

Graduate Course

Making Sense: Introduction to Methods in the Study of Vision, Aesthetics, and Politics

Fall 2013

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This course will be an introductory survey of historical and anthropological methods in the study, narration, and display of visual and media culture. Working with curatorial exhibitions, multi-media projects, film, and different archives we will explore the relationship between aesthetics, technology, science, and society. Questions that guide our study will include whether our contemporary forms of attention and economy have a history? How does one write, and more importantly show histories of sentiments, senses, and technicity? How might the study of vision, broadly conceived, help us to rethink our present, produce new methods in the social sciences, and critically examine the relationship between technology, media, politics, and governance?

The class will be structured as a lab, and students will be encouraged to experiment with different forms of documentation, media, and data collection as part of their practice. We will focus on developing new methods and new practices for curating and writing histories of sense.

Books:

Zahid Chaudhary, Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

Jonathan Crary, Techniques of the Observer (Cambridge:MIT Press, 1995)

Robert Venturi, Steven Izenour and Denise Scott Brown, Learning from Las Vegas - Revised Edition: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form by (1977) Any Version

Natasha Schull, Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas, (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2012)

Requirements:

One 20 page original research paper linked to a web based project on a topic of your choice (40%)
Presentation (20 min) on research project (10%)
Submission of an abstract on project to a conference not at the New School
Being leader of class discussion for one class. (10%)
Classroom participation and attendance (40%)

Leaders of Discussion: Each week two-three students will lead discussion. To do so you must submit to the entire class a list of questions to lead discussion 24 hours before class. You should then be prepared as a group to discuss the readings and points you had questions about for 15 minutes or so. You can discuss big ideas, or go over your questions and ask for clarification on particular pages. Each student presenting should also bring in a “found” or made object/design/recording that relates to the readings in some way, or is part of their final project. This will be part of the discussion and the presentation.

Web Component of Research Project: In the course of this class you will be trained to use a new system being developed at Parsons entitled the Urban Research Toolkit. The intention is to provide a space where you can bring your archival or ethnographic research, post it on-line, organize it for yourself and curate it, and also be trained in some quantitative tools for inputting data should you wish to integrate public databases or visualizations into your topic. You will become familiar with coding and other strategies for standardizing ethnographic and historical information. The system is relatively simple, and will teach you a lot about the constraints and possibilities designed and otherwise of databases, organizing research, and will allow you to collate multi-media forms of data—images, aural, video, etc. Its basically a blog, and does not have to be public, but does have some additional functionality which is helpful, again, especially if you want to input GIS/GPS or other types of data and add visualizations.

Dates: You will be asked to submit a topic for research by October 15th. Final papers are due December 20th. You must show me your archival work and web based work on November 16th. Presentations will run on the 9,11, and 16th of December. Depending on the size of class.

Week One:

Rem Koolhaas, Delirious New York, Junkspace (excerpts)

Week 2: NO CLASS LABOR DAY

Go to MOMA to see: Le Corbusier: Atlas of Modern Landscapes
Go to MET: See the Vanderlyn Panorama in the American Collection in the Basement

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/13052>

Reading:

Le Corbusier from Robert Fishman, "Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century", Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982 (165-263)

Week 3: Vision, Visuality, Media, and History—Some Canonical Texts

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*, 217-252. New York: Schocken, 1968.

McLuhan, Marshall. "Introduction", "Medium is the Message" and "Media Hot and Cold." In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 3-32, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, edited by Philip Rosen, 198-209. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996(1975).
Also available online at:
<http://imlportfolio.usc.edu/ctcs505/mulveyVisualPleasureNarrativeCinema.pdf>

Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism." In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, 195-228. New York: Vintage Books, 1977.

Week 4: Historicizing Attention

Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (entire book)

Stephen Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, New York: Zone Books (1997) , Introduction

See the John Vanderlyn, Panorama at the Met in the basement!!!! (should do this on week 2, but if not then do it)

Return to: Michel Foucault, *Panopticism*, from Discipline and Punish

Recommended:

Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon*,
<http://cartome.org/panopticon2.htm>

Week 5: Science, Vision, and Sensation

Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity*, (selections from book)

Kuriyama, Shigehisa. "The Expressiveness of Colors." In *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine*, 153-192. New York: Zone Books, 2002.

Henning Schmidgen, *Pictures, Preparations, and Living Processes. The Production of Immediate Visual Perception in late-19th-Century Physiology*. In: *Journal of the History of Biology*, Jg. 37 (2004)

Week 6: Vision , Governance, Race, and Empire

Christopher Otter, *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008)

Week 7: (Vision, Governance, Race, and Empire, cont.)

Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire* (entire book)

The Body and the Archive

Allan Sekula

October, Vol. 39 (Winter, 1986), pp. 3-64 [on-line]

Week 8: Rethinking Difference

Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A curious History of the Senses*, New York: Routledge (1993) (excerpts)

Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychaeesthesia"
<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~stou0046/caillois.pdf>

Please check out these movies
Screenings early cinema clips/ Archives Library of Congress [on-line]

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/edhtml/edshift.html>
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhtml/awmi10/index.html>

Week 9: Difference (Cont.)

Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham: Duke 2008) Intro, Chapter 1-3

Week 10: The end of Vision? —Information, Communication, Noise

Hillel Schwartz, *Making Noise: From Babel to the Big Bang and Beyond*, New York: Zone Books (2011)

Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999) excerpts

Week 11: Visualization and Power

Rosalind Morris, *The War Drive: Image Files Corrupted*, *Social Text* 91, Vol. 25, No. 2, Summer 2007

Laura Kurgan, *Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology, and Politics*, New York: Zone Books (2013) (excerpts)

Week 12: Speculation

Learning from Las Vegas - Revised Edition: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form by Robert Venturi, Steven Izenour and Denise Scott Brown (1977) Any Version

Natasha Schull, "Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas", (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2012)

Week 13: Security

Eyal Weizmann, *Hollow Land*, New York: Verso (2012) excerpts

Keller Easterling: *Zone: The Spatial Softwares of Extrastatecraft*, in Design Observer/Places: <http://places.designobserver.com/feature/zone-the-spatial-softwares-of-extrastatecraft/34528/>

Week 13: Perception beyond Humanity

Jake Kosek, *The Nature of the Bees: on the New Uses of the Honeybee*, from Richard Peet, ed. *Global Political Ecology*, New York: Routledge,

Jussi Parikka, *Insect Media* Cambridge: MIT Press (2010) excerpts

Week 14: (cont.)

Stephen Helmreich, *Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas* (University of California Press, 2009) excerpts