

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**COMS 367 (L01): Visual Communication & Culture**

**SPRING 2023: May 3 to June 15**

**Lecture: TuTh 9:00 to 11:45**

**IMPORTANT NOTE FOR IN-PERSON COURSE DELIVERY**

**Note:** This course will be delivered in-person. If you are unable to participate in-class owing to time differences or geographical location, please arrange to take this course in a future term.

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Arti Modgill
<b>Email:</b>	arti.modgill2@ucalgary.ca
<b>Web Page:</b>	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Tuesdays 12:00am to 2:00pm

### **Course Description**

Our everyday lives are characterized by a constant flow of images: in advertisements, art, films, emails, online news, and Instagram. We are both the creators and consumers of images. Yet, how often do we stand back from our visual experience and ask ourselves how visual culture interacts with us, and how significantly it affects the way we think and interact with one another?

This course will explore a range of approaches to the interpretation of visual experiences and introduce students to the critical study of images in society. Collectively, we will ask how practices of looking are bound up with power relations. Topics may include formal image analysis; theories of the image; the politics and ethics of visual representation; portraiture and identity; advertising images; spectacle and modern media; war and propaganda imagery; circulation and the networked image; iconoclasm and censorship.

### **Prerequisite(s)**

Communication and Media Studies 201

### **Additional Information**

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found on D2L.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Please note that we will be studying some challenging material in this course that may involve coarse language, discussions of race and gender and discriminatory practices. In addition, we will look at the intersections of critical race theory and gender studies in our discussions of visual representations of racialized people.

This course offers a combination of lecture, class discussion, and some small group discussion. Coming to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss the material in a respectful, informed manner is essential to success in this course.

## Objectives of the Course

Students will build their visual literary and analysis and:

- To acquaint you with influential theories of the visual that will be relevant to your studies in communications and media studies, as well as to your consumption, interpretation, and production of images in everyday life;
- To engage you with scholarly debates and cultural discourses surrounding the visual, both in the present day and in the past;
- To enable you to develop techniques of analysis as they relate to visual material;
- To involve you directly in the practice of visual culture analysis, with writing assignments and activities that require you to interpret and critique visual materials as well as intervene in scholarly and popular debates surrounding visual culture.

## Textbooks and Readings

The required textbook for this course is the third edition of *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (Oxford University Press, 2018).

It is available for purchase in the University of Calgary Bookstore.

Please note that it is important to ensure you get the 2018 edition of this book; earlier editions differ substantially and do not contain the required readings. A copy of the textbook is also on reserve in the Taylor Family Digital Library. All other readings will be posted to D2L.

## Mark Allocation

“Show and Tell” Group Visual Analysis	Dates Vary	10%
Midterm Exam	May 25	25%
Essay Proposal Activity	June 8	10%
Analytical Essay	June 13	30%
Final Exam	Registrar Scheduled	25%

## Assessments

### Show and Tell – Group Visual Analysis

In groups you will present an image that relates to a concept from the readings and course and present it to the class. This exercise in applying our theoretical lens offers an opportunity to practice new visual literacy skills as a group. Students will introduce an image they find interesting and discuss: what the image is messaging its audience, how that message is delivered, and how successful the visual text communicates. Additionally, groups will submit a one-page written analysis of the image at least one class prior to their presentation. More details and examples will be discussed in class.

### Paper Proposal Activity

Students will meet in small groups to discuss their research, theoretical lens, and major statement for their major paper. Students will bring 2 copies of their proposal to the meeting which will include a paragraph describing their major statement and theoretical lens, an annotated bibliography with their research that states how each item will support their analysis, and a printed copy of the visual text. One copy will be submitted to the instructor and the second used in their discussion with their group. This activity will give students an opportunity to share ideas, offer feedback, and strengthen their own points of analysis prior

to writing their final paper. The assessment will be based on 1) participation, and 2) the thoroughness of the submitted assignment. More details will be discussed in class.

### **Visual Rhetorical Analysis Paper**

Students will write an essay of 2500 words which analyses a visual image by applying the theoretical lens as covered in our readings and discussions. These essays will take the approach of visual rhetorical analysis to critically engage with visual text. More information on the assignment and essay guidelines will be discussed in class and instructions will be posted to D2L.

Students are strongly advised to visit the instructor during office hours to get guidance on their essay and discuss their topic and thesis prior to writing the essay.

### **Midterm and Final Exams**

The exams will assess your knowledge and understanding of both the readings and class lectures.

#### **Midterm Exam**

This closed book exam will cover the first half of the course readings and lectures. The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and a long answer written visual analysis question. The midterm will cover readings, lectures, class discussion and activities to the exam date.

#### **Final Exam**

This closed book, Registrar-scheduled exam will largely cover the second half of the course readings and lectures. The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and one or two long answer written visual analysis questions. The final exam will cover readings, lectures, class discussion and activities mostly past the midterm exam and include some summative assessment questions.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** Yes

**Note:** All major assignments (worth 10 percent or more) must be completed, or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. Failing grades on individual assignments may be averaged out to a final passing grade by other assessment components.

### **Submission of Assignments**

All out-of-class assignments are due at the start of class. Assignments must be typewritten, double spaced, and submitted in hard copy. Please choose an easily readable font type (such as Garamond or Times New Roman) and size 12 point. In exceptional circumstances, which must be discussed beforehand with the instructor, an assignment may be submitted electronically to avoid a late penalty provided that an identical hard copy is submitted at the next class meeting. Assignments will be assessed for writing style as well as content, and all work should be carefully edited and proofread before submitted. Include your name, course, and instructor's name on all assignments. Students are required to retain a duplicate copy of their essays as insurance against loss of their work for any cause.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of*

*Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act.* Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

### **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Essays more than one week late will not be accepted without prior approval of the instructor. In the event of a serious illness, please contact me immediately about an extension. Assignments submitted after the deadline will be graded without additional feedback notes.

### **Policy on the use of Electronic Communication Devices**

Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones may be used in class and tutorials only for course-related purposes and only if their use is not distracting others or negatively impacting the learning environment. **No audio or video recording is allowed in any class without the instructor's explicit permission.**

### **Taking notes**

Research studies have shown that handwritten class notes are markedly superior in terms of acquiring a more thorough understanding of course material and for retention of material in one's memory. Keep in mind that it is the student's responsibility to take notes. (In other words, notes are not given but taken.) Sometimes students assume that notes should be taken only when there is a PowerPoint Presentation on the screen, but this is not true.

### **Email**

Email is most useful for short, specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions on the course material, assignments, or grades, visit the instructor during office hours. The instructor will respond to emails during the week, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read (or replied to) until the next working day.

When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course name (ex. COMS 367) in the subject line. If you do not include the course name in your email's subject line, your message may get overlooked in the instructor's inbox and go unread. Please maintain a respectful tone in your correspondence with the instructor.

**NOTE: Email submissions of work will not be accepted unless otherwise specified.**

### **Student Accommodations**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/). Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors.

## Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

## Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades will be used for written assignments, while percentage or numerical grades will be used for exams.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

\* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

## Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages, A.I. content generators, or visual media.

Students must adhere to the instructor's course policy regarding the use of A.I. generated content in course work. Unsanctioned use of A.I. generated content in course work may be reported as academic misconduct.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

## Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

## Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

## **Research Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

## **Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal**

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

## **Student Support Services and Resources**

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

## **Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings**

See the course website on D2L for the scheduled of topics and readings.

**COMS 367 – Visual Culture and Communication  
READING SCHEDULE\***

Complete readings as listed and be prepared to discuss them in class.

You are required bring your text/reading to class with you for class discussions, group work, and in-class work. You will not be provided with paper copies by the instructor. Ebook copies are acceptable; however, you should have them downloaded to a tablet or laptop rather than inefficiently trying to scroll them on your phone.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topics and Readings</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>
<b>May 4</b>	<b>Course Introduction</b>	
<b>May 9 &amp; 11</b>	<p><u>Tuesday:</u> <b>The Power of Images</b> Chapter 1 (pp. 13-48) in Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. <i>Practices of Looking: an Introduction to Visual Culture</i>. Third edition., Oxford University Press, 2018.</p> <p><u>Thursday:</u> <b>Reading Visual Texts</b> Chapter 2 (pp. 51-86) in Sturken &amp; Cartwright</p>	<p>Ongoing "Show and Tell" Group Visual Analysis 10%</p>
<b>May 16 &amp; 18</b>	<p><u>Tuesday:</u> <b>Introduction to Visual Rhetoric</b> Sonja Foss "Theory of Visual Rhetoric" (<i>Reading on D2L</i>)</p> <p><u>Thursday:</u> <b>Visual Reproduction</b> Chapter 3 (pp. 179-215) in Sturken &amp; Cartwright</p>	
<b>May 23 &amp; 25</b>	<p><u>Tuesday:</u> <b>Visual Realism</b> Chapter 4 (pp. 139-174) in Sturken &amp; Cartwright</p> <p><u>Thursday:</u> <b>Midterm Exam</b></p>	<p>May 25 Midterm Exam (Chapters 1-4 and Foss) 25%</p>
<b>May 30 &amp; Jun 1</b>	<p><u>Tuesday:</u> <b>Our Daily Media</b> Chapter 6 (pp. 219-253) in Sturken &amp; Cartwright</p> <p><u>Thursday:</u> <b>No Class</b></p>	
<b>Jun 6 &amp; 8</b>	<p><u>Tuesday:</u> <b>Brands and Consumerism</b> Chapter 7 (pp. 257-296) in Sturken &amp; Cartwright</p> <p><u>Thursday:</u> <b>Paper Proposal Peer Review Activity</b></p>	<p>June 8 Paper Proposal Peer Review 10%</p>
<b>Jun 13 &amp; 15</b>	<p><u>Tuesday:</u> <b>Visual Identity Construction</b> Payne, Carol. "Through a Canadian Lens: Discourses of Nationalism and Aboriginal Representation in Governmental Photographs." <i>Visual Communication and Culture: Images in Action</i>, edited by Jonathan Finn, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 310-325. (<i>Reading on D2L</i>)</p>	<p>Analytical Essay June 13 30%</p>



	<u>Thursday: Scientific Looking AND Course Review</u> Chapter 9 (pp. 337-374) in Sturken & Cartwright	
<b>Jun 19-21</b>	<b>Final Exam</b> Registrar scheduled	Final Exam 25%

**\*NOTE: This Schedule Is Subject to Change**

This reading list will be adjusted and amended as we move through the weeks and major ideas. You will be informed of changes to your required weekly readings during class.