**TOPICS IN CHAPS (AH 441)**

**Heritage and Visual Culture**

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**1. Course description**

Images are virulent, and they intervene in every aspect of our sensorial engagement with the world. The ways in which vision dominates over other forms of perception are part of a wider process of sensorial mediation that is enabled and limited by power struggles. This process of sensorial mediation has a history, and is culturally contextual. Cultural heritage is an arena in which images are created, analyzed and exchanged with social and political intentions. Our first contact with heritage is usually mediated by images, and as professionals our expertise relies mostly in visual analysis.

This course aims to question the relationship between cultural heritage and visual culture. We will discuss the historical trajectories of the visual within heritage and preservation studies, as well as the ways in which heritage produces visual culture. We will focus on the circumstances in which heritage is documented, how heritage imagery circulates, and how it is used to intervene in society by generating affective responses—such as desire and disgust—that have an impact on the public perception of heritage as well as on its management.

We will also look at how the prominence of the visual over other forms of perception is being challenged in the western world, and what kind of alternatives we can propose for a multi-sensorial engagement with heritage.

**2. Course objectives**

By the end of the course, students may be able to recognize that vision is a culturally contextual form of perception, and that cultural heritage is both the product and the enabler of particular ways of seeing. The course has three main learning goals:

* To introduce the concept of visual culture;
* To critically examine the theories and methods that shape the visual perception of cultural heritage;
* To discuss how the work of heritage generates a visual archive, and how that impacts society.

**3. Course texts and readings**

The readings required for this semester can be found at the library and at major online retailers. A number of other readings, including short articles and media materials will be provided online.

**4. Course requirements and assessment**

Class meetings will have three main components: lecture, discussion of readings, and scheduled presentations. All students are required to participate in class and engage with the readings and other materials. This will be evaluated in different ways:

* *Class Participation*: 20%, 100 points
* *Curatorial Work*: 30%, 100 points
* *Final Paper*: 50%, 100 points

*Class participation*: This course requires full and active participation of all students, who are expected to complete all required readings each week prior to class meetings and be prepared to contribute to the discussions. Students will be evaluated on the quality of the contributions. Class attendance is crucial. Students are allowed up to three non-justified absences, but no more than three. The final letter grade will be affected negatively by additional absences not justified with formal documentation (e.g. health reasons). The instructor will provide feedback on participation during the 5th week of classes to let the students know what to improve on.

*Curatorial Work*: The students will co-organize an exhibition at Rutgers about the theme of this course. Each student will be responsible for a set of artworks, and generate a narrative about it for the public. However, this work will be collaborative, and the class will discuss and evaluate the process during the class meetings starting on the 5th week.

*Final paper*: Students will write a research paper (graduate students write a 10-page paper of approximately 2800 words, and undergraduate students will write a 5-page paper, or about 1400 words) on a subject of their preference, as long as it is related to the course themes. Students must relate the chosen topics to the readings and to critical heritage and preservation issues. It is due during the finals week. The details of this assignment will be discussed in advance, and the students must discuss their chosen subject with the instructor before starting their project.

*Grading Scale*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 90-100 | A |
| 88-89 | B+ |
| 80-87 | B |
| 78-79 | C+ |
| 70-77 | C |
| 60-69 | D |
| 0-59 | F |

*General Grading Detail for Assignments and Participation*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Letter Grade | Comments |
| A | Excellent. Well-written, clearly communicated, demonstrates a clear understanding of material and shows critical and creative thinking, going beyond critique. For participation, consistently strong and productive contributions with creative insights. Always prepared for discussion. |
| B/B+ | Good to very good. Fulfilled the assignment, with a few minor improvements suggested. Shows understanding that goes beyond simple definitions. For participation, generally strong and productive contributions. Consistently prepared for discussion. |
| C+ | Basically completed the assignment as required, but little more. General understanding demonstrated. For participation, some substantive contributions, but little more than minimum expectations met. Occasional lateness, missed class, or lack of participation. |
| C/D | Content missing and limited demonstration of understanding. Consistently lacking in participation. Missed several class meetings without justification. |
| F | Missing significant content or did not follow guidelines. Major omissions and no understanding demonstrated. Missed many class meetings without justification. |

**5. Course policies**

It is strongly advisable for students to come to office hours, see the instructor after class, or make an appointment to meet if there are any questions, ideas, concerns, or difficulties to discuss. E-mail is good for logistical issues such as making appointments, but it is much better to discuss in person. The use of electronic devices (except laptops and tablets) is not allowed in classroom.

**6. Plagiarism and academic honesty**

In this course students are individually responsible for doing the assigned readings, and completing all assignments autonomously. Any students caught in violation of this policy will be assigned an “F” in the course and subject to further penalties as prescribed by the University. Check the University policies on: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>

**7. Course schedule**

**Week 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Week 2**

**WHAT IS VISUAL CULTURE?**

**Week 3**

**HERITAGE AND THE SENSES**

**Week 4**

**THE MODERN GAZE**

**Week 5**

**THE PHOTOGRAPHIC GAZE**

**Week 6**

**THE SCIENTIFIC GAZE**

**Week 7**

**THE INTIMATE GAZE**

**Week 8**

**VIOLENCE**

**Week 9**

**RUINS AND PATINA**

**Week 10**

**HYPERREALITY**

**Week 11**

**MEMORY**

**Week 12**

**GLOBAL VISUAL CULTURE**

**Week 13**

**UNRULY ARCHIVE**

**Week 14**

**BEYOND VISION**

**Week 15**

**CONCLUSION**