Course Description
This course is an introduction to the key issues of the field of visual culture, looking at the social role of images and visuality (the structures and power relations of looking, being seen and unseen, and vision in society). It introduces students to some of the foundational aspects of visual culture theory and concepts, in contemporary culture, with particular attention to the US context in relation to the global. This course will introduce some of central themes of visual culture, looking at the history of modern forms of visuality and the history of visual technologies, concepts of spectacle and scale, museums and image collections, image icons, taboo images, and the relationship of images to memory. We will examine how images circulate through digital media, remakes, and viral networks, and the cross-fertilization of images between various social arenas, such as art, advertising, popular culture, comic books, news, science, entertainment media, video games, theme parks, architecture, and design. We will also examine the visual culture of New York in our discussion and assignments, in order to better “read” the visual images and visuality we live among and within.

Learning Objectives:
By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Define the visual culture of contemporary society.
- Explain how viewers create cultural meaning.
- Identify how images circulate through different social arenas.
- Analyze how visuality and the gaze function in power relations.
- Evaluate the role of style, irony, recoding, and pastiche in image-making.

Course Requirements:
Students are required to attend all classes, complete the readings for each class session, and complete all assignments. If you miss more than 4 classes without a reasonable excuse, your grade will be lowered.

You should make an effort to meet with me in person at some point in the semester. I am available for consultation via e-mail, in office hours, and by appointment.

Website:
We will have a class blog to share materials.
READINGS:
Mandatory:

Recommended:

Additional readings will be posted on NYU Classes.

ASSIGNMENTS:
There are 4 short papers, a visual project, and a final paper. The short papers will each be an analysis of a visual site, image, text, etc. The visual project will require you to create a presentation (minimum of the equivalent of 20 powerpoint slides) that deploys images (and not text) to narrate its argument. The final paper will be a research paper on a topic related to visual culture, 10-12 pages. Students will submit proposals for approval prior to working on these research papers.

These assignments will be worth the following portion of your grade:

- 4 short papers 10% each
- visual project 30%
- final paper 30%

In addition, strong class and blog participation will enhance your final course grade.

Please type and double-space your written work and number your pages. I recommend you use Chicago style for your citations; the short version is here: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. If you send me a document via e-mail, please put your name in the file name and on each numbered page.

GRADING AND EVALUATION
You are responsible for the material covered in lecture and in the reading. You will be evaluated on (1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your written work and class participation) (2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms (3) and your ability to creatively explore these theories and methodologies. All of your written work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales (1) how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class (2) how well it structures and articulates its argument.
Evaluation Rubric

A= Excellent
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B= Good
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C= Average
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F= Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

B+ = 87-89   C+ = 77-79   D+ = 65-69   F = 0-59
A = 94-100    B = 84-86    C = 74-76    D = 60-64
A- = 90-93    B- = 80-83   C- = 70-73

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams, making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others, and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you cheat on an exam, submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors, receive help on a take-home examination that calls for independent work, or plagiarize.

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in has been your own and no one else’s, and that you have not turned in any work for which you
have received credit in another class, and that you have properly cited other people’s work and ideas. Do not take this policy lightly! Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course. If you have questions about these policies, or proper citation of scholarship, please come speak with me in person. (see http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity)

STUDENT RESOURCES
- Henry and Lucy Moses Center for students with disabilities (http://www.nyu.edu/csd/)
- Writing Center: 269 Mercer Street, Room 233. Schedule an appointment online at www.rich15.com/nyu/ or just walk-in.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1:
  --Introduction

  --Reading Images
  Reading: Practices of Looking, Introduction and Chapter 1
  Paper 1 given: Do an analysis of the visual landscape that you encounter on your way to NYU.

Week 2:
  --Viewers Make Meaning
  Reading: Practices of Looking, Chapter 2
  Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author”

  --Modernity and the Image
  Reading: Practices of Looking, pp. 93-111
  Ben Singer, “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism”
  Wolfgang Schivelbush, “The Railway Journey” (excerpt)
  Paper 1 due.
Week 3:

--Image Icons—Spectacle
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 34-40, 250-60
Robert Harriman and John Lucaites, No Caption Needed (excerpt)
Paper 2 given: Analyze an image of spectacle.

--The Gaze
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 104-37
Anne Friedberg, “The Mobilized and Virtual Gaze”

Week 4:

--Visuality and Power
Reading:
Nicholas Mirzoeff, The Right to Look, Introduction
Paper 2 Due.

--Empire and the Image
Reading:
Anne McClintock, “The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism” (excerpt)

Week 5:

--Concepts of Realism
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 141-51
Michael Foucault, Episteme (excerpt from The Order of Things)
Geoffrey Batchen, Burning with Desire (excerpt)
Paper 3 given: Examine visuality at work in the city. Choose a particular site to do this, and explain why.

--Perspective and Perception
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 151-81
Alex Galloway, Gaming (excerpt)
Week 6:

--Visual Technologies
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 183-90
Geoffrey Batchen, Burning with Desire (excerpt)
Paper 3 due.

--Mechanical Reproduction
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 190-221
Walter Benjamin, “The Age of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

Week 7:

--Collecting and Exhibition
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 56-69
James Clifford, “On Collecting Art and Culture”
Paper 4 given: Visit an NYC museum and analyze its visual displays.

--The Politics of Museums
Practices of Looking, pp. 417-430
Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex”

Week 8:

--Public Art
Reading:
Marita Sturken, “The Wall, the Screen, and the Image”
Casey Blake, “Tilted Arc”
Paper 4 due.

--Visual Culture and Resistance
Reading:
Douglas Crimp, AIDSDemoGraphics (excerpt)
Alison Trope and Lana Swartz, “The Visual Culture of the Occupation”
Week 9:

--Commodity Visual Culture
Reading:
Practices of Looking, Chapter 7

--Desire, Style and Coolness
Reading:
Sarah Banet-Weiser, Authentic (excerpt)
Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction (excerpt)

Week 10:

--Postmodernism and Irony
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 307-28
David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, excerpt

--The Remake and Pastiche
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 328-345
Robert Harriman and John Lucaites, No Caption Needed, excerpt

Week 11:

--Memory and Visual Culture
Reading:
Marita Sturken, “Camera Images and National Meaning” (from Tangled Memories)

--Taboo Images
Reading:
WJT Mitchell, “What do Pictures Want?”
Anne Higonnet, “Conclusion Based on Observation”
Dora Appel and Shawn Michelle Smith, “Lynching Photographs”

Visual Projects due.
Week 12:

--Scientific Imaging
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 347-73
Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive”

--The Digital Body
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 373-84
Joseph Dumit, “Pharmaceutical Witnessing”

Week 13:

--The Viral Image
Reading:
W.J.T. Mitchell, Cloning Terror (excerpt)

--Facebook, Instagram, and Self-Documentation
Reading:
Susan Murray, “Digital Images, Photo Sharing, and Our Shifting Notions of Everyday Aesthetics”

Week 14:

--Digital Media, Digital Identity, Global Images
Reading:
Practices of Looking, pp. 389-413
Lisa Nakamura, “Digital Racial Formations and Networked Images of the Body”

--Conclusion

Final Papers due XXXX