New Meta-Field: Bridging the Humanities-Neurosciences Divide* (Under consideration by University of Chicago Press)

Gyorgy Kepes, *Language of Vision* (P. Theobald, 1949)

**September 29: Week 6: Special Visitor: Prof. Sally Promey, Yale University: Considering the Divisions between the Visual and the Material**

Presentation: "Hearts and Stones: Material Transformations and the Stuff of Christian Practice in the United States"

\*\*\*Sally M. Promey and Shira Brisman, "Sensory Cultures: Material and Visual Religion Reconsidered," in Philip Goff, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Religion in America* (Blackwell publishing, 2010, forthcoming), pp. 177-205.

\*\*\* Sally M. Promey, "Situating Visual Culture," in Karen Halttunen, ed., *A Companion to American Cultural History* (Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 279-294.

\*\*\* Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," in *Winterthur Portfolio* 17:1 (Spring 1982), pp. 1–19.

**Part II: History of Images**

**October 6: Week 7: On Visuality, Space and the Built Environment  
Special Visitor: Natalie Roseau, Ecole des Ponts, Paris**

\*\*\*Nathalie Roseau, "The Obsolescence of the Monument, the Future of Airport Icons," in D.van den Heuvel, M.Mesman, W.Quist, B.Lemmens, eds., *The Challenge of Change, Dealing with the Legacy of the Modern Movement* (Amsterdam, IOS Press 2008), pp. 87-92.

\*\*\*Nathalie Roseau, "Rescaling Urban Matter: The City Viewed from the Air," in *New Geographies* 4, Special issue on *Scales of the Earth* (Harvard University Press, Forthcoming October 2010)

\*\*\*Reyner Banham, "The Obsolescent Airport," in *The Architectural Review* 132 (October 1962), pp. 251-253

\*\*\*Nigel Whiteley, Chapters 4 and 6 from *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (MIT Press, 2002), pp. 186-243 and 308-361

\*\*\* Hans Ibelings, Selections from *Supermodernism, Architecture in the Age of Globalization* (Nai Publishers, 2002), pp. 9-128

**October 13: Week 8: Capturing the Moment: The Time of Images**

\*\*\*Essays from Special Issue of the Journal of Visual Culture, co-edited by Lynn Hunt and Vanessa Schwartz (forthcoming, 2010)

**Table of Contents:**

Lynn Hunt & Vanessa Schwartz, “Capturing the Moment: Images and Eyewitnessing in History”

Margaret Conkey, “Images without Words: The Construction of Prehistoric Imaginaries for Definitions of ‘Us’ ”

Victoria Cain, “‘The Direct Medium of the Vision:’ Visual Education, Virtual Witnessing and the Prehistoric Past at the American Museum of Natural History, 1890-1923”

Karen Halttunen, Comment

Marie-José Mondzain, “What Does Seeing an Image Mean?”

Megan O’Neil, “The Material Evidence of Ancient Maya Sculpture”

Erika Naginski, “Historical Pyrrhonism and Architectural Truth”

Thomas Habinek, Comment

Mary Elizabeth Berry, “(Even Radical) Illustration Requires (Normalizing) Convention: The Case of ‘Genre Art’ in Early Modern Japan”

Jeff Wasserstrom, Comment

Richard Taws, Comment

Thierry Gervais, “Witness to War: The Uses of Photography in the Illustrated Press, 1855-1904”

Nancy Troy, Comment

Sharon Sliwinski, “Visual Testimony: Lee Miller’s Dachau”

Macarena Gómez-Barris, “Visual Testimonies of Atrocity: Archives of Political Violence in Chile and Guatemala”

Julia Adeney Thomas, Comment

Katja Zelljadt, “Capturing a City’s Past”

Phil Ethington, Comment

***October 20: Week 9: Photography***

Steve Edwards, *Photography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2006)

Denis Cosgrove and William L. Fox, *Photography and Flight* (Reaktion Books, 2010)

Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (Routledge, 2004): Kracaueur, “Photography,” pp.60-63 and Freund, “Precursors of the Photographic Portrait,” pp. 79-82

**Part III: Vision and Visuality**

***October 27: Week 10: Ethnography and Framing the Other: Museums and “Primitives.” Visitor, Nancy Lutkehaus to give paper on Primitive Art in Museums***

Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (Routledge, 2004): Ames, “From the Exotic to the Everyday: The Ethnographic Exhibition in Germany,” pp. 313-326; Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” pp. 117-130; Sherman, “The Bourgeoisie, Cultural Appropriation, and the Art Museum in Nineteenth-Century France,” pp. 130-144; and Kasson, “Stacking a Claim to History,” pp. 276-286

\*\*\* James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Surrealism," from James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Harvard University Press, 1988)

\*\*\* Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Whose Culture Is It?," *The New York Review* (February 9, 2006), pp. 38-41.

**PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

**November 3: Week 11: The Frame**

Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft* (MIT Press, 2006)

Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (Routledge, 2004): Crary, "Techniques of the Observer," pp. 82-92

**Part IV: Visual Studies and Visual Pedagogy: Doing the Final Project**

**November 10: Week 12: Re-presentation of the image**

**Finish Screening:** Kenneth Clark, "Civilisation"

**Read:** Jonathan Conlin, *Civilisation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

\*\*\* Vanessa R. Schwartz, "Film and History," in James Donald and Michael Renov, eds., *The Sage Handbook of Film Studies* (Sage, 2008), pp. 199-215.

**November 17: Week 13: Meeting to Discuss Methods and Modes of Visual Authoring (IML)**

**Project Summary Posted to Blackboard by Monday, November 15**

**November 24: Week 14: T-GIVING: NO CLASS; required individual meetings this week**

**December 1: Week 15: Rough Cuts meeting of seminar**

**Friday, December 10: Week 16: Final Presentations (no more than 10 minutes each) and dinner at my house**