Metapictures: An Introduction to Visual Culture
VISS 599
Summer 2019

Location
The Getty Research Institute
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 1-5pm
Plaza Level Conference Room, Mon./Wed.
Special Collections Seminar Room, Th.

Instructors:
Dr. W. J. T. Mitchell, wtjm@chicago.edu
Dr. Ellen Macfarlane, emacfarl@usc.edu

Course Description
This seminar will provide an introduction to the field of visual culture, its origins, history, and controversies, its relation to art history, anthropology, and media studies. The primary readings will be drawn from the publications of the instructor, W. J. T. Mitchell, which will lead out into topics such as the history of optics, the politics of vision, idolatry and iconoclasm, spectacle and surveillance, panoptic technologies, and the relation of images and language.

The course will be organized around a virtual exhibition of “Metapictures,” pictures about pictures, seeing, and visual media. These will include diagrams of the visual process, schematic renderings of media relationships (e.g., the “visual/verbal difference”), atlases and assemblages of visual materials, and images that have played a crucial role in the elaboration of visual theory. An archive of about 80 such images will be circulated prior to the seminar, and participants are urged to think about further examples that might be used as central exhibits in their own research projects.
Course Requirements

1. Attend all seminar meetings and lectures, complete assigned readings, and engage thoughtfully in class discussions.

2. Submit posts to Blackboard Discussion Board for our Monday and Wednesday meetings. Please post three questions and/or comments that focus on the assigned readings. Your questions and comments should demonstrate thoughtful synthesis of the material addressed and raise issues for further discussion in class. Deadline for submission: 10 pm Sunday and Tuesday before class.

3. A 10-15-minute discussion-oriented presentation on an object(s)/aspect of an archive from GRI Special Collections to be given at a Thursday meeting in weeks two and three.
   - 10-15 min, you will have the stage for 20min, including questions/discussion.
   - Strict time limit. Please respect everyone's chance to speak.
   - Kinds of items: Visual material; textual material; visual and textual objects together; multiple objects or one.
   - Briefly tell us what the object is, its use.
   - Tell us what is interesting to you about it, why you chose it.
   - Relate it to idea of the Metapicture.
   - Consider incorporating visual analysis. How does form contribute to meaning?
   - Perhaps you choose to utilize a method from class in your analysis.
   - Or to illuminate a debate we have discussed, such as the October Q.
   - Email Ellen with the specific call information by Tuesday at 3pm the week of presentation
     o Accession no., box/folder, mark with streamer by Tuesday at 3pm.

4. Act as class discussion leader on assigned reading/s at one meeting to critically summarize and analyze key concepts addressed in the texts with the seminar.

5. Final Project: a 15-minute presentation centered on the “Metapicture” of your own research (such as a dissertation) that explains how you have put the Metapicture concept to work in your own research.
   - Center your presentation on the image (it may be textual)
   - Tell us WHY you have chosen the picture and how it functions as a Metapicture within your own research.
   - Consider the Metapictures Atlas:
     o Where would it fit and why? Or, does it need a new cloud? Why? Does your image belong within a particular sequence of images within the atlas?
   - Consider how the Metapictures concept alters, illuminates, opens up new areas of inquiry, etc. your research project and how does your chosen picture show us that?
Grading

Blackboard Posts: 15%
Participation: 15%
Class discussion leader: 15%
GRI Special Collections presentation: 20%
Final presentation: 35%

Course Patron ID

Please use the following login to request materials in Special Collections for the duration of the seminar.

Patron ID: A05013
Password: Getty Class

Recommended Texts, most on the GRI Reserve Shelf

W. J. T. Mitchell:

*Iconology*: Image, Text, Ideology
*Picture Theory*: Essays on Visual and Verbal Representation
*The Last Dinosaur Book: The Life and Times of a Cultural Icon*
*What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*
*Cloning Terror*: The War of Images, 9-11 to the Present *(not in Getty collection)*
*Seeing Through Race* (Harvard, 2012) *(not in Getty collection)*
*Image Science*: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics

Also recommended and/or on reserve:

Neal Curtis, *The Pictorial Turn* (Routledge)
John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*
Nicholas Mirzooff, *The Right to Look* and *The Visual Culture Reader*
Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*
Kaja Silverman, *On the Threshold of the Visible World*
Vanessa Schwartz, *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News*
Lucien Taylor, *Visualizing Theory*
Michael David Levin, *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*
Roland Bleiker, *Visual Global Politics*
James Elkins, *The Domain of Images*
Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*
Ron Burnett, *Cultures of Vision*
Margaret Dikovitskaya, *Visual Culture: The Study of the Visual After the Cultural Turn*
Richard Howells and Joaquim Negreiros, *Visual Culture*
Didi-Huberman, *Atlas, Or the Anxious Gay Science*, 2018
*The Journal of Visual Culture*, available online through GRI Primo & USC, print on GRI L2

**Recommended Films:**
*Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950); *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1983); *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (Nicholas Roeg, 1976); *Blow-Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966); *Bamboozled* (Spike Lee, 2000); *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998); *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958). Feel free to recommend other films or notable scenes that reflect on images and the visual process in cinema and beyond.
Seminar Schedule

WEEK ONE: Visual Culture and Art History

Monday, July 22: The debate over Visual Culture
- The Visual Culture Questionnaire, October 77 (Summer 1996): 25-70.

*In seminar:
- Sign up for lunch meetings with instructors

Wednesday, July 24:

Thursday, July 25: GRI Special Collections

1pm: Meet in Plaza Level lobby for GRI library tour and catalogue training

WEEK TWO: Picturing Vision

Monday, July 29:
- (Joseph presenting) Hans Blumenberg, Paradigms for a Metaphorology, 1960, 1-30 + title page.
- René Descartes, Dioptrics, 1637, 1-16.
- Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations 103-228.
Wednesday, July 31:

Thursday, August 1: GRI Special Collections

*Student presentations
*Malvina Hoffman Papers and the *Hall of Man*

**WEEK THREE: There Are No Visual Media & Atlas Fever**

Monday, August 5: Sounding the Image; the Image/Text:
- Friedrich Nietzsche, Preface to *Twilight of the Idols: How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, 1889, 155-161.
- **Ellen presents on her book project.**
Wednesday, August 7: Atlas Fever
- Mitchell, “Planetary Madness: Globalizing the Ship of Fools”
- Excerpts from Derrida, *Archive Fever*
- Lev Manovich’s *SelfieCity*: [http://selfiecity.net](http://selfiecity.net)

Thursday, August 8: GRI Special Collections

*Student presentations*
*Allan Sekula Papers: Fish Story and Ship of Fools/Docker’s Museum*
*Visit from VSRI Visiting Scholar, Filip Lipiński*

**WEEK FOUR: Images Made Flesh & Student Presentations**

Monday, August 12: Theology of the Incarnation; Cloning:

Wednesday, August 14: Student Final Presentations

Thursday, August 15: Student Final Presentations
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” 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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

*Student Health Counseling Services* - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call engemannshc.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 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) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX* - (213) 740-5086 equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

*Bias Assessment Response and Support* - (213) 740-2421 studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.
The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
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 Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa
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
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
dps.usc.edu, 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) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.