

SC 532, Fall 2010, Boston College,
Thurs. 3:00-5:30 PM, McGuinn 415
Stephen Pfohl, McGuinn Hall 416
Office hours: Thurs: 3:15-5:15 PM, and by appt.

Images and Power

“People are ... aroused by pictures and sculptures; they break pictures and sculptures; they mutilate them, kiss them, cry before them, and go on journey's to them; they are calmed by them, stirred by them, and incited to revolt. They give thanks by means of them, and are moved to the highest levels of empathy and fear.

–David Freedberg, *The Power of Images*.

This seminar explores the social-psychic and energetic-material power of images within historically specific global/local contexts. How do images affect our hearts and minds? How do images influence our everyday lives, our techno-scientific practices, our connections and disconnections, our conscious and unconscious desires and fears? How do images show up in the clothes we wear, in the ways we walk, and the objects we want? How do images influence the foods we eat or don't eat and the ideas and feelings we have about our selves and others? How do some images enter our flesh, captivate us, fascinate us, or arouse our senses? How is it that other images put us to sleep? How do images inform our habits and fantasies, pleasures and doubts, worries and joys, rituals and rebellions? How do images shape our personal, political, cultural, moral, and religious beliefs about nature and about justice? How do images influence what we imagine to be possible and what's not?

Visual images are today everywhere entangled within a complex and contradictory web of global electronic flows of information. Images are typically racialized, gendered, territorialized, eroticized, militarized, and class-driven. Some of the most powerful images are hooked-up to hi-tech machineries of war, surveillance, and the economic marketplace. Images also lie at the core of global corporate technologies of profit, control and advantage. How might such images be best understood? How might they be critically subverted, transformed, or remade? In exploring these and related questions, this seminar provides an introduction to a variety of critical sociological approaches to the study, making, and remaking of images.

As resources for an engagement with these and related questions, the seminar also invites participants to consider a variety of “power-reflexive” sociological and visual cultural practices. These include Dadaist, constructivist, surrealist, feminist, Marxist, social psychoanalytic, Situationist, queer, postcolonial, radical multicultural and anti-racist, anti-systemic and other critical approaches to the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of images.

Topics and Readings.

1. Sept. 7th ***Introduction.***

2. Sept. 14th ***Ways of Seeing.***

a. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, London: BBC/Penguin, 1972, pp. 1-34, 45-64, 83-112; 129-154.

3. Sept. 21st ***Dreaming Images: Seeing Symptoms: Visual Culture.***

a. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, "Introduction" and "Imagers, Power, and Politics," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 1-8; 9-48.

b. bell hooks, "Introduction" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston: South End Press, 1992, pp. 1-7.

c. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Global Visual Cultures: Paradox and Comparison" in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 1-16.

d. Robert D. Romanyshyn, *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, New York: Routledge, 1989, pp. 1-15.

4. Sept. 28th ***Picture it: I See/He Flies/She Questions!***

a. Susan Bordo, "Introduction," in *Twilight Zones: the Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-26.*

b. Robert D. Romanyshyn, "Lift-Off: we are all astronauts," in *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, New York: Routledge, 1989, pp. 16-31.

c. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Division of the Sensible" and Chapter 1, "Sight Becomes Vision From al-Hathān to Perspective," in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 17-20; 21-40.

d. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Chapter Two, "Viewers Make Meaning," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 49-139.

5. Oct. 5th ***The Ad and the Ego: Visual Images in Consumer Culture.***

Video to be shown in class: no assigned readings.

6. Oct. 12th ***Window on the World: Finger on the Trigger.***

a. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Chapter Three, "Realism and Perspective: From Renaissance Painting to Digital Media," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 141-182.

b. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Culture and Transculture" and Chapter 2, "1492: Expulsions, Expropriations, Encounters," in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 41-44; 45-67.

c. Robert D. Romanyshyn, "The Window and the Camera," in *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, New York: Routledge, 1989, pp. 32-64.

d. Kevin Robbins, "The Touch of the Unknown," Chapter 1 in Kevin Robbins, *Into the Image: Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision*. New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 11-34.*

7. Oct. 19th ***Aestheticizing Bodily Relations: Eating the Other.***

a. bell hooks, "Eating the Other," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston: South End Press, 1992, pp. 21-39.

b. Robert D. Romanyshyn, "Self as Spectator," in *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, New York: Routledge, 1989, pp. 65-102.

c. Nicholas Mirzoeff, Chapter 3, "Slavery Modernity and Visual Cultures" in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 68-88.

d. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Chapter Five, "Visual Technologies, Image Reproduction and the Copy," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 183-222.

8. Oct. 26th ***Panoptic Modernity and Images in Everyday Life.***

a. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Visuality" and Chapter 4, "Panoptic Modernity" in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 89-93; 94-112.

b. bell hooks, "Selling Hot Pussy," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston: South End Press, 1992, pp. 61-77.

c. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Chapter Six, "Media in Everyday Life," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 223-264.

d. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 217-251.*

9. Nov. 2 ***History in Ruins and Bodies in Ad Culture.***

a. Susan Bordo, "Never Just Pictures," in *Twilight Zones: the Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 107-138.*

b. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Modernity" and "Breakout Image: Photography and Death," and Chapter 5, "Imperial Transcultures: from Kongo to Congo" and "Race" in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp.113-118; 119-126; 127-146; 147-152.

c. Robert D. Romanyshyn, "Body as Specimen," *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, New York: Routledge, 1989, pp. 103-132.

d. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Chapter Five, "Advertising, Consumer Cultures and Desires," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 265-306.

10. Nov. 9th ***The Abandoned Body and its Eroticized Return.***

a. Nicholas Mirzoeff, Chapter 6, "Sexuality Disrupts; Measuring the Silences," and "The Fetish and the Gaze," in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 153-168; 169-175.

b. bell hooks, "Reconstructing Black Masculinity," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston: South End Press, 1992, pp. 87-113.

c. Robert D. Romanyshyn, "The Abandoned Body and its Shadows," in *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, New York: Routledge, 1989, 133-173.

d. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Chapter Five, "Postmodernism, Indie Media, and Popular Culture," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 307-345.

11. Nov. 16th ***Dreamworld and Spectacle.***

a. Kevin Robbins, "Consuming Images: from the Symbolic to the Psychotic," Chapter 5 in Kevin Robbins, *Into the Image: Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision*. New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 107-126.*

b. Nicholas Mirzoeff, Chapter 7, "Inventing the West" and "Empire and the State of Emergency" in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 176-191; 192-196.

c. Robert D. Romanyshyn, "World as Spectacle," in *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, New York: Routledge, 1989, 176-198.

d. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Chapter Nine, "Visual Technologies, Image Reproduction and the Copy," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 347-387.

12. Nov. 23rd ***Seeing Otherness: Decolonizing the Eye/'I' Want To Burn.***

a. Nicholas Mirzoeff, Chapter 8, "Decolonizing Visions" in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 197-217.

b. bell hooks, "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston: South End Press, 1992, pp. 165-78.

c. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Networks" and Chapter 9, "Discrete States: From Difference Engine to Web 2.0" in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 224-244; 245-249.

d. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Chapter Ten, "The Global Flow of Visual Culture," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 389-430.

13. Nov. 30th ***Reframing the Eye/I of White Northwestern “Man.”***

- a. Celeste Olalquiaga, Chapter Five, “Tupincócopolis: The City of Retrofuturistic Indians,” in *Megalopolis: Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, pp. 75-94.*
- b. bell hooks, "Revolutionary Renegades," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston: South End Press, 1992, pp. 179-194.
- c. Robert D. Romanyshyn, "Re-entry: paths of return," in *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, New York: Routledge, 1989, 199-229.
- d. Nicholas Mirzoeff, Chapter 10, “The Death of the Death of Photography” and *Spectacle and Surveillance*” in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, 250-263; 264-270.

14. Dec.7th ***Re-dreaming Images, Remaking Power.***

- a. bell hooks, "A Feminist Challenge," and "The Oppositional Gaze" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston: South End Press, 1992, pp. 79-86; 115-131.
- b. Nicholas Mirzoeff, Chapter 11, “From Imperial Monarchy to Reality TV” in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 271-286.
- c. Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Breakout Image: the Abu Ghraib Photos” and Chapter 12 “Watching War” in *An Introduction to Visual Culture, Second Edition*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 287-291; 292-309.

Course Requirements.

1. Active preparation for and participation in seminar discussion. While there are various styles of active seminar participation, all participants enrolled for credit must, with at least one fellow student, share responsibility for opening and leading class discussion of assigned texts during two meetings of the seminar. (10%)

2. Construction of semester-long JOURNAL-ART-NOTEBOOK.

Journal-art-notebooks involve written and visual meditations and short essays on specific course materials, readings, themes, and discussions. Journal-art-notebooks should also include analytic applications of course materials to found images and everyday (sociological) sightings. Journal entries are to be typed (or handwritten neatly) and journal-art-notebooks must include a minimum of eight 2-3 page entries over the course of the semester. Journals will be reviewed twice during the semester. Journals are due for review on October 26th and again no later than noon on December 20th. (60%)

3. MIXED MEDIA ANALYSIS OF VISUAL CULTURE. This project involves critical inquiry into the use of images in contemporary social life. Participants are asked to sociologically explore aspects of images and power involving a specific visual cultural event, event series, object, social technology or social practice. Final project is to include both written text (approximately 15-20 pages) and 15-20 minute multi-media presentation at class performance session(s) to be scheduled near end of semester. One page statement of proposed projects are due on October 12th. Proposals should include brief statement of visual cultural topic to be studied, methods to be used, and likely form of mixed-media presentation or performance. Students

are invited to collaborate on these ethnographic projects. Written components of this project are due no later than noon on December 20th. (30%)