

COLT 103: Introduction to Comparative Literature -- Visual Cultures

Spring 2007 – CRN 35235 – M, W, F – 10-10:50 – 112 LIL

Instructor: Audrey Vanderford
Email: audreylv@uoregon.edu
Website: blackboard.uoregon.edu

TA: Jen Hammond
Email: jhammon2@uoregon.edu

According to the French theorist Guy Debord, “In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has receded into representation.” Like many contemporary scholars, Debord contends that the image dominates our present-day culture. Recognizing the pervasiveness and power of the image, this class will provide students with analytical frameworks for understanding and interpreting visual culture through an examination of photography, film, performance, graphic novels, and digital media.

Required texts:

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

Daniel Clowes, *Ghost World*

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard

Assignments and grading:

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|-----------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| Participation | 15% | Presentation | 10% |
| Exams (2 @ 25%) | 50% | Term paper | 25% |

Participation:

While I have no formal attendance policy per se (as in “you miss 2 lectures, you fail”), I do expect you to come to class prepared—do the readings, and be ready to discuss the material. Attendance will be taken in both lecture and discussion section, so I will know if you are present. “Participation” in my mind is a combination of attendance, attentiveness, in-class assignments, and the occasional pop-quiz if I’m feeling particularly mean or if you are being particularly slack.

Presentation:

In your first discussion section meeting, students will sign up for group presentations. In your discussion section, beginning week six, these groups (consisting of 2-3 students) will offer a 5-10 minute multimedia presentation based on that week’s topics, themes, and assigned materials. Presentations must include some visual component and will be accompanied with a 1-2 page written commentary.

Exams:

In order to strong-arm you into engaging with the materials I’ve assigned, I will be testing you throughout the course of the term. The exams will draw on the assigned readings and media, on lectures, and on in-class discussions.

Term Paper:

By Spring Term, you should know the routine—pick something interesting that you come across in this course and write a 5-7 page (double-spaced, typewritten) paper on it. More details will follow, including some suggestions for topics. Papers due Finals Week – no later than 5pm Wednesday June 13.

Individual Conferences:

To compensate for the cancelled classes in Week 1 and 2, I will meet with you each during Weeks 9 and 10 to discuss your term papers. I will circulate a sign-up sheet so you can select a time that works with your schedule.

Tentative Schedule:

Note: the reading schedule is subject to change at the whim of the instructor. I will notify you one week in advance if this is the case. Otherwise, please have readings completed by day listed. All films must be screened outside class, unless otherwise indicated. [BB] = Blackboard

Week 1 4/2 Introduction

| | | |
|-------------|------|---|
| | 4/4 | THE IMAGE |
| | 4/6 | Reading: Berger Class cancelled (No Discussion Section this week) |
| Week 2 | 4/9 | Class cancelled |
| | 4/11 | THE IMAGE + TEXT Reading: <i>Ghost World</i> |
| | 4/13 | Reading: <i>Ghost World</i> , cont. |
| Week 3 | 4/16 | THE BODY Reading: Wojcik [BB] |
| | 4/18 | Reading: Balsamo [BB] |
| | 4/20 | BODIES IN MOTION Reading: Fusco [BB] |
| Week 4 | 4/23 | THE MOVING IMAGE Reading: Eisenstein [BB] |
| | 4/25 | Reading: Mulvey [BB] Film (in-class): <i>Rear Window</i> |
| | 4/27 | Film (in-class): <i>Rear Window</i> , cont. |
| Week 5 | 4/30 | EXAM 1 |
| | 5/2 | THE SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE Reading: Debord, Baudrillard [BB] |
| | 5/4 | Film: <i>The Matrix</i> |
| Week 6 | 5/7 | SURVEILLANCE SOCIETY |
| | 5/9 | Reading: Foucault, Surveillance Camera Players [BB] |
| | 5/11 | Reality TV: TBA (Discussion Section: Presentations) |
| Week 7 | 5/14 | DIGITAL IMAGE/DIGITAL CINEMA Guest Lecture |
| | 5/16 | Reading: Fiske, Joselit [BB] |
| | 5/18 | Media: YouTube (Discussion Section: Presentations) |
| Week 8 | 5/21 | DIGITAL PLACE |
| | 5/23 | Reading: Foucault, Batchen Reading: Nakamura, Campanella [BB] |
| | 5/25 | Meet Online – “Place” TBA (Discussion Section: Presentations) |
| Week 9 | 5/28 | No Class |
| | 5/30 | DIGITAL PLAY Reading: TBA |
| | 6/1 | Videogames: TBA (Discussion Section: Presentations) |
| Week 10 | 6/4 | THE FUTURE? Reading: Haraway [BB] Film: <i>Ghost in the Shell</i> |
| | 6/6 | CONCLUSIONS |
| | 6/8 | Exam 2 |
| Finals Week | 6/13 | Term paper due no later than 5pm |