

COURSE OUTLINE

Anth 9900B 001- Special Topics in Anthropology

Topic: Visual Anthropology

Winter 2019

Lectures: Wednesdays 10:30 am-1:30 pm

Classroom: SSC-3227

Instructor: Dr. Lindsay Bell

Office: SSC-3312

Office hours: Tuesdays 3:30-5:00

Email: Lindsay.bell@uwo.ca

Credit value: 0.5 credit

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to visual anthropology and to visual studies more broadly. The course tracks the parallels and divergences in debates about representation as they occur in art and anthropology. The course is experiential and will ask you to experiment with visual thinking strategies of various kinds. No artistic or technological expertise is required. Instead, curiosity and a collaborative spirit are essential.

Prerequisite: Instructor permission by application.

Antirequisite: None.

Course Syllabus:

Visual anthropology is the study of visual aspects of cultural lives and experience, and an exploration of the use of visual techniques and technologies in anthropological research and representation. Visual anthropology can be used in any of the four fields of traditional anthropology. Most researchers now use photographs or video to capture parts of their research process, and a growing number of scholars use visual modes for representation and dissemination of their findings. More importantly, our own lives are visually mediated. This course provides students with an in depth understanding of the practice and politics of 'picturing' the world. We investigate questions such as what is the role of images

and image making in everyday life? How are ideologies of seeing cultural? What is the role of the "seen" in creating claims about the world? How do different strategies for image making create or limit our relationship to the world?

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's OWL site before the first day of class.

Learning Outcomes:

- By the end of the course students will be able to:
- Demonstrate an understanding of the variety of anthropology's theoretical approaches to the visual.
- Discuss how anthropological theories and methods of representation, identity, production, collaboration, distribution, consumption, power, and post-coloniality intersect with visual images.
- Critically analyze the forms of interaction and self-reflexivity involved in producing visual ethnographic products.
- Use and reflect on visual methods for data collection and dissemination.

Course Materials:

There are two required books which can be purchased from the University of Toronto Press' website or another book retailer.

- Causey, Andrew (2016) *Drawn To See: drawing as an Ethnographic Method*. University of Toronto Press.
- Hamdy, Sherine and Coleman Nye. Art by Sarula Bao and Caroline Brewer (2017) *Lissa: A Story about Medical Promise, Friendship, and Revolution*. University of Toronto Press.

Registered students will be able to access information about additional course readings through the course's on-line OWL site before the first day of class.

Evaluation:

Visual Attendance (5%) Each class you are expected to turn in a 'self-portrait' (broadly conceived) on a provided index card. Students with 12 of 13 cards will receive full points. For every card missing, one point is lost (11 cards is 4 points, 10 cards is 3 points, 9 cards is 2 points). This idea is adapted from Lynda Barry's "Syllabus: Notes of an Accidental Professor".

Visual Data Diary (25%) For 4 weeks, select different aspects of your daily lives to document (complaints, meals, socks, time spent, thank you's, words read). Gather data related to this aspect of your life. Complete a hand-drawn visualization to represent your findings. This concept comes from the project/book *Dear Data* by Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec. Examples will be shown in class. On February 11, you will exchange your data with a partner. Write an 800-1500 word reflection on how this form of representation taught you to "see" yourself and someone else differently. What limits and possibilities did the method offer you? Connect your thoughts to course readings on data visualization and representation.

Due: February 11: Twelve Data Visualizations due (switch with partner)

Due: February 28: Papers due in class and copy uploaded to OWL

Participation/ Melbourne Method (30%)

The Melbourne Method is a seminar format that has been passed down through several generations of anthropologists. I have adapted it to be suited to a visual course. The idea is simple—the class is divided into three groups, and each group takes turns being responsible for a key role in our seminar. The class will be divided into three groups, Group A, Group B, and Group C. Each of these groups will take turns performing the three key roles of a good discussion: (1) giving questions and providing a visual provocation; (2) answering questions; and (3) deepening the discussion by responding to the questions and answers. This method encourages students to develop seminar skills — to articulately perform in conversation, to engage in structured dialogue with others, to work well in groups, to analyze visual materials and, above all, to be answerable to the readings.

We will use this method for most of our weekly sessions. Each group will take turns moving through the three roles. Each group will move through the different roles **three** times. The group giving questions and providing the visual provocation for the week must circulate them by email to the entire class by 2:00 PM Monday. The group answering the questions must write out their answers and distribute them in class. This way, we will all have a written record of part our discussion. The responding group will have seen the questions beforehand, but not the

answers, so they will need to respond “on the fly” to the answers. During the class meeting, someone from the questioning group will first read their questions and share their visual provocation (film, photos, other visual piece). Then the answering group will distribute their written document and give a brief overview of their answers. Finally, the responding group will respond to the questions and answers and then will lead an open discussion in which we will all participate. Your performance in each role is worth 10% total.

Final Visual Research Project (40%) Choose two from the following five options for a visual final project. Your project should be suitable to be included in an online exhibit on the Centre for Imaginative Ethnography’s website. Framing is important to this exercise. Your pieces should include 4000 words of text that situates the work and can include a discussion of at least one problem incurred in carrying out this project and suggest a solution.

Due: April 1st in class.

A) Autobiography: Study a space that you spend a lot of time in (bedroom, office, living room). Document in a written text the ways in which that physical environment visually symbolizes who you are. Next photograph that environment and construct a photo essay exhibit (with no more than 10 images) that represents that understanding.

B) Representing the “Other” Find an individual whose social or cultural practices are different than your own. With permission capture a day-in-the-life of that person. The visuals should reveal activities that say something about the social/cultural life of the individual as well as capture personality. This project may be presented in either photos or video (with no more than 10 images or 2 minutes of video).

C) Autobiographical/Indigenous Ethnography. Ask a person in a profession outside of the university setting to take 10 photographs that reveal what it means to be a

person involved in such an occupation. Analyze the pictures and share the group's understanding with that individual.

D) Cultural Preservation Find a cultural practice or social phenomenon you believe will soon disappear and document it as an example of the value of "salvage" ethnography. Try to reveal "why" the practice is disappearing. Be certain to capture the custom in a way that others may be able to learn it in the future when no former practitioners exist. This project should be presented in the most appropriate format for the activity. (i.e., photos, video, PowerPoint).

E) Visceral: Art, Anthropology & The Body. This is the broad theme proposed by The Centre for Imaginative Ethnography. Consider the theme and plan and execute a visual exploration of a topic that speaks to the theme.

F) Non-producing option: In lieu of a creative final, you may write a paper (7000 words) along the lines of one of the following themes: A) an anthropological visual technology/practice of your choice B) The role of a particular visual technology/technique in a given field of knowledge C) An analysis of the ways in which your field site/ research problem is "pictured".

Extensions only granted with 24 hours advanced notice. Late work will be accepted with 3 % penalty per day with work not accepted after 5 days including weekends and holidays.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Course Specific Statements and Policies:

Statement on Seeking Special Accommodations:

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

Statement on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

Policy on Laptops and Cellphones in Class:

Laptops are permitted for note-taking in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites, they will be asked to close the laptop and will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cellphones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and medical accommodation. [These policies are outlined with links to the full policies on the Anthropology website.](#)