

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



Professor Vanessa R. Schwartz  
Fall 2017, USC

Wednesday, 2-5, Taper 308  
Office Hours: Wednesday, 5-6, Taper 336 and by appointment at vschwart@usc.edu

### **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 visibility and the experience and creation of visual objects.

This course is one of two required courses as part of the USC's VSGC.

### **Books for Purchase:**

Sousanis, *Unflattering*

Freedberg, *The Power of Images*

Boorstin, *The Image*

Bleichmar, *Visual Voyages*

Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader (optional)*

Hill and Schwartz, *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News*

Kalba, *Color in the Age of Impressionism*

Ramplay, *Art, Evolution and Neuroscience*

Berger, *The Art of Philosophy* (<http://press.princeton.edu/titles/11009.html#evendors>)

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 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. 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 Events and Lectures:** As part of this seminar you are expected to attend at least two special events and preferably all if it is possible. All special events are listed below:

**(REQUIRED hoping your schedule permits) Monday, August 28: Back-to-School with VSRI: *In the Land of the Head Hunters and Its Afterlives: An Update***

Brad Evans, Rutgers University

Program: 3:30 to 4:45pm; Reception: 5:00-6:00pm

Amy King Dundon-Berchtold University Club, Scriptorium Room

**Wednesday, September 13: VSGC Student Lunch**

12:30 to 2:00pm

SOS 250

**Tuesday, September 19: Round table on Photography and Pacific Standard Time. LA/LA: A Celebration Beyond Borders**

Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, curator, “Radical Women,” Hammer Museum

Chon Noriega, curator, “Home,” LACMA

Amy Scott, co-curator, “La Raza,” Autry Museum

Respondent: Jesse Lerner, Pitzer College, Claremont

7:00-9:00pm

LACMA Study Center for Photography and Works on Paper, Art of the Americas Building

**Wednesday, October 11: *Color in the Age of Impressionism: Commerce, Technology, and Art* Book Talk**

Laura Anne Kalba, Smith College

12:30 to 2:00pm

SOS 250

**Sunday, October 15: Grant Writing Workshop**

10:00am to 4:30pm

SOS 250

Strongly Recommended for EVERY Student. First year and second year: morning CV-writing. Second and third and above: full day.

**Monday, October 16: Seeing and Knowing: Visions of Latin American Nature**

Daniela Bleichmar, USC, and co-curator of *Visual Voyages: Images of Latin American Nature from Columbus to Darwin*

7:30-8:30pm

The Huntington, Rothenberg Hall

**Monday, October 30: Master Class on Alexander Calder: Research and the Artist Biography**

Jed Perl, Art Critic, New York Review of Books

12:00 to 2:00 pm

SOS 250

Perl will also be speaking at the Hauser and Wirth on Sunday, October 29. Please register asap at <https://www.hauserwirthlosangeles.com/events/conversation-and-book-signing-with-jed-perl-and-alexander-s-c-rower-20171029>.

**(REQUIRED) Wednesday, November 1:**

**The figure of a professional photographer: Margaret Bourke-White at *Fortune* (1930-1937)**

Gaëlle Morel, Ryerson Image Centre

7:00-9:00pm

Amy King Dundon-Berchtold University Club, Scriptorium Room

**Monday, November 13: Cybernetic Socialism**

Anneka Lenssen, UC Berkeley

12:00 to 1:30pm

SOS 250

**FINAL PROJECT:** You must listen to at least two podcasts a week from the BBC Series, "A History of the World in 100 Objects." (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00nrtd2/episodes/downloads?page=4>) 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 through your visual presentation of your object and visual lesson. Students are asked to reflect upon the specific issue of the production of the image and producers, circulation, materiality, technology, and knowledge construction relating to vision, visibility, images, seeing, and spectacle. In other words, how and why is this an object that relates to a field that might be called "Visual Studies" that is different from how you might have treated this in your home discipline, or is it different at all?

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*.

**Schedule of Readings and Seminars**

## **Part I: Definitions**

**Week One: August 23: Seeing, The World Picture and Pictorial Communication**

**Complete for Class: Readings and Post a response on the class blackboard**

Due by 8 pm, August 22

- Screen, First two episodes of Clark, "Civilization"
- Read, Sousanis, *Unflattering*
- \*Heidegger, "Age of the World Picture"
- \*Krios, "What are Images and What are they for?" online at <http://www.kunst-als-wissenschaft.de/multimedia/KreisEn.pdf>
- Selections from Boorstin, *The Image*, Introduction and Chapter One

**Week Two: (Please Note Special Day and Time): Monday, August 28 3:30-6**

**BACK TO SCHOOL VSRI EVENT: "In the Land of Head Hunters"**

**Introducing VSRI Theme: "The Pacific" and thinking about concrete case studies and materials to think about more general problems of theory and method**

**IF ALL STUDENTS CANNOT MAKE THIS EVENT WE WILL HAVE CLASS AS SCHEDULED ON WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30).**

For this week students will post AFTER the event, however, not before and posts will integrate comments on the event as well as readings and screenings.

- \*Brad Evans and Aaron Glass, "Introduction," in *Return to the Land of the Head Hunters: Edward S. Curtis, the Kwakwaka'wakw, and the Making of Modern Cinema* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2014), 3-39.
- \*Glass and Evans, "Consuming the *Head Hunters*: A Century of Film Reception," in *Return to the Land of the Head Hunters*, 146-166.
- \*Evans, "Indian Movies and the Vernacular of Modernism," in *Return to the Land of the Head Hunters*, 190-211.
- \*Glass, "The Kwakwaka'wakw Business of Showing: Tradition Meets Modernity on the Silver Screen and the World Stage," in *Return to the Land of the Head Hunters*, 315-357.
- Screening of the Curtis film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73u7eugbbu8>

**Week Three: September 6: Defining Visual Studies: Borders/Boundaries**

- \*Carlo Ginzburg, etc., "Inter/Disciplinarity," *Art Bulletin* 77:4 (December 1995), pp. 534-552.
- \*Horst Bredekamp, "A Neglected Tradition? Art History as *Bildwissenschaft*," *Critical Inquiry* 29 (Spring 2003), pp. 418-428.
- \*Mieke Bal, "Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture"(2003)\* *Journal of Visual Culture* and responses from pp. 229-268: <http://journals.sagepub.com/toc/vcua/2/2>
- \*W.J.T. Mitchell, "There Are No Visual Media," *Journal of Visual Culture* 4.2 (2005): 257-266.
- \*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):
  - a) Schwartz and Przyblyski, "Visual Culture's New History: Twenty-First Century Interdisciplinarity and Its Nineteenth-Century Objects," pp. 3-14
  - b) Cohen and Higonnet, "Complex Culture," pp. 15-26.
  - c) Wilson, pp. 26-33
  - d) Genealogies, pp.35-63

**Week Four: September 13: The Power of Images**

- Freedberg, David *The Power of Images*
- Screen, Berger, "Ways of Seeing" Episode one.
- Clark, episodes 3-6 and please watch the rest of the episodes over the course of the semester.

**Week Five: September 20: Seeing: Historical or Hard Wired? Class ends early today for Jewish Holiday. Possible early start?**

- \*Jay, *Downcast Eyes, Chapters One and Two*, pp.1-147
- Rampley, *Art, Evolution and Neuroscience*
- \*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
- \*Vanessa Schwartz, "Walter Benjamin for Historians," in *The American Historical Review* 106:5 (December 2001).

## Part II. Materiality, Circulation, Technology

### Week 6: September 27: Circulation, Knowledge and Imperialism:

Go to the Huntington between September 16 and September 27 to see the Visual Voyages Show

Guest, Prof. Daniela Bleichmar, USC

- Bleichmar, *Visual Voyages*
- \*Jennifer L. Roberts, "Copley's Cargo Boy with a Squirrel and the Dilemma of Transit," *American Art*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer 2007), pp. 20-41
- \*Deborah Silverman, "Art Nouveau, Art of Darkness- African Lineages of Belgian Modernism," Part I, II, III. In *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*, 18:2 (2011), 139-181; 19:2 (2012), 175-195; 20:1 (2013), 3-61.
- \*Martin Jay and Sumathi Ramaswamy "The Imperial Optic" in Martin Jay and Sumathi Ramaswamy, eds. *Empires of Vision*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp.25-43

### Week 7 October 4: Circulation, Transport, Networks

- \*Schwartz, "LAX: Designing for the Jet Age" in *Overdrive: L.A. Constructs the Future, 1940-1990* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2013), 162-183.
- \*Schwartz, "Networks: Technology, Mobility, and Mediation in Visual Culture," *American Art* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 104-109.
- \*Schwartz, Disneyland Chapter (to be added)
- \*Nadya Bair, "The Decisive Network: Producing Henri Cartier Bresson at Mid-Century" *History of Photography* and "The Daily Bread" in *American Art* and essay in GTP
- \*Martin, "Art World, Network and Other Alloway Keywords" <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/art-world-network-and-other-alloway-keywords>
- \*Lawrence Alloway, "Art and the Communications Network," *Canadian Art*, no.100, January 1966.
- \*Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, "Blow-Up: Photographic Projection, Dynamite, and the Sculpting of American Mountains," *Scale*, ed. Jennifer L. Roberts, (Terra Foundation for American Art, 2016), 66-102.
- \*Olivier Lugon, "Photography and Scale: Projection, Exhibition, Collection," *Art History*, 38:2 (2015), 386-403.
- Boorstin, Chapter 3

### Week 8: October 11: Technologies of Modern Color:

Guest: Laura Kalba, Smith College,

- Kalba, *Color in the Age of Impressionism*

## Part III: The Visualization of Knowledge, Visual Information, and the Problem of the Producer

### Week 9: October 18: Knowledge as a Visual System

Guest: Professor Susanna Berger, USC

- Berger, *The Art of Philosophy*
- \*Chapter 5, titled "Classifying Knowledge: Curricula, Libraries and Encyclopedia," from Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) vol. 1, pp. 81-115.

- \*Chapter 1, titled “Models for the Memory” from Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 16-45.

**Week 10: October 25: The World Picture: Is there a Universal Subject and Object?**

Guest: Professor Jason Hill, University of Delaware

- \*His forthcoming book from UC Press: *The Artist as Reporter: Weegee, Ad Reinhardt, and the PM News Picture*
- From Hill and Schwartz, sections, “News Picture Time” and “Speaking of News Pictures”

**Week 11: November 1: Gender, Class, The Professional and the Amateur:**

Guests: Gaelle Morel, Director of Exhibitions, Ryerson Image Center, Toronto

Ryan Linkof, curator, Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences Museum

- \*Ryan Linkof, advance copy of his book, *Public Images: Celebrity, Photojournalism and the Making of the Tabloid Press* to be commented on by Morel
- \*Morel, “Margaret Bourke-White at *Fortune*”
- *Getting the Picture*, Part I essays
- \*Schwartz, “Wide Angle at the Beach”

Mandatory attendance at Photo History Seminar where Morel will present on Margaret Bourke White. (7-9).

**Week 12: November 8: No Class. Schwartz in Europe**

**Week 13: November 15: Corporations and the Diffusion of Diffuse Visual Information (maybe a longer session with dinner because of missed class last week)**

Guests: Society of Fellows Post-Doc John Blakinger and Professor Brian Jacobson, University of Toronto

Blakinger:

- \*John R. Blakinger, manuscript on Gyorgy Kepes.
- \*Anne Collins Goodyear. “Gyorgy Kepes, Billy Klüver, and American Art of the 1960s: Defining Attitudes Toward Science and Technology.” *Science in Context* 17, no. 4 (2004): 611-635.
- \*Selections from Gyorgy Kepes, *The New Landscape in Art and Science*. Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1956.
- \*Selections from Gyorgy Kepes, ed., *The Nature and Art of Motion*, Vision + Value Series. New York: George Braziller, 1965.
- \*Letters between Gyorgy Kepes and Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, 1965/1968.
- \*Gyorgy Kepes, “Toward Civic Art,” *Leonardo* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1971): 69-73. [NB: a version of this text was also published in the catalog for the 1970 exhibition “Explorations,” based on the canceled US pavilion for the 1969 São Paulo Biennial]
- \*Letters between Gyorgy Kepes and Robert Smithson, 1969.

Jacobson: **Industry, Technology and Corporate Knowledge: Space, Energy and Oil:**

- \*Jacobson, *Studios Before the System: Architecture, Technology, and the Emergence of Cinematic Space* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), Chapters 1 and 5.
- \*Jacobson, “French Art and Energy” manuscript, 2 chapters TBD
- \*(OPTIONAL) Marjorie A. Beale, “Advertising as Modernism,” in *The Modernist Enterprise: French Elites and the Threat of Modernity, 1900-1940* (Stanford, 1999), 11-47.

**Week 14: Nov. 29: Return to the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Re-Considering Race, Identity and the Powers and Limits of a new medium: On Slavery and Photography:** Guest: Matt Fox-Amato,

- \*Read Fox-Amato manuscript forthcoming from Oxford University Press, *Slavery, Photography, and the Birth of Modern Visual Politics in America*.
- \*Brian Wallis, “Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz’s Slave Daguerreotypes,”

- American Art* 9 (1995), 38-61.
- \*Maurie McClinnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade* (2011), Intro, Ch 1-2.

**Final Visual Presentations: Possibly December 6 date and time to be determined by the group. Likely Location at Schwartz Residence with Dinner.**

**10-12 page paper due electronically by December 12 at 9 am.**

