

EC USG
Paris
Summer 2017

VISUAL RHETORIC
COM 270
Dr. Brian Carroll



“Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.” –
John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

“It is a paradox of the twentieth century that while visual images have increasingly come to dominate our culture, our colleges and universities traditionally have devoted relatively little attention to visual media.” – Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*

Course Objectives

I. Introduction

Catalog description: While visual images have increasingly come to dominate our culture, our colleges and universities have devoted relatively little attention to visual media. As a partial response to this problem, this course is a study of visual theory, visual literacy and how images are used to persuade. We will utilize Paris’s seemingly unlimited visual possibilities in architecture, advertising and high and low culture to study and interpret audience-specific visual culture and communication.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, my goal is for students to:

- Better understand how images and their viewers make and communicate meaning.
- Understand how to study and decipher images for their textual meanings by applying methods of interpretation.
- Appreciate different modes of responding to visuality, or the practices of seeing or looking.
- Understand the different roles images play in culture and how those roles change as the images move, circulate, become appropriated and cross cultures.
- Understand how cultural influences determine the type of visual messages used and how they are interpreted.
- Learn a grammar and ethics of and for seeing and producing visual messages.
- Appreciate how cultural influences determine the types of messages created and those messages’ interpretations

II. Stuff you need to know

Instructor: Dr. Brian Carroll

E-mail: bc@berry.edu

Home page: <http://www.cubanxgiants.com>

Blog: <http://wanderingrocks.wordpress.com>

III. What you will need (required)

- *The Age of the Image: Redefining Literacy in a World of Screens*, Stephen Apkon
- A digital camera (make, model and sophistication are not factors)

IV. What you may want (recommended, not required)

- *Visual Rhetoric*, Olson, Finnegan and Hope (Sage)
- *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger (Penguin)
- *The Image*, Dan Boorstin (Vintage)
- *pure design: 79 simple solutions for magazines, books, newspapers and web sites*, Mario Garcia (Miller Media)
- *Ourspace*, Christine Harold (University of Minnesota)
- *Graphic Design Across Cultures*, Ronnie Lipton (How Design Books)
- *Meggs' History of Graphic Design*, Philip B. Meggs and Alston W. Purvis (Wiley)
- *Visual Methodologies*, Gillian Rose (Sage)
- *Graphic Communications Today*, Ryan and Conover (Thomson)
- *On Photography*, Susan Sontag (Picador)
- *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (Oxford)

V. Class format: The professor has planned a combination of dynamic out-of-class excursions, a range of media to examine in the classroom, and a bounty of discussion themes and lines of inquiry. Class time, then, will be spent learning ways of seeing, then applying these methods as we examine artifacts from our various media or visual culture safaris, with plenty of discussion throughout. The professor believes in discussive and collaborative learning experiences, realizing that we all bring something unique and valuable to pursuit and discovery.

VI. Policies

- **Attendance:** Every absence that is not excused by the program director results in the drop of a letter grade. Three instances of tardiness will be treated as one absence.
- **Field trips & fees:** Field trips are an integral and required component of Program courses, and students pay their own way. The instructor will collect these fees at the first class meeting.
- **Distractions:** This instructor is easily distracted. Ringing cell phones, therefore, will be lobbed out of the classroom window and into the Paris streets. Chatter during lecture will result in "professionalism and participation" point deductions, as will Facebooking, texting or any other unauthorized Internet use during lecture or topic presentations.
- **Preparation:** Complete the assignments, do the readings and be ready to tackle the activities of the day. Be ready to discuss and debate ideas and approaches.
- **Academic integrity:** Because academic integrity is the foundation of college life, academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure on the assignment in question. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism (reproducing ideas, words, or

statements without giving proper credit to original sources), fabrication, submitting the same work in multiple courses, and aiding and abetting (collusion). For definitions of these terms, please consult the instructor. If you breach this academic integrity policy, you will fail the course and be referred to your college or school dean for disciplinary action. Writing assignments will be submitted to turnitin.com, a plagiarism detection database.

VII. How your course grade will be computed

Daily projects and blog post comments	30%
Project I	30%
Project II	30%
Professionalism, participation, attendance _____	10%
	100%

For daily projects, safaris and blog posts, grades of check plus, check, check minus, and zero will be awarded. Roughly translated, check plusses = As; checks = Bs; and check minuses = Cs, but this is admittedly crude. The wide variability of subjectivity of these daily assignments, such as “bring in three examples of metonymic symbolism,” preclude a more precise grading scheme. The check system also facilitates a faster turnaround time.

To compute your final grade, add up your point totals, apply the appropriate percentages, then refer to the suggested grading system, summarized here:

Definitions of the grades include: “A” students will demonstrate an outstanding mastery of course material and will perform **far above** that required for credit in the course and **far above** that usually seen in the course. The “A” grade should be awarded sparingly and should identify student performance that is relatively unusual in the course and that **demonstrates mastery**.

(Brassai’s Paris by Night, right)



VIII. Assignments

- A. Daily projects and safaris: There will be great variety in these assignments, from analyzing a film or news broadcast to documenting a photographic safari to conceptualizing a print ad.
- B. Larger projects: To evaluate your application of what we are learning, including history, key terms and concepts, and visual rhetorical theory.
- C. Blog post comments: To extend and expand our discussions, the professor will occasionally write to Wandering Rocks (<http://wanderingrocks.wordpress.com>) and invite students to comment on

the post. Evaluated here are a student's creativity, thoughtfulness and the questions the student raises.

- D. Note that professionalism is a significant dimension to each grade. Attendance, participation, preparation and overall professionalism are aspects of this 10%.

Deadlines

- **Late submissions:** Because the due dates for written assignments are known well in advance, there is no reason why the assignments cannot be completed on time. Moreover, it would be unfair to selectively grant extensions. All late work, therefore, will be penalized. Assignments received one class period late will be penalized one letter grade. No assignments will be accepted more than one class period late.

IX. Students with special needs

If you have special needs of any kind, including learning disabilities and/or medications, please let me know.

Finally, I believe we are here for a good time, not a long time, so let's have some fun.

- *"Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing!"* --Judy the elf in "The Santa Clause")
- *"We view things not only from different sides, but with different eyes; we have no wish to find them alike."* --Blaise Pascal, Pensee no. 124
- *"The more you see the more you know. The more you know, the more you see."* --Aldous Huxley
- *"Every appearance is also a disappearance."* - Dr. C