Course Description

Visual Anthropology is a diverse and growing subfield in anthropology with research interests ranging from photography and ethnographic film to media analysis, studies of material culture, museum displays, engagements with hypermedia and more. Visual anthropologists are interested both in the cultural meanings of visual expressions, and in visually recording diverse cultural practices. Thus, there are two sides to visual anthropology: reception: the study of images produced by anthropologists and others; and production: the creation of image records by anthropologists themselves. This course introduces a series of key issues in Visual Anthropology and will focus on the areas of photography, film, and mass media.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course students will demonstrate understanding of the following ideas through class discussion and written and visual essays:

1) the relationship between commercial representations of non western cultures in late 19th and early 20th century and the use of visual materials by anthropologists of this period.
2) The use of photographic images to represent cultural phenomena, including reflection on how visual data compare and contrast with purely linguistic descriptions and analyses.
3) The relationships between the different objectives espoused by ethnographic filmmakers, the structures of films produced, and the reception of these films by different audiences.
4) The role of media in cultural definition

Class Format and Evaluation

Class sessions will follow a seminar format with detailed discussions of assigned readings and films by instructor and students. It is important that you read each assignment carefully before each class period and make notes on the discussion questions provided on D2L.

Students will be required to write two out of class essay exams and to create an ethnographic photo essay on a topic of their choice. Evaluation will be based on class participation (20%), two essay exams (25% each) and the photo essay assignment (30%). Late work will be penalized one half grade per day (not class period) except in the event of serious illness or emergency. Requests for extensions on deadlines should be made ahead of the due date. You must attend class regularly and complete every assignment to pass the course. Students registered with DSS who need accommodations should notify the instructor.

Graduate students will be held to a higher standard of performance on exams and other coursework. Graduate students are also required to write an additional research
paper worth 30% of their final grade. A separate sheet of related assignments for this paper will be provided.

**Course Prerequisites:** Previous coursework (8 credits) in sociocultural anthropology (including one theory course such as Anth 304 and 305) strongly recommended.

**Required Readings:**
All class readings are available for download and printing from D2L, which students access with their Odin account. Please contact the instructor if you encounter difficulties in accessing this resource. A complete list of references for course materials is included at the end of the syllabus. Please print out and make notes on discussion questions for readings and bring to class. These will be periodically turned in and become part of your class participation grade.

**I. What is Visual Anthropology?**
April 2 Course and Student Introductions
Film: *Nanook of the North* (1922) Robert Flaherty, 60 minutes.

April 4 What is Visual Anthropology?
Mead, Margaret 2003 (1975) “Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words”
Ruby, Jay 1996 “Visual Anthropology”
MacDougall, David 1997 “The Visual in Anthropology”

**II. Photographic Images**
April 9 Colonialism and Exhibited Others
Corbey, Raymond 1993 “Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930”
Griffiths, Alison 2002 “Knowledge and Visuality in Nineteenth-Century Anthropology”

Apr 11 Photography in early 20th century Anthropology
Jacknis, Ira 1988 “Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in Bali: Their Use of Photography and Film”
Film: *Karba’s First Years* (1952) Mead & Bateson, 20 min.
Recommended: Damon, Frederick H. 2000 “’To Restore the Events?’ On the Ethnography of Malinowski’s Photography”

Apr 16 Photography as Research Method
**Discuss Ethnographic Photo Essays**
Newton, Julianne, 1998 “Beyond Representation: Toward a Typology of Visual Behavior”
Recommended: Halvaksz, Jamon 2008 "Photographing Spirits: Biangai Photography, Ancestors, and the Environment in Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea"
Photography in Diverse Cultural Contexts
Sprague, Stephen 1978 “How I See the Yoruba See Themselves”
Orrantia 2012 "Where the Air Feels Heavy"
Recommended: MacDougall, David 1992 “Photo Wallahs: An Encounter with Photography”

III. Ethnographic Film

Ap 23  Heider, Karl  2006 “A History of Ethnographic Film” in Ethnographic Film
Photo Essay Topics Due

Ap 25  First Essays Due
         The Axe Fight (1975) Timothy Asch and Napoleon Chagnon, 30 min.
         Les Maitres Fous (1955) Jean Rouch, 24 min.

Ap 29  Rouch, Jean 1975 “The Camera and Man”


May 7  Discuss photo essay projects. See photo essay assignment.
Becker, Howard  1998 “Categories and Comparisons: How We Find Meaning in Photographs”

May 9  MacDougall, David  1991 “Whose Story Is It?”
MacDougall, David  1998 “Beyond Observational Cinema” in Transcultural Cinema
Film: Forest of Bliss (1985) Robert Gardener, 90 min.

Parry, Jonathan  1988 “Comment on Robert Gardner’s “Forest of Bliss”
Chopra, Radhika  1989 “Robert Gardener’s Forest of Bliss: A Review”
Kirkpatrick, Joanna  1989 “Review of Forest of Bliss”
Ostor, Akos  1989 “Is That What Forest of Bliss is All about? A Response”
MacDougall, David 2001 “Review Article: Gifts of Circumstance”

**Student Presentations on Photo Essay Projects**
May 16, 21, 23 in class presentations. See photo essay assignment

**IV. Anthropology and Mass Media**

May 28 Spitulnik, Debra 1993 “Anthropology and Mass Media”
Lutz, Catherine and Jane Collins 1991 “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic”


**Photographic Essays Due**

Turner, Terence 1992 “Defiant Images: The Kayapo Appropriation of Video”
Film: *The Kayapo: Out of the Forest (1991)* Granada TV, 52 minutes.
*Recommended:* Tomaselli, Keyan 2002 "... We have to work with our own heads" (/Angn!ao): San Bushmen and the Media"

June 6 Coleman, E. Gabriella 2010 "Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media"

**Thursday, June 13 Final Essays Due: Noon in Cramer 141**

**Ethnographic Photo Essay Project**
Students may use either 35 mm print film or digital cameras for this exercise, but will be required to submit their photo essays in print form. If you do not own a camera, you can purchase a single use camera for this exercise. **Be sure to test your camera equipment before attempting to take photos ‘in the field’**.

Select a cultural phenomenon and describe/examine/explore it through still photography and text. This will entail a mini-ethnographic exploration of a setting, an event, a series of interactions, etc. In choosing your topic, think about how visual data might contribute a different type of understanding from purely linguistic description. You will also want to consider your interaction with the people you are photographing and whether you want to elicit their input in selecting images or explaining situations, relationships, etc.

Keep a separate journal for this exercise that records your decisions (and reasoning behind them) as well as your experiences for each stage of the project. Journal entries should include your selection of topic (why this?); selection of images to photograph; technical decisions (e.g. distance from subjects, camera angle, lighting, etc.); interactions with people involved in this project; caption selections, etc. As you make notes, relate your decisions and experiences to the insights you have gained from class readings and discussions (this is important!).
Your final report should consist of three sections:

1. Journal notes (20 pts.)
2. A photographic essay consisting of 15-25 photographs (4x6) with captions and explanatory text. (40 pts.)
3. A four to five page reflective essay that draws on your journal writings to discuss your experiences with this project in relationship to issues raised in class discussions and readings. This essay should reference specific readings and include a short bibliography (at least 5 references) at the end. (40 pts.)

Your evaluation (grade) for this project will be based on both your success in using visual media to convey a cultural phenomenon (legible photos, selection of images, thoughtful captions/texts) and your ability to link your experiences with wider issues in your reflective essay.

**Photo Essay Topics Due: April 23** Submit a short paragraph that describes the topic of your photo essay, including the types of themes/questions that you hope to focus on with this project. Why is this topic a good choice for visual exploration/interpretation? What is the sociological/anthropological significance of this topic?

**Discuss Photo Essay Project: May 7** Students should bring to class a set of initial photos for their ethnographic photo projects. We will divide into small groups to discuss these images, talk about strategies for narrative format, and what further images might be useful to pursue.

**Class Presentations of Photo Essays: May 16, 21, 23** Students will prepare a 10 minute PowerPoint presentation of their photo essay to present in class, that includes both photos and text. There will be 5 minutes for questions and feedback after each presentation. If you have been using print film, you will need to scan your photos into a digital format. These presentations will not be formally graded, but students should use the feedback to revise final photo essays.

**Photo Essay Projects Due: May 30**

**Bibliography for Required Readings**


Collier, John and Malcom Collier  

Corbey, Raymond  

Ginsburg, Faye  

Griffiths, Alison  

Grimshaw, Anna  

Harper, Douglas  

Heider, Karl  

Jacknis, Ira  
1988 “Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in Bali: Their Use of Photography and Film” *Cultural Anthropology* 3 (2): 160-177.

Kirkpatrick, Joanna  

Lutz, Catherine and Jane Collins  

MacDougall, David  


Mead, Margaret  

Moore, Alexander  

Newton, Julianne  

Orrantia, Juan  
2012 Where the Air Feels Heavy: Boredom and the Textures of the Aftermath" *Visual..."

Ostor, Akos

Parry, Jonathan

Rouch, Jean

Ruby, Jay

Spitulnik, Debra

Sprague, Stephen

Turner, Terence

Recommended Readings

Damon, Frederick H.

Halvaksz, Jamon

MacDougall, David

Tomaselli, Keyan
2002 "... We have to work with our own heads" (/Angn!ao): San Bushmen and the Media" Visual Anthropology 15 (2): 203-220
Ethnographic Film Analysis Guide

When viewing ethnographic films in this course, it would be useful for you to keep the following questions in mind. We will draw on these issues in our class discussions of films, and you will be expected to show a critical understanding of the films in commenting on them in your essays.

Objectives

1. What, if any, are the purposes of this film? Does the film seem designed to answer a particular question, or questions?

2. Could you discern the objectives of the film from within the film itself? If so, how?

3. Do you detect the presence of a theory in structuring the narration, the presentation of images, and/or the subject matter of the film? What might that theory be?

Structure

There are at least two narrative structures to a film: a spoken one, in the form of narration (if there is one) and a visual narrative.

1. How would you describe the way the film has been pieced together, and what do you think the purpose was of piecing it together in that fashion?

2. If the readings commented on either the spoken or visual narrative, what do you think of their assessments?

Evidence of authorship and subject response

1. Where does the primary authority for statements made by the film lie?
2. Aside from the obvious fact that the filmmaker is standing behind the camera, what evidence is there from the film of a response to the presence of the filmmaker on the part of those filmed?

3. To what extent can you observe “native feedback,” “shared anthropology,” or “co-production” and how does this affect the overall effectiveness of the film?

Critiques

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the published critiques of the film? Why?
2. Where would you position this film in a general “history of ethnographic film”?