

LEH 300—07W

Pattern Recognition:

Images and Visual Literacy

Saturdays 1 – 3:30 p.m.

Meets in Carman Hall 332

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Office Hours: Saturdays 12-1 p.m., and
by appointment

Course Description:

We are surrounded by images and we gather information from visual sources constantly. But how do we know what visual representations are saying to us? What are images and how do they work? What is visual literacy? How do we “read” pictures? How do we compose information in a visual format? Does the visual have persuasive power? Can we make visual arguments? These are some of the central questions we will explore in this interdisciplinary seminar drawing from the academic disciplines of literature, history, philosophy, science, film and the visual arts.

In this course, we will look at the role of images in constructing our understanding of the world. We will also think about images as a means of manipulating the truth. Ranging from children’s picture books to paintings to graphs to advertising, this course will look at visual representation in the disciplines, in the arts, and in our everyday reality. Students will be asked to consider the role of images and visual information in their own fields of study and in the world around them. We will develop and exercise our skills in visual rhetorical analysis by looking at visual images and reading essays about visual images.

Course Requirements:

Informal (ungraded) assignments:

- Students will keep an **observations journal** throughout the semester and will use this journal to build ideas for assignments.
- **5 short informal assignments** will be assigned over the course of the semester. The short informal assignments will be handed in for comment, but will not be graded.

Formal (graded) assignments:

- **2 projects.** Students will choose TWO of their short informal assignments, revise and expand them, and then submit them for a grade. The first project will be due around midterm, the second will be turned in at the end of the semester. Instructions for revising informal assignments into formal projects will be distributed before the first revision is due. The 2 projects will be evaluated by both the student and the professor.
- **Portfolio.** At the end of the semester, students will turn in a **portfolio** of their work which will include the journal and the short informal assignments. The portfolio will be evaluated by both the student and the professor.

Summary of requirements:

1 st formal project – due March 17	25%
2 nd formal project – due May 19	25%
Portfolio of student work – due May 12	50 %

Required Texts, available in Lehman College Bookstore:

Molly Bang, *Picture This: How Pictures Work*

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History*

Edward Tufte, “Visual and Statistical Thinking: Displays of Evidence for Making Decisions,”
an article reprinted from his book *Envisioning Information*

Additional readings will be posted on the course Blackboard site or distributed in class. Students should log into the site right away to make sure they have access and familiarize themselves with the course page.

To access the Blackboard site, go to the CUNY portal (www.cuny.edu) and log in. If you don't know your login name and password, the IT center on the first floor of Carman hall will be able to help you log in for the first time. We will be using Blackboard extensively in this class, so it is very important that you access the site and get comfortable with using it right away.

WEEK	Readings	Assignments
Unit One	The Picturebook	
Feb 3	Course Introduction How DO pictures work? Sendak, <i>Where the Wild Things Are</i> Hutchins, <i>Rosie's Walk</i> Tour of Blackboard	Email letter response to TanyaRadford@gmail.com by Feb 9 th
Feb 10	Children's picture books Molly Bang, <i>Picture This</i> Perry Nodelman, "Picture Books"	
Unit Two	Representing the Visual World	
Feb 17	Writing the image: Description	Short informal #1 DUE "Scary Birds" Field excursion: MOMA or the Met
Feb 24	Description, continued Reading TBA "Show and Tell" Day	Journals DUE
Unit Three	Image, Ideology, Consumption: Advertising	
March 3	Klein, from <i>No Logo</i> Video: <i>Frontline</i> on advertising	Short Informal #2 DUE
March 10	Strategies for reading images: Semiotics Ads and <i>Adbusters</i>	
March 17	Image/Word/Advertising – wrap-up "Show and Tell" Day	Formal #1 DUE

Unit Four	The Documentary Image	
March 24	Film: <i>Born into Brothels</i>	Short Informal #3 DUE
March 30	**Last day to withdraw w/o academic penalty**	
March 31	Riis, <i>How the Other Half Lives</i>	Field Excursion: TBA Journals DUE
April 7	** SPRING BREAK—No Class**	
April 14	Spiegelman, <i>Maus I: My Father Bleeds History</i>	
Unit Five	Communicating Discovery: the Visual Display of Scientific Knowledge	
April 21	Class meets online Tufte, “Visual and Statistical Thinking” <i>Understanding USA</i> , link on BB site	Short Informal #4 DUE
April 28	Field trip: American Museum of Natural History	
May 5	Picturing Knowledge	Short Informal #5 DUE
May 12	Film: <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i>	Portfolios DUE
May 19	NO CLASS – All student work DUE	Second Formal Project DUE