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 beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many have argued that modernity, at its core, concerns transformations in visual culture and experience. This semester I wanted to address this assumption by attending to Marx’s phrase, “all that’s solid melts into air.” We will explore the theoretical literature underpinning the concept as well as its attendant institutions and forms of representation. We will read Baudelaire, Marx, Freud, Benjamin and their latter-day interpreters such as Appiah and Azoulay and examine such topics as identity, time, truth, media and networks. We ponder material expressions such as the centrality of the city, transformations in artistic practice and the rise of commercial visual culture, technological reproducibility from photography to film, the department store and fashion, museums and the mass press. 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, primarily in the West from 1850 to the present. This class is pre-approved for credit as part of the Visual Studies Graduate Certificate.

“The wisdom of the dead and the energy of the living merge to become a tradition that informs the present and shapes the future.

There are few places, very few places left, other than great universities, where ... both the wisdom of the dead coupled with the doubt of the living are vigorously encouraged, welcomed, become the very stuff of education, the pulse of teaching, the engine of research, the con-sequence of learning. No faculty member worth the profession has ever taken for granted as fixed truth or fiat all he or she has learned. The nature of our profession is to doubt, to expand, to enhance, to review, to interrogate. But no faculty member is able to question in a vacuum or is fired to innovate, to create because she or he is interested in erasing the inheritance, the authority of her discipline.

No student is expected to be content with the acquisition of data, of information. It is demanded of her to move beyond the stasis of what is known to what is knowable; toward more and other knowledge, knowledge that might one day contribute to the wisdom of the past.

 Tradition is not there to bedevil us. It is there for us. It is not there to arrest us; it is there to arouse us. That is the continuum; that is the reconcilability of tradition and the future.”

...Toni Morrison, 250th Convocation, Princeton University, 1996...

Assignments and Written Work:

1) All students must contribute a comment and a question about the week’s readings to the class electronic space (https://5f025c71a1b5d.site123.me/) due no later than 11 pm the Tuesday night before class. 25%

2) After the first three weeks, each student will pick a week in which they will read an additional related book where it says “individual report” and include a list of an additional ten possibly
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 presentation. 25%

3) All students will also work in teams (to be constituted by week two) to pick one subject off the list below of research fields or select a related one of the group’s choosing and do an in-class presentation about on-line resources and collections and recent issues and debates. (We can think of this as “A beginner’s guide to…”) 10%

4) The final project will consist of a 20-25-page paper. Given our current circumstances, papers may be review essays where secondary sources are considered or a field/subject is reviewed, but there are also certain subjects where research topics can be examined with satisfactory results. All students should meet with me individually by week 3 to discuss and should write a paragraph proposal for a final project by week 5. 40%

Required Complete Texts, other materials will be provided electronically
*Amato, Exposing Slavery (available through USC library online)
Appiah, The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity
Azoulay, Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism
*King, Gods of the Upper Air (available through USC library online)
Gefter, What Becomes a Legend Most
*Halpern, Beautiful Data or (book pdf is in the class DropBox folder)
Isenstadt, Electric Light: An Architectural History (available through USC library online)
*Murray Dick, The Infographic: A History of Data Graphics In News and Communications (book pdf is in the class DropBox folder)
Clark, News Parade

VSRI Events Tentative Schedule: Complete Calendar with co-sponsored events online
1. Chris Wood, August 27, 12:30, Images Out of Time
2. LeRonn Getty Research Institute, Sept. 1, 7 pm, USC-LACMA History of Photography Seminar
3. Racial Justice Reading Group: September 14
4. Kim Beil, Stanford, September 15, 7 pm, USC-LACMA History of Photography Seminar
5. Images Out of Time Reading Group, September 23, 4:00pm
6. Grant-Writing Workshop, October 3, 10-4
7. Racial Justice Reading Group, October 19
8. Philip Gefter, October 28, 5pm, USC-LACMA History of Photography Seminar
9. Racial Justice Reading Group, November 9
10. Ezra Edelman, OJ Simpson, Made in America and Photographing Sports, November 10, 6pm
   USC LACMA History of Photography Seminar

Weekly Schedule and Readings

Part I. WHAT IS MODERNITY? Some Key Themes

- All that is Solid Melts into Air
- Truth/Knowledge: The End of Magic? Religion?
- Time Consciousness and Time Troubled
- Identity: The Individual, The Social and the Axes of Difference
- Form, Media and Communication: Speed, Mobility, Reproducibility

Week One: August 19: General Introduction: Please ARRIVE HAVING ALREADY READ
- "Weber, “The Scholar’s Work” and Introduction to Charisma and Disenchantment. The Vocation Lectures; see this intro:
the-humanities/#:~:text=In%20%E2%80%9CThe%20Scholar's%20Work%2C%E2%80%9D%20they%20impart%20ready%20made%20worldviews. (see also PDF)


Suggested for Further Reading: Mattelart, Networking the World

**Week Two: August 26: Social Structures/Personal Structures**

- Screen: Steinem on being a feminist: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu8INQWP5yY; https://www.pbs.org/video/makers-women-who-make-america-ms-magazine/
- Screen Buckley and Baldwin Debate: https://aeon.co/videos/the-legendary-debate-that-laid-down-us-political-lines-on-race-justice-and-history

**Week Three: September 2: Visual Culture, Industry and Technology**

- *Francastel, Art and Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Intro and ch. 1.
- *An Appraisal of Mumford’s Technics and Civilizations” in Daedalus, 1959 by Mumford.

**Individual Report:** Ivins, Prints and Visual Communication

**Week Four: September 9: Knowledge, Anthropology and the Production of Difference**

- King, Gods of the Upper Air
- Familiarize yourself with In the Land of the Headhunters project:
  - https://www.curtisfilm.rutgers.edu

**Group Report on Museums**

**Individual Report:** Higonnet, A Museum of One’s Own or Price, Paris Primitive

**Part II: TIME**

**Week Five: September 16: Modern Time(s)**

N and Tiedemann, pp. 930-942.

- “In Crane, Edwards, “Media and Technology.”

**Week Six: September 23: Digging up Trouble: The Long Ago and Far Away**

- “Discovering/Uncovering: Castor, “Prehistoric Imaginary and the Modernity of Images” and Labrusse “Prehistoric Present: How and Why Prehistory has been Conjured in the Present Tense.”
- *Chapters 4 and 5 from Wharton, Selling Jerusalem.
- “In Crane, ed., Landry, “Philosophy, Religion and History.”

**Individual Report: Melman, Empires of Antiquities**

**Week Seven: September 30: The Irredeemable Past?**

- Azoulay, Potential History

**Individual Report: Memmi, The Colonizer and the Colonized**

**Part III: Form, Media and Technologies of Vision**

**Week Eight: October 7: Visual Politics**

- Amato, Exposing Slavery

**Week Nine: October 14: The Technological Sublime**

- *Laura Kalba, from Color in the Age of Impressionism Intro and pp. 149-213.
- Isenstadt, Electric Light: An Architectural History.
- Tristan Grunow: “Ginza Bricktown and the Myth of Meiji Modernization”

**Group Report Week on Celebrity**

**Individual Report on either Ockman and Silver, Bernhardt or Marcus, The Drama of Celebrity**

**Week Ten: October 21: Moving Images: Early Cinema: Curating a Show**

**GUESTS: LACMA Curators Britt Salvesen and Leah Lembeck**

- *Schwartz, The Wax Museum and the Morgue” from Cinema and…or Schwartz, Spectacular Realities
- Drafts of catalogue essays in progress by Salvesen, Lembeck, and Schwartz
- Link for film screenings: La Vie de Jesus (Alice Guy); Travel Films; Poster films and industrial films
Week 11: October 28: Strike a Pose: Fashion/Photography:
GUEST: Philip Gefter
- Gefter, What Becomes A Legend Most.
- *Schwartz, Jet Age Aesthetic, ch. 3 and 4.
- *Bair, The Decisive Network, ch. 4 “Traveling for Holiday.”

Individual Report: Bair, The Decisive Network

Week 12: November 4: The Informational Aesthetic
- *Mattern, Code, Clay, Data and Dirt, Intro and 43-84.
- *Lupton, "Reading Isotype.
- Clark, News Parade

Group Report Week

Individual Report:
Hill and Schwartz, eds., Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News
Nieland, Happiness by Design

Week 13: November 11: Comics: Back to the Beginning?
- *Selections from the King of Comics and Ad Reinhardt, "How to Look at Art.”
- *Jason Hill, The Artist As Reporter, Intro and ch. 5.

Group Report Week

Individual Report: Chute, Why Comics?

FINAL PRESENTATIONS: Date to be determined
In November Presentations/Drafts of Final Projects; preferably week of finals and papers in the ten day period that follows. Given the unclear situation with this new semester being condensed, all final paper deadlines will be discussed in early November and individual contracts written based on current pandemic situation, travel possibilities etc. Best by November 30.

Research Areas: broad areas and you can select something within the area and mix and match
An example: roadside architecture or drive-ins; restaurants, food package design
Museums
Monuments
Design
Display
Department Stores
Graphic Design
Graphic Arts/Print
Logos
Photojournalism/Magazines
Advertising and Consumer Culture
Theme Parks
Exhibitions/World’s Fairs
Film Culture: Exhibition/Film-Making/Star Culture
Architecture and Urban Culture: Housing/Corporate/ Lobbies/Hotels
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” https://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, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:
Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.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
http://www.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) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours - 24/7 on call
https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.
Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086/Title IX - (213) 821-8298
https://equity.usc.edu/, http://titleix.usc.edu/
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.
Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.
The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
http://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 Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710
https://uscsa.usc.edu/
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
https://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
http://dps.usc.edu/, http://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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call
http://dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.