

History 520: Modernity and Its Visual Cultures Fall 2020: Still in Confinement

Professor Vanessa R. Schwartz
Zoom Sessions: 5:00 to 7:50pm pst
Wednesdays
Certain special guest sessions and possible times
Office hours: by appointment
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Course Description:

This graduate seminar attempts to define and examine “modernity” and its expression in visual cultural practices and forms. “Modernity” can be considered as a series of changes in so-called subjective experience or as shorthand for broad social, economic, and cultural transformations beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many have argued that modernity, at its core, concerns transformations in visual culture and experience. This semester I wanted to address this assumption by attending to Marx’s phrase, “all that’s solid melts into air.” We will explore the theoretical literature underpinning the concept as well as its attendant institutions and forms of representation. We will read Baudelaire, Marx, Freud, Benjamin and their latter-day interpreters such as Appiah and Azoulay and examine such topics as identity, time, truth, media and networks. We ponder material expressions such as the centrality of the city, transformations in artistic practice and the rise of commercial visual culture, technological reproducibility from photography to film, the department store and fashion, museums and the mass press. The seminar’s goal is to have students gain knowledge of the fundamentals of the conceptual literature and have an enhanced grounding in the history of visual culture, primarily in the West from 1850 to the present. **This class is pre-approved for credit as part of the Visual Studies Graduate Certificate.**

“The wisdom of the dead and the energy of the living merge to become a tradition that informs the present and shapes the future.

There are few places, very few places left, other than great universities, where ... both the wisdom of the dead coupled with the doubt of the living are vigorously encouraged, welcomed, become the very stuff of education, the pulse of teaching, the engine of research, the consequence of learning. No faculty member worth the profession has ever taken for granted as fixed truth or fiat all he or she has learned. The nature of our profession is to doubt, to expand, to enhance, to review, to interrogate. But no faculty member is able to question in a vacuum or is fired to innovate, to create because she or he is interested in erasing the inheritance, the authority of her discipline.

No student is expected to be content with the acquisition of data, of information. It is demanded of her to move beyond the stasis of what is known to what is knowable; toward more and other knowledge, knowledge that might one day contribute to the wisdom of the past.

Tradition is not there to bedevil us. It is there for us. It is not there to arrest us; it is there to arouse us. That is the continuum; that is the reconcilability of tradition and the future.”

...Toni Morrison, 250th Convocation, Princeton University, 1996...

Assignments and Written Work:

- 1) All students must contribute a comment and a question about the week’s readings to the class electronic space (<https://5f025c71a1b5d.site123.me/>) due no later than 11 pm the Tuesday night before class. 25%
- 2) After the first three weeks, each student will pick a week in which they will read an additional related book where it says “individual report” and include a list of an additional ten possibly

related books and articles. He or she will write a 4-5 page review of the book to be submitted the week after the seminar presentation. 25%

- 3) All students will also work in teams (to be constituted by week two) to pick one subject off the list below of research fields or select a related one of the group's choosing and do an in-class presentation about on-line resources and collections and recent issues and debates. (We can think of this as "A beginner's guide to...") 10%
- 4) The final project will consist of a 20-25-page paper. Given our current circumstances, papers may be review essays where secondary sources are considered or a field/subject is reviewed, but there are also certain subjects where research topics can be examined with satisfactory results. All students should meet with me individually by week 3 to discuss and should write a paragraph proposal for a final project by week 5. 40%

Required Complete Texts, other materials will be provided electronically

*Amato, *Exposing Slavery* (available through USC library online)

Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity*

Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*

*King, *Gods of the Upper Air* (available through USC library online)

Geffer, *What Becomes a Legend Most*

*Halpern, *Beautiful Data* or (book pdf is in the class DropBox folder)

Isenstadt, *Electric Light: An Architectural History* (available through USC library online)

*Murray Dick, *The Infographic: A History of Data Graphics In News and Communications* (book pdf is in the class DropBox folder)

Clark, *News Parade*

VSRI Events Tentative Schedule: Complete Calendar with co-sponsored events online

1. Chris Wood, August 27, 12:30, Images Out of Time
2. LeRonn Getty Research Institute, Sept. 1, 7 pm, USC-LACMA History of Photography Seminar
3. Racial Justice Reading Group: September 14
4. Kim Beil, Stanford, September 15, 7 pm, USC-LACMA History of Photography Seminar
5. Images Out of Time Reading Group, September 23, 4:00pm
6. Grant-Writing Workshop, October 3, 10-4
7. Racial Justice Reading Group, October 19
8. Philip Geffer, October 28, 5pm, USC-LACMA History of Photography Seminar
9. Racial Justice Reading Group, November 9
10. Ezra Edelman, OJ Simpson, Made in America and Photographing Sports, November 10, 6pm
USC LACMA History of Photography Seminar

Weekly Schedule and Readings

Part I. WHAT IS MODERNITY? Some Key Themes

- All that is Solid Melts into Air
- Truth/Knowledge: The End of Magic? Religion?
- Time Consciousness and Time Troubled
- Identity: The Individual, The Social and the Axes of Difference
- Form, Media and Communication: Speed, Mobility, Reproducibility

Week One: August 19: General Introduction: Please ARRIVE HAVING ALREADY READ

- *Saler "Modernity and Enchantment: An Historiographic Review" *American Historical Review*, 2006.
- *Weber, "The Scholar's Work" and Introduction to *Charisma and Disenchantment. The Vocation Lectures*; see this intro:
http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/assets/general/Owen_and_Strong_Introduction_to_Webers_Science_as_Vocation.pdf and <https://aeon.co/essays/weber-diagnosed-the-ills-of-the-modern-university-and-prescribed-the-cure> and <https://www.chronicle.com/article/max-weber-invented-the-crisis-of->

[the-humanities/#:~:text=In%20%E2%80%9CThe%20Scholar's%20Work%2C%E2%80%9D,they%20impart%20ready%2Dmade%20worldviews. \(see also PDF\)](#)

- *Peter Gordon, "Max the Fatalist" <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2020/06/11/max-weber-fatalist/> (June 11 2020).
- * Marshall Berman, *All That's Solid Melts Into Air*: <https://libcom.org/files/All%20That%20is%20Solid%20Melts%20into%20Air.pdf>, pp. 17-35.
- *Joyeux-Prunel, "Art History and the Global: Deconstructing the latest canonical narrative" *Journal of Global History* (2019) 1, pp. 413-435.
- *Chris Wood, Introduction, *History of Art History*.

Suggested for Further Reading: Mattelart, *Networking the World*

Week Two: August 26: Social Structures/Personal Structures

- *Held and Hall, *Modernity: An Introduction*, pp. 1-90 and pp.149-181.
- Screen: Steinem on being a feminist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu81NQWP5yY>; <https://www.pbs.org/video/makers-women-who-make-america-ms-magazine/>
- Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Re-thinking Identity*.
- *Schwartz and Przyblyski, "Visual Culture's History," *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader*.
- Screen Buckley and Baldwin Debate: <https://aeon.co/videos/the-legendary-debate-that-laid-down-us-political-lines-on-race-justice-and-history>

Week Three: September 2: Visual Culture, Industry and Technology

- *Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>
- * Francastel, *Art and Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Intro and ch. 1.
- *Benjamin, "Little History of Photography."
- *Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863) *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader*.
- *Kracauer, "Photography," *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader*.
- *Brunet, *The Birth of the Idea of Photography*, Introduction and ch. 1.
- *Brunet, Introduction, *Circulation*, Terra Foundation Essays Book 3.
- *An Appraisal of Mumford's Technics and Civilizations" in *Daedalus*, 1959 by Mumford.

Individual Report: Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication*

Week Four: September 9: Knowledge, Anthropology and the Production of Difference

- King, *Gods of the Upper Air*
- *Appiah, "Whose Culture Is It?" *New York Review of Books*.
- *Sherman, "Post-Colonial Chic: Fantasies of the French Interior."
- Familiarize yourself with *In the Land of the Headhunters* project: <https://www.curtisfilm.rutgers.edu>

Group Report on Museums

Individual Report: Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own or Price, Paris Primitive*

Part II: TIME

Week Five: September 16: Modern Time(s)

- *Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: Everyone reads "Paris, Capital" pp. 14-26 and Convolutes B, M,

N and Tiedemann, pp. 930-942.

- *Schwartz, "Walter Benjamin for Historians" *The American Historical Review*, December 2000.
- *Reinhart Koselleck, "Modernity and the Planes of Historicity," in *Future's Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 9–35.
- *Lowe, "Temporality" from *History of Bourgeois Perception*.
- *Crane, Introduction, "A Cultural History of Memory in the Nineteenth Century," Vol. 5 of *A Cultural History of Memory*.
- *In Crane, Edwards, "Media and Technology."

Week Six: September 23: Digging up Trouble: The Long Ago and Far Away

- *Discovering/Uncovering: Castor, "Prehistoric Imaginary and the Modernity of Images" and Labrusse "Prehistoric Present: How and Why Prehistory has been Conjured in the Present Tense."
- *Melman, "Ur: Empire, Modernity and the Visualization of Antiquity Between the Two World Wars" in *Representations 145: Visual History: The Past in Pictures*.
- *Chapters 4 and 5 from Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem*.
- *In Crane, ed., Landry, "Philosophy, Religion and History."

Individual Report: Melman, *Empires of Antiquities*

Week Seven: September 30: The Irredeemable Past?

- *Judaken, "The Heresies of Albert Memmi" from *Tablet* June 23, 2020: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/albert-memmi-obituary>
- Azoulay, *Potential History*

Individual Report: Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*

Part III: Form, Media and Technologies of Vision

Week Eight: October 7: Visual Politics

- Amato, *Exposing Slavery*
- *Sohier, "Hybrid Images: From Photography to Church Painting: Iconographic Narratives at the Court of the Ethiopian King of Kings, Menelik II (1880s-1913)" *African Arts*, Spring 2016.

Week Nine: October 14: The Technological Sublime

- *Neil Harris, "Color and Media: Some Comparisons and Speculations" in *Cultural Excursions*.
- *Laura Kalba, from *Color in the Age of Impressionism* Intro and pp. 149-213.
- Isenstadt, *Electric Light: An Architectural History*.
- Tristan Grunow: "[Ginza Bricktown and the Myth of Meiji Modernization](#)"

Group Report Week on Celebrity

Individual Report on either Ockman and Silver, *Bernhardt* or Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*

Week Ten: October 21: Moving Images: Early Cinema: Curating a Show

GUESTS: LACMA Curators Britt Salvesen and Leah Lembeck

- *Schwartz, "The Wax Museum and the Morgue" from *Cinema and...or Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities**
- Drafts of catalogue essays in progress by Salvesen, Lembeck, and Schwartz
- Link for film screenings: *La Vie de Jesus* (Alice Guy); *Travel Films*; *Poster films and industrial films*

Week 11: October 28: Strike a Pose: Fashion/Photography:

GUEST: Philip Gafter

- Gafter, *What Becomes A Legend Most*.
- *Schwartz, *Jet Age Aesthetic*, ch. 3 and 4.
- *Bair, *The Decisive Network*, ch. 4 "Traveling for Holiday."

Individual Report: Bair, *The Decisive Network*

Week 12: November 4: The Informational Aesthetic

- Murray Dick: *The Infographic: A History of Data Graphics In News and Communications* **OR** Orit Halpern, *Beautiful Data*.
- *Mattern, *Code, Clay, Data and Dirt*, Intro and 43-84.
- *Lupton, "Reading Isotype."
- Clark, *News Parade*

Group Report Week

Individual Report:

Hill and Schwartz, eds., Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News
Nieland, Happiness by Design

Week 13: November 11: Comics: Back to the Beginning?

- *Spiegelman, "Foolish Questions," *New York Review of Books*, March 12, 2020.
- *Selections from the *King of Comics* and Ad Reinhardt, "How to Look at Art."
- *Jason Hill, *The Artist As Reporter*, Intro and ch. 5.

Group Report Week

Individual Report: Chute, *Why Comics?*

FINAL PRESENTATIONS: Date to be determined

In November Presentations/Drafts of Final Projects; preferably week of finals and papers in the ten day period that follows. Given the unclear situation with this new semester being condensed, all final paper deadlines will be discussed in early November and individual contracts written based on current pandemic situation, travel possibilities etc. Best by November 30.

Research Areas: broad areas and you can select something within the area and mix and match

An example: roadside architecture or drive-ins; restaurants, food package design

Museums

Monuments

Design

Display

Department Stores

Graphic Design

Graphic Arts/Print

Logos

Photojournalism/Magazines

Advertising and Consumer Culture

Theme Parks

Exhibitions/World's Fairs

Film Culture: Exhibition/Film-Making/Star Culture

Architecture and Urban Culture: Housing/Corporate/ Lobbies/Hotels

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 - 24/7 on call

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours - 24/7 on call

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/>

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086/Title IX - (213) 821-8298

<https://equity.usc.edu/>, <http://titleix.usc.edu/>

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

<http://dsp.usc.edu>

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

<https://uscscsa.usc.edu/>

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

<https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

<http://dps.usc.edu/>, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

<http://dps.usc.edu>

Non-emergency assistance or information.