

Politics of Visual Culture

Course Details

Clarissa Castaneda, PhD (*she/her/hers*)

Office Hours:

E-mail:

Required Text

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 3rd edition. (978-0190265717)

Suggested/Optional Text

Richard Howells and Joaquim Negreiros, *Visual Culture*, 3rd edition. (978-1509518784)

Course Description

This course will examine and critique the political architecture of visual texts. Students will learn methods for looking, contextualizing, and recognizing the discourses at work in a visual text. A medium and work of art may have its own political system which is self-contained within its own systems for production and narration. There are also political systems and sociopolitical commitments which can be imposed upon a visual text by the viewer/audience. While the viewings for this course will primarily consist of film and visual artworks in a range of mediums from the 1980's to the present, we will be narrowing our field of study to focus on visual texts which adapt, dramatize and/or document, reflect, and narrate actual historical events and/or subjects. Readings will cover methods for looking, theoretical perspectives on visual culture and knowledge building, intertextual discourse, relevant current events, and concepts related to narrative and cultural studies. We will also read relevant criticism from scholars and artists contending with the politics of history-making and keeping, the counter-historical, gender & sexuality, digital platforms for discourse, race & ethnicity, border consciousness, and the sociocultural fringe.

Class Policies

Attendance: Your success in this course depends on regular attendance and active participation, particularly since this course only meets once per week. Class meetings will include lecture, group work, discussion, in-class writing assignments, quizzes, and viewings which cannot be “made-up” outside of class. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting, and unexcused absences and late arrivals *will* negatively affect your ability to pass the course. Students who miss more than one class may receive a penalty of up to one grade lower on their final grade for the course. Students who miss more than two classes will automatically fail the course. Three late arrivals equal one full day absence. You are responsible for all class material, whether you are present or not. I encourage you to exchange phone numbers and email addresses with at least two other students so that if you miss class, then you can be informed of any activities/announcements and come prepared to the next class. If you miss a class, then do not email me and ask what you missed. I do not respond to such requests. You may come see me during office hours and/or make an appointment to meet to discuss the items you missed in person! If you are going to miss class for any reason, then you are welcome to email to let me know that you will not be in attendance. However, informing me of your absence does *not* constitute an automatically excused absence. Only students with verifiable emergencies (e.g., doctor’s sick note, hospitalization documents, police report, death certificate/dated memorial programs) may be excused from class.

Class Etiquette and Decorum: It is expected that you will participate appropriately and as adults during class discussions. We are a diverse academic community, representing different lifestyles, ethnicities, sexualities, faiths, and cultures. We will be discussing controversial issues in class—issues that typically elicit strong opinions, so it is especially important that you show tolerance and respect for your fellow classmates at all times.

Participation: Attending class is not a guarantee of full participation points for the day. Participation points are earned through engagement with class discussion and group work, volunteering to answer questions presented as part of lecture, sharing your homework with the class, asking questions, responding to questions from your peers, and visits to office hours.

Electronics Policy: This is not a class wherein you are permitted to complete homework for other classes, shop online, use social media, and/or watch basketball games with earbuds on. Use of electronics—laptops, tablets, apple watches, smart phone—are not permitted. Studies show that pen and paper note-taking result in superior information retention and knowledge building. Silence your smart phone before class begins and put all electronic devices away and out of sight. If I observe you on an electronic device, then I will mark you absent for the day and you will receive an F in participation for the day. I may not inform you that you have been observed and you will simply be marked absent. If your electronic device use is disruptive and/or chronic, then you will also be directed to exit the classroom. Should you need to use your device for personal reasons, then feel free to briefly leave the classroom and use your device outside.

Late Work: I will accept homework up to three days past the due date, but you must upload your document to iLearn. Do not email me your late submissions. The penalty for late submission is less 1/3 of a letter grade on the assignment. *Absence from class does not extend the due date of an assignment.*

Homework: All homework is due in hard-copy form on the Friday that class meets. Homework assignments do not need to be in MLA format, but you must proofread your work. Errors in grammar and logic will negatively impact your homework grade.

Quizzes: There will be a quiz on the assigned reading(s) and viewing(s) at each class meeting. Quizzes cannot be made-up and additional time is not given to students who arrive after a quiz begins. Most quizzes will feature short-answer essay questions which require students to critically think about the reading/viewing.

In-Class Writing Assignments: In-class writing assignments cannot be made-up and additional time is not given to students who arrive after a writing session begins. Most assignments will feature a subject text and question which students must respond to in 4-5 paragraphs of writing.

In-Class Presentation & Discussion Session: In week two, we will review the prompt for your in-class presentation & discussion session, and sign-up for presentation topics. Each student is responsible for presenting on a topic using a visual aid and leading the class discussion as it may relate to an assigned reading/viewing. Visual aids must be uploaded in an accessible file format to iLearn before class meets on the day of your presentation. Students may not upload links. I need an actual file to download. If you do not have access the appropriate software, then plan on using a campus computer with PowerPoint software. Students may not make-up scheduled presentations.

Final Essay (6-8 pages): There is no late-submission window for the final essay. Your final essay is due to iLearn at the date/time listed on the course syllabus. I do not accept emailed essays, and I do not accept late essays. All essays must be uploaded to the correct module under “Assignments” in iLearn. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have uploaded a legible document. Failure to upload a document which can be accessed through iLearn may result in an automatic F. Failure to submit a final essay for the course may result in an automatic F. Your final essay must adhere to the current MLA formatting guidelines. This includes proper document formatting—such as one-inch margins, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, and double-spacing—in addition to proper citation of sources. The minimum page length is six pages to the very last line available on the page. The maximum page length is eight pages. Five and 3/4 pages of submitted text will not meet the six-page minimum, and your works cited page is not counted toward page minimum or maximum.

iLearn and R’Mail: Check the iLearn site regularly for important announcements and discussion board activity. Be sure to check your UCR e-mail account daily. You are responsible for reading all emails and announcements sent from my email account or through an iLearn course page alert or announcement.

Email, Office Hours and Appointments: When emailing the instructor, keep in mind that it may take up to 48 hours to receive a reply. I highly recommend that you come to office hours with a specific set of questions and goals for our meeting. Office hours are first come, first serve. If several students want to meet, then please be advised that each student will be able to meet with me for at least 15 minutes.

Title IX: I am a mandated Title IX reporter. This means that I am legally obligated to report any violations to Title IX rules which concern sexual harassment and sexual violence. Please be advised that should you want to discuss your situation before disclosing a potential violation to me or another mandated reporter, I can put you in touch with a campus counselor or individual who is *not* a mandated Title IX reporter.

Per institution.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct: Per institution.

If I suspect that you have violated a principle of academic integrity, then I will attempt to discuss it with you and file a report with the SCAIP. You will receive a zero on the assignment and may fail the course. Students who submit final essays which are the product of academic misconduct will automatically fail the course. Further disciplinary action may also be taken by the university. If you ever have a question about potential plagiarism or other academic misconduct, then please consult me before you turn in any work that may be problematic.

Special Needs: Per institution.

Course Requirements

Students are responsible for attendance, participation, homework assignments, quizzes, in-class writing assignments, one in-class presentation and discussion session, and a final essay. Be advised that all submissions are subject to SafeAssign submission and plagiarism review.

Requirements		Grading Scale	
Attendance and Participation	10%	100%	A+
Homework	10%	99% - 93%	A
Quizzes	25%	92.9% - 90%	A-
In-Class Writing Assignments	10%	89.9% - 87%	B+
In-Class Presentation & Discussion	20%	86.9% - 83%	B
Final Essay	<u>25%</u>	82.9% - 80%	B-
TOTAL	100%	79.9% - 77%	C+
		76.9% - 73%	C
		72.9% - 70%	C-
		69.9% - 67%	D+
		66.9% - 63%	D
		62.9% - 60%	D-
		59.9% and below	F

Tentative Schedule for Politics of Visual Culture

*Schedule Subject to Change with Notice

Please note that I am working on scheduling on-site tours at the Riverside Arts Museum, UCR Arts Block, and Sherman Indian Museum. We may also have a speaker during the second half of the quarter.

		Homework Assignment Due	Reading and Viewing Assignments Due	In-Class Focus
Week 1	1/10	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Syllabus • Introductions • Viewing & Reading • Screen ½ of Zoot Suit directed by Luis Valdez
Week 2	1/17	Worksheet on viewing and readings.	Read: Chapter 1 from <i>Visual Culture</i> PDF posted to iLearn. Read: 3 PDFs (The Guardian, BBC, PEW Research Center)	Politics of Iconography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen second ½ of Zoot Suit directed by Luis Valdez
Week 3	1/24	Worksheet on viewing and readings.	Read: Chapters 1-2 <i>Practices of Looking</i> Read: Excerpt from Foucault's <i>Archaeology of Knowledge</i> (PDF) Viewing: <i>Basquiat</i> directed by Julian Schnabel	Politics of Fine Art
Week 4	1/31	Worksheet on viewing and readings.	Read: Chapters 3-4 <i>Practices of Looking</i> Viewing: <i>Straight Outta Compton</i> directed by F. Gary Gray	Politics of Album Covers
Week 5	2/7	Worksheet on viewing and readings.	Read: Chapters 5-6 <i>Practices of Looking</i> Viewing: <i>To Be Takei</i> directed by Jennifer M. Kroot	Politics of Race in Visual Culture

Week 6	2/14	Worksheet on viewing and readings.	Read: Chapters 7-8 <i>Practices of Looking</i> Viewing: <i>Chavela</i> directed by Catherine Gund & Daresha Kyi	Politics of Gender & Sexuality in Visual Culture
Week 7	2/21	Worksheet on viewing and readings.	Read: Chapters 9-10 <i>Practices of Looking</i> Viewing: <i>Good Night, and Good Luck</i> directed by George Clooney See iLearn for additional viewings/readings	Politics of TV-News
Week 8	2/28	Worksheet on viewing and readings.	Viewing: <i>Freedom Riders</i> directed by Stanley Nelson See iLearn for additional viewings/readings	Politics of Youth & Social Media in Visual Culture
Week 9	3/6	Worksheet on viewing and readings.	Viewing: <i>Jojo Rabbit</i> directed by Taika Waititi See iLearn for additional viewings/readings	Politics of Satire in Film
Week 10	3/13	Worksheet on viewing and readings.	Viewing: <i>The Art of the Steal</i> directed by Don Argott Viewing: <i>Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World</i> directed by Catherine Bainbridge See iLearn for additional viewings/readings	Politics of Archives, Collections, and the Counter-Historical in Visual Culture
Week 11	3/19	Final essay due on Thursday, March 19 th at 5 PM...Upload your final essay to iLearn under "Assignments"/ "Final Essay." Note that your final essay is due on the same day a final exam for this course would have been scheduled. You are submitting a final essay instead of taking a final exam.	No reading due.	No class meeting.