
MDA 599

Getting the Picture: The History and Visual Culture of the News

2014
Wednesdays 2:00-4:50pm
SOS 250 unless otherwise noted

Instructor(s):
Vanessa R. Schwartz, Director,
VSGC/VSRI and team of USC and
invited guest instructors

Course Description

News pictures are first and foremost created to be forms of communication, despite the fact that in reality, they are often no less expressive and interpretive than artworks. News pictures share with art that they are visual expressions but they also self-consciously seek to inform about the present – the world currently accessible outside the picture – in a truthful way. Unlike “art” as it tends to be understood in the modern period, “news pictures” are principally concerned with relating information about the events unfolding before the artist or photographer on the scene. It has, however, been easier to define this class of imagery negatively. This course corrects this vision by offering a comprehensive point of entry into the surprisingly difficult question: What is a news picture and how does it work?

Although there are many ways to define the news, this class defines those pictures that are news which are tied to the institutions that operate in direct relation to the general rubric of the press. It will consider thematic priorities in the representation of historical events – war, catastrophe, atrocity, exoticism – but also it will focus as much on the form, practice and material history of news pictures as on the images’ content and the reception of the story the picture tells.

Interdisciplinary Object of Study

The news picture is an image that operates across the boundaries that have traditionally divided the fields of art history, history, and communications and media studies. As such, understanding news pictures requires a willingness to work collaboratively across these fields, taking the lessons of each seriously and seeking to bring their respective strengths to bear on the subject rather than attempting to identify their particular blindspots.

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 mornings although earlier posts are welcomed. Students are also expected to read each other’s responses before class. A response can be a critical summary of the readings, a series of questions, complaints, rants. The post asks each student to take some time reflecting on the week’s readings and share those thoughts with the class. Students are also expected to attend the conference to be held May 4 and 5 at USC.

Guest Speakers



Matthew Amato
VSRI Postdoctoral
Teaching and Research
Fellow, USC



Joshua Brown
Executive Director,
American Social History
Project/Center for Media
and Learning, CUNY



Joe Clark
Visiting Assistant
Professor of American
Studies, Franklin &
Marshall College



Kate Flint
Provost Professor of
English and Art History,
USC

Each student taking the class for credit needs to do a “photo of the week” presentation. The student selects an image and speaks about it for ten minutes and invites conversation about it. It might be best to select an image that relates to the week you are presenting but we also want to be open to “current events” intervening.

Two field trips: February 9, Nixon Library and independent visit to Annenberg Space for Photography National Geographic Show, before week 12.

Final Project: Each student will write a final, 20-page research paper. Proposals are due February 15 and final papers will be due at 9 am May 12.

** Below denotes an unpublished draft essay from Hill and Schwartz, *Getting the Picture*. Please do not cite or circulate without the editors’ permission.

Schedule of Classes:

Week One: January 15: Introduction: Why News Pictures and Not Photojournalism?

Vanessa Schwartz, Director of USC VSRI/VSGC, and Jason Hill, VAP, Art History, UNLV

Reading:

**Introduction Draft, Hill and Schwartz, *Getting the Picture*

*Panzer, Introduction, *Things as They Are*

*Panzer, “The Meaning of the Twentieth-Century Press Archive” in *Aperture 202*

**Image*, September 1953 issue.

*Lippman, *Public Opinion* (1922): pp. 3-33, found

@ http://books.google.com/books/about/Public_Opinion.html?id=eLobn4WwbLUC

Week Two: January 22: The Crimean War: From Painting to Sketching

Guest: Katie Hornstein, Asst. Prof. of Art History, Dartmouth College

Reading:

*Hornstein, abridged dissertation, “Episodes in Political Illusion: The Proliferation of War Imagery in France”

*Hornstein, “Suspended Collectivity: Horace Vernet’s *The Crossing of the Arcole Bridge* (1826)”

*Taws, Introduction and Chapter 1, *The Politics of the Provisional*

*Gervais, “Witness to War: The Uses of Photography in the Illustrated Press, 1855-1904,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 9, no. 3 (2010): 370-384.

**Hornstein, “Horace Vernet’s Capture of Smahla...”

Guest Speakers (cont.)



Larry Gross
Professor and Director,
Annenberg School for
Communication, USC



Robert Hariman
Professor, Department of
Communication Studies,
Northwestern University



Jason Hill
Visiting Assistant
Professor of Art History,
UNLV
VSRI Affiliated Research
Scholar



Katie Hornstein
Assistant Professor of
Modern European Art,
Dartmouth College

Week Three: January 29: Sketch Reporting

Guest: Joshua Brown, Executive Director of the American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning, Professor of History, and co-director of the New Media Lab at the CUNY Graduate Center

Reading:

*Brown, *Beyond the Lines*, pp. 7-59.

*Brown, Manuscript Chapter, "The Visualization of the 1863 Draft Riots"

**Michael Leja, "News Pictures in the Early Years of Mass Visual Culture"

**Jennifer Tucker, "Famished for News Pictures"

**Jordan Bear, "Adrift: The Time and Space of the News in Géricault's *Radeau de la Méduse*"

*Special Event: January 30: "Imaging Disaster: Tokyo and the Visual Culture of Japan's Great Earthquake of 1923"

Gennifer Weisenfeld, Professor of Modern Japanese Art History and Visual Culture, Duke University

12:30-2:00pm, Academy for Polymathic Study, DML 241

Reading:

*Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster: Tokyo and the Visual Culture of Japan's Great Earthquake of 1923*, Introduction and Ch. 2. E-book:

<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.usc.edu/stable/10.1525/j.ctt24hssr>

**Weisenfeld, "Minimata Pieta"

Week Four: February 5: The Civil War and Photography

Guest: Matthew Amato, VSRI Teaching Postdoctoral Fellow

Reading:

*Amato, "Exposing Humanity: Slavery, Antislavery, and Early Photography in America, 1839-1865" (dissertation), Ch. 3 and 4

*Davis, "'A Terrible Distinctness': Photography of the Civil War Era," in *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Martha A. Sandweiss (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1991).

*Natale, "Photography and Communication Media in the Nineteenth Century," *History of Photography*, 36, no. 4 (2012): 451-456.

**Sandweiss, "General Wool and Staff"

**Amato, "An Abolitionist Daguerreotype"

**Anthony Lee, "Gardener and Antietam"

FEBRUARY 9: Field trip to the Nixon Library

Week Five: February 12: NO CLASS: CAA

Guest Speakers (cont.)



Ryan Linkof
Ralph M. Parsons
Curatorial Fellow,
LACMA



John Lucaites
Professor, Department of
Communication and
Culture, Indiana
University



Sarah Banet-Weiser
Professor of
Communications and
American Studies and
Ethnicity, USC



Diane Winston
Knight Chair in Media
and Religion,
Annenberg School for
Communications, USC

Week Six: February 19: The Birth of the Tabloid: The Photo- Newspaper

Guest: Ryan Linkof, Curatorial Fellow, Photography, LACMA

Reading:

- *Linkof, "The Public Eye: Celebrity and Photojournalism in the Making of the British Tabloids, 1904 – 1938" (dissertation), Ch. 5
- *Linkof, "'The Photographic Attack on his Royal Highness': The Prince of Wales, Wallis Simpson and the Prehistory of the Paparazzi," *Photography & Culture* 4, no. 3 (2011): 277-292.
- *Becker, "Photojournalism and the Tabloid Press," in *Journalism and Popular Culture*, ed. Peter Dahlgren (London: Sage Publications, 1992).
- *Meyer, "Learning from Low Culture," in Anthony W. Lee and Richard Meyer, *Weegee and the Naked City* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008).
- **Linkof, "The Tabloid Press"
- **Meyer, "Dead! Ruth Snyder and the Mortification of Tabloid Photography"

Week Seven: February 26: Newreels

Guest: Joseph Clark, Visiting Assistant Professor of American Studies, Franklin and Marshall

Respondent: Michael Renov, Professor of Critical Studies and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, USC School of Cinematic Arts

Reading:

- *Clark, "'Canned History': American Newsreels and the Commodification of Reality, 1927-1945," pages 1-218.
- **Mike Conway, "TV News"
- **Lubin, "JFK Assassination and Zapruder Footage"

Week Eight: March 5: Flash

Guest: Kate Flint, Provost's Professor of English and Art History, USC

Reading:

- *Draft chapter from "Flash! Photography, Writing, and Surprising Illumination"
- *Journal of Photography of the George Eastman House, Oct. 1955
- *Coxe, "Return Engagement" and "Casey – Detective." *Black Mask* XVII (March 1934): 73-84 and *Black Mask* XVII (February 1935): 68-88.
- *Pelizzon and West, "'Crime is My Oyster': Weegee's Narrative Mobility," in *Tabloid, Inc. Crimes, Newspapers, Narratives* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010).
- *Trachtenberg, "Weegee's City Secrets," *E-rea* 2010 <http://erea.revues.org/1168>
- * Zelizer, "Words against Images: Positioning Newswork in the Age of Photography," in *Newsworkers: Towards a History of the Rank and File*, ed. Hanno Hardt and Bonnie Brennan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 139-59.

**Man with a Camera* [starring Charles Bronson]: “The Last Portrait” (1959) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFzeYv4zmek> [26 minute made-for-TV film].

**Will Straw, “Crime: After the event: The Challenges of Crime Photography”

**Magilow, “Erich Soloman”

Week Nine: March 12: The Luce Empire

Guest: Jason Hill, Visiting Asst. Professor, UNLV

Reading:

*Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century* (New York: Random House, 2010), 145-239.

*Allred, “‘We Americans’: Henry Luce, *Life*, and the Mind-Guided Camera,” in *American Modernism and Depression Documentary* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 167-196.

*Barney, “Richard Edes Harrison and the Cartographic Perspective of Modern Internationalism,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 15, no. 3 (2012): 397-433.

*Kozol, “Gazing at Race in the Pages of *Life*: Picturing Segregation through Theory and History,” in Erika Doss, ed. *Looking at Life Magazine*, pp. 159-175.

*Hill, “On the Efficacy of Artifice: PM, Radiophoto, and the Journalistic Discourse of Photographic Objectivity,” *Études Photographiques* 26 (November 2010), 50-85.

**Zervigon, “Rotogravure”

**Panzer, “Vilette: The Lash of Success”

**Hill, “Warneke and The Halftone and News Time”

Peruse:

<http://www.fulltable.com/VTS/f/fo.htm>

<http://books.google.com/books/about/LIFE.html?id=R1cEAAAAMBAJ>

Week Ten: March 26: On the Ethics of Photojournalism

Guest: Larry Gross, Professor of Communications, USC Annenberg

Reading:

*Selections from Gross, Katz and Ruby, eds., *Image Ethics: The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film, and Television*

* Selections from Gross, Katz, Ruby, eds., *Image Ethics in a Digital Age*

**Soloman-Godeau, “Abu Ghraib”

**Delage, “Rodney King”

Week Eleven: April 2: Icons

Guests: Robert Hariman, Professor of Communication Studies, Northwestern University and John Lucaites, Professor of Communication and Culture, Indiana University

Reading:

*Hariman and Lucaties, *No Caption Needed*, Ch. 1, 2, and 6

**“Seeing the Bomb, Imagining the Future: Allegorical Vision in the Post-Cold War Nuclear Optic,” *Cahiers ReMix 1* (2012), <http://oic.uqam.ca/en/remix/seeing-the-bomb-imagining-the-future-allegorical-vision-in-the-post-cold-war-nuclear-optic>

*Hariman and Lucaites, “Image, Icon, and Cultural Critique,” draft essay for *Sociologica*

*Vestberg, “Robert Doisneau and the Making of a Universal Cliché,” *History of Photography* 35, no. 2 (2011): 157-165.

**Hariman and Lucaites, “Eddie Adams, Street Execution of a Viet Cong”

**Nemerov, Rosenthal, “Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima”

**Stein, “Capa, The Falling Soldier”

*In addition, please nominate an image or post from our blog for discussion. The posts could be on iconic images or others, as they wish. If you could let us know two weeks in advance of our arrival, we could be ready to discuss them further in light of the other readings. Blog: <http://www.nocaptionneeded.com/>

Week Twelve: April 9: The News in Color

Vanessa Schwartz, Director of USC VSRI/VSGC

Reading:

*Bussard, “Full Spectrum: Expanding the History of American Color Photography” and Hostetler, “Real Color” in Bussard and Hostetler, *Color Rush: American Color Photography from Stieglitz to Sherman* (New York: Aperture, 2013).

**Timby, “Color News Pictures”

**Schwartz, “Less Prose, More Poetry: Magic Images of a City (1953)”

*Blasczyk, *The Color Revolution*, Introduction, 1-20 and “Rainbow Cities” pp.192-214 and 242-264

*Stein, “FSA Color: The Forgotten Document,” *Modern Photography*, 43, no. 1 (January 1979): 90-98 and 162-64 and 166.

Week Thirteen: April 16: Religion in the News

Guest: Diane Winston, Knight Professor of Journalism, USC Annenberg

Reading:

*Street, “Attention! American Press Coverage of Buddhism from the 1870s to the Present,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the American News Media*, ed. Diane Winston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

*Skow and Dionisopoulos, “A Struggle to Contextualize Photographic Images: American Print Media and the ‘Burning Monk,’” *Communication Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 393-409.

*Yang, “Still Burning: Self-Immolation as Photographic Protest,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 1 (Feb. 2011): 1-25.

**Winston, “The Burning Monk”

Week Fourteen: April 23: News Picture Time

Guest: Sarah Banet-Weiser, Professor of Communication, USC Annenberg

Reading:

- *Zelizer, Selections from *About to Die*
- **Zelizer, "Child in Warsaw Ghetto"
- **Shneer, "Grief, Soviet World War II Photo, 1946"
- **Liam Kennedy, "The Situation Room"
- **Gao, "Chinese News Picture"
- **Berger, "Rosa Parks"
- **Mraz, "Zapata: Revolutionary Charro"
- **Przyblyski, "Commune Photo"

Week Fifteen: April 30: 4th Annual Anne Friedberg Memorial Grant Lecture

Nadya Bair, Doctoral Candidate Art History and VSGC, USC

"Learning to Shoot: The Photographic Education of Henri Cartier-Bresson"
SOS 250, 2:00-3:30pm

- **Clark, "The Gare Saint-Lazare"
- ** Bair, "The Photo Editor"
- **Lavoie, "Appraising News Pictures"
- **Gresh, "Photojournalism in the Museum"

MAY 4 and 5: Getting the Picture Colloquium at USC

There will be 12 pre-circulated papers to read which will be available starting April 25. All participants must read papers for the meetings on the 4th and 5th.