



**COMM 2335.001 – Introduction to Visual Communication
SPRING 2016
Course Syllabus**

Professor 1 of 3: Joseph Velasco, Ph.D.
Office Hours: Tuesday-Thursday: 2pm-3pm, *or by appointment*
Office Location: FAB 206B
Telephone: 837-8370
Email Address: jvelasco@sulross.edu
Class Schedule: 9:00 a.m. - 9:50 a.m. MWF
Classroom Location: MAB 302
Required Text: *Selected readings from the following books will be handed out:*
Berger, A. A. (2008). *Seeing as believing: An introduction to visual communication*. McGraw-Hill: New York.
Smith, K., Moriarty, S., Barbatsis, G., & Kenney, Keith (2005). *Handbook of visual communication: Theory, methods, and media*. Erlbaum: Mahwah, NJ.

Always bring applicable reading material to class with you.

Section I. Introduction

In our lives, we humans have to learn to walk, talk, and read. Interestingly, we never really have to learn how to see. Unlike walking or talking or reading, we are often far less cognizant of the many processes that contribute to what we see. Scholars in the rapidly evolving field of Visual Communication now attempt to understand and describe these many processes. Visual communication (as a phenomenon) is pervasive and plays important roles in most of our lives. Most of us watch television. Most of us read newspapers, magazines, and books (in their physical or electronic forms). Most of us go to the movies. Further, we all live in an *information society* where much of the information we consider has a visual nature.

A significant number of our students at Sul Ross hope to work in fields such as advertising, public relations, television, or journalism – fields where they will be involved, either directly or indirectly, with visual communication. It is important that everyone know something about how images function and how people learn to “read” or interpret images and various forms of visual communication. But it is particularly important that students in Communication (and related areas) do so since those who create and use images have a responsibility to those who *will* be affected by them.

The purpose of this course, then, is to introduce students to perceptual, physiological, psychological, cultural, and semiotic concepts imbedded within the field of Visual Communication, focusing on visual awareness and processing as key elements in effective communication and message production.

Section II. Course Design

This course is co-taught by three instructors:

Joseph Velasco, Ph.D. 432.837.8370 jvelasco@sulross.edu FAB 206B	Dominique Sanchez, MA 432.837.8019 dvargas@sulross.edu FAB 202	Bret Scott, MFA 432.837.8794 bscott@sulross.edu FAB 208
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The semester is divided into thirds. For the first five weeks, you will receive instruction from Dr. Velasco, followed by five weeks with Ms. Sanchez, and five weeks with Mr. Scott. The course will be worth 1000 points total, with each instructor's portion accounting for 333.3 points. More on this is provided in Section V.

Section III. Course Learning Objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the major theories that have shaped the field of visual communication, and their relevance to your life and your scholarship/work.
2. Describe how particular communication theories and methods can be used to address visual communication problems in social and cultural contexts.
3. Demonstrate ability to analyze visual communication messages based on an understanding of major theoretical areas (i.e., aesthetics, perception, culture, etc.) and important elements of analysis relevant to various media production and consumption (i.e., lighting, sound, narrative, subject, setting, genre, audience, etc.).
4. Demonstrate competent use of media technology including video, audio, and internet-based technology.

Section IV. Program Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to meet one or more of the program learning outcomes applied to all Communication majors:

The graduating student will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Competently deliver public presentations, including the use of presentation technology such as presentation software, video, and audio.
2. Analyze communication content for argument, including identification of major elements, such as claims, warrants, data, etc.
3. Complete appropriate discipline specific writing assignments.
4. Apply communication theory to the analysis of communication situations appropriate to each degree specialization.
5. Demonstrate competent use of media technology including video, audio, and internet-based technology.

Section V. Course Requirements and Grading

Assignment	Points Possible	Grading Scale	
Aesthetics Presentation	33.3	Per Instructor A = 298-333.3 B = 265-297 C = 232-264 D = 198-231 F = < 198	Entire Course A = 895-1000 B = 795-894 C = 695-794 D = 595-694 F = < 595
RR Blackboard posts (4 x 50 pts)	200		
Ethical Analysis	100		
Possible Points	333.3		

Section VI. Course Assignments

Aesthetics Presentation.

1. Find three things that you find aesthetically pleasing:
 - a. One of these things is a physical object
 - b. One is a photo of a person
 - c. One is a drawing of a place
2. Be prepared to give a short presentation about the three aesthetically pleasing things above in class.
3. We will try to see if we can find patterns to aesthetics, so pay careful attention to everyone's presentations. Are there qualities of people and things that make them beautiful or is beauty mostly culturally determined or even idiosyncratic? What do our readings say?

Reading Response Blackboard Post. Each week (by Monday) you will be expected to post a response to that week's readings on our class Blackboard page. While there is no minimum required length for your responses, each week's reading response should do five things:

- 1) Demonstrate that you've done all of the reading (not Tuesday's readings, all the week's readings),
- 2) Demonstrate that you've thought about the reading,
- 3) Make connections among the ideas in the present week's readings and among previous weeks' material,
- 4) Include at least one relevant image (see below), and
- 5) Reference (and link to) at least one other classmate's post.

Your reading response should be a well-considered, (loosely) essay-style discussion of the week's readings. As we move through the semester, your responses should make connections among readings, ideas, and discussions from previous weeks. Your reading responses should demonstrate your active efforts to make connections and to question the ideas presented in the readings and class discussions. Your understanding of the material will be demonstrated (and examined) through your writing. Remember that everyone in the class will be reading the primary readings, **THEREFORE**, your reading response should NOT be a summary of the readings. A summary tells us (at most) that you read; it doesn't tell us anything about what you think or that you've thought about what you read.

You are not required or expected to read all of the weekly responses by all of your classmates – you have enough to read. You are, however, expected to pay attention to what your classmates are saying and to engage with one another, questioning, answering, and/or reinforcing each other's ideas and concerns on a regular basis throughout the week.

Ethical Analysis. Whether or not you have thought much about it, ethics will likely play a frequent role in your decision-making in the work place. We often have to make decisions about people's safety, health, status, cultural background, abilities, and more in relation to costs and the image of the company for whom we work. For this assignment, you will select an image from a print or electronic medium, and you will write a short essay analyzing the image from an ethical standpoint. You will need to make use of Berger's 'checklist on ethics and the media' (p. 40).

Section VII. Policies

Attendance. I expect you to be in class. You are responsible for everything that goes on, including announcements, lecture material, assignments and modifications to the course schedule – *this includes required reading in subsequent class meetings.* Arrange with someone in the class wherein you will notify each other of relevant items in the event that one of you must be absent.

Attendance is essential to your success in this class; therefore, excessive absences will be reflected in your grade. All students are expected to attend all classes. Absences will reduce your score since you will be actively participating in activities (e.g. giving presentations, being an audience member, etc.) during every class session. Attendance will be recorded at **the beginning** of every class session. Fifty points will be taken away from your final grade for every **unexcused** absence after two unexcused absences have been recorded. Therefore, I am giving you two unexcused absences before you begin losing points. For example, if you record five unexcused absences, your grade will be reduced by 150 points (essentially a letter grade). "Excused absences" are those that have approved documentation (e.g. certified doctor's excuses that specifically cite the class date, time, and reason for the missed day). With that said, **DO NOT SCHEDULE DOCTOR'S, DENTISTS, CHIROPRACTORS, MECHANICS, FAMILY REUNIONS, OR ANY OTHER TYPE OF APPOINTMENTS DURING THIS CLASS.** Thank you.

Classroom Demeanor. I expect the environment during class meetings to be conducive to learning. I have little tolerance for students talking among themselves when they should be listening to someone else speak. It is particularly disturbing when students talk among themselves when one of their classmates is presenting a speech, giving a report, making a comment, or observing or asking a question. I understand that some comments pertain to class material; I encourage you to share these comments with the class as a whole. Also, I would rather that cell phones, pagers, etc. **not** disrupt class – make sure your communications technology is **shut down** when class begins. If you do have a communication device that rings, beeps, vibrates, or in any other way disturbs the class, you may be asked to leave. If you choose to send text-messages during class, you may be asked to leave. If these types of disturbances become in any way chronic, routine, or repetitive, you may be dropped from the course entirely. If you feel that you need special consideration due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. your wife may go into labor soon, you anticipate a family emergency, you are acting as a 'phone-a-friend lifeline' on *Millionaire*, etc.), see me beforehand.

Academic Integrity. I expect and assume that as students you conduct yourselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Sul Ross State University reserves the right, through due process, to place on probation, suspend or expel any student who violates academic integrity and regulations by *plagiarism, classroom misdemeanor, or academic dishonesty*. Plagiarism includes doing and/or taking credit for someone else's work, presenting the ideas and work of others as your own, and not citing your sources if you utilize the ideas of others. Classroom misdemeanor includes cheating, allowing others to cheat, and interfering with others' ability to succeed in the course. Academic dishonesty includes procuring examination materials illegally, doing unauthorized group work, and handing in your own work for which you have already received academic credit (see Student Handbook, p. 39-40). I consider all forms of academic misconduct to be insulting, unacceptable, and inexcusable.

Grading. Different assignments require different grading procedures. Exams and quizzes are not curved.

Missed Exams. In my experience exams are *always* given on the date that it says on the schedule (unless we negotiate a schedule change as a class). Accordingly, the rule on missing an exam is, simply: If you miss an exam, then you get a zero. If you produce documentation, through the Vice President of Academic Affairs, that missing the exam could reasonably be excused, then you will be able to make up the exam (possibly by taking an incomplete for the course and taking a makeup exam sometime after the semester). If you are to miss an exam because you are representing the University in some official capacity, then you are allowed to make it up – but this likely means that you will take the exam *early*, not late. See me well in advance of any exam you will have to miss, and I will try to work it out with you.

Late Work. *You are responsible for handing in assignments when they are due.* While I am willing to “hear you out” when unforeseen and/or difficult circumstances impede with your course work, I do not generally accept late work, *and especially* if you have not notified me that you're having problems before the due date arrives. If you miss a due date, you will be given full credit *only* if the assignment was missed because of a University-excused absence – which includes hospitalization or a *serious* medical condition, a family or personal *emergency*, or a University-sponsored activity. In order to be able to make up the assignment, you must notify me beforehand *and* have supporting documentation from a relevant authority that the situation or event occurred. *NOTE: There is nothing in this syllabus that requires me to accept late work; if you submit work late, then receiving credit depends on my allowing you to turn it in. If I do accept late work, it will likely be at half-credit.*

Section VIII. Notes on University Programs and Policies

ADA. It is Sul Ross University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such accommodations because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact the ADA coordinator for Program Accessibility located in FH 112 or call 837-8691.

Calendar

(This calendar is subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Chapters	Assignment/Activity
One	Jan 20	Intro. To Course		Introductions
	Jan 22	Mapping the Field	Smith -Intro	
Two	Jan 25	Seeing as Believing	Berger 1	
	Jan 27	How We See	Berger 2	
	Jan 29	Elements of Visual Communication	Berger 3	BB post #1
Three	Feb 1	Aesthetics Theory	Smith 1	Aesthetics Presentation
	Feb 3	<i>Aesthetics Presentations</i>		
	Feb 5	Perception Theory & Cognition	Smith 3;14	BB post #2
Four	Feb 8	Visual Semiotics Theory	Smith 15;16 or17	
	Feb 10	Reception Theory	Smith 18;19	
	Feb 12	Narrative Theory	Smith 22	BB post #3
Five	Feb 15	Visual Ethics Theory	Smith 26	
	Feb 17	Reactions to Photo Manipulations	Smith 27	Ethical Analysis Due
	Feb 19	Ethical Analysis Discussion		BB post #4

The following weeks are TBA

Six Feb 22
 Feb 24
 Feb 26

Seven Feb 29
 Mar 2
 Mar 4

Eight Mar 7
 Mar 9
 Mar 11

 Mar 14 SPRING BREAK
 Mar 16 SPRING BREAK
 Mar 18 SPRING BREAK

Nine	Mar 21 Mar 23 Mar 25	NO CLASS! ☺
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Ten	Mar 28 Mar 30 April 1
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Eleven	Apr 4 Apr 6 Apr 8
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Twelve	Apr 11 Apr 13 Apr 15
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Thirteen	Apr 18 Apr 20 Apr 22
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Fourteen	Apr 25 Apr 27 Apr 29
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Fifteen	May 2 May 4 May 6	DEAD DAY – No Class
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The Final Exam is scheduled for May 11th at 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.