



VISUAL RHETORIC
COM 270
Dr. Brian Carroll

SPRING 2018
MWF
11-11:50 p.m.
LAU 113

“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: Study of visual theory, visual literacy and how visual images are used to persuade. Students study and interpret audience-specific visual culture and communication, and the rhetoric of visual materials.



Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students should:

- Better understand how images and their viewers make and communicate meaning.
- Understand how to “read” and deconstruct images by applying methods of interpretation.
- Appreciate different modes of visibility, or the practices of seeing or looking or reading images.
- Understand the different roles images play in culture and how those roles change as the images are communicated, circulated and appropriated.
- Understand how cultural influences determine visual messages and how they are interpreted.
- Learn a grammar and ethics of and for seeing and producing visual messages.

The course uses images to ask questions about vision and seeing, power, spectatorship, reality and other aesthetic concerns, organized around a few central questions: What are images? What do they do? How do they work? How are they structured, and how in turn do they structure or frame or influence our perceptions of reality? What do they mean? How do they create meaning? How do we negotiate those meanings?

II. Stuff you need to know

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E-mail: bc@berry.edu | bc@unc.edu

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

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

Office hours: MWF 2-4pm; T 1-5pm | by appointment | walk-ins are welcome

Course website, calendar and syllabus are available:

<http://www.cubanxgiants.com/berry/270> (memorize this URL, be one with it, and refer to it daily).

III. What you will need (required)

- *The Age of the Image: Redefining Literacy in a World of Screens*, by Stephen Akron (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2013).

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

- *Seeing is Believing*, Arthur Asa Berger (McGraw-Hill)
- *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 enterprises (safaris), 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:** Be here every day on time, just as you would for a job, surgery or even a haircut. Everyone gets one unexcused absence or late arrival, maybe two, with no questions asked. Stuff happens. After that, unexcused and/or unexplained absences (and/or lateness) will result in point deductions from the "professionalism and participation" portion of your grade -- **one point for each unexcused absence and/or late arrival**. What is excused is at the instructor's discretion, so you are best served by discussing situations and extraordinary circumstances prior to class whenever possible.
- **Distractions:** This instructor is easily distracted. Ringing or buzzing smartphones, therefore, will be lobbed out of the classroom window and/or run over with a truck. Chatter during lecture will result in "professionalism and participation" point deductions, as will Facebooking, texting or any other device use during lecture or topic presentations. Do homework for other

classes somewhere else. Leave your laptop at home. If you have to arrive late or leave early, clear it with the instructor beforehand whenever possible.

- **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 at Berry, 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, fabrication, submitting the same work in multiple courses, and aiding and abetting. For definitions of these terms, please consult the instructor. Additionally, violators will be reported in writing to the Provost. Students who are sanctioned for violating the academic integrity policy forfeit the right to withdraw from the class with a grade of “W.”

VII. How your course grade will be computed

Daily projects, safaris & blog post comments	15%
Exam or Project I	25%
Exam or Project II	25%
Exam or Project III	25%
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 a bit crude. The variety and subjectivity of these daily assignments 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 Berry College Communication Department suggested grading system, summarized here:

A = 93-100	A-= 90-92	B+=88-89	B=83-87
B- = 80-82	C+= 78-79	C=73-77	C-=70-72
D= 60-69	F=59 and below		

Definitions of the grades can be found in the Berry College Catalog. “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**.

VIII. Viking Honor Code

It is not just policy. It is foundational to the academic environment we enjoy and in which scholarship thrives. It is in force in this classroom and during all lab sessions. For the complete Viking Code, please consult the student handbook. In short, each student is “expected to recognize constituted authority, to abide by the ordinary rules of good conduct, to be truthful, to respect the rights of others.” The College’s

mission, in part, commits to a community of integrity and justice. During an era when ethics are sometimes suspect, there seems no higher goal toward which students ought to strive than that of personal honor.

IX. 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 test your recall of history, key terms and concepts, and to test your ability to apply visual rhetorical theory to examples and artifacts.
- 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%. Please see the policies section for details on how points are won and lost.

Deadlines

- **Late submissions:** Because the due dates for written assignments are known well in advance, there is no reason why they cannot be completed on time. Assignments received one class period late will be penalized one letter grade. Assignments received two class periods late will be penalized two letter grades. No assignments will be accepted more than two class periods late unless arranged with the professor prior to the original due date.
- **Please note:** If a student misses a class when an assignment is due and that student has a legitimate excuse, I will accept the late assignment without penalty. I define what constitutes a legitimate excuse and reserve the right not to grant full credit for assignments turned in under these circumstances. The same holds true for exams. The best policy is to come speak with me.

X. Students with special needs

If you have special needs of any kind, including learning disabilities and/or medications, please let me know. Let us discuss it and work together to overcome. In addition, *"students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodation in this course are encouraged to contact the Academic Support Center in Memorial Library as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion."* - Academic Support Center.

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



"Every appearance is also a disappearance." - Dr. Carroll

"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

