



Eadweard Muybridge, *Woman jumping over barrier*, 1887

## Art 620

### History and Theory of Imaging and Digital Arts Fall 2015 /// Wednesday 2:00-5:40

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#### Course Description

Beginning in the mid-1800s, innovations in communication, advances in transportation, and a general trend toward increased mechanization radically reconfigured Western societies. Among the defining features of this new “modern” way of life were dramatic, fundamental alterations in experiences, senses, and perceptions: of time and space, public and private, work and leisure, self and other, reality and representation. This was the period during which the media environment we currently inhabit began to take shape, and we have inherited, and often intensified, the uncertainties precipitated by these changes.

Although we ‘postmoderns’ have largely abandoned many of the technologies that revolutionized life in that period (like the telegraph and the railroad), we remain enamored of another machine that exemplified and perhaps even defined modernity: the camera. We revel in the lush visual landscapes that have flourished since its invention, even as we continually rehearse the anxieties of the earliest photographic spectators about the trustworthiness and power of images. These concerns became more acute with the rise of mass media and consumer culture and more vexing yet with the development of digital imagining technologies. The goal of this course is to chart these visual questions, complexities, and ambivalences. To do so, we will explore the connections between visual artifacts; the social, cultural, and political contexts in which they circulate; and the theoretical perspectives that illuminate those relationships.

### Course Goals and Objectives

This course is an extended consideration of the significance of visual media: its social, historical, political, cultural, and ethical importance. It emphasizes active and critical engagement with a variety of theoretical perspectives on visual media and culture through reading, writing, and the sharing of perspectives. We will test and refine these theories against practical and material examples to assess their relevance and explanatory power. Students will be encouraged to use others’ ideas to reflect on their artistic praxis, and also to develop their own theorizations of visual media. Upon successful completion of the course, students will be:

- Critically aware of the social, cultural, and political functions that the visual has served since the mid-nineteenth century
- Fluent in the concepts, theories, and debates that inform the study of visual media
- Experienced at using these analytics to consider their own artistic praxis
- Empowered to use those artistic and other experiences to generate new analyses of other artists’ work and theories of visual media
- Prepared for future coursework in the IMDA program and to continue making meaningful contributions to its intellectual and creative communities.

### Required Texts

The following text is required and available for purchase at the UMBC Bookstore:

Durham, Meenakshi Gigi and Douglas Kellner, eds. *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. [ISBN: 978-0470658086]

Other readings will be available on Blackboard or elsewhere online (like the UMBC library website). All readings that appear on the syllabus are required, unless otherwise indicated.

### Course Policies

This course is designed to be a collaborative learning experience, and the following guidelines and policies are designed to help facilitate that.

- *Please bring all assigned readings to class and be prepared to discuss them.* This is especially crucial because course meetings will emphasize active and critical engagement with the texts.
- *You are responsible for keeping track of assignment deadlines and submission instructions as outlined on the syllabus and assignment sheets.* If you are unable to complete or deliver an assignment because of an emergency, contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements for submitting your work.
- *Late work may not be accepted; if accepted, it will be penalized.* Some assignments cannot be submitted late, and accordingly will not be accepted after the deadline. Before choosing to miss a deadline, contact me to determine whether you will be able to receive partial credit for late work. Every day that an eligible assignment is late will result in a deduction of 1/10 of the total points possible. If a family or medical emergency arises, I may agree to accept a late assignment without penalty.
- *Talk with me outside of class.* Stop by during office hours to discuss any elements of the course that intrigue, excite, vex, or puzzle you. E-mail me any time with questions about the readings, ideas about papers/projects, or feedback about the course. Outside of office hours, e-mail is the best way to reach me.
- *Use mature judgment when deciding whether or not an illness should prevent you from attending class.* Put simply: if you are sick, stay home. As soon as your health permits, contact a classmate for notes and updates. If an emergency arises that will keep you from attending class, please e-mail me as soon as possible to let me know.
- *'Emergency' means emergency.* If you are seeking a deadline extension because of an emergency situation, remember that emergencies are illnesses (of you or a family member, including partners, children, and creatures) or other unpredictable events of that magnitude.
- *Use e-mail judiciously.* Many questions can be answered by consulting the course syllabus, assignment sheets, or classmates; checking these places first will lead you to the desired information faster than e-mailing your professor. Plan to wait at least 24 working hours for a response, and more at busy times of the semester or for complicated questions.
- *This course uses Blackboard.* Some of your readings and assignments will be available through Blackboard, and I will also use this forum to post announcements outside of class. If class is cancelled, I will post updates on our Blackboard site.
- *Please turn off cell phones at the beginning of class* unless you are a parent, caretaker, or possessed of another need to be accessible.
- *Use available media wisely and respectfully.* Productive dialogue cannot occur when members of the class are distracted by things like Facebook or text messaging.

## Course Requirements

### **Participation and contribution to course's intellectual community (20%)**

ART 620 is a requirement for the completion of your degree but also, and perhaps more importantly, essential to the formation of a creative and intellectual community for your cohort. The seminar format of this course is designed to promote critical engagement and the sharing of perspectives. Consequently, everyone will derive the most benefit if all members of the course attend every class meeting, having read every assigned text carefully and well enough in advance to permit thoughtful reflection on the material and their peers' comments about it. There are a variety of ways that students might contribute meaningfully to our conversations, whether by synthesizing ideas, identifying troublesome parts of the reading, drawing comparisons, seeking clarification, querying authors' claims, engaging with others' comments, or making connections to the world beyond the classroom. The professor's primary roles will be to pose questions and facilitate discussion, to provide intellectual context or background when necessary, and to be available to answer questions during and outside of class.

### **Response papers and replies (5 @ 4% each + 5 @ 3% each = 35%)**

Our intellectual community will be formed, in large part, through interaction with theorists' ideas, and the Response Papers and Replies will be a crucial component of this process. Response Papers will allow you to give complex ideas sustained consideration and assess both your comprehension of them and their relevance for artistic praxis. In the process of drafting your reply, you will re-encounter the reading through a colleague's perspective and so explore dimensions of it that you might otherwise have overlooked.

Five times throughout the semester, on dates of your choosing, you will write a 750-1000 word paper in response to one of the assigned readings for that day. By 12:00 p.m. on the Monday before class, you will post your response to that week's discussion board on the Art 620 Blackboard site, so that your classmates have the opportunity to read, reflect, and comment on it. Five *other* times during the semester, on dates of your choosing, you will write a 500-750 word reply to a classmate's response paper and post it to the discussion board by 12:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before class. Both writers and respondents should come to class prepared to speak about their submissions. Detailed instructions on this element of the course will be provided in a separate document, which will include guiding questions for completing each kind of writing. At the beginning of our second class meeting, students will choose all ten of their dates.

### **Reflection paper (10%)**

Due at the beginning of class on September 23, this 5-7 page paper will be an opportunity for you to place a theorist from the first weeks of the course in conversation with an artwork of your choice. The goal of this paper is to place the two perspectives in relationship, and so to consider what the critical perspective illuminates about the piece (or, alternately, what it cannot capture or account for) and how the artwork echoes (or complicates) ideas from the reading. The idea is to test the limits and potentials of each approach to the visual. More information about this assignment will be provided in advance of the deadline.

### **Facilitation (10%)**

Once during the semester, on a day for which you did not complete a Response (you can facilitate on a day that you contributed a Reply), you will be responsible for facilitating 25-30 minutes of class. These minutes are yours to fill in any way you see fit: discussion,

lecture/presentation, screening, creative work, some combination of these, or another option not on the list. As you consider your facilitation, focus on making connections: between readings, concepts, pieces of art, and people. Think expansively about how to realize that goal, and feel free to discuss your ideas and plans with me (or past 620 students) in advance. Facilitations will begin once the semester is underway, and we will talk more about the expectations for this assignment before anyone completes it.

### **Final project (proposal (3%) + project (22%) = 25%)**

The final project is an opportunity for you to orient yourself on your creative and intellectual trajectory by both reflecting on the course and looking ahead to new directions for your work. You will accomplish this by grounding your project in course materials and concepts while also exploring other approaches to these ideas with outside research, as appropriate. The topic and scope are entirely up to you, and you can decide whether you want to prepare a seminar paper, creative project, some hybrid of the two, or something else entirely. Please note that the final project you prepare for this class must be original and prepared specifically for Art 620 (IMDA students: we will talk in class about how this assignment might intersect with work that you are doing in preparation for grad review day and other end-of-semester events.)

More information about all components of the final project will be provided later in the semester.

#### *Final project proposal (3%)*

In this 1-2 paragraph document, you will offer a brief plan and rationale for your final project. Successful proposals will provide a clear, succinct description of the anticipated project, and its significance, while specifying how it will reflect on and expand inquiries from the course.

In lieu of our class meeting on Wednesday, November 25, all students will upload their proposal to the course's Blackboard site by 12:00 p.m. on Monday, November 23. By 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 25, all students will provide a peer review of a classmate's proposal, also posted to Blackboard. Failure to satisfactorily complete the peer review will result in a 0 for the proposal.

#### *Final project (22%)*

Final projects are due by 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 9. No late assignments will be accepted.

### Evaluation

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

93-100% = A

90-92% = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86% = B

80-82% = B-

77-79% = C+

73-76% = C

70-72% = C-  
60-69% = D  
59% and under = F

Note to IMDA students: To fulfill the requirement of completing 620, you must earn a grade of B or higher in the course.

### Academic Integrity

Integrity is the foundation of any scholarly community. By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in our intellectual community. This means that everyone's academic work and behavior will be held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty.

Verifiable instances of academic misconduct in this course will be penalized and documented in UMBC's Academic Misconduct Database. Possible course penalties will be assessed in light of the nature of the infraction and in accordance with UMBC policies; they may include a grade of '0' on the assignment, a 10% or greater deduction from the student's overall grade for the course, or failure of the course. Upon review, UMBC's Academic Conduct Committee may also recommend additional disciplinary action, including notation on the student's transcript, suspension, or expulsion.

Academic misconduct is a choice, and therefore it is preventable. Remember:

- ! ALWAYS cite your sources (your professor can help with this)
- ! ALWAYS ask questions if you are unsure of what constitutes academic dishonesty
- ! ALWAYS see your professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are welcome in this class! If you need to have an accommodation made for a disability, please let me know *as soon as possible* so that we can work together to meet your needs. For more information on your rights as a student with a disability and the resources available to you, contact Student Support Services at 5-3250.

## Class Schedule (Subject to Change at My Discretion)

Course readings are organized into seven paired inquiries (each divided across two class periods) into particular visual practices, relationships, and dilemmas. Please note that readings are due on the date under which they appear.

### *W August 26 /// Ideology and Material Reality*

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideals” (*KeyWorks* 31-33)
- Antonio Gramsci, “History of the Subaltern Classes” / “The Concept of ‘Ideology’” / “Cultural Themes: Ideological Material” (*KeyWorks* 34-37)
- Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)” (*KeyWorks* 80-86)

### *W September 2 /// Ideology and Material Reality*

- Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (*KeyWorks* 37-53)
- Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (*KeyWorks* 53-75)
- Michael Betancourt, “The Aura of the Digital.” *CTHEORY* (September 2006): available at <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=519>

### *W September 9 /// Seeing and Sensing*

- Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator.” In *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, edited by Linda Williams, 114-134. Depth of Field. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994.
- Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra” (*KeyWorks* 388-407)
- Ariella Azoulay, “What Is a Photograph? What is Photography?”, *Philosophy of Photography* 1, no. 1 (2010): 9-13.
- Hito Steyerl, “In Defense of the Poor Image,” *e-flux* 10 (November 2009): <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>

### *W September 16 /// Seeing and Sensing*

- Shawn Michelle Smith, “The Space Between: Eadweard Muybridge’s Motion Studies.” In *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen*, 75-98. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Mark Côté, “Technics and the Human Sensorium: Rethinking Media Theory Through the Body.” *Theory & Event* 13, no. 4 (2010): n.p. /// available through UMBC library website
- Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message” (*KeyWorks* 100-107)
- Brian Massumi, “The Archive of Experience.” In *Information is Alive: Art and Theory on Archiving and Retrieving Data*, edited by Joke Brouwer and Argen Mulder, 142-151. Rotterdam, NL: NAI Publishing, 2003. /// available at <http://www.brianmassumi.com/textes/Archive%20of%20Experience.pdf>.

### *W September 23 /// Bodies and Spectacles*

(readings continue on next page ...)

- **Reflection paper due at the beginning of class!**
- Michel Foucault, “Docile Bodies” and “Panopticism.” In *Discipline and Punish*, translated

- by A. Sheridan, 135-169 and 195-230. New York.” New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Kimberly Hamlin, “The ‘Case of a Bearded Woman’: Hypertrichosis and the Construction of Gender in the Age of Darwin.” *American Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (December 2011): 955-981. /// available through UMBC Library website
- J. Martin Daughtry, “Thanatosonics.” *Social Text* 32, no. 2 119 (2014): 25-51. /// available through UMBC library website

*W September 30 /// Bodies and Spectacles*

- Rosemarie Garland Thomson, “The Cultural Work of American Freak Shows.” In *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, 55-80. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?” In *About Looking*, 3-28. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.
- Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public.” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 547-566. /// available through UMBC library website
- Jane Blocker, “The Shame of Biological Being: Microbiology and Theories of Subjectivity in a Project by Ann Hamilton and Ben Rubin.” In *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony*, 103-120. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

*W October 7 /// Commodities and Feelings*

- Roland Barthes, “Operation Margarine”; “Myth Today” (*KeyWorks* 95-100)
- Guy Debord, “The Commodity as Spectacle” (*KeyWorks* 107-109)
- Barry Shank, “Vicious Sentiments: Nineteenth-Century Valentines and the Sentimental Production of Class Boundaries.” In *A Token of My Affection: Greeting Cards and American Business Culture*, 16-65. Popular Cultures, Everyday Lives. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Lisa Parks, “Falling Apart: Electronic Salvaging in the Global Media Economy.” In *Residual Media*, edited by Charles R. Acland, 32-47. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

*W October 14 /// Commodities and Feelings*

- Frederic Jameson, “Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” (*KeyWorks* 407-433)
- Sara Ahmed, “Happy Objects.” In *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, 29-51. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- McClintock, Anne. “Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising.” In *The Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, 506-518. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 2002.

*W October 21 /// Empire and Images*

(readings continue on next page ...)

- Kristen Whissel, “The Gender of Empire: American Modernity, Masculinity and Edison’s War Actualities.” In *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, edited by Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, 141-165. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Brenda L. Croft, “Laying Ghosts to Rest.” In *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, edited by Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, 20-29. London: Routledge, 2002.

- Laura Wexler, "The Missing Link." In *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*, 262-290. Cultural Studies of the United States. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- Wendy Kozol, "Looking Elsewhere." *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture* 11:2 (2011): <http://reconstruction.eserver.org/112/Kozol.shtml>.

W October 28 /// *Empire and Images*

- Anjali Nath, "Beyond the Public Eye: On FOIA Documents and the Visual Politics of Redaction." *Cultural Studies <-> Critical Methodologies* 14, no. 1 (2013): 21-28. /// available through UMBC Library website
- Gil Z. Hochberg, "Introduction: Visual Politics in a Conflict Zone" and "The (Soldier's) Gaze and the (Palestinian) Body: Power, Fantasy, and Desire in the Militarized Contact Zone." In *Visual Occupations: Violence and Visibility in a Conflict Zone*, 1-35 and 79-96. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
- Lily Cho, "Citizenship, Diaspora, and the Bonds of Affect: The Passport Photograph." *Photography and Culture* 2:3 (2009): 275-287. /// available through UMBC library website

W November 4 /// *Desire and Otherness*

- Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (*KeyWorks* 267-274)
- Judith Halberstam, "The Transgender Look." In *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, 76-96. New York: New York University Press, 2005. /// available at <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic464958.files/Halberstam%20The%20Transgender%20Look.pdf>
- Michele White, "Babies Who Touch You: Reborn Dolls, Artists, and the Emotive Display of Bodies on eBay." In *Political Emotions: New Agendas in Communication*, edited by Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovich, and Ann Reynolds, 66-89. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" (*KeyWorks* 308-318)

W November 11 /// *Desire and Otherness*

- Judith Butler, "Torture, Sexual Politics, and the Ethics of Photography" (Available through Stanford University / iTunes U)
- Malek Alloula, "From *The Colonial Harem*." In *The Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, 519-524. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Elizabeth Daphinée, "The Politics of the Body in Pain: Reading the Ethics of Imagery," *Security Dialogue* 38, no. 2 (2007): 139-155.
- Maurice Stevens, "From the Deluge: Traumatic Iconography and Emergent Visions of Nation in Katrina's Wake," *English Language Notes* 44, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 217-225. /// available through UMBC Library website

W November 18 /// *Looking and Not Looking* (readings continue on next page ...)

- Ulrich Baer, "Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash." In *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma*, 25-60. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005.
- Georges Didi-Huberman, "Part I: Images in Spite of All." In *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, 1-48. Translated by Shane B. Lillis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Eli Clare, "Gaping, Gawking, Staring." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 9:1-2

- (2003): 257-262. /// available through UMBC Library website
- Geoffrey Batchen, "Looking Askance." In *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, edited by Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller, and Jay Prossy, 227-239. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.
  - OPTIONAL: Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look." *Critical Inquiry* 37:3 (2011): 473-496. /// available through UMBC Library website
  - OPTIONAL: Angi Buettner, "Skeletal Figures: Presence and the Unrepresentable in Images of Catastrophe." *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 23:3 (2009): 351-366. /// available through UMBC Library website

*M November 23 /// Upload Final Project Proposals*

In lieu of Wednesday's class meeting:

- **Upload your final project proposal to Blackboard by 12:00 p.m.**

*W November 25 /// HAPPY THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS MEETING!*

- **Upload peer review of partner's proposal to Blackboard by 6:00 p.m.**

*W December 2 /// Looking and Not Looking*

- Daniel Bürkner, "The Chernobyl Landscape and the Aesthetics of Invisibility." *Photography and Culture* 7:1 (2014): 21-39 /// available through UMBC Library website.
- Sharon Sliwinski, "On Photographic Violence." *Photography and Culture* 2:3 (2009): 303-316. /// available through UMBC Library website
- Jill Bennett, "Insides, Outsides: Trauma, Affect, and Art." In *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, 22-45. Cultural Memory in the Present. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Kelly Oliver, "Introduction: Beyond Recognition." In *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 1-20. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

*W December 9 /// Final Projects Due by 12:00 p.m.!*