

## MDA 501: Introduction to Visual Studies: Methods and Debates

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Fall 2013  
Thursday, 2-5, SOS B41  
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### **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* (3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

September 27/28: Ephemerality and Durability EMSI Conference, The Huntington.

October 3, 12:30-2:00: Scott Bukatman, Stanford: "The Rise and Fall of Cartoon Physics," SOS 250.

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.

In preparation for this, please also read: \*\*\*Vanessa R. Schwartz, “Film and History,” in James Donald and Michael Renov, eds., *The Sage Handbook of Film Studies* (Sage, 2008), pp. 199-215 and \*\*\*Mitchell, “Showing Seeing” in the *Journal of Visual Culture*.

## **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 28<sup>th</sup>

- Read for First Class: \*\*\*Carlo Ginzburg, etc., “Inter/Disciplinarity,” *Art Bulletin* 77:4 (December 1995), pp. 534-552.
- “The Visual Culture Questionnaire” *October* 77 (Summer 1996): 25-70.
- “The Heart of the Matter” Humanities Commission Report:  
[http://www.humanitiescommission.org/\\_pdf/hss\\_report.pdf](http://www.humanitiescommission.org/_pdf/hss_report.pdf)

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

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

- 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 Higonet, "Complex Culture," pp. 15-26.
- Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, pp. 1-50 and 105-148.

### **Week Three: September 12: Materialism and The Image: Benjamin's Marxism**

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

- 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).
- *Journal of Visual Culture*, August 2012, "Ways of Seeing" 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue.

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.
- **\*\*\*** Svetlana Alpers, "Is Art History?" *Daedalus* 106:3 (Summer, 1977), 1-13.
- *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (Routledge, 2004): Wilson, pp. 26-33 and Genealogies, pp.35-63.
- 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
- David M. Kaplan, "Introduction," in David M. Kaplan ed., *The Philosophy of Food* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012): 1-23.

- Carolyn Korsmeyer, "The Hierarchy of the Senses," in *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999): 11-37.
- Pierre Bourdieu, "The Homology between the Space," in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984): 175-208.
- Sheila McTighe, "Foods and the Body in Italian Genre Paintings, about 1580: Campi, Passarotti, Carracci" *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (2004): 301-323.
- Brian Cowan, "Food Representations in Early Modern Europe: Powerful Appetites," in *A Cultural History of Food*, Fabio Parasecoli and Peter Scholliers, general editors vol. 4, *The Early Modern Age*, Beat Kümin, ed., (Oxford: Berg, 2012): 165-183.

## **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>
- Interview with Philip Nel, <http://westfieldcomics.com/blog/interviews-and-columns/interview-philip-nel-eric-reynolds-on-crockett-johnsons-barnaby-from-fantagraphics/>

#### **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*

\*\*\*Goodyear, "Gyorgy Kepes, Billy Klüver, and American Art of the 1960s: Defining Attitudes Toward Science and Technology," *Science in Context* 17 (2004): 611-635.

#### **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*

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.

#### **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"

<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/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.**