

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**  
**COMS 367 (L01): Visual Communication and Culture**

**WINTER 2023: January 9, 2023 to April 12, 2023**  
**(excluding February 19-25, April 7, April 10, 2023)**

**Lecture: TR 12:30-13:45**

**This course is in-person.**

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Linda Vennard
<b>Email:</b>	vennard@ucalgary.ca
<b>Web Page:</b>	access via MyUofC portal
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Wednesdays 11:00 -13:00 via Zoom, or in person by appointment

### **Course Description**

We live as both creators and consumers in a constant flow of images. In this course we will closely examine many of them to identify the power relations within visual practices of looking, and consider how visual culture interacts with us. Our inquiry will be theoretical, and also draw on and reflect student experiences, positionalities and interests.

This course is a critical study of images in society. 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.

### **Additional Information**

The weekly schedule of Readings and Assignments can be found at the end of this outline and on D2L. A full schedule of lecture topics and class activities will be provided on D2L.

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

### **Objectives of the Course**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Critically analyze visual communication through a range of theoretical interpretations.
2. Develop skill in techniques of analysis as they relate to visual communication and culture.

3. Identify key elements in image construction (e.g. technical, compositional, social) and articulate their relationship to practices of looking and positionality.
4. Engage with past and present scholarly debates and cultural discourses surrounding visual communication.
5. Critically reflect on their own visual communication practices.
6. Develop skills in visual communication and culture analysis through assignments and activities requiring interpretation, critique and analysis of visual material.

## **Textbooks and Readings**

Required Textbook: Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright. (2018). *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) (Oxford University Press). Be sure to get the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

Both print and digital formats are available through the University of Calgary Bookstore.

Supplementary Readings will be posted on D2L.

Please note: Required readings should be read prior to lectures.

## **Additional Online References:**

American Psychological Association. (2020). Style and grammar guidelines. APA Style. <https://apastyle.apa.org>

## **Learning Technologies and Requirements**

In order to complete courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for zoom office hours).

If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

## **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;

- if their use is not distracting others;
- if their use does not negatively impact the learning environment.

Please familiarize yourself with the University's policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

**No audio or video recording of lectures is permitted without the instructor's explicit permission.**

## Email

When corresponding with the Instructor via email please include the course name and number (Coms 367 L01) in the subject line, along with your full name as registered. If you do not include these your message may be overlooked and go unread.

Please do not send emails requesting information easily found on course documents.

The Instructor will usually respond to emails within 24 hours during the week, but if you have not received a reply in 48 hours please check to make sure you included the course name and number and your full name and resend. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read or replied to until the next working day.

## Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
	<p><b>Tests (4x10% each, total 40%)</b></p> <p>Tests are to be done individually.</p> <p>There are 4 multiple choice tests, each available for 24 hours on D2L. Class time is allotted for students to do the test in the classroom if they wish. All tests are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• open book.</li> <li>• to be done individually.</li> <li>• timed, and once open must be completed in one attempt.</li> </ul> <p>Please allow yourself distraction free time to do the tests. If unforeseen circumstances arise after you have started the test which impact your ability to complete it within the specified time, please contact me as soon as possible to arrange for an alternate time.</p> <p>On each day a test is open I will closely monitor my email to answer questions about the test.</p> <p>For each test I will be in the classroom during regular class hours for students wishing to bring their computer and do the test there.</p>	

10%	<p><b>Test #1</b> (10%) on January 26:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has 40 multiple choice questions.</li> <li>• Covers Ch. 1-2 inclusive and lectures.</li> <li>• Is timed for 75 minutes (includes 50% more time in case of technical difficulties).</li> <li>• Will be open on D2L for 24 hours (from 1:00 pm on January 26 to 1:00 pm January 27).</li> </ul>	Jan 26 (open from 1:00 pm Jan 26 to 1:00 pm Jan 27)
10%	<p><b>Test #2</b> (10%) on February 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has 40 multiple choice questions.</li> <li>• Covers Ch. 3-4 inclusive and lectures.</li> <li>• Is timed for 75 minutes (includes 50% more time in case of technical difficulties).</li> <li>• Will be open on D2L for 24 hours (from 1:00 pm on February 9 to 1:00 pm February 10).</li> </ul>	Feb 9 (open from 1:00 pm Feb 9 to 1:00 pm Feb 10)
10%	<p><b>Test #3</b> (10%) on March 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has 40 multiple choice questions.</li> <li>• Covers Ch. 5,6,7 inclusive and lectures.</li> <li>• Is timed for 75 minutes (includes 50% more time in case of technical difficulties).</li> <li>• Will be open on D2L for 24 hours (from 1:00 pm on March 9 to 1:00 pm March 10)</li> </ul>	March 9 (open from 1:00 pm March 9 to 1:00 pm March 10)
10%	<p><b>Test #4</b> (10%) on March 23:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has 40 multiple choice questions.</li> <li>• Covers Ch. 8,9,10 inclusive and lectures.</li> <li>• Is timed for 75 minutes (includes 50% more time in case of technical difficulties).</li> <li>• Will be open on D2L for 24 hours (from 1:00 pm on March 23 to 1:00 pm March 24)</li> </ul>	March 23 (open from 1:00 pm March 23 to 1:00 pm March 24)
20%	<p><b>Visual Analysis Assignment (20%)</b> (Individual)</p> <p>This assignment is to be done individually. Each student will use an image of their choosing and systematically analyze it structurally and theoretically through short answers responding to a series of questions provided by the Instructor. The goal of the assignment is for students to practice their new visual literacy skills and demonstrate (1) understanding of and ability to apply theoretical frameworks to visual works, and (2) skill in identifying compositional and structural elements forming meaning in the image.</p>	<p>Due in class Thurs, Feb 16</p> <p><b>HARD COPY ONLY</b> <b>NO D2L SUBMISSIONS</b></p>

	<p>The Assignment will contain 10 questions, and each short answer will require a maximum of 100 words.</p> <p>Further details will be provided in class and posted on D2L.</p> <p>The assignment is due in class on Thursday, February 16. <b>HARD COPY ONLY, NO D2L SUBMISSIONS.</b></p>	
10%	<p><b>Indigenous Visual Communication Presentation (10)</b></p> <p>This is a small group assignment.</p> <p>Working in self-selected groups of 2-4, students will present a visual of their choice from an Indigenous culture (see below) to the class and describe the message communicated within its cultural context. The goal of this assignment is for students to enrich their own and their colleagues' understanding of visual communication and cultural codes and meanings beyond their own perspective and positionality.</p> <p>The oral and visual presentation in class will be maximum six (6) minutes, and be in the form of a PowerPoint containing 3-5 slides.</p> <p>For the purpose of this assignment 'Indigenous' will be considered to be <i>"people or things that belong to the country in which they are found, rather than coming there or being brought there from another country."</i> (Collins Dictionary definition).</p> <p>Further details will be provided in class and posted on D2L.</p> <p>Presentation will be ongoing, and a sign-up sheet schedule provided.</p> <p>Self-selected groups of 2-4 students will be formed and groups signed up for a presentation date by Thursday, January 19 at 11:59 pm.</p>	<p>By Thurs, Jan 19 at 11:59 pm: Groups of 2-4 students are to be formed, and signed up for presentation date</p>
<b>Group Project (total 30%)</b>		
30%	<p><b>Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Project (Outline 5%, Paper 25%)</b></p> <p>This is a small group project.</p>	

	<p>Working in self-selected groups of four (4), students will choose a visual, analyze it, and produce a <i>Visual Rhetorical Analysis</i> paper (2000-2500 words).</p> <p>The <i>Visual Rhetorical Analysis</i> paper will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• draw on course material (in particular Barthes semiotic model),</li> <li>• demonstrate critical engagement with their chosen visual and application of the theoretical frameworks studied,</li> <li>• offer a critical analysis of the visual, and</li> <li>• reference course readings as well as at least two outside readings that are scholarly in nature.</li> </ul> <p>Groups will be provided with a set of potential topics early in the course, and are encouraged to propose topics to the Instructor by email or in office hours.</p> <p>Each group is required to submit an <b>Outline</b> (5%) of their project on March 2, due in class – <b>HARD COPY ONLY – NO D2L SUBMISSION</b>.</p> <p>Further details will be discussed in class and posted on D2L.</p> <p><b>Visual Rhetorical Analysis Papers</b> are due Tuesday, April 11 in class - <b>HARD COPY ONLY, NO D2L SUBMISSIONS</b></p> <p>Self-selected groups of four (4) students will be formed by Thursday, January 19 at 11:59 pm.</p> <p><i>“Group members will receive the same grade on assignments; however, the instructor reserves the right to award differential grades based on group peer reviews or information indicating significantly uneven contributions by group members.”</i></p>	<p>Groups to be formed by Jan 29 at 11:59 pm</p> <p><b>Outline</b> (5%) due in class Thurs, March 2 <b>HARD COPY ONLY - NO D2L SUBMISSIONS</b></p> <p><b>Final Paper</b> (25%) due in class Tues April 11 <b>HARD COPY ONLY - NO D2L SUBMISSIONS</b></p>
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### Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

**Note:** You do not have to complete all the assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

### Submission of Assignments

As described above please submit assignments by **HARD COPY IN CLASS** on due dates. Tests will be through D2L.

Include your name and ID number on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

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.

### 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 percentage grades will be used for all assignments.

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%

<b>3.70</b>	Approaching excellent performance	<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>	Exceeding good performance	<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good performance	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>	Approaching good performance	<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>	Exceeding satisfactory performance	<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory performance	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>	Approaching satisfactory performance	<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	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 or visual media.

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/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

**Schedule of Readings and Assignment Due Dates:**  
**(A full schedule of lecture topics and class activities will be provided on D2L)**

Week	Assigned Reading Chapters	Assignments	Due Dates
1	<p><b>January 9-13</b></p> <p>Assigned Readings:</p> <p>Chapter 1: Images, Power, and Politics</p>		
2	<p><b>January 16-20</b></p> <p>Assigned Readings:</p> <p>Chapter 2: Viewers Make Meaning</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups (of 4) formed for <i>Visual Rhetorical Analysis</i> group project by Jan 19 at 11:59 pm</li> <li>• Groups (of 2-4) formed and sign-up date for <i>Indigenous Visual Communication Presentation</i> by Jan 19 at 11:59 pm</li> </ul>	<p>Groups (of 4) formed for <i>Visual Rhetorical Analysis</i> group project</p> <p>Groups (of 2-4) formed and sign-up date for <i>Indigenous Visual Communication Presentation</i></p>	<p>by Jan 19 at 11:59 pm</p> <p>by Jan 19 at 11:59 pm</p>
3	<p><b>January 23-27</b></p> <p>Review of Chapters 1 and 2</p>	<p>Test #1 (10%) Jan 26 (Ch 1-2 inclusive and lecture material)</p>	<p>Test #1 - Jan 26 (open from 1:00 pm Jan 26 to 1:00 pm Jan 27) D2L</p> <p>Due Jan 26 at 11:59 pm D2L</p>
4	<p><b>January 30-February 3</b></p> <p>Assigned Readings:</p> <p>Chapter 3: Modernity: Spectatorship, the Gaze and Power</p>		
5	<p><b>February 6-10</b></p>	<p>Test #2 (10%) Feb 9</p>	

	Assigned Readings:  Chapter 4: Realism and Perspective: From Renaissance Painting to Digital Media	(Ch 3-4 inclusive and lecture material)	Test #2 - Feb 9 (open from 1:00 pm Feb 9 to 1:00 pm Feb 10) D2L  Due Feb 9 at 11:59 pm D2L
6	<b>February 13-17</b>  Assigned Readings:  Chapter 5: Visual Technologies, Reproduction, and the Copy	Individual <i>Visual Analysis Assignment</i> due <b>in class (20%) – HARD COPY ONLY</b>	Due Feb 16 <b>in class – HARD COPY ONLY- NO D2L Submissions</b>
7	<b>February 20-24</b>  Reading Week – no Classes		
8	<b>February 27-March 3</b>  Assigned Readings:  Chapter 6: Media in Everyday Life	<b>Outline (5%) for <i>Visual Rhetorical Analysis Project</i> (5%) due in class Thurs, March 2 <b>HARD COPY ONLY</b></b>	<b>Outline (5%) due in class Thurs, March 2 <b>HARD COPY ONLY - NO D2L SUBMISSIONS</b></b>
9	<b>March 6-10</b>  Assigned Readings:  Chapter 7: Brand Culture: The Images and Spaces of Consumption	Test #3 (10%) March 9 (Ch 5,6,7 inclusive and lecture material)	Test #3 - March 9 (open from 1:00 pm March 9 to 1:00 pm March 10)  Due March 9 at 11:59 pm D2L
10	<b>March 13-17</b>  Assigned Readings:  Chapter 8: Postmodernism: Irony, Parody, and Pastiche		

11	<p><b>March 20-24</b></p> <p>Assigned Readings:</p> <p>Chapter 9: Scientific Looking, Looking at Science</p>	<p>Test #4(10%) March 23 (Ch 8,9,10 inclusive and lecture material)</p>	<p>Test #4 - March 23 (open from 1:00 pm March 23 to 1:00 pm March 24)</p> <p>Due March 23 at 11:59 pm D2L</p>
12	<p><b>March 27-31</b></p> <p>Assigned Readings:</p> <p>Chapter 10: The Global Flow of Visual Culture (an overview and integrative chapter)</p> <p>Paper Writing Workshop</p>		
13	<p><b>April 3-7</b></p> <p>No new Assigned Readings.</p>		
14	<p><b>April 10-14</b></p> <p>No new Assigned Readings.</p> <p><b>Last Class April 11, 2023</b></p>	<p><i>Visual Rhetorical Analysis paper (25%) due in last class Tues, April 11, 2023</i> <b>HARD COPY ONLY</b></p>	<p>Due in last class April 11, 2023 - <b>HARD COPY ONLY - NO D2L SUBMISSIONS</b></p>