

COM 3360 Visual Communication

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Office: Cushing 306

Course Description & Objectives

In this class, students will learn some of the major principles surrounding visual communication: physio-psychological bases of perception, cognition, semiotics, and the history that lead to the realization of visual images. Lectures, discussions, and analyses of visual artifacts will include the ethical dimensions of visual image-making, as well as critical analysis of contemporary visual images across all media.

Course Goals

- To explore basic issues and perspectives in the study of visual communication
- To develop methodological proficiency through personal investigations, and the creation of a course project.
- To critically engage with the image-stream that defines our contemporary culture and the realities it produces.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Students should demonstrate their abilities to think critically using written academic argument, analysis, critique, and evaluation.
- Students should be able to analyze and interpret texts and case studies by applying the concepts, questions, and theoretical paradigms discussed in class and in the assigned readings.
- Students should be able to formulate illuminating and persuasive claims in their writing, projects, and exam responses. These ideas should reflect a solid internalization of the course material.
- Students should be able to use textual evidence (via quotation, analysis, and documentation of pertinent passages) to ground their arguments and back up their claims.
- Students should be able to express their ideas in clear, logical, organized, concise, and persuasive ways, in both written and oral forms.

Required Texts

Book

Sturkin, Marita & Cartwright, Lisa. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 3rd Edition, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Articles, Essays, Chapters, & Websites

Available (for free) on blackboard.

Blackboard

This course utilizes Blackboard online services.

Blackboard is a required part of the course that will be used to host recordings of student speeches, among other functions. It is your responsibility to stay caught up with online updates.

University Policies

Academic Integrity

All written work for this class must be your original work. Presenting material from other sources, either print or electronic, as one's own work constitutes plagiarism. Please review Merrimack College's Academic Integrity Code:

<http://catalog.merrimack.edu/content.php?catoid=9&navoid=202#academic-integrity>

Please consult the library's web site for a complete discussion on academic integrity

<http://libguides.merrimack.edu/content.php?pid=120821> for a complete discussion of academic integrity.

Academic Accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office

Regardless of whether the course or the student is on-campus or remote, Merrimack College provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities through the Accessibility Services Office. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact the Accessibility Services Office via the online request form found on the Accessibility Services website: www.merrimack.edu/aso, email

accessibilityservices@merrimack.edu or by visiting us on the third floor of McQuade Library (subject to change if the college becomes remote).

Students are encouraged to contact the office as soon as possible via the website or via email at accessibilityservices@merrimack.edu to ensure adequate time to meet and create a plan. Students already registered with Accessibility Services are encouraged semesterly to request for their letters to be emailed and students are responsible to then email the letter to their instructors personally. The Accessibility Services Testing Center remains available to students whether in-person or remote. While it is understood that some students will not use all accommodations in all courses, accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.merrimack.edu/academics/academic-success-center/accessibility-services/faculty.php>

Merrimack College Withdrawal Policy

Please be mindful of the academic calendar and what the last day to drop, add, and withdraw from the class are.

Course Policies

Learning Environment – We will maintain our classroom as a productive place to learn. We are all responsible for fostering an environment open to observing, discussing, and reflecting upon our own and others' communicative behaviors in order to learn. Thus, each one of us will need to be conscious of our role in providing a place where every class member, given all our differences, will feel and function as part of the class. If at any time or for any reason you feel uncomfortable with the classroom environment, please contact the instructor immediately in order to resolve/improve the situation.

Deadlines –All assignments are due exactly on the dates indicated in the course schedule. Late assignments will not be accepted without a university-sanctioned reason for your absence. Fortunately, I can be accommodating! If you have extenuating circumstances, illness, family, mental health, etc. I am happy to grant extensions *if you reach out to me prior to the due date.*

Attendance

Who knows what this fall will look like, so let's take attendance on a case-by-case basis, okay? Here are some ground rules for absences:

Please try to prioritize coming to class. You are paying for these classes after all, and it is a shame to forfeit that money.

If you need to miss class a few times, that is okay, just make sure to email me (cullinanm@merrimack.edu) before this occurs. Preferably at least an hour ahead of time. Students who do not contact me prior to missing class will be marked unexcused and lose participation points.

If you have any COVID symptoms, or flu symptoms for that matter, please do not come to class. I will have missed-lesson contingency plans available for students who have fallen ill.

Tech Policy

Technology use in this classroom is intended to enhance the learning environment for all students. Please be sure to bring your iPad or laptop fully charged and updated to class.

As adults, we all live complex lives that sometimes deviate from our plan. If you *must* communicate with someone who is not in the class, please take the conversation outside and return when you have finished. This will show respect to your classmates, prevent unnecessary distractions, and allow your group work to function seamlessly.

Like many of you, I am very attached to my mobile device, and I understand that in the 21st century cell phones are as necessary as shoes. For our time together, however, I request you give your full attention to your classmates and your learning. If it becomes apparent that you are using your technology for something unrelated to class, you will risk losing attendance points for the day. Reminder: If there is an emergency or unforeseen circumstance, please take your device outside, and return when you have handled this situation. If you are out of the class for an extended period of time, please stop by Student Hours so we can determine the best path to move forward.

Assignments and Coursework

Introductory Visual Post (10 points). Before any of your work will be graded, you must successfully post an Introductory Visual Post

Semi-weekly Critical Visual Posts (10 points each). Throughout the semester you will be required to submit regular discussion posts about the reading assignments or class content. Students will be required to provide clear, appropriate, and engaging material that responds directly to the critical question that was asked. In addition to the required examples of visual communication, students will also be required to provide short explanations of 300-400 words that use the correct terminology and concepts from lectures and readings. Full details for each post can be found on Canvas.

“*Learning Assessment 1*” (40 points). The mid-term exam will be fill-in-the blank, matching, and multiple choice on terms, concepts, and texts/case studies/films read or discussed during the first half of the semester. This is take-home.

“*Learning Assessment*” 2 (40 points). The final exam will be fill-in-the blank, matching, and multiple choice on terms, concepts, and texts/case studies/films read or discussed during the second half of the semester (it is not cumulative). Also a take-home.

Final Project (50 points). The final project requires you to produce a visual artifact (e.g. advertisement, magazine cover, graphic design, collage) and write a 1000-1500 word analysis discussing how your production exemplifies or challenges key concepts discussed throughout the entire semester, and what effects the image has in the world. Full details can be found on blackboard.

Final Grades:

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|-------------|-------------|
| A = 100-94% | A- = 93-90% |
| B+ = 89-87% | B = 86-84% |
| C+ = 79-77% | C = 76-74% |
| D+ = 69-67% | D = 66-64% |

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| | B- = 83-80% |
| | C- = 73-70% |
| | D- = 63-60% |

F = 59% ↓

Do I round up grades? *Sometimes*.

It really depends on the quality of in-class discussions this semester. So make sure to be a good participant.

Credit Hour Justification

In this course, students will be expected to do something like the following amount of work:

Classroom hours: 3 per week

Reading and activities per week: 4 hours per week

At-home writing/research/discussions: 2-3 per week

Exam prep and project work breakdown: 1-2 hour per week (but this is unlikely to be weekly)

Total: ~12 hours per week