FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

NEW COURSE PROPOSAL
Undergraduate Programs

Department Visual Art and Art History

College Arts & Letters

*(To obtain a course number, contact **erudolph@fau.edu**)*

UUPC Approval 2-23-26
UFS Approval _____
SCNS Submittal _____
Confirmed _____
Banner Posted _____
Catalog _____

Prefix ARH

Number 4803

(L = Lab Course; C = Combined Lecture/Lab; add if appropriate)

Lab Code

Type of Course: Lecture

Course Title: Visual Culture: Critical Perspectives

Credits *(See Definition of a Credit Hour)*: 3

Effective Date *(TERM & YEAR)*: Fall 2026

Grading *(Select One Option)*
- **Regular** (●)
- **Sat/UnSat** ( )

Course Description *(Syllabus must be attached; see Template and Guidelines)*

In this age of mass communication and digital technology, the role of visual culture cannot be overstated: it shapes our tastes and desires, informs our identities and how we think about others, mediates our understanding of the world, and provides us with entertainment and leisure. The goal of this course course is to provide students with a critical and reflective understanding of visual culture, and to equip them with the conceptual tools and analytical skills necessary to critically interpret images and other visual media.

Prerequisites, with minimum grade* None.

Corequisites

Registration Controls *(Major, College, Level)*

***Default minimum passing grade is D-.** **Prereqs., Coreqs. & Reg. Controls are enforced for all sections of course**

WAC/Gordon Rule Course

☐ **Yes** ☑ **No**

WAC/Gordon Rule criteria must be indicated in syllabus and approval attached to proposal. See WAC Guidelines.

Intellectual Foundations Program (General Education) Requirement *(Select One Option)*

None

General Education criteria must be indicated in the syllabus and approval attached to the proposal. See Intellectual Foundations Guidelines.

Minimum qualifications to teach course

Doctorate in Visual Culture, Art History, or other related field.

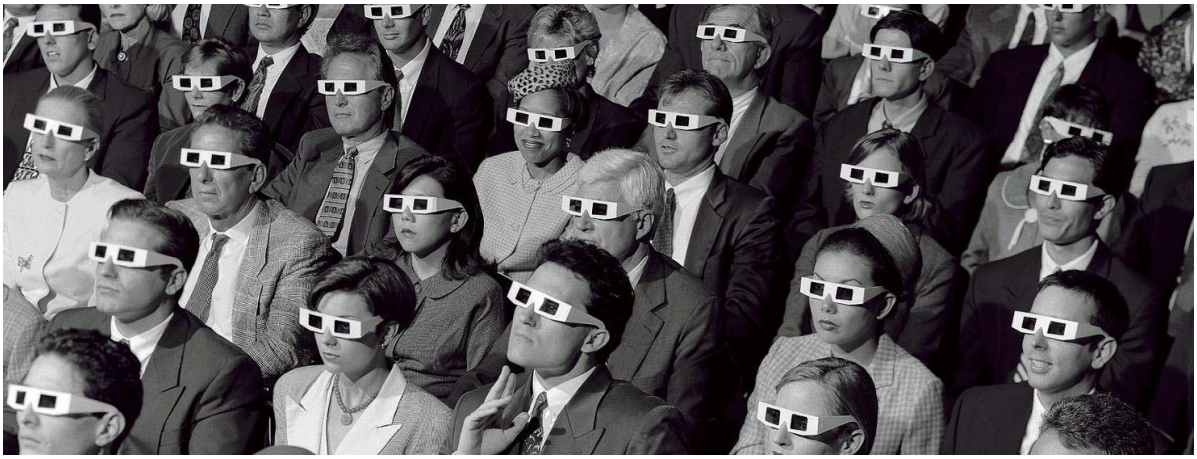
Faculty Contact/Email/Phone

ryepes@fau.edu. Phone: 561 279 3870

List/Attach comments from departments affected by new course

Approved by		***Date***
Department Chair	[signature]	11 Feb 26
College Curriculum Chair	Robin Larson	02-11-2026
College Dean	[signature]	2/11/26
UUPC Chair	Korey Sorge	2-23-26
Undergraduate Studies Dean	Dan Meeroff	2-23-26
UFS President		
Provost		

Email this form and syllabus to mjenning@fau.edu seven business days before the UUPC meeting.



VISUAL CULTURE: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

3 credits

Ruben Yepes
Office: AH118B
TEL: 561.297.3870
ryepes.fau.edu
Office hours: W 9am-1pm.

ARH 4803
FALL 2025
TR 2-3:20 pm
General South 116

TA INFO HERE

(**Note**: Classroom, class dates and times, and office hours are speculative and provided only for clarity and illustration).

DESCRIPTION

In this age of mass communication and digital technology, the role of visual culture cannot be overstated: it shapes our tastes and desires, informs our identities and how we think about others, mediates our understanding or the world, and provides us with entertainment and leisure. The goal of this course course is to provide students with a critical and reflective understanding of visual culture, and to equip them with the conceptual tools and analytical skills necessary to critically interpret images and other visual media.

Drawing from visual studies, art theory and history, critica theory, and media theory, we will study a range of concepts and approaches to visual culture. In tandem, we will examine the production, circulation, meanings, and uses of a range of images and objects drawn from fields such as contemporary art, photography, film, television, advertising, and digital media. A key focus will be on the sociopolitical dimension of such images and objects.

No textbook required. All readings will be provided in electronic format.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD

The course is a seminar and is fully in-person. Students will complete the weekly readings in a timely manner and prepare questions and comments. The class will begin with a lecture, accompanied, in some cases, by a student presentation. In the remainder of the class, we will examine the readings and related visual material through group discussions and in-class assignments. Since the course is a seminar, preparation and thoughtful participation are required.

PREREQUISITES: None.

OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

Analyze and interpret a wide range of visual media, including art, photography, film, television, advertising, and digital platforms, through critical and interdisciplinary approaches.

Define and explain key concepts and theoretical frameworks in visual culture studies, including visuality, spectacle, ideology, and representation.

Apply concepts from major critical theorists (e.g., Berger, Barthes, Foucault, Debord, Benjamin, Mulvey, bell hooks) to the close reading of visual culture objects.

Evaluate how visual culture both reflects and shapes social power relations and structures, particularly in relation to issues of race, gender, class, and ecology.

GRADING SCALE AND EVALUATION METHOD

	Scale
In-class assignments = 7 points each, 28 total. Presentation: 12. Paper Writing Workshops = 5 points each, 15 total. 2500 (min.) word Paper = 35. Participation = 10.	A 93-100 A – 90-92 B+ 87-89 B 83-86 B- 80-82 C+ 77-79 C 73-76 C- 70-72 D 60-69 F <60

In-class assignments

The purpose of these assignments is to provide an opportunity for you to assess your progress and understanding of the key aspects from the readings and lectures, and to apply the knowledge you have obtained to the analysis of specific artworks and visual culture objects. The assignments will be published on Canvas on their corresponding date and are due by the end of the regular classtime. You must be present for the assignment unless you have a valid excuse. The assignment may be a workshop, a group activity, or a quiz. You will need to have done the readings and taken notes in class in order to successfully complete the assignments.

Instructions and grading will be specified for each assignment.

Presentation

The presentations will be in pairs, which will be assigned by me. Topics will be assigned on the first week of class; once assigned, they may not be changed except under exceptional circumstances.

Presentations will be between 15 and 25 minutes and should include a brief introduction of the author(s) and a detailed presentation of the session readings, including their theme, main argument and key ideas. To conclude, present two or three questions that may guide our discussion of the readings. If relevant, you may also present a few images of visual cuture (artworks, films, advertisements, TV shows, etc), as long as they are relavant to the readings. You may develop the presentation in any format you prefer and use any type of visual aids.

While you may use notes, you are expected to present extemporaneously. Points will be subtracted if you read your presentation.

Grading: Author introduction, 2 points. Theme, main argument and key ideas, 10 points. Discussion questions: 3 points. -5 points if the presentation is under 15 minutes or read.

Paper writing workshops

There will be three gradable final paper workshops throughout the semester. You must attend the entire session and submit the required work in order to receive credit.

The purpose of the first workshop is to formulate a good topic and question. For this first session, students will bring three potential paper topics, with a corresponding question, or list of questions, for each one. Each student will receive feedback on their topic(s) and question(s) from other students and the instructor. Once the topic and question have been defined, each student will also write a list of one to three concepts that could be used to approach the topic and question. Full credit will be earned once the instructor and the student agree that the topic, question, and concepts are ready. If necessary, the student may work on the topic, question and concepts after the workshop and submit for credit at a later date.

For the second workshop, you will have researched and read three to five academic references that are relevant to their topic. During this session, you will write brief summaries of the sections or aspects of the readings that may be useful for their papers. In addition, with the instrutor's guidance, students will define their key concepts. Full credit will be earned once the instructor and the student agree that the summaries and concept definitions are ready. If necessary, you may work on the summaries and concept definitions after the workshop and submit for credit at a later date.

For the final workshop, you will have advanced a substantial portion of their paper introduction and analysis. During the session, each student will receive feedback from the instructor and other students, and further develop their analysis. Full credit will be earned once you and the instructor agree that the paper is fully developed to at least 70% of its final form. If necessary, you may work on the paper after the workshop and submit for credit at a later date.

Final Paper

Will be written in pairs or individually. Must be at least 2500 words, not counting bibliography.

Final paper is due on December 5 by midnight. This is a firm deadline!

1. Choose an artwork, artist, group of artworks or artists, exhibition, school, or movement, (not too many) to address in the paper. They may but do not have to be selected from the artworks presented in the course.

2. Formulate a question or thesis concerning the biography, production, circulation, meaning and/or exhibition and reception of your object(s), or any other relevant focus. Possible topics include how and why the work was produced, its technical aspects as they relate to its meaning, how the work fits within a certain style, movement or school, its social and political significance, the representation of certain identities, including gender and racial/ethnic identities, or any other relevant topic.

A good paper starts with a good question or thesis! Take some time to think about it and discuss your idea with me.

3. Do some research! Almost surely you will not be the first author who has written about the artist(s) and artworks you choose. Find out what others have said about them and elaborate the observations, ideas, and insights that may be relevant to your question or problem. A good short research paper will include at least five relevant academic references (web-page sources do not count). These may include the course readings.

4. Explain the key concepts and/or categories that you will use in your analysis. Use relevant academic literature. A good paper will include at least one key concept and no more than three.

5. Develop your analysis based on an argument or thesis about your theme. Don't just state your points, demonstrate them. You want to convince your reader that what you say

is meaningful, true, relevant, and important. Check and double (and triple) check the development of your argument, make sure it is as sound as possible. Include images and analyze them if relevant. This should be the largest section of your paper.

6. Briefly conclude your paper. Refer to your question or problem and clearly state why you consider you have answered or resolved it.

7. Include a reference list with all the references used throughout the paper, both academic and non-academic. Do not include references that were not used. Use any formatting system you prefer, but be consistent and make sure to cite the reference correctly, I should be able to find the source.

8. Write your paper as clearly as possible. Use proper citation! Proofread and have at least one other person proofread your paper.

9. Avoid plagiarism! This includes the use of generative AI tools. If I suspect that you did not write the paper, I may ask you to orally present it to me. If I can demonstrate that you did not write the paper in its entirety (and I am VERY good at this!), your grade will be 0.

10. Finally, don't forget to give your paper a title and to include your name!

Grading: Question/problem: 7 points. Concept/category elaboration: 8 points. Development and argumentation: 14 points. Conclusion: 4 points. References: 2 points.

Participation

You are expected to have read the session materials before the class and prepare thoughtful questions or comments. You are also expected to engage in classroom discussions of the readings and artworks, and to be attentive throughout the class. Likewise, you are expected to complete all the assignments.

Grading: Participation will be graded based on the quality of your contributions and your consistency throughout the course.

LATE WORK IS NOT ACCEPTED UNLESS THERE IS A VALID EXCUSE

POLICY ON THE RECORDING OF LECTURES

Students enrolled in this course may record video or audio of class lectures for their own personal educational use. A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach students about a particular subject. Recording class activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to student presentations (whether individually or as part of a group), class discussion (except when incidental to and incorporated within a class lecture), labs, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, and private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the lecturer, is prohibited. Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation or class attendance and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty

member. Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the University's Student Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Academic Integrity.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are permitted three unexcused absences. For each absence thereafter, you will lose a full letter grade (A final grade of "A" will become a "B" if you have 4 unexcused absences, a "C" if you have 5 unexcused absences, etc.).

Absences from class may be excused only with proper documentation of a medical emergency or your required participation in an FAU-approved event or activity. If you are absent from a class, you are expected to obtain the material you missed from your classmates, but do ask me for help if necessary.

2 tardies = 1 unexcused absence. (If you are late to class by *5 minutes or more*, this counts as a tardie.)

Class Etiquette

- Arrive a little bit early so you don't disrupt the class.
- Always be courteous toward everyone in the class. We will sometimes disagree in our class discussions; this is fine, but it should be done with utmost respect and consideration.
- Consumiing liquids and food in class is fine, as long as it is not disruptive. Avoid noisy/crunchy food and packages. If you do consume food in class, make sure you clean up after yourself.

Email Etiquette

Please review the syllabus before writing with questions, it may be the case that you will find the answer there. To help me respond to your email quickly and efficiently, please:

- Include your full name and our course name in the subject of your email.
- Use an appropriate message title (like "ARTS 4930 student question").
- Please reply to my email response so I know you received the necessary information.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center

Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to http://www.fau.edu/counseling/

Disability Policy

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU's campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/.

Code of Academic Integrity

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see *University Regulation 4.001*.

AI Policy

This course values your critical thinking and intellectual creativity. While generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, Grammarly, etc.) can be powerful study partners, they must never replace your engagement with the material or your responsibility as a student. You are expected to do your own intellectual work, not outsource it.

In this course, you are permitted to use AI tools as a support for developing, refining, and strengthening your thinking and writing, so long as this use is transparent, responsible, and AI does not substitute your own original work.

<u>You may use AI tools to:</u>

- Brainstorm or refine paper topics, research questions, or thesis statements.
- Receive feedback on the clarity, structure, tone, or coherence of your writing.
- Generate examples, counterpoints, or prompts to deepen your engagement with class materials.
- Help you summarize readings or transcripts for personal study purposes.
- Help you analyze or interpret visual materials with AI as one source among others.
- Proofread your drafts, similar to how one might use a writing tutor or editor.

<u>You may not:</u>

- Submit text, ideas, or interpretations generated by AI tools as your own work (i.e., no copy-pasting AI-generated sentences, paragraphs, or essays).
- Use AI to compose full or partial drafts of your final paper, presentations, or reaction papers.
- Use AI tools to bypass reading assignments or fabricate citations.

• Fail to acknowledge when AI meaningfully contributed to shaping your ideas, argument, or structure.

If you use an AI tool for help on an assignment, you must briefly note this in a footnote or an endnote. Example: "I used ChatGPT to help brainstorm possible research questions for this paper."

Failure to follow these guidelines constitutes academic dishonesty and will be treated accordingly.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Aug 19. Introduction: What is Visual Culture?

Concepts and Critical Perspectives

Aug 28. Ways of Seeing

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972), chapter 1.

Sept 2. Ideology

Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970).

Sept 4. Images, Signs, and Ideology

Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" (1964).

Sept 9. Spectacle

Guy Debord, "Separation Perfected" and "Negation and Consumption Within Culture", in: *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967).

Sept 11. Panopticism

Michel Foucault, "Panopticism", in: *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975).

Sept 16. Visuality

Hal Foster: "Preface", in: *Vision and Visuality* (1988).

Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look" (2011).

Session 8. In-class assignment #1

New Media

Sept 18-23. Image Reproducibility

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" (1936).

Sept 25. Photography

Howells & Negreiros, "Photography," in: *Visual Culture* 3rd ed. (2019).

Sept 30. Advertisement and Propaganda

Watch: "The Century of the Self, Part 1"

Oct 2. Film

Howells & Negreiros, "Film", in: *Visual Culture* 3rd ed. (2019).

Oct 7. Television

Howell & Negreiros, "Television," in: *Visual Culture* 3rd ed. (2019).

Oct 79 Music Videos, and Videogames

Howell & Negreiros, "New Media", in: *Visual Culture* 3rd ed. (2019).

Oct 14. Digital and Internet Media

Jaron Lanier, "Missing Persons", in: *You Are Not a Gadge*t (2011).

Ivan Manokha, "Surveillance, Panopticism, and Self-Discipline in the Digital Age" (2018).

Oct 16. Digital Social Media

Watch: The Social Dilemma, available on Netflix and on reserve in the library.

Oct 21. In-class assignment # 2

Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Visual Culture

Oct 23. Women in Visual Art I

Linda Nochlin, "Women, Art, and Power" (1988).

Oct 28. Women in Visual Art II

Laura Meyer, "Power and Pleasure: Feminist Art Practice and Theory in the United States and Britain" (2006).

Oct 30. **Race and Contemporary Art**

Pauline de Souza, "Implications of Blackness in Contemporary Art" (2006).

Nov 4. Intersections of Race and Gender

bell hooks, "Introduction: Art Matters", "Art on My Mind" and "The Poetics of Soul: Art for Everyone", in: *Art On My Mind: Visual Politics* (1995).

Nov 6. Paper Writing Workshop 1

Nov 11. Case Study: Andy Warhol's Queerness

Douglas Crimp, "Mario Montez, For Shame", *Our Kind of Movie: The Films of Andy Warhol* (2012).

Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick: "Queer Performativity: Warhol's Shyness/Warhol's Whiteness" (1996).

Nov 13. Case study: Interculturality in Two Undiscovered Amerindians

Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance" (1994).

Nov 18. In-class assignment #3

Nov 20. Paper Writing Workshop 2

Nov 25. Paper Writing Workshop 3

Final paper is due on December 5 by midnight. This is firm deadline!