“Seeing is believing” seems self-evident. That is why we even question our own sanity if we cannot trust our eyes. Yet vision is neither innate nor inborn. It is developed in early children by input of clear images from each eye. Through our vision, as well as other faculties, children develop a schematic concept of the world. For this reason, we are surprised when our preconceived ideas are challenged, as when we are presented with optical illusions (e.g. Escher perpetual steps). The process of perception involves receiving images, analysing them and making predictions based on memory, expectations and previous experience. When the brain function is disturbed, we hallucinate and see things that are not there. Stated simply, the first objective of this course is to demonstrate that we see with our brains and not with our eyes. We will do this by exploring the physics, anatomy and physiology of vision including functional MRI imaging of the vision of the brain when presented with different images.

If our perception can be influenced by our experience, the reverse can also apply. By manipulating images, we can create different perceptions. “Photographs don’t lie.'' is another truism. Images can be manipulated. Throughout history, there are also many examples of mass manipulation from propaganda images. Today with the widespread use of digital photography and the use of multi-media in journalism, computer manipulation is made easier. There are many examples of politicians being airbrushed out or juxtaposed. Simply cropping photographs can portray a different story. Our second objective is to help students appreciate our perceptions which can be influenced by the manipulation of images. They can actively participate by finding everyday examples from history, from journalism, from advertisement and analyse the devices used.

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. Is beauty entirely subjective? Is our judgement of how attractive a member of the opposite sex influenced by our own perception of how good looking we are? We are going to approach our individual preferences and the prevailing concept of beauty from the point of view of the development of self-image, of psychosexual growth of young adolescence. The objective is to see if we could challenge students to take a more detached look at the prevailing culture of body image.