BA (H) Sociology

Discipline Specific Elective 07

Visual Culture

Course Objectives

1. The objective of this paper is to introduce the students to various perspectives that enable a contextualisation of everyday visual culture within the larger debates around power, politics, identity and resistance.

2. It brings together debates from the field of Art History, Social Sciences and Visual Art Practices to enable the students to understand the processes through which different visual environments can be sociologically analyzed. One of the central arguments of this paper is to understand how the very process of 'seeing' can be problematized.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Developing the techniques to understand and appreciate visuals; working with visuals as potential representations of matters of sociological interest.

2. Understanding 'visuality'/'visualization' as a technique of asserting power and dominance in society; simultaneously locating the subversive potential of alternative or 'counter-visualities.

3. Discovering the strength of 'visuals' in an age dominated by techniques of mass production and dissemination of images.

Course Content:

Unit 1 Introduction

1.1 Introducing Visual Cultures and the Process of 'Seeing'

1.2 The Spectacles of Modernity

Unit 2 Visual Environments and Representations

2.1 Power, Knowledge and gaze of the State

2.2 Visual Contestations

2.3 Visual Practices and Identity formation

2.4 Visual Cultures of Everyday Life

Unit 1. Introduction (Weeks 1-4)

1.1 Introducing Visual Culture and the process of 'seeing' (Weeks 1-2)

Mitchell, W.J.T. 'Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture' In *Journal of Visual Culture,* August 2002 vol. 1 no. 2 165-180

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting, 1972. (p. 7- 33)

1.2 The Spectacles of Modernity (Weeks 3-4)

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black & Red, 1983. (p. 7- 17)

Shohat, Ella & Robert Stam 'Narrativizing Visual Culture', In Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed) *The Visual Culture Reader*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2002. (p. 37-41)

Fenske, Gail & Deryck Holdsworth, 'Corporate Identity and the New York Office Building: 1895-1915' In David Ward and Olivier Zunz (ed) *The Landscape of Modernity: New York City*, 1900-1940. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997.

Roma Chatterji 'Global Events and Local Narratives: 9/11 and the Chitrakaars' In *Speaking with Pictures: Folk Art and Narrative Tradition in India* (p 62-103)

Unit 2. Visual Environments and Representations (Weeks 5-14)

2.1 Power, Knowledge and gaze of the State (Weeks 5-7)

Foucault, Michel. 'Panopticism' In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon, 1977. (p. 195-203)

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. 'The Right to Look, or, How to Think With and Against Visuality' In *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011.

Cohn, Bernard, 1987 (1983), "Representing Authority in Colonial India", in *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, Delhi: OUP, pp. 632-650

Tagg, John. 'Evidence, Truth and Order: Photographic Records and the Growth of the State' In *Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1988

2.2 Visual Contestations (Weeks 8-10)

Eco, Umberto. *On Ugliness*. New York: Rizzoli, 2007. Print. pp. 8-20.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 'The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources' In Mariam Fraser & Monica Greco (ed) *The Body: A Reader*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Ranciere, Jacques. 'Problems and Transformations of Critical Art' In *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2009.

Mally, Lynn. *Revolutionary Acts: Amateur Theater and the Soviet State, 1917-1938*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000. p. 147-169

2.3 Visual Practices and Identity Formation (Weeks 11-12)

Srivastava, Sanjay. 'Urban spaces, Disney-Divinity and Moral Middle classes in Delhi' In *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. XLIV, Nos. 26 & 27 (June 27, 2009), pp. 338-345

MacDougall, David. 'Photo Hierarchicus: Signs and Mirrors in Indian Photography' in *Visual Anthropology*, 1992, 5 (2): 103-29.

2.4 Visual Culture of the everyday life (Weeks 13-14)

Certeau, Michel De. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Trans) Steven Rendall, Berkeley: University of California, 1984 (p. xi-xxiv)

Pinney, Christopher. 'What do Pictures Want Now: Rural Consumers of Images, 1980-2000' In *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India*. London: Reaktion, 2004. Pp. 181-200

Thomas de la Peña, Carolyn. 'Ready-to-Wear Globalism: Mediating Materials and Prada's GPS' In *Winterthur Portfolio*. Vol. 38, No. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2003), pp. 109-129

References:

Compulsory Readings:

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 'The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources' In Mariam Fraser & Monica Greco (ed) *The Body: A Reader*. London: Routledge, 2005.

 Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting, 1972. (p. 7- 33)

Certeau, Michel De. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Trans) Steven Rendall, Berkeley: University of California, 1984 (p. xi-xxiv)

Cohn, Bernard, 1987 (1983), "Representing Authority in Colonial India", in *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, Delhi: OUP, pp. 632-650

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black & Red, 1983. (p. 7- 17)

Eco, Umberto. *On Ugliness*. New York: Rizzoli, 2007. Print. pp. 8-20.

Fenske, Gail & Deryck Holdsworth, 'Corporate Identity and the New York Office Building: 1895-1915' In David Ward and Olivier Zunz (ed) *The Landscape of Modernity: New York City*, 1900-1940. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997.

Foucault, Michel. 'Panopticism' In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon, 1977. (p. 195-203)

MacDougall, David. 'Photo Hierarchicus: Signs and Mirrors in Indian Photography' in *Visual Anthropology*, 1992, 5 (2): 103-29.

Mally, Lynn. *Revolutionary Acts: Amateur Theater and the Soviet State, 1917-1938*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000. p. 147-169

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. 'The Right to Look, or, How to Think With and Against Visuality' In *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011.

Mitchell, W.J.T. 'Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture' In *Journal of Visual Culture,* August 2002 vol. 1 no. 2 165-180

Pinney, Christopher. 'What do Pictures Want Now: Rural Consumers of Images, 1980-2000' In *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India*. London: Reaktion, 2004. Pp. 181-200

Ranciere, Jacques. 'Problems and Transformations of Critical Art' In *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2009.

Roma Chatterji 'Global Events and Local Narratives: 9/11 and the Chitrakaars' In *Speaking with Pictures: Folk Art and Narrative Tradition in India* (p 62-103)

Shohat, Ella & Robert Stam 'Narrativizing Visual Culture', In Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed) *The Visual Culture Reader*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2002. (p. 37-41)

Srivastava, Sanjay. 'Urban spaces, Disney-Divinity and Moral Middle classes in Delhi' In *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. XLIV, Nos. 26 & 27 (June 27, 2009), pp. 338-345

Tagg, John. 'Evidence, Truth and Order: Photographic Records and the Growth of the State' In *Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1988

Thomas de la Peña, Carolyn. 'Ready-to-Wear Globalism: Mediating Materials and Prada's GPS' In *Winterthur Portfolio*. Vol. 38, No. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2003), pp. 109-129.

Additional Resources:

Books & Articles:

Appadurai, Arjun, and Carol A. Breckenridge. 'Museums are Good to Think: Heritage on View in India.' Representing the Nation: A Reader: Histories. Heritage, and Museums. (Eds.) David Boswell and Jessica Evans .New York: Routledge, 1999.

Babb, Lawrence A., and Susan Snow Wadley. Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995.

Mazumdar, Ranjani. Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007

Pinney, Christopher. Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997.

Rappoport, Erika D. 'A New Era of Shopping: The Promotion of Women's Pleasure', Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (ed) Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995

Sciorra, Joseph. 'Religious Processions as Ethnic and Territorial Markers in a Multi-ethnic Brooklyn Neighborhood' In Robert A. Orsi (ed) Gods of the City. Indiana University Press: 1999

Weinbaum, Alys Eve. The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. Print.

Teaching-Learning Process

a. The teaching-learning process for this course is centered on idea that students develop the capacity to connect concepts and debates from different visual art and social science fields, thereby understanding the interdisciplinary premise of this paper.

b. The role of the teacher is demanding here since this interdisciplinary aspect requires the students to be continually engaging with past and present artistic approaches, architectural developments, and advances in film, photographic and other visual practices.

c. This is not a course that can be transacted purely within the limits of a classroom. Accordingly, the pedagogic approach for this paper encourages visits to museums and art exhibitions along with regular conversations with artists and producers of various visual materials. It is expected that this course be transacted keeping in mind the constant encounter that the students have with the visual, thus enabling them to receive this data not as passive observers but with keen and analytical minds.

Assessment:

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the course and its requirement to move beyond the classroom and text books, assessment methods would involve tutorial and seminar presentations, guided term papers, group discussions and periodic class tests (closed or open book depending on the topic addressed).

Keywords:

Visual, Visuality, Seeing, Folk Art, Panopticon, Authority, Modernity, Countervisuality, Grotesque, Amateur Art, Camera, Photographic Representation, Photography, Critical Art, Identity, Representation, Everyday Life.