

Visual/Material Communication

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OFFICE HOURS: Tu-Th 11:30-1:00pm; by appointment using shared Google doc
CLASS MEETINGS: 1:00-2:15pm TTh, FWO 126

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces students to theories and methodologies in communication studies, visual culture studies, and material culture studies that focus on both the representational and nonrepresentational or more-than-representational performative dimensions of everyday visual and material communication, particularly the ways that material objects, images, and spaces function as communicative media that not only *represent* and *mean* things but also *do* things and *make things happen*.

The primary focus of the class is on learning the fundamental theoretical concepts, perspectives, and critical methodologies used in the analysis not only of more traditional visual texts produced by major media industries—such as advertisements, films, television shows, print media content, and websites—but also of visual materials in more decentralized forms of social media and mobile media devices, as well as things not often thought of as media, such as mass-produced and handmade physical objects, museum exhibits, educational materials, monuments and memorials, and landscapes. No Prerequisites.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies* Fifth Edition (London: Sage, 2023)
All other readings for the class will be located at the course web resource page:
<http://people.southwestern.edu/~bednarb/vmc/>

Please note that I use the Course Webpage instead of Moodle, so look to the course webpage for readings, resources, and any agreed-upon changes to the schedule

GRADING:

I design my classes with a number of different kinds of low stakes and high stakes assignments focusing on different communicative forms and assignment formats to make sure that each student has maximum potential to demonstrate existing skills and knowledge while developing new ones. I go into every class, every assignment, and every student encounter with a growth mindset--the belief that every

student is capable of both succeeding and improving--and see that my responsibility is to give you the tools you need to succeed and improve while also being clear about my expectations and evaluations.

Grades are given a lot of power in dominant culture, but it is important to remember that grades are not a reflection of your worth as a person but a reflection of your performance under a certain set of defined constraints. To level the playing field and fight against a scarcity model of grading, which reinforces unearned advantages and inherited cultural power, I do not grade on a bell curve to place your graded assignments or final grade into a pre-determined grade distribution, where only a certain number of students can get an A, B, C, D, or F. The grades I assign reflect my evaluation of your performance within the constraints outlined in the syllabus and in assignment handout rubrics. Grades for particular assignments thus measure your performance on that assignment relative to the requirements of the assignment, not relative to other students, and final course grades measure your performance in the class overall.

Based on my goal to both minimize grade focus/anxiety while also teaching you to be independent thinkers and self-advocates, I do not post grades that are calculated in real-time throughout the semester. Increasingly, students are being trained to expect real-time grades computed as courses unfold, which creates an unbalanced extrapolation of a snapshot of your performance, treating your current performance as a predictor of your final grade. I myself do not compute your grades until the very end of the semester unless I see a major concern emerge or a student requests it. Because the work we do continues to build to higher and higher stakes over the course of the semester, I see grades on smaller assignments along the way as signals about what to do in the future, not an accurate prediction of what your final grade will be. The only way they become predictive is if you ignore the feedback you are getting along the way or do not take it as a stimulus for growth.

If you ever want to compute your emerging overall grade average yourself at any point during the semester, here is what you need to know to compute grades yourself in this class. Final course grades are assigned a final letter grade based on a range of averages for individual assignments based on a 100-point scale. For example, a final average of 88-89% would be recorded as a B+; a final average of 83-87% would be recorded as a B; and 80-82% would be recorded as a B- (extrapolate from there if it is higher or lower than a B). For the purposes of averaging individual project letter grades into a final grade, I use the following system to assign a numerical grade based on a letter grade on an assignment: B+=88%; B=85%, and B-=82% (and so on). For example, if you got a B- on an assignment that was weighted 25% of the final grade, you would receive 20.5 points for that assignment (or *lose the possibility of getting* 4.5 points overall). The only exception for that is if you achieve an A+ on an individual assignment, where it will score as a 100% of the available points, where in this example you would receive the full 25 points.

At any point along the way, if you are curious, you can see how your grade is tracking: multiply the score of an individual assignment grade by the percentage it is weighted and that will reveal the total points you have earned for that assignment grade; add it to other determined grades; and then divide it by the highest potential scores for all the completed assignments combined. For grades that are composite, such as graded Classwork, you can calculate it the same way to track your ongoing composite score. If Classwork is determined by completion grades instead of scoring, you can average that score based on the number of assignments you have completed divided by the ones you have not. Please note that I do not compute cumulative class participation grades until the very end of the semester, so if you want to get a sense of where this score is tracking before that, you will need to discuss it with me. Finally, if you have absences in excess of the stated policy or a pattern of late submissions, you will need to factor them in as well. If you have questions about this grading system at any time, please consult me.

Here is how each assignment or set of assignments is weighted in this class:

EAP 1: “My Stuff” Presentation	10%
EAP 2: Social Semiotic Analysis of a Single Visual Text	15%
EAP 3: Curated Visual Discourse Analysis	15%
EAP 4: Analysis of Visual/Material/Spatial Practices	15%
Daily Classwork	10%
Daily Class Engagement	10%
Final Research Project	25%

COURSE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The Learning Outcomes for this course focus on developing proficiency with theory, methodologies, analysis/interpretation, self-reflection, production of photo-essays, and research. By the end of the course, students will demonstrate:

- Proficiency in understanding and critically engaging culturally-oriented visual/material **theory**, particularly social semiotics, psychoanalysis, Foucauldian discourse analysis, material culture, and audience theory.
- Proficiency in understanding and critically engaging culturally-oriented visual/material **methods of analysis**, particularly social semiotic analysis, psychoanalysis, intertextual analysis, Foucauldian discourse analysis, visual/material analysis, photo-elicitation/photo-voice, and audience/use analysis.
- Proficiency in developing effective **research** strategies for identifying primary and secondary sources pertinent to the analysis and interpretation of pictures, objects, and spaces.
- Ability to critically engage visual theory and methodologies in framing arguments that **curate, analyze and interpret** particular images, objects, and spaces.
- Proficiency in **producing photo-essays** that have a clear object of analysis and logically and coherently develop a clearly identifiable persuasive interpretive thesis through the interplay of word and image.

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES:

We will discuss more specific guidelines for the class assignments as the course unfolds, but here is a short outline to help orient you at the outset:

- **EVERYDAY ANALYSIS PROJECTS:** The four Everyday Analysis Projects (EAPs) will apply the course material covered in discussions and readings to curate, analyze, and interpret particular visual texts/objects/spaces chosen by the student. Each EAP will be short but tightly composed, critically engaged, and precisely documented. EAP 1 is a 3-minute in-class presentation combined with a 1-page word/image outline. The other 3 EAPs are 1000-1500 word “photo-essays.” See the attached “FAQs About EAPs” document for more information about the EAPs for this class. Additionally, I have included handouts for each separate EAP assignment in the syllabus. Evaluated on a plus/minus system.
- **FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT:** For the Final Research Project, you will write a researched analytical photo-essay that performs a detailed, theoretically-framed analysis and interpretation of a well-defined specific set of visual texts, objects, spaces or practices. The final project may build on one or more of the shorter EAPs to give you the opportunity to sustain your thinking about a topic over time, but that is not required. The Research Project paper will be produced as a “photo-essay” that features multiple embedded images and at least 3,500 words of analytical writing. It will critically engage at least 8

outside scholarly sources in addition to the materials we study in class. Before the Final Project is turned in, you must first submit a Project Proposal that outlines the project you intend to produce and have it approved. See the due dates in the schedule and the attached Project Proposal handout. This assignment will be evaluated on a plus/minus system.

- **CLASSWORK:** Your Classwork grade will be determined primarily by your work on Discussion Questions, which are designed to confirm that you are critically engaging the course readings while also helping you prepare to be active participants in our daily discussions. Every student will produce "daily discussion questions" (DQs) to submit to me **every day we have assigned readings (which is almost every day)**. Each DQ assignment will contain at least two discussion questions. When there is only one reading (usually a chapter from Rose), one DQ will address a specific question engaging the reading for the day and one question will connect issues across and/or in between current and previous readings. When there are multiple readings, one DQ will address a specific question engaging one of the readings for the day and one question will connect one of the other readings to connect across and/or in between current and previous readings. The best DQs are *anchored in the readings, interpretive, and open-ended* (e.g., with no pre-determined yes/no answers). More specifically, good DQs start with particular passages from the readings and then either seek to *clarify, extend, and/or challenge* the ideas, analysis, and/or interpretive arguments in them. You will prepare these daily DQs in advance (either handwritten or printed out in hard copy), show them to me at the beginning of class, work from them in class, and submit them to me at the end of class for a completion grade and feedback. DQs are recorded as completion grades, meaning that although I will give you feedback on your DQs to help you produce effective DQs, you will get credit for submitting them and not get credit if you do not. Note also that because DQs are designed to facilitate discussion in class, there are NO MAKE-UPS for DQs after we have discussed the material. If for some reason you are not able to attend class, email me your DQs before class for credit.

- **CLASS ENGAGEMENT:** In taking this class, you have joined a group, where your peers and I will have expectations about your participation. We will run this class like a seminar, which revolves around group discussion—not simply witnessing the professor lecture. In a seminar, daily Class Participation is imperative for every member of the group. Good Class Participation means more than merely attending class, which is a given. Minimally, it means reading the assigned course materials and coming to class ready to critically engage them—and actively contributing to the class discussion by speaking *and* listening not only to me, but to your classmates as well. More substantially, it means working to make our class a space of open, inclusive, respectful, responsible, and challenging engagement with ideas, perspectives, and voices both similar to and different from your own. Class Participation will be evaluated on a 10-point scale.

- **ATTENDANCE:** Because this is a discussion seminar, it is important that you be prepared and in class every day. Remember that attending class is not just about you and me but about you and your colleagues in the class. We can't work together if we are not present together. If you will be absent, for whatever reason--because you are observing a religious or cultural holiday not recognized by the normative University schedule, because you participating in an intercollegiate sport or another activity where you are representing Southwestern, or "just because"--you still are responsible for completing all your assignments by the deadline. More specifically, you are responsible for notifying me of the absence in advance and are responsible for arranging the means of making up and turning in applicable work in advance of the absence. I do not enforce a pre-determined penalty for absences as absences, but if you end up missing more than a couple of days throughout the semester, your Class Engagement grade will suffer accordingly.

- **READING ASSIGNMENTS:** Readings are contained in either Rose's *Visual Methodologies* or PDFs and webpages linked off the Course Webpage. All reading assignments must be completed before class on the day scheduled for discussion/application of the readings, and I expect you to have the readings available to you in class every day.
- **LATE PAPERS:** EAP 1 is a presentation with an accompanying written outline, and it must be performed on schedule. That outline and all other EAP papers and the Final Paper will be submitted to be electronically, emailed to me as PDFs, no later than noon on the days indicated in the schedule. Given the ongoing variables of working post-pandemic, I will consider a paper late if it is not submitted within 8 hours of the posted deadline, and then take a letter grade off for every 24 hours it is late after that. Any flexibility beyond that will be exceptional and will need to be the result of direct negotiations between me and you, so clear and open communication between us will be key.
- **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** It is your responsibility to understand and live by the Honor System, so it will be a good idea to review the policies and procedures outlined in the *SU Student Handbook*. All in-class and out-of-class assignments are subject to the Honor Code; therefore, I will assume that everything you turn in that is not accompanied by a full statement of the Pledge and your electronic signature will indicate that you have witnessed an Honor Code violation and wish to pursue it. Students who violate University policies on Academic Dishonesty by representing another's work as their own are subject to review by the Student Honor Code Council, which includes the possibility of disciplinary penalties.
- **INCLUSIVITY:** I work hard to create a classroom space that is dynamic, engaging, and inclusive for all students, where we work together from diverse perspectives and diverse ways of doing within fair and clearly-defined expectations for student engagement and performance. If at any time you sense a dynamic emerging in our class that makes you feel unsafe or unwilling to participate fully, please reach out to me by email or after class so that I can address your concerns. I value direct communication and want your feedback about how things are working for you. Also, as part of my commitment to inclusivity, I make regular accommodations for students with documented learning differences that challenge their ability to have equal access to engage and perform in the course. To arrange documentation for these accommodations, contact the Assistant Director of Academic Success within the Center for Academic Success (Prothro Center room 120; phone 863-1286; e-mail success@southwestern.edu). Students seeking accommodations should notify their office at least two weeks before any services are needed. It is your responsibility to discuss any necessary accommodations with me as well.

PLANNED SCHEDULE

Jan	16:	Mapping the Course/Introductions
	18:	Introduction to Visual/Material Communication Studies Read: Rose, Ch. 1 Course Webpage: Mitchell
	23:	Intro to Critical Visual/Material Methodologies Read: Rose, Ch. 2-3
	25:	What is “the Visual”? Read: Course Webpage: Shirato & Webb
	30:	What is “the Material”? Read: Course Webpage: Breen, Scott, & McLean
Feb	1:	Case Study: “Afghan Girl” Course Webpage: Edwards
	6:	“My Stuff” Presentations (In-Class Presentation and Submission of Outline) Due: EAP #1: “My Stuff” Presentation (+ 1-page outline, submitted electronically by noon)
	8:	Producing Photo-Essays Read: Rose, Ch. 15
	13:	Semiotics Read: Rose, Ch. 9
	15:	Social Semiotics Read: Course Webpage: Jewitt & Oyama; Kress & van Leeuwen
	20:	Cinematic Semiotics: Screen/Discuss <i>The Unusual Inventions of Henry Cavendish</i> (2005) Read: Rose, pages 125-143
	22:	Discourse Analysis I: Text/intertext/context Read: Rose, Ch. 10
Feb	23:	<i>Special Friday Due Date [no class]</i> Due: EAP #2: Social Semiotic Analysis of a Single Visual Text [electronic submission, by noon]
	27:	Discourse Analysis I: Text/intertext/context (cont) Read: Course Webpage: Jenkins; Lutz & Collins
	29:	Discourse Analysis II: Institutional ways of making people and things visible Read: Rose, Ch. 11
Mar	5:	Discourse Analysis II: Institutional ways of making people and things visible (cont) Read: Course Webpage: Spalding; Bednar, “Being Here, Looking There”
	7:	Spatial Communication Read: Course Webpage: Aiello; Aiello & Dickinson
Mar	12-14:	{No Class-Spring Break}

- Mar 19: {Research Consultations}
- 21: {Research Consultations}
Due: EAP #3: Curated Visual Discourse Analysis
[electronic submission, by noon]
- 26: Studying Visual/Material/Spatial Practices
Read: Rose, Ch. 12
- 28: Studying Visual/Material/Spatial Practices (cont)
Read: Course Webpage: Janning et al.; Bennett & Rogers
- Apr 2: Studying Visual/Material/Spatial Practices (cont)
Read: Course Webpage: Bednar, "Trauma Remains"
- 4: Making Pictures
Read: Rose, Ch. 13
- 5: *Special Friday Due Date [no class]*
Due: EAP #4: Analysis of Visual/Material/Spatial Practices
[electronic submission, by noon]
- 9: Making Pictures (cont)
Read: Course Webpage: Packard, "'I'm Gonna Show You What It's Really Like Out Here'"; Wagner, "Picture Perfect Bodies"
- 11: Doing Research Projects
Read: Rose, Ch. 5
Due: Final Project Proposal
[electronic submission, by noon]
- 16: <<No Class—SU Research & Creative Works Symposium>>
- 18: Theoretical Extensions: Visuality/Materiality and Mobility
Read: Course Webpage: Karlander; Drozdzewski
- 23: Theoretical Extensions: Absence and Presence
Read: Course Webpage: Gibson; Heessels et al.
- 25: {Research Consultations}
- 30: Conclusions, Brief Informal Research Presentations, Course Evaluations
- May 7 (Tue): Final Research Projects **DUE** (Electronic Submission by 9pm)

COURSE PDF READINGS

- Aiello, Giorgia, "Communicating the 'World-Class' City: A Visual-Material Approach," *Social Semiotics* 31/1 (2021), pp. 136-154.
- Aiello, Giorgia, and Dickinson, Greg, "Beyond Authenticity: A Visual-Material Analysis of Locality in the Global Redesign of Starbucks Stores," *Visual Communication* 13/3 (2014), pp. 303-321.
- Bednar, Robert M., "Being Here, Looking There: Mediating Vistas in the National Parks of the Contemporary American West," in Thomas Patin (ed.), *Observation Points: The Visual Poetics of National Parks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 1-28.
- Bednar, Robert M., "Trauma Remains: The Material Afterlives of the 1989 Alton Bus Crash," *Journal of Material Culture* 27/4 (2022), 414-431.
- Bennett, Andy, and Rogers, Ian, "Popular Music and Materiality: Memorabilia and Memory Traces," *Popular Music & Society* 39/1 (2016), pp. 28-42.
- Breen, Andrea, Scott, Christine, and McLean, Kate, "The 'Stuff' of Narrative Identity: Touring Big and Small Stories in Emerging Adults' Dorm Rooms," *Qualitative Psychology* 8/3 (2021), 297-310.
- Drozdowski, Danielle, "Memory, Movement, Mobility: Affect-full Encounters with Memory in Singapore," *Media Theory* 2/1 (2018), pp. 245-265.
- Edwards, Holly, "Cover to Cover: The Life Cycle of an Image in Contemporary Visual Culture," in Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards, & Erina Duganne (eds.), *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 75-92.
- Gibson, Margaret, "Melancholy Objects," *Mortality*, 9/1 (2004), pp. 285-299.
- Heessels, Meike, Poots, Fleur, and Venbrux, Eric, "In Touch with the Deceased: Animate Objects and Human Ashes," *Material Religion*, 8/4 (2012), pp. 466-489.
- Janning, Michelle, Collins, Caitlyn, and Kamm, Jacqueline, "Gender, Space and Objects in Divorced Families," *Michigan Family Review* 15/1 (2011), pp. 35-58.
- Jenkins, Eric S., "Seeing Katrina: Perspectives of Judgement in a Cultural/Natural Disaster," *Visual Communication Quarterly* 14/2 (2007), pp. 90-107.
- Jewitt, Carey, & Oyama, Rumiko, "Visual Meaning: a Social Semiotic Approach," in Theo van Leeuwen & Carey Jewitt (eds.), *Handbook of Visual Analysis* (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 134-156.
- Karlander, David, "Fleeting Graffiti: Backjumps, Mobilities, and Metro Semiotics," *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*, 161 (2016), pp. 1-18.
- Kress, Gunther, & van Leeuwen, Theo, "The Meaning of Composition," in Kress & van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2nd Ed, (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 175-214.
- Lutz, Catherine, & Collins, Jane, "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic," in Liz Wells (ed.), *The Photography Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 354-374.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. "There are No Visual Media," *Journal of Visual Culture*, 4/2 (2005), pp. 257-266
- Packard, Josh, "'I'm Gonna Show You What It's Really Like Out Here': The Power and Limitation of Participatory Visual Methods," *Visual Studies* 23/1 (2008), pp. 63-77.
- Shirato, Tony, & Webb, Jen, "Reading the Visual" in Shirato & Webb, *Understanding the Visual* (London: Sage, 2004), pp. 11-33.
- Spalding, Sally J. "Airport Outings: The Coalitional Possibilities of Affective Rupture," *Women's Studies in Communication* 39/4 (2016), pp. 460-480.
- Wagner, Phillip E., "Picture Perfect Bodies: Visualizing Hegemonic Masculinity Produced for/by Male Fitness Spaces," *International Journal of Men's Health* 15/3 (2016), pp. 235-258.

FAQs about EAPs

→ What is an EAP?

E.A.P. stands for Everyday Analysis Project. It is a short, out-of-class *project* that requires you to apply the theoretical models, methodologies, terms, concepts that you learn in class to *analyze* a particular visual media example from *everyday life*. Each EAP assignment has its own handout, but they share some common features I will outline here.

→ What makes a good EAP a good EAP?

A good EAP shows that you have learned the material in the class well enough to effectively apply it to a particular real-world example you encounter outside of class and bring to us. The models/terms/concepts you are expected to apply will vary according to the EAP. Regardless of what we are studying, however, all EAPs should explicitly and critically engage the course materials. That means that they must show that you understand the models/terms/concepts in general AND show that you know how to use them to generate meaningful and specific analytical interventions into specific elements of the visual object or space that you build into a more general analytical analysis/interpretation of the object or space as a whole. Therefore, you must define terms as you apply them, you must make extensive direct references and citations to the course readings, and your EAP must have both specific analysis and a general analytical argument about the text as a whole.

For all 4 EAPs, the visual object, set of objects, or space you analyze and/or curate must be not only *visual/material/spatial* but also *representable* to your reader, at least visually. That means that to analyze them you MUST have access to encountering them as directly as possible and representing it in your EAP (see more detail below). They CANNOT only be analyzed based on memory or second-hand linguistic description alone; you must personally physically encounter AND represent them *as visual*, and/or *as material*. Thus your focus of analysis should either be a physical object or a print or electronic media text such as a photograph, advertisement, poster, or social media post, or be something that can be represented by images you can witness yourself, such as film stills or photographs of sculptures, displays, or built environments. More specifically, for EAP 1 you will do your presentation with the object in your hands. For EAP 4, you MUST do a direct on-site analysis of objects in a particular physical or virtual space. EAPs 2 and 3 are more open.

→ Does the way the EAP is communicated count?

Yes. Persuasive analytical communication cannot be persuasive unless it is also built from detailed analysis, organized into an argument, and expressed clearly. EAP 1 is a presentation, EAP 2 and 4 are more traditional analytical essays, and EAP 3 is more exploratory, but they all should be clearly structured and delivered. Definitely edit your written EAPs to avoid problems with spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, etc. These assignments are short (3-minute presentation for EAP 1, and 1,000-1,500 words plus images for the rest), but that does not mean they are not challenging or ambitious. Remember that concise, direct communication expresses much in few words. You must choose the most important elements

to focus on while still showing that you understand the object of analysis as a whole. I will read the evidence of your decision-making and your ability to formulate your analysis into an effective short form of communication as signifiers of your competency as a critical analyst.

These are interpretive, analytical assignments. Explore meaningful elements, relationships, and structures. If you are looking for the single right answer, you will be frustrated. Do not try to be definitive, but provocative. What you discover as you apply the terms/concepts/models should reflect your own interests as the person building the analytical interpretations. In short, there is no right or wrong way to interpret a visual text, object, or space. There are, however, correct ways to understand the terms and concepts we are learning, and there are more effective or less effective arguments and more effective or less effective ways to critically engage the readings, address the assignment, and engage a written or live audience.

→ For Written EAPs, do I have to include a visual representation of the object(s) I am analyzing?

Yes. EAP 1 is a presentation focused on a physical/visual object, so it is obviously about showing *and* telling. The other EAPs are as well, though. They are produced as “photo-essays”: multimodal documents combining word/image (see Rose, Ch. 15). Therefore, I will not grade EAPs 2-4 unless you also embed visual representations of the visual object(s) or space(s) you are analyzing into your word-processed document so that your words and images occupy the same communicative space in your document. To ensure that the photo-essay I read matches the one you have designed, always submit your work as a PDF, which locks both words and images into place.

EAP1: "My Stuff" Project

Start with a single, portable visual/material object that you can present to class for an elaborate "show and tell." The assignment presumes that you either already possess the object or can gather it in time for the presentation. You can't present a picture of the object, only the object itself (unless of course that object is a printed picture).

Once you choose your object, think about how the object is integrated into your personal identity, way of life, subculture, etc., and think about wherever it usually "lives." As you do, also forget what you already know about it and think about how it might look to someone seeing it for the first time. That is, think about what material culture scholars would call its "affordances" and "constraints": what kinds of things does it enable and what kinds of constraints does it make on those using it? Think about how it might relate to something we've read in class so far this semester. Do some research on the object, locating and studying at least two different published sources that will help you situate it in the phenomena we have been studying so far in the class by the due date. Then prepare a 3-minute presentation to the class that shows how you personally interact with the object and what you think about how it works in the context of what we are learning about visual/material communication more generally. Along the way, you must critically engage at least one of the readings from the course so far, and two published sources we haven't read as a class.

As you look for sources and think about what you will say as both a personal artifact and a piece of visual/material culture, think about it in terms of the different sites (production, image/object itself, circulation, use) and modalities (technological, compositional, social) Rose identifies as part of a critical visual/material methodology. More specifically, here are some good angles to explore to contextualize your object: how the artifact is/was *represented* as it *circulates* in culture (especially what cultural concepts are used to sell it in ads, or how it is framed in other media representations of people doing something with it in TV, film, social media, etc.); how it is/was *produced* (and by whom, within which organizational culture, and why that matters); how it is/was *used* by other people (for what, by whom, and with what practices); what legal policies and social practices *regulate* how (and by whom) it is/was used and not used; and which social *identities* (personality, age, gender/sexuality, class, ethnic, racial, etc.) are/were associated with it (and by whom and why).

You probably won't find sources that address all of these overlapping elements, but work to address more than one. Also, since your later research project will require it, challenge yourself to make at least one research source a peer-reviewed scholarly source from an academic journal or book, but it is not yet required.

Finally, in addition to the engaging 3-minute presentation you will perform, you will also submit a one-sided, single-spaced, 1-page PDF document that includes a visual representation of the object, provides a detailed outline of your presentation, and includes full citations for the sources you used. You will email me this outline before class on the day we do the presentations.

EAP 2 Guidelines

For EAP 2, choose a single 2D still multimodal visual text (i.e., one comprised of both visual and linguistic signs, such as a print advertisement, a captioned news photograph, a full-page magazine layout, a single social media post, or something like a meme) that is complex enough to likely produce an interesting interpretive reading and allow you to apply the central terms/concepts/relationships listed below to produce a coherent 1,000-1,500 word analytical/interpretive photo-essay that critically engages (i.e., directly cites and incorporates into your argument) our course materials and analyzes the main social semiotic resources and processes of the text to produce an argument about your overall interpretive "reading" of it.

As you do, remember that this assignment is designed to evaluate your knowledge of and competence with not only knowing but using and critically engaging the course materials to produce an effective analysis. The challenge of the assignment is to show that you know the course material AND can use it to generate a persuasive overall reading of the visual/linguistic text. Strong interpretive arguments are built from strong analysis, which itself is generated through working through the separate elements in a disciplined fashion. Visual/Material theory (and the terms and concepts used by visual/material scholars) helps discipline your attention—helps to focus it—but is not an end in itself, so the trick here is to use the concepts to help you ask good critical questions about the visual text and to help you show your interpretative argument, not simply point to things and name them.

Below I list the terms you MUST critically engage in EAP 2. You must show that you know what these concepts are in general AND show that you can decide when/where/how/why to use them (or not use them) given the text you are analyzing. Not all of these will be equally useful to analyzing and interpreting every multimodal media text, but you should at least try to use them and show why they are not useful if they aren't.

Central signifier/signified/sign relationships

Denotation/connotation/myth/ideology

Polysemy and anchorage between visual, linguistic, and graphical signs in the multimodal text

Appellation/interpellation and preferred meaning

Composition: information value (left/right/top/bottom); framing; salience; modality

Represented interaction: contact (offer/demand), distance, and POV (horizontal/vertical angle of power/involvement)

Remember: From here, all of your EAPs will be produced as "photo-essays": multimodal documents combining word/image (see Rose, Ch. 15). Therefore, I will not grade EAPs 2-4 unless you also embed visual representations of the visual object(s) or space(s) you are analyzing *into* your word-processed document so that your words and images occupy the same communicative space in your PDF document.

EAP 3 Guidelines

For EAP 3, you will curate and analyze a set of found photographs around the theme “Visualizing Southwestern.” The main objective here is to get experience using the main analytical tools we have learned in the class so far: Social Semiotics, Discourse I, and Visuality/Materiality. The assignment also will help you continue to develop your skills at producing photo-essays that use both words and images to develop an interpretive argument. The focus on Visualizing Southwestern allows us also to explore how ideological dimensions of institutional culture, place, and belonging are pictured in visual/material communication.

All of the pictures you use for this assignment will come from the official Southwestern University website. The website, like all university websites, is an interactive form of visual communication that serves as the institution’s authoritative way of representing and performing a collective “Image” of itself to multiple publics. That collective image is the result of discursive relationships among the hundreds of pictures featured throughout the website, each picture anchored to words and contextualized in specific ways on the pages they appear within while also adding up to project/perform a larger intertextual, discursive “Image.” That image itself (as well as the pictures it is comprised of) is both representational and more-than-representational, meaning it *shows* something and *does* something at the same time.

As you explore the SU website, focus on photographs depicting people doing things in particular indoor and outdoor spaces on or near campus. Some of you will be drawn to curating/analyzing photographs that seem to confirm a singular dominant Image of Southwestern; some of you will be drawn to curating/analyzing images that deliberately challenge or complicate any singular Image. Either way, look for intriguing photographs and intriguing visual connections across photographs. As you do, remember that connections can be not only about similarities but also differences: visual contradictions and tensions can connect images just as strongly as visual harmonies—especially if you draw them out in the way you display and analyze/discuss them. Then choose between 3-7 photographs you would like to include in a virtual exhibit that will have something to say about the way Southwestern is visualized on our website (the way it looks, the way it is looked at, etc.). Once you have made your selections, produce a coherent 1,000-1,500 word photo-essay that curates, displays, and performs both a Social Semiotic analysis of the individual pictures and a Discourse I analysis of the intertextual relationships you see cutting across and holding the photographs together into a collective Image that is more than the sum of its individual parts, but what Foucault calls a “discursive formation.”

Remember that strong interpretive arguments are built from strong analysis, which itself is generated through working through the separate textual and intertextual elements in a disciplined fashion. Visual/Material theory (and the terms and concepts used by visual /material scholars) helps discipline your attention—helps to focus it—but is not an end in itself, so the trick here is to use the course theory to help you ask good critical questions about the visual texts and intertexts and to help you show your interpretive argument, not simply point to things and name them. Finally, remember that I will not grade your EAP unless you also embed visual representations of the visual texts you are analyzing into your PDF document so that your words and images occupy the same communicative space within in your document so it works as a photo-essay.

EAP 4 Guidelines

For EAP 4, the theme is Analyzing Visual/Material/Spatial Practices, where the goal is to analyze how objects and bodies are made visible within certain spatial contexts. You will choose one of the following five approaches:

- 1) **Physical Institutional Display Practices:** analyze how material and/or visual objects are made visible within a certain physical institutional apparatus, such as a museum, gallery, retail store, welcome center, or office lobby.
- 2) **Virtual Institutional Display Practices:** analyze how material and/or visual objects are made visible within a certain virtual institutional apparatus, such as a museum or gallery website, online retail website, university website, or corporate website.
- 3) **Institutional Surveillance Practices:** analyze how bodies are made visible (surveilled) using certain institutional technologies within a certain physical institutional apparatus, such as a prison, immigration detention center, travel checkpoint, concert venue, or school.
- 4) **Using Visual Objects:** analyze how particular individuals use and/or display material and/or visual objects performatively within a certain physical space/platform, such as a house, apartment, dorm room, personal office, car bumper, laptop, backpack, or reusable water bottle.
- 5) **Using Virtual Visuals:** analyze how particular individuals use visuals to both represent and do something in a certain virtual platform/apparatus where the interface is institutionally controlled through institutional technologies (templates, settings, ranking, etc.), but dependent on individuals curating and displaying visual content, such as Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, TikTok, or Reddit.

Each of these 5 approaches has a slightly different theoretical foundation and methodology, but all five presume a direct site analysis, and all five will represent their analysis in the form of a photo-essay. More specifically, all five require you to directly engage and analyze unique spaces, objects, and/or arrangements of texts, just like EAPs 1-3. That should be clear in Options 1, 3, and 4, which are about analyzing real-world ways that visual/material objects and bodies are displayed or made visible in particular physical places, but it is also true of Options 2 and 5, which are focused on mediated environments, because your analysis there must be built from your direct observation of particular web or social media texts and the infrastructure of these platforms themselves, not a broad discussion of how websites or social media work in general. Options 1, 2, & 3 require a Discourse II analysis. Options 4 & 5 require both a Discourse II analysis and an ethnographic approach involving direct observation of users of particular places (Option 4) or particular online texts (Option 5). Each of the five approaches will be strengthened by interviewing the direct users as well.

The challenge of this assignment is to show that you know the course material AND can use it to generate an engaging virtual exhibit space of your own within the confines of your photo-essay that makes claims about how the phenomena you are studying work. Strong interpretive arguments are built from strong analysis, which itself is generated through working through the separate textual and intertextual elements in a disciplined fashion. Remember that I will not grade your EAP unless you also embed visual representations of the visual texts you are analyzing into your word-processed document so that your words and images occupy the same communicative space within in your PDF document so it works as a photo-essay. Once again, that photo-essay will be a coherent 1,000-1,500 word photo-essay that both shows and analyzes the modes of display, visualization, and/or use you are studying.

Preparing Your Research Project Proposals

The Final Research Project focuses on developing a specific analytical approach to what I call a “research object.” In the term “research object,” the word “object” means something more metaphorical than the material objects we have been studying as physical things in this class. Here, the term research object refers to the thing you are analyzing, the object of your attention--the direct object to the noun “you” and the verb “analyze” in the following sentence: “You must directly analyze a visual/material/spatial research object.” The type of research object you will analyze in this class is a visual text or set of texts, a material object or set of objects, and/or a space where visual/material objects are made visible and/or encountered within a certain context.

Whichever type of research object you choose, your final project will be a photo-essay that includes at least 3,500 words of writing that analyzes and interprets your research object using a particular theoretical framework and methodology and features multiple visual representations of your research object. Implicit in both of these criteria is the need to critically engage not only the common materials from the course but also additional scholarship pertaining to both your research object and the theories and methodologies you will mobilize in your project. At minimum, I expect to see a final works cited page of at least 8 outside scholarly peer-reviewed sources in addition to the sources we’ve read and discussed in our class.

Your proposal should be about **1-2 single-spaced pages typed**, and must be **divided into the separate sections outlined below**, and **include a separate additional page listing the current bibliography** of sources you are using, with full citations using a standard citation system, such as MLA, Chicago, or Harvard. Your final project eventually will critically engage at least 8 outside scholarly sources; for this proposal to be credible, **the proposal must include a bibliography of at least 3 scholarly sources we have not read for this class**. Please note that you should expect to revise & re-submit your proposal before it is fully accepted.

Your Project Proposal must address the set of questions below as concretely as possible. As a shorthand, these questions ask you to define: What exactly you will study; how you will analyze it; why you will study it; who cares if you study it; and so what if you study it.

Research Object. What specific text(s), space(s), practices(s), and/or object(s) are you focusing on analyzing? What site or sites (production, image/object itself, circulation, use) and modality or modalities (technological, compositional, social) are you focused on? (What?)

Theory and Methodology. Which theories and theorists seem most pertinent to your project and how/why? What specific method of analysis will you use to analyze your research object? Which other scholars do you see doing similar and different but related work on your topic, and how does your proposed methodology relate to theirs? (How?)

Motivation. What is your personal motivation for doing the project? (Why?)

Significance. How does your project speak from and speak to the more general concerns of this class? (So What? and Who cares?)

Pronouns and Possessives:

its = possessive pronoun

e.g. the essay's point of view => its point of view

it's = contraction of it + is

e.g. It is a fine day => It's a fine day

their = possessive pronoun

e.g. Hondo and Jo Jo's dog roams the neighborhood => Their dog roams the neighborhood

there = adverb indicating place

e.g. Their dog usually leaves its mark on that tree over there.

they're = contraction of they + are

e.g. Hondo and Jo Jo are looking for their dog => They're looking for their dog.

Punctuation/Sentence Structure Problems:

fragment (frag)

A fragment is an incomplete sentence that lacks a subject, a verb, or both.

e.g. Washing the car. (no subject, incomplete verb, and incomplete thought)

comma splice (cs)

A comma cannot, on its own, join two independent clauses.

e.g. Jo Jo likes barbecue, Hondo prefers tofu => Jo Jo likes barbecue; Hondo prefers tofu.

=> Jo Jo likes barbecue, but Hondo prefers tofu.

=> Jo Jo likes barbecue. Hondo prefers tofu.

fused sentence (fs)

A fused sentence lacks the punctuation necessary to separate two independent clauses.

e.g. Jo Jo likes barbecue Hondo prefers tofu => see comma splice corrections above

semicolon errors

A semicolon can only be used in an extensive series or to separate two independent clauses.

e.g. Hondo stumbled; washing the car => Hondo stumbled; he was washing the car.

=> While he was washing the car, Hondo stumbled.

run-on

A run-on sentence proliferates verbs and subjects and objects without attention to grammatical structure.

awkward (AWK)

An awkward sentence stumbles over itself as it tries to communicate its point, rendering the writing confused/confusing. Often the fix is to "write to the point" more directly.

using the word "however"

The word "however" is not an interchangeable synonym for the word "but" or "although." It cannot be used to indicate contradiction unless you use punctuation to interrupt the flow of the sentence. If a sentence begins with the word, it must be followed by a comma; if a sentence ends with the word, it must be preceded with a comma. If it is used in the middle of a sentence, it must be set apart either with a set of commas before and after it or with a semicolon and a comma (see also fs, cs, and run-ons).

e.g. Jo Jo says she does not know how their dog gets out; however, I know that she does.

e.g. Jo Jo says she does not know how their dog gets out. However, I know that she does.

e.g. Jo Jo says she does not know how their dog gets out. I know, however, that she does.

Apostrophes:

A singular noun that does not end in "s" takes "'s" to indicate possession.

e.g. the woman's dog (the dog belongs to one woman)

A plural noun that already ends in "s" takes an "'" only to indicate possession.

e.g. the boys' dog (the dog belongs to more than one boy)

e.g. the ladies' house (the house belongs to more than one lady)

A plural noun that does not end in "s" takes "'s" to indicate possession.

e.g. the children's dog (the dog belongs to all the children)

e.g. the women's house (the house belong to the women)

A singular noun that ends in "s" takes either "'" or "'s" to indicate possession.

e.g. Charles' spaniel or Charles's spaniel (the spaniel belongs to Charles)

Punctuating quotes and citations:

I expect you to critically engage other writers as you develop your own arguments. Document all citations (including direct quotations, paraphrases, and "general indebtedness") using MLA, Harvard, Chicago, or some other standard in-text citation format within the essay and then list all of your cited sources in a Works Cited section at the end of the paper. Notice that the standard format for documenting a quote ends the quote, includes the citation, and only then provides the sentence's end punctuation, as in the following example: As Patrick Phillips argues, "There is a fine line between determining and overdetermining the meaning of a film text" (Phillips, 157).