Course Description

This course examines the role and history of photography within the historical landscape of media and communication. The lectures introduce students to the history of photography, from its beginnings in the 1830s to the recent practices of photographers and artists working with photographic technologies in the context of postmodernity. Special emphasis is placed on the accumulative meaning of visual archives, tracing how images relate and establish cultural territories across a variety of texts and media. We will investigate and contrast the mimetic visual strategies within western and non-western traditions, looking at historical and contemporary images in a variety of forms. The primary task of the course will be to develop visual literacy and familiarity with the complex and contradictory genres and social functions of photographic image production. Thus the course will familiarize the student first of all with the key figures in the photographic history and the artistic movements of the periods.

Updating classical concepts of the archive, we will examine how new technologies are rapidly changing both the nature and the power of information, and thus its repositories. In regards to the historical development of photography, this course will cover the general development of the history of photography and its relation to modern visual culture looking at the intersection of photography with traditional artistic practices in the 19th century, the mass cultural functions of photography in propaganda and advertising from the 1920s onwards, and the emergence of photography as the central medium in the production of postwar visual practices.

The course readings will consist of historical documents (artists’ and photographers’ statements) as well as writings by critics and historians that reflect the unstable status of the photographic object between: technology and culture, mass culture and avant-garde art, discourse and documentation. An extensive bibliography and weekly visual events will be provided.

Course Requirements

The major assignment of the class is a visual/archival research project of the student’s choice. This must be formulated early in the semester, a rough draft plan with visual supplements will be due October 15th.

Students are expected to do all readings in preparation for class and to participate fully in class discussions and on Blackboard. Written work for the class will consist of two quizzes, one midterm exam (which will be short essay questions), and a 10-12 page final paper on an approved topic of your choosing related to the course materials. Two presentations are required during the semester – each will have a pre-assigned research topic and will necessitate the construction of an archive. Please note, a brief proposal with short bibliography for the final paper will be due in mid-February. Final evaluation of students’ performance will be made on the basis the following criteria.
SAMPLE SYLLABUS – This syllabus is provided as a sample. Some course content may vary.

In class participation, discussion, presentations 25%
Short Answer Essay Midterm 20%
Quiz [2] 25%
Final Paper 30%

Evaluation

A=Excellent
This work demonstrates a solid understanding of course material, and presents comprehensive, well-focused and well-reasoned analysis. It includes an intelligent use and interpretation of source materials, visual illustrations, interdisciplinary references and no grammar/typing errors. Outstanding work on all levels.

B=Good
This work demonstrates an accurate understanding of course material, presents a reasonable degree of analysis. Quotes tend to stay within the predictable domain of assigned course readings, interdisciplinary concepts are not included. Work reflects competence, but remains at a general level of understanding. Images, source materials, references and quotes and aptly used and writing/presentation is clear and direct. The paper has been carefully proofread and is without errors.

C=Adequate/Fair
This work shows understanding remains superficial, inaccurate or incomplete, writing is vague or inappropriate, typos are included, and the concept level remains at the assumed. Source materials are used inadequately, and arguments lack correct and specific examples.

D=Unsatisfactory
This work is late, demonstrates a serious lack of understanding, and fails to comprehend the basic aspects of the course. Sources and images may be used entirely inappropriately or not at all, and writing/articulation appears lackluster or inappropriate.

F=Failed
Work not submitted.

Plus (+) or minus (-) grades indicate your range within the aforementioned grades.

A  = 94-100
A-  = 90-93
B+  = 87-89
B   = 84-86
B-  = 80-83
C+  = 77-79
C   = 74-76
C-  = 70-73
D+  = 65-69
D   = 60-64
F   = 0-59
SAMPLE SYLLABUS – *This syllabus is provided as a sample. Some course content may vary.*

**Policies**

**Late Assignments:** All late assignments are to be marked down a grade for each day late. All late timed papers/tests will be marked down a grade for every hour late. If you are going to be late with a writing assignment or presentation, notify me before the day the assignment is due and request an extension, otherwise they will be marked down a grade.

**Absences:** Two unexcused absences will automatically result in a grade dropped by 5%, an additional 5% for each additional two unexcused absences. Lateness will also be reflected in your evaluation of participation. Regardless of the reason for your absence you will be responsible for missed work, all absences must have a doctor’s note in order to be excused. Travel arrangements do not constitute a valid excuse for rescheduling exams. If you have to miss a class due to an emergency be sure to get a classmate’s notes. Please come to class prepared; collective participation in this class is critical to our success.

Writing help is available through the Writing Center, 411 Lafayette, 3rd Floor. The telephone number is: (212) 998-8866. This is an excellent resource that I encourage you to explore.

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:** “Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do…you violate the principle 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 courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home that calls for independent work; or plagiarize. Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions…” (see Steinhardt School Bulletin 2008-2010 p. 177-8)

**Notes on Written Work:** All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, in 11-point Times font, and properly cited. On all written work include your name, the course number, my name and the date. Please number your pages, and always include a bibliography. Essays turned in without one will be marked down. Please make sure to keep a hard copy of each assignment you turn in. While computer malfunctions are unfortunate and do happen, they are an accepted excuse for late papers, if your paper is received after the deadline, it will be marked down as stated above.

**Course Schedule**

*Required reading is underlined; anything not underlined is optional and is suggested for students interested in further reading on the subject. All readings [unless stated] are below. It is recommended you obtain a copy of Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*. I will also provide the text to you as a PDF. It is a short text and a good one to have for accurate images.*

**Sept. 13 – Course Introduction, Syllabus, Layout of Readings and Visual Material**

**Sept. 20 – Historical Landscape of Photography**
In-class presentations: Archive
Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*
Michael Fried, Barthes' Bunctum
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Sept. 27 – The Invention of the Photographic Image
Walter Benjamin, Arcades, excerpts
Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Panoramic Travel
Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish, Panopticism
In-class Quiz

Oct. 4 – The Beginnings of Urban Photography
Allan Sekula, The Body and The Archive
Jorge Borges, The Library of Babel, Labyrinths
Sven Spieker, The Big Archive
Jacques Derrida, Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression
Charles Merewether, ed., The Archive

Oct. 11 – NYU holiday

Oct. 18 – Visual Archives: Mirroring, Copies and Doppelgangers
Michel Foucault, The Order of Things
Walter Benjamin, Little [Short] History of Photography
Margarita Tupitsyn, Against the Camera: For the Photographic Archive
In-class Midterm: Short Answer Essay

Oct. 25 – Photography as Reduplication, and the Original
Walter Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction
Roland Barthes, The Photographic Message
Walter Benjamin, Unpacking My Library
March 3 – Viewing: Atget

Nov 1 – The American Documentary Tradition
George Baker, Degeneration and the Decay of the Portrait, Narrative and Stasis

Nov. 8 – Mimetics and the Hyper-real
Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle, excerpt
Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin, On Photography
Rosalind Krauss, A Note on Photography and the Simulacral
Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation
Gilles Deleuze, Postscript on the Societies of Control
Susan Sontag, On Photography

Nov. 15 – The Political Space of the Archive
David Joselit, Toward a Genealogy of Flatness
Hal Foster, An Archival Impulse
Hal Foster, The Archive without Museums
Michel Foucault, The Statement and the Archive, in The Archeology of Knowledge
In-class Quiz

Nov. 22 – Photography and Post-War Imagry
Benjamin Buchloh, The Anomic Archive
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Benjamin Buchloh, A Note on Gerhard Richter's "October 18, 1977"
Buchloh, Benjamin. Photography and Painting in the Art of Gerhard Richter: Four Essays on Atlas
Peter Osborne, Painting Negation: Gerhard Richter's Negatives

Nov. 29 – Advertising as Cultural Archive
Rosalind Krauss, Perpetual Inventory
Rosalind Krauss, When Words Fail

Dec. 6 – Propaganda as Image
Allen Feldman, Violence and Vision
Hal Foster, Death in America
Allen Feldman, On the Actuarial Gaze

Viewing: People, Facebook, Photobucket

Dec. 15 – Future Archives
Final Review, Open Discussion. Final Paper: 10 – 12 pages

Additional Resources:
Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography
Richard Bolton (ed.), The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography
Alan Trachtenberg (ed.), Classic Essays on Photography Lev Manovich, Languages of New Media (see manovich.net for his latest)
Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, The Practice of Looking
WJT Mitchell, What Do Pictures Want?
Stuart Hall (ed), Visual Culture: The Reader
Jonathan Crary, Techniques of the Observer (18th and 19th century)
Svetlana Alpers, The Art of Describing (17th century)
Anne Friedberg, Window Shopping (origins of cinema, 19th-20th century)
Michel Foucault, The Statement and the Archive, in The Archaeology of Knowledge
Margarita Tupitsyn, Against the Camera: For the Photographic Archive

Reader is Currently Available at: Advanced Copy on LaGuardia Place, South of West 3rd St.