

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Department of Sociology
Sociology 401.36
Visual Sociology
Winter 2010

Instructor: Dr. Liza McCoy
Office: SS 934
Telephone: 403-220-6856
Email: mcco@ucalgary.ca
Office hours: Wednesdays, 1:00-3:00 pm; and by appointment

Course Description

There are two main trends within **visual sociology**. The first studies the visual aspects of human society, with an emphasis on social forms and practices of visual representation. The second uses visual methods to conduct sociological research. In this course we will learn about – and *do* – both types of visual sociology. Our focus will be on still photographs and practices of photographic representation, both as objects of sociological analysis and as data within sociological research.

This course emphasizes hands-on practice, with small exercises and writing assignments throughout the semester. Class participants will need access to a digital camera of some kind: cell phone, point-and-shoot, SLR. Ordinary life experience of taking and storing/transferring digital images is all that is required.

Required Readings

Steve Edwards, *Photography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).

A collection of journal articles, available online. See list of articles at the end of the course outline.

Assignments, Activities, and Assessment

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Reading notes | 10 % |
| Article discussion | 10 % |
| Practice activities | 30 % |
| Midterm | 20 % |
| Final project | 30 % |
| Total | 100 % |

Reading notes 10 %

For each article or chapter, you may write one single-spaced, typed page of notes, following guidelines posted in Blackboard. Post these to the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard by 12 am (midnight) the day before the class when we will discuss the reading. The number of times you turn in notes is up to you. Each set of notes is worth 1 point, to a maximum total of 10 points. Your notes will not be graded, but incomplete or weak notes may be given half credit or no credit. Notes for the article on which you will serve as discussant *cannot* be submitted for reading note credit, as you will be turning those notes in for your discussant grade (see below).

Article discussion 10 %

Each student must sign up as discussant for one article. The job of the discussant is not to summarize the reading, but to comment thoughtfully on it – highlighting theoretical, methodological and analytic strengths or weaknesses, making connections with other course readings, responding personally, and raising issues for discussion with the rest of the class. Guidelines for preparation will be given in class. After the discussion, you will turn in a copy of your notes.

Practice activities 30 %

For each assignment you will find or take photographs and post them to the course Gallery. You will also write a short paper that discusses the images, according to the specific guidelines of the assignment. See attached activity list for assignment details and due dates.

| | |
|---|------|
| Travel/vacation pictures (Activity #1) | 5 % |
| Analysis of advertising images (#2) | 10 % |
| Analysis of University spaces images (#3) | 10 % |
| Reflection on ethnographic photography (#4) | 5 % |

Midterm 20 %

There will be an in-class midterm on March 2. This test will involve a combination of short and longer essay questions.

Final project 30 %

This will be an original piece of sociological research on a topic of your choice. You will conduct 3-4 interviews using photo elicitation techniques and write a 9-12 page paper describing your research and presenting an analysis of your data. You must turn in a written proposal for your project by March 25. This proposal is not graded, but if it is not submitted or is submitted late, there will be a deduction from the grade given to the final project paper. Guidelines for the proposal, the research and the paper will be given in class. The final paper is due on April 25.

Grading

Your final letter grade will be determined according to the following schedule:

| Percentage Grade | Letter Grade |
|------------------|--------------|
| 95-100 | A+ |
| 90-94 | A |
| 85-89 | A- |
| 80-84 | B+ |
| 75-79 | B |
| 70-74 | B- |
| 67-69 | C+ |
| 63-66 | C |
| 60-62 | C- |
| 55-59 | D+ |
| 50-54 | D |
| 49 or less | F |

Instructor's Policies

Classroom atmosphere: Stimulating discussion thrives in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Our goal should be to create an environment in which the largest number of people feel both inspired and safe to participate in discussions. Every person in the class has a role to play in creating and maintaining that environment.

Courtesy: Please make this class and the other people in it your priority during the time the class is in session. That means not reading or sending text messages and email, surfing the Internet, or checking Facebook, etc.

Late assignments: A late penalty (maximum 5% per day late) will be deducted from the grade on any assignments handed in after the due date/time.

Plagiarism: In accordance with University policy, I report all cases of plagiarism, including the unintentional kind. Make sure you know what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid it. Consult the Effective Writing Centre (<http://www.efwr.ucalgary.ca/writingcentre>) and the resource material posted in Blackboard.

Rounding: If your percentage grade falls on the cusp between two letter grades, I will look at your grades and your participation in class discussions over the semester in order to decide whether to round your final grade up to the higher letter grade.

Official University & Departmental Policies

Exam Policies: You must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam. All requests for deferral of an examination due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferred exams may be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. If you have missed an exam for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a “make up” exam as close to the original exam as possible. The date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferred exam. Deferred exams will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

Ethics Research: Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Academic Misconduct: Cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor’s office or the Department main office. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor’s office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

Safewalk: The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation: Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student’s responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

Handing in Papers Outside of Class, Return of Final Papers, and Release of Final Grades

When students are unable to submit papers at class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant rather than at the Sociology Department main office.

Final papers will not be returned through the Sociology Department main office. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, (i.e., outside an instructor's office, the department office, etc.). Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will only be available for pick-up during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or the beginning of the next term.

Final grades are not posted by the Sociology department. They are only available online.

Schedule of topics, readings, activities, assignments and tests – Tentative

| Dates | Topics | Readings |
|------------------|---|---|
| January 12 & 14 | Introduction to course Framework for studying photography sociologically | Edwards, ch. 1 (Thurs.) |
| January 19 & 21 | History of photography Exploring the nature and contemporary uses of photographs | Edwards, ch. 4 (Tues.) Edwards, ch. 5 (Thurs.) |
| January 26 & 28 | Personal photographs Studying photographic practice <i>Activity # 1 due Jan. 28</i> | Foster article (Tues.) Sather-Wagstaff article (Tues.) Edwards, Afterword (Thurs.) |
| February 2 & 4 | Issues of privacy and publicity Film: <i>War Photographer</i> , Feb. 4 | Chalfen article (Tues.) McNamara article (Tues.) |
| February 9 & 11 | Documenting war and disaster Representing the Other | Kennedy article (Tues.) Payne article (Thurs.) Edwards, pp. 20-26; ch. 6 (Thurs.) |
| Reading week | | |
| February 23 & 25 | Advertising images <i>Activity # 2 due Feb. 23</i> | Gill article (Tues.) Robinson & Hunter article (Thurs.) |
| March 2 & 4 | <i>Midterm – March 2</i> Using photos in qualitative research process | Becker article (Thurs.) Edwards, pp. 26-39; 53-66 (Thurs.) |
| March 9 & 11 | Photo elicitation research Conducting interviews Research projects | Harper article (Tues.) Barr article (Tues.) |
| March 16 & 18 | Research participant photography Photographing places & things | O Donoghue article (Tues.) Warren article (Thurs.) |

| | | |
|--------------------|---|---|
| March 23 & 25 | Ethnographic photographs <i>Activity #3 due March 23</i> <i>Project proposal due March 25</i> | Brown article (Thurs.) Woodward article (Thurs.) |
| March 30 & April 1 | Ethnographic and PE research, continued <i>Activity #4 due April 1</i> | Back article (Tues.) Samuels chapter (Thurs.) |
| April 6 & 8 | Photovoice Guest lecture – April 8 | Castleden et al article (Tues.) Wong article (Tues.) |
| April 13 & 15 | Wrap-up & review | TBA |
| April 25 | <i>PE projects due</i> | |

Schedule of Activities and Due Dates

| Activity | Post by date for images Due date for writing |
|---|--|
| Post a picture of yourself in the Gallery, with commentary. | Post by January 22 (earlier if possible) |
| <p>Post a travel/vacation picture from your collection.</p> <p>Write 2-3 pages about your practice of photographing or being photographed in a travel/vacation context.</p> | <p>Post by midnight January 27</p> <p>Due in class, January 28</p> |
| <p>Post 2 ads, one relating to Gill article and one relating to Robinson & Hunter article.</p> <p>Write a 4-6 page paper analyzing the ads using the framework from the relevant article.</p> | <p>Post by February 23</p> <p>Due in class, February 23</p> |
| <p>Take and post 2 photographs of meaningful spaces in the University, with commentary.</p> <p>Write a 2-4 page paper analyzing the corpus of photos/commentary.</p> | <p>Post by midnight March 19</p> <p>Due in class, March 23</p> |
| Write a proposal for your photo elicitation project. | Due in class, March 25 |
| <p>Take and post a series of 2-4 ethnographic photographs, with commentary.</p> <p>Write 1-2 pages reflecting on your process.</p> | <p>Post by midnight, March 31</p> <p>Due in class, April 1</p> |
| Conduct a small photo elicitation research project, involving 3 PE interviews; write an 8-12 page paper describing your research and analyzing your data. | Due in my office (SS 934) by 3:00 pm on April 25 |

List of Articles – By Week

Note: All articles can be obtained through the University of Calgary website.

January 26 & 28

Foster, M.D. 2009. What time is this picture? Cameraphones, tourism and the digital gaze in Japan. *Social Identities* 15, 3: 351-372.

Sather-Wagstaff, Joy. 2008. Picturing experience: A tourist-centred perspective on commemorative historical sites. *Tourist Studies* 8, 1: 77-103.

February 2 & 4

Chalfen, Richard. 2009. “It’s only a picture”: Sexting, “smutty” snapshots and felony charges. *Visual Studies* 24, 3: 258-268.

McNamara, Kim. 2009. Publicising private lives: Celebrities, image control and the reconfiguration of public space. *Social & Cultural Geography* 10, 1: 9-23.

February 9 & 11

Kennedy, Liam. 2008. Securing vision: Photography and U.S. foreign policy. *Media, Culture & Society* 30, 3: 279-294.

Payne, Carol. 2006. Lessons with Leah: Re-reading the photographic archive of nation in the National Film Board of Canada’s Still Photography Division. *Visual Studies* 21, 1: 4-22.

February 23 & 25

Gill, Rosalind. 2009. Beyond the “sexualization of culture” thesis: An intersectional analysis of “sixpacks,” “midriffs” and “hot lesbians” in advertising. *Sexualities* 12, 2: 137-160.

Robinson, Bryan K., and Erica Hunter. 2008. Is Mom still doing it all? Re-examining depictions of family work in popular advertising. *Journal of Family Issues* 29, 4: 465-486.

March 2 & 4

Becker, Howard S. 1995. Visual sociology, documentary photography, and photojournalism: It’s (almost) all a matter of context. *Visual Sociology* 10, 1-2: 5-14.

March 9 & 11

Harper, Douglas. 2002. Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies* 17, 1: 13-26.

Barr, Mary. 2009. The alchemy of the photograph. *Visual Studies* 24, 1: 66-70.

March 16 & 18

O Donoghue, Dónal. 2007. "James always hangs out here": Making space for place in studying masculinities at school. *Visual Studies* 22, 1: 62-73.

Warren, Samantha. 2002. "Show me how it feels to work here": Using photography to research organizational aesthetics. *Ephemera* 2, 3: 224-245.

March 23 & 25

Brown, J. Brian. 2001. Doing drag: A visual case study of gender performance and gay masculinities. *Visual Studies* 16, 1: 37-54.

Woodward, Sophie. 2008. Digital photography and research relationships: Capturing the fashion moment. *Sociology* 42, 5: 857-872.

March 30 & April 1

Back, Les. 2009. Photography and betrayal: Bourdieu, photography and sociological life. *Sociological Review* 57, 3: 471-490.

Samuels, Jeffrey. 2004. Breaking the ethnographer's frame: Reflections on the use of photo elicitation in understanding Sri Lankan monastery culture. *American Behavioral Scientist* 47, 12: 1528-1550.

April 6 & 8

Castleden, Heather, Theresa Garvin and Huu-ay-aat First Nation. 2008. Modifying Photovoice for community-based participatory Indigenous research. *Social Science & Medicine* 66: 1393-1405.

Wang, Caroline. 1999. Photovoice: A participatory action research strategy applied to women's health. *Journal of Women's Health* 8, 2: 185-192.