History 520: Modernity and Its Visual Cultures, Spring 2011

Professor Vanessa R. Schwartz
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Class: T, 12:30-3:30, VKC 379
Office Hours: T-3:30-4:30 and by appt.
SOS 170

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 associated with the second half of the nineteenth century. Modernity, at its core, concerns transformations in the visual. This course will explore the theoretical literature underpinning the concept as well as its attendant institutions and forms of representation. We will explore the writings of Baudelaire, Marx, Freud, Simmel, and Benjamin and examine such topics as the centrality of the city, new notions of temporality and the rise of novelty, transformations in artistic practice and in commercial visual culture, theories of vision, technological reproducibility from photography to film, consumerism and the department store and fashion, museums and the mass press will be discussed. 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 in the West from 1850 to the present. This class is already approved for credit as part of the Visual Studies Graduate Certificate.

Assignments and Written Work:

1) All students must contribute a comment and a question about the week’s readings to the class Blackboard due no later than 9pm the Monday before class.

2) After the first three weeks, each student will pick a week in which they will read an additional related book and include a list of an additional ten 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.

3) The final paper (25 pages in length) will be designed individually. Some of you might benefit by doing preliminary research and writing a bibliographic essay. Others might want to write a “review essay” in order to shape an area that will appear in your comprehensive examinations or as a frame for a research paper. You must have talked with me in the first four weeks during my office hours about this and must submit a paper proposal before Spring Break. Final Papers will be due Saturday May 7th no later than 11:00 am.
Required Texts Available for Purchase
Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*
Homans, *Appollo’s Angel*
Rubin, *Impressionism and the Modern Landscape*
Jane Brox, *Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light*
Benson, *The Printed Picture*
Prochaska and Mendelson, *Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity*
Garfield, *Mauve*
Batchelor, *Chromophobia*
Sandra Philipps, *Voyeurism, Surveillance and the Camera*
Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*
Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One’s Own*
Cohen, *Household Gods*
Mathur, *India By Design*
Spiegel, *TV By Design*
Chu and Trujillo, *New Views on R. Buckminster Fuller*
Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*
Hine, *Populuxe*
Sparke, *The Plastics Age*
McCloud, *Understanding Comics*
St. Exupery and Sfaar, *The Little Prince Graphic Novel*
* Readings with an * are available on the Blackboard

DVDs:
“Smash his Camera” 2010 netflix instant:
(http://movies.netflix.com/WiPlayer?movieid=70129362&trkid=2429438
“Etoiles: Dancers of the Paris Opéra Ballet” (2001) netflixinstant:
http://movies.netflix.com/WiMovie/Visual-Acoustics-The-Modernism-of-Julius-Shulman/70100753?strackid=1a2a67713dc26c8e_0_srl&strkid=1418548365_0_0&trkid=438381#height2178

Week One: January 11: General Introduction
* Singer, pp.17-34 from *Melodrama and Modernity*

Listen to BBC Podcasts of History of the World in 100 Objects that Shaped the World, starting with North American Buckskin Cap to the End of the Series (13 Episodes: 88-100) http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/ahow/all
Complete this by week three but do at least 5 this week.
Suggested Companion to the Course: Schwartz and Przyblyski, *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader*

**Week Two: January 18: Visual Culture, Industry and Technology**
*Benjamin, “The Work of Art” essay @ http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm*
*Adorno, “The Culture Industry” @ http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm*
*Benjamin, “Little History of Photography”*
*From Francastel, *Art and Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries***

**Week Three: January 25: The Arcades Project or the Complete Guide to Neat Things that made Paris the “capital of the 19th century”**
Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*
Everyone reads “Paris, Capital” pp.14-26 and Convolutes M, N and X and then the rest are divided and summarized on the blackboard

Suggested:
*Buse, Peter, Benjamin’s Arcades: An Unguided Tour*
Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping*
Dimendberg, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*
Cohen, *Profane Illumination*
Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*

**Week Four: February 1: The Fate of the Classical and the Ephemeral Arts in Modernity**
Attend Homans talk at 12:30 and follow-up discussion with Homans in class.

Homans, *Appollo’s Angel*
Screen: “Ballets Russes” or “Etoiles” unless the Wiseman film becomes available

Suggested:
*Nancy Troy, Couture Culture*
Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead*
Steve Dixon, *Digital Performance*
Laura Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity*

**Week Five: February 8: Visualizing the Industrial Landscape**
Rubin, *Impressionism and the Modern Landscape*

Suggested Readings:
*Marrinan, Romantic Paris*
Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*
Grigsby, *Colossal: Engineering Modernity*
Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*
Talk at 12:30 by Christian Henriot and follow-up visit to seminar with Jeff Wasserstrom and Henriot


The Urban Icons Project, especially Wasserstrom article
http://journals.cambridge.org/fulltext_content/supplementary/urban_icons_companion/index.htm

Suggested:
Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*
Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*
David Henkin, *City Reading*
*Nead, Victorian Babylon*
Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*

Week Seven: February 22: Seeing the Light: Artificiality and the City
Jane Brox, *Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light*

Suggested:
Chris Otter, *The Victorian Eye*
Shivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night*
David Pike, *Subterreanean Cities*
David Nye, *American Technological Sublime*
Schlor, *Nights in the Big City*

Week Eight: March 1: Revolutions in Print
Benson, *The Printed Picture*
Prochaska and Mendelson, *Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity*

Suggested:
Jennifer Tucker, *Nature Exposed*
Ockman and Silver, *Sarah Bernhardt: The Drama of High Art*
William Ivins, *Print and Visual Communication*
Maude Lavin, *Clean New World*
Ockman, *Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama*
Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*

Week Nine: March 8: From Black and White to Color
Garfield, *Mauve*
Batchelor, *Chromophobia*
*Neil Harris, “Color and Media: Some Comparisons and Speculations” in Cultural Excursions*
Suggested:
Philip Ball, *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color*
John Gage, *Color and Meaning*
Bogart, *Artists, Advertising and the Borders of Art*

March 14-19: Spring Break

TENTATIVE PLAN: Week Ten: March 22: **Photography and Film: New Publics/New Privates**
If we don’t go to SF, we will need to re-schedule class this week, perhaps for Sunday?
Field Trip Saturday?: San Francisco to see Exposed at SF MOMA
Sandra Philipps, *Voyeurism, Surveillance and the Camera*
Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*
Screen: “Smash his Camera”

Suggested:
Beckman, *Crash: Cinema and the Politics of Speed and Stasis*
Stimson, *The Pivot of the World*
Lee and Meyer, *Weegee and the Naked City*
Panzer, *Things as they Are*

**Week Eleven: March 29: The Museum, The Home and the Collection**
Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One’s Own*
Cohen, *Household Gods*
*Benjamin, “Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian”*

Suggested:
McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullé to Bilbao*
Sally Price, *Paris Primitive*
H. Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany*
Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities*

**Week Twelve: April 5: Modernity and Empire**
Mathur, *India By Design*

Suggested:
Sheriff, *Cultural Contact and the Making of European Art since the Age of Exploration*
Celik, *Empire, Architecture and the City*
Gallo, *Mexican Modernity*
Pinney, *Camera Indica*
Poole, *Vision, Race and Modernity*

**Week Thirteen: April 12: Media High and Low**
Spiegel, *TV By Design*
Screen some of Disneyland, USA, selections to be announced
SATURDAY: OPTIONAL TRIP TO DISNEYLAND

Suggested:
Jenkins, Convergence Culture
McLuhan, Understanding Media
Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow
Varnedoe, High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture
Kaier, Imagine No Possessions

Week Fourteen: April 19: Design: from Gadgets to the Planet
Chu and Trujillo, New Views on R. Buckminster Fuller
Fuller, Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth
Hine, Populuxe
Sparke, The Plastics Age
Screen: "Visual Acoustics"

Suggested:
Jeffrey Meikle, Design in the USA
Penny Sparke, An Introduction to design and culture 1900 to present, edition 2.0
Schnapp, Speed Limits
Whiteley, Reynar Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future
Banham: A Critic Writes: Selected Essays by Reynar Banham
Codgell, Eugenic Design
Massey, Hollywood Beyond the Screen
Betts, The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design

Week Fifteen: April 26: Word and Image
McCloud, Understanding Comics
St. Exupery and Sfaar The Little Prince Graphic Novel

Suggested:
Walker, The Comics before 1945
Sabin, Comix, Comics and Graphic Novels: A History of Comic Art
Berona, Wordless Books: The Original Graphic Novels
Eisner, Will, Comics and Sequential Art
Amidi, Cartoon Modern
Thierry Groensteen, The System of Comics, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen
Chute Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics