Visual Rhetoric

“It is the office of Rhetoric to make pictures of virtue and goodness so that they may be seen.” Francis Bacon

“When the visual and verbal dance in step, the power of each is magnified.” Kathleen Jamieson

Overview of the Course

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the faculty of observing (or discovering) in any given case the available means of persuasion. The phrase “available means” suggests that rhetoric includes modes beyond those of speech or writing, yet much rhetorical scholarship and instruction, particularly in the last century, concentrated on one or the other of these two modes. Certainly, the study of rhetoric has always featured some emphasis on visual modes albeit under such guises as delivery (how a speaker or text “looks,” use of visual aids, and visual demonstration) and style (creating pictures in the minds of audience members or readers). In fact, eloquence was sometimes conceived of in visual terms, for example as “lively portraiture.” Advances in communication technology have resulted in new and more accessible means for creating and distributing visual images and artifacts. At the same time, the rhetorical impact of these images and artifacts is not yet well documented or understood. It is important to examine what rhetorical theory and criticism can offer to our understanding, interpretation, and use of visual images. In this course, students will:

1. Develop an understanding of the concepts and methods used to rhetorically analyze and interpret visual images and artifacts.
2. Demonstrate ability to engage in rhetorical analysis of visual images and artifacts.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical strategies employed in various primarily visual forms of communication including photography, visual art, advertising, and public commemorative activities.

Texts


Reserve readings – see bibliography and schedule of course readings and assignments

Course Structure and Assignments

This course is run as a seminar. Learning in a seminar format depends upon preparation and involvement by the students as well as the professor. Therefore, it is very important that you not only read the assigned material, but also that you critically examine and interrogate it. The following questions should help you to do so:

1. What are the key concepts or terms?
2. How does this material fit in with other materials in the course as well as with relevant outside materials?
3. To what extent does this information and/or approach allow me to understand or illuminate the rhetoric of visual images and artifacts? How does it apply to practical ventures/my own experience?
4. What doesn’t make sense to me? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?

To aid us in our discussions, we will reserve the first 5-10 minutes of each class period for class business. To participate in class business, you need to bring in newspaper clippings, ads, web addresses, exhibit announcements, video clips, or any other images and artifacts you may run across that illustrate, contradict or in some other way relate to the issues raised in the readings for that class period. Participation in class business will be included as part of your class participation grade– each student should plan to participate at least once during the semester.

As your participation in discussion and other in-class activities is crucial to the success of this course, attendance is required. Excessive absences (defined as more than 2) during the semester will have a negative impact on your course grade.

Per university regulations, excused absences must fall into one of two categories: sanctioned anticipated situations and documented emergency situations. Anticipated situations, (e.g., participating in an official university function, court attendance, religious observances, or military duty) must be submitted in writing at the beginning of the semester or one week prior to the anticipated absence. Emergency absences (e.g., student illness, injury or death of immediate family member) must be documented within one week following the emergency. Make-up work will be allowed only in situations where absences were excused. Please consult the following web page for further information on university attendance regulations:
http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/academic_policies/attend/reg.htm

In addition to class business, there are three oral presentations in the course. The chapter presentation entails presenting an in-depth look at one of the critical methods presented in the Foss textbook. The article presentation entails presenting an in-depth look at one or more scholarly articles pertaining to a particular unit in class. Assignment sheets with further details are included at the end of the syllabus. The final paper/project presentation entails orally presenting a rhetorical analysis of a particular visual image(s) or artifact(s) to the class for feedback and critique prior to submitting a completed critical essay. This assignment is not graded separately but is part of your participation and attendance grade. There are also several short writing assignments building up to the final paper/project:

Short Paper #1
- describe the topic
- review some of the literature devoted to the topic

Short Paper #2
- describe the image or artifact to be analyzed
- describe the method or approach you will use in the analysis
- summarize your preliminary evaluation of the image or artifact

General requirements for the short papers include:
- You should consult several different sources, which should be cited in your paper.
- Your paper must be clearly organized and well written. It must be typed and checked for spelling and grammatical errors, approximately 5 pages in length.
- The paper should demonstrate an appropriate level of insight and understanding.

Evaluation for Graduate Students
Chapter Presentation 15%
Article Presentation 10%
Short Paper I 10%
Short Paper II 10%
Final Paper (Critical Essay) 40%
Participation and Attendance 15%
Total 100%

**Academic Integrity.** Strict standards of academic honesty will be enforced according to the University policy on academic integrity found in the Code of Student Conduct. I expect a student’s name or signature on any test or assignment means that you have neither given nor received unauthorized aid. Consult the following website for further details: [http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/ncsulegal/41.03-codeof.htm](http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/ncsulegal/41.03-codeof.htm)

**ADA Statement.** The American with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning and/or psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester to discuss any such accommodations needed for this course. Consult the following website for further specifications: [http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/hat/current/appendix/appen_k.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/hat/current/appendix/appen_k.html)

**Departmental Equity Statement.** All persons, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, physical disability, or sexual orientation shall have equal opportunity without harassment in Department of Communication courses and programs. Any harassment should be reported immediately to either the classroom instructor or the department head.

**Organization and Assignments**

(The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule, with appropriate notice to the class, based upon class interest and need). Reading and other assignments are listed on the day they are DUE to be covered in class and/or handed in. Additional readings and assignments for graduate students are listed.

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<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Reading and Other Assignments</th>
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<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
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<td>Jan 10</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
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<td>Read Introduction to <em>Defining Visual Rhetoric (DFV)</em>, pgs. 1-23</td>
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<td>and Introduction to the <em>Grammar of Visual Design</em> (GVD), 1-15</td>
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| **Week 2** | **Visual Rhetoric** |
| Jan 15    | Read DFV Chapter 1 and Electronic reserve articles: |

| 17 | **Rhetorical Criticism and Cultural Studies** |
|    | Read Foss, ch. 1 and 2 |
|    | Brummett, ch. 1 and 2, on reserve |
**Week 3**  
Jan 22  
*Methods of Analysis*  
Read Foss, ch.3 and Brummett ch. 4

24  
*Methods of Analysis, cont’d.*  
Read GVD, chs. 1 & 2

**Week 4**  
Jan 29  
*Critical Approaches – Chapter Presentations*  
Cluster Criticism and Fantasy Theme Analysis  
Read Foss chpts. 4 and 5

31  
*Critical Approaches – Chapter Presentations*  
Feminist Criticism and Genre Analysis  
Read Foss chpts. 6 and 7

**Week 5**  
Feb 5  
*Critical Approaches – Chapter Presentations*  
Ideological Criticism and Metaphoric Analysis  
Read Foss, chpts. 8 and 9

7  
*Critical Approaches – Chapter Presentations*  
Narrative Criticism and Pendatic Analysis  
Read Foss, chpts. 10 and 11

**Week 6**  
Feb 12  
*Critical Approaches – Chapter Presentations*  
Generative Criticism  
Read Foss, chp. 12

14  
*Theorizing the Visual*  
Read *DVF* chs. 2 & 3 and GVD, ch. 3

**Unit II -- Visual Rhetoric in Photography, Painting, and Art**

**Week 7**  
Feb 19  
*Visual Rhetoric in Painting – Guest Speaker*  
Read electronic reserve  


22  
*Visual Rhetoric in Painting and Art*
Read electronic reserve

**Week 8**
Feb 26

**Visual Rhetoric in Photography**
Read *DVF* ch. 8, Rhetorics of Display (R of D) ch. 5 and on Electronic Reserve:

Mar 1

**Visual Rhetoric in Photography -- continued**
Read *DVF* ch. 9 and on reserve


**Week 9**
Mar 3-7

**SPRING BREAK – RELAX AND ENJOY!**

**Week 10**
Mar 11

**Visual Rhetoric in Public Art and Public Spaces**
Read *DVF* ch. 12 and electronic reserve


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**Visual Rhetoric in Public Art and Public Spaces**

**Short Paper #1 Due**
Read electronic reserve
Read distributed manuscripts


**Unit III – Commemoration: Memorials, Monuments and Museums**

**Week 11**
*Mar 18*

**Field Trip or Guest Presentation**

20

*The Rhetoric of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*

Read electronic reserve


**Week 12**
*Mar 25*

**Rhetoric and Commemoration**

Read electronic reserve


*Mar 27*

**NO CLASS – Work on Projects**

**Week 13**
*Apr 1*

**Rhetoric of Civil Rights Commemoration**

Read R of D, ch. 8 and electronic reserve


*Mar 3*

**NO CLASS – SSCA Conference**
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<td>Apr 8</td>
<td><strong>Rhetoric of Civil Rights Commemoration</strong></td>
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<td>Read electronic reserves:</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Rhetoric of Commemoration and Museums</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Course Wrap-up</strong> – In-class analysis</td>
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<td>Apr 22</td>
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