

Department of Cultural & Religious Studies
CULS5412 Visual Research Methods
Fall 2020



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Room 307
Leung Kau Kui Building
Thursdays 6:45pm-9:30pm

This course will introduce visual and sensory research methods to enable innovative research projects, drawing on frameworks in art history, visual anthropology, media studies, performance art and general cultural research. The course aims to enhance students' capacities in undertaking visually focused research projects in community and professional contexts.

Audio-visual materials and social media networks are increasingly used for the production and transmission of knowledge in contemporary culture and Cultural Studies. This course will explore visual research methods with a focus on new technologies learning methods within new media platforms. Older and newer methods of image classification and interpretation will be introduced such as iconology, semiotics, online ethnography and big data analysis.

The emphasis will be on studying cultural environments by means of immersive and multi-sensory ethnography of online and physical environments. Students will practice the ethical and creative uses of ethnography through photography and video production and by documenting a community, subculture or art group of their choice.

Assessment Scheme

Attendance and Active Online Engagement 20%

Most classes are divided between online lectures and online discussions or exercises in breakout rooms. Students will be asked to actively engage in these

discussion. This is not a typical lecture course and active participation is required without any exception. Since the classes will be taught online, it is important that students can participate as fully as possible. Even students experience technical difficulties, they are advised to inform the teachers or TA.

Photo-Diary, Weekly Reflection Papers and Presentations 40 %

All students will create a photography diary at the beginning of the semester

All students are required to write several short reflection papers based before each class. These are 300-word essays that are not “just summaries” of the readings, but that students write to “respond to” readings and audio-visual materials. These papers have to be sent to the teacher and TA via blackboard before each lecture. They are meant to enhance in-class discussion and they will also be graded at the end of the semester.

Every week, one or two students will guide the in-class discussion and give a short presentation.

Final Group Projects (Including Online Presentations of Proposal and Final Project) 40%

Students are required to carry out one major individual or group research project about a virtual community or subculture of their choice. It will apply digital ethnographic research methods and lead to a group essay and a presentation.

- o There will be several mandatory exercises (in class) for students to better prepare and carry out this major project
- o Students have to also present a research proposal about the topic of their major research projects, which counts for 10% of the grade

Learning Outcomes

On satisfactory completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Explain key distinctions between visual research methods and conventional text-based research methods.
2. Identify key characteristics of ethical ethnographic research practices in regards to visual documentation.
3. Specify appropriate methods for visual observation and data collection in online media and physical community settings
4. Recognize current debates and technological challenges in visual culture studies and new media.

Course Content

LECTURE TOPIC and READINGS research methods 1: Approaching ‘visual’

Week 1 sept 10 Why Are We Visual Researchers?

Reading: Sarah Pink, "A Multisensory Approach to Visual Methods." In Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods," Ch. 31

Week 2: Sept 17 Ice-breaker: Photo/Video Diaries

Readings:

Elizabeth Chaplin, "The Photo Diary as Autoethnographic Method." In Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods," Ch. 13

Charlotte Bates, "Video Diaries " In Routledge International Handbook of Ethnographic Film and Video, Ch.11

Homework: 300-word reflection due before class (Deadline: Midnight 16 sept)

Week 3: Sept 24 Visual Anthropologists and Visual Fantasy Cultures

Reading: Katrien Jacobs, "Wandering Dolls," Chapter 1 Kyoto

Kerim Friedman, "Defining Ethnographic Film," In Routledge International Handbook of Ethnographic Film and Video, ch. 2

Homework:

1 300-word reflection due before class (Deadline: Midnight 23 sept)

2. Post a first draft of your photo-diary (Deadline Midnight 23 sept)

Week 4: Oct 1 National Day Holiday

Week 5: Oct 8 Workshop I: Writing and Rewriting "Photo-diaries"

Students work in group and give in-depth comments on each other's work and help each other editing the photos and text.

Homework: Photo-diary (500 words and 10 photos)

Week 6 : Oct 15 Social Media Networks, Medium Theory and Iconology

Reading: Boy, J. D., & Uitermark, J. L. (2017). "Reassembling the city through Instagram." Transactions - Institute of British Geographers, 42(4), 612-624

Reading, Marwick, Alice E. (2015) "Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy" In Public Culture 27 :137-160.

Homework: Reflection paper, 300 words due before class (Deadline Midnight oct 14)

Week 7: Oct 22 Social Media: Big Data and Quality Data

Guest lecture Ruerpert Cao

Readings:

Ong, Jonathan and Jason Cabanes, (2017) "Architects of Networked Disinformation: Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines" (University of Leeds Tech4Dev Report)

Varol Onur, Emilio Ferrara, Christine L. Ogan, Filippo Menczer, and Alessandro Flammini (2014) "Evolution of online user behavior during a social upheaval," Center for Complex Networks and Systems Research, School of Informatics and Computing, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA

Homework: Reflection paper, 300 words due before class (deadline: MIDNIGHT oct 21)

Week 8: Oct 29 Presentations Final Project Proposals (Graded)

In your 500-word proposals, focus on the following:

Describe your social media platform and what aspect you would like to research

What is your research topic?

What are your research questions?

What other academic literature or documentaries can you find on this topic.

How will do you carry out your digital ethnography ethically, safely and for a long enough period of time?

How can you find informants or interviewees in Hong Kong?

7 minute graded oral presentations.

Your group will prepare the proposal and a visually alluring and academically informed ppt presentation.

One student will actually do the presentation.

You will get feedback from the teacher, TA and other students.

Week 9: Nov 5 Workshop II. Final Projects: Immersive Ethnography and Social Media

Readings:

Nardi, Bonnie, My Life as Night Elf Priest, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010. Chapter1

<https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3064/2574>

Homework, please prepare:

- 1. Your research proposal
- 2. A short bibliography of 5 to 6 items (academic books or articles) that you hope to be in dialogue with. From these items try to extract 2 key concepts or questions that you are tackling in your project. You can formulate these in your own words but also make sure that your words or curiosities resonate with existing academic ideas.
- 3. Do some research about the digital medium platform(s) that you will be researching and plan to hang around in, find out who owns it, what the community guidelines are, what kinds of textual and visual communications are or less common, what kinds of demographics are using it.
- 4. List of 2 or 3 interviewees and their contact information + what efforts you have made to contact them.

Week 10: Nov 12. Decolonizing Visual Aesthetics and Performative Fieldwork

Case study Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium and artistic responses

Homework: 300-word reflection about the case-study due before class (deadline, MIDNIGHT nov 11)

Week 11: Nov 19. Visualizing Sexualities and Sex Studies

Homework, Final Project, each group brings along an overview of 2 problems they are encountering in visualizing their subjects.

Week 12: Nov 26 Student Presentations-A

Week 13: Dec 3 Student Presentations-B

Bibliography.

Carolyn, E. and Bochner, A.P. Composing Ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing, Altamira Press, 1996.

Collins Samuel Garrald and Matthew Durlington "From Ethnographic media to multimodality." In Routledge International Handbook of Ethnographic Film and Video, Ch.7

Gray, A.: Research Practice for Cultural Studies: Ethnographic methods and lived cultures, Sage, 2003.

Johnson, R. Chambers, D., Rughuram, P. and Tincknell, E.: *The Practice of Cultural Studies*, Sage, 2004.

Leeuwen, van T. and Jewitt, C. (eds.): *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*, Sage, 2000.

Margolis. E and Luc Pauwels (eds.): *The Sage handbook of Visual Research Methods*

Pickering, M. (ed.): *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*, Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

Pink, S.: *The future of Visual Anthropology: Engaging the senses*, Routledge, 2006.

Pink S, ed. (2016) *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice* (London: Sage Publications, 2016)

Rose, G.(2007) *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*, Sage, 2007.

Sturken, M. and Cartwright, L.(2009) *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*, Oxford University Press

Vannini, Philip (2020) *Routledge International Handbook of Ethnographic Film and Video*: London. Routledge

Van Leeuwen: "Multimodality and Multimodal Research? In *Sage Handbook of Visual Research methods*, ch. 28.

Walker, J.A. and Chaplin, S.(1997) *Visual Culture: An Introduction*, Manchester University Press, 1997.

Honesty in Academic Work: A Guide for Students

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students, and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating and plagiarism. Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the University. All student assignments in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes should be submitted via VeriGuide with effect from September 2008: <https://veriguide2.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/cuhk/>

Although cases of cheating or plagiarism are rare at the University, everyone should make himself/herself familiar with the content of this website and thereby help avoid any practice that would not be acceptable.

Section 1 What is plagiarism

<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p01.htm>

Section 2 Proper use of source material
<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p02.htm>

Section 3 Citation styles <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p03.htm>

Section 4 Plagiarism and copyright violation
<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p04.htm>

Section 5 CUHK regulations on honesty in academic work
<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p05.htm>

Section 6 CUHK disciplinary guidelines and procedures
<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p06.htm>

Section 7 Guide for teachers and departments
<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p07.htm>

Section 8 Recommended material to be included in course outlines
<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p08.htm>

Section 9 Electronic submission of assignments via VeriGuide
<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p09.htm>

Section 10 Declaration to be included in assignments
<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p10.htm>