

# COURSE SYLLABUS

## Visual Culture

**Course code:** ART 250

**Term and year:** Spring 2024

**Day and time:** Monday, February 5th – Monday, May 20th | 14:45 - 17:30

**Instructor:** MA Björn Steinz

**Instructor contact:** bjorn.steinz@aauni.edu

**Consultation hours:** By appointment online or on Mondays from 17:30 to 18:00

**Art fee:** 450 CZK

Art fees for this course will be used to cover: Guest lectures, Gallery visits and excursions.

<b>Credits US/ECTS</b>	3/6	<b>Level</b>	Intermediate
<b>Length</b>	15 weeks	<b>Pre-requisite</b>	Toefl iBT 71
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	JC Required; HSC, PS Elective, CEA

### 1. Course Description

This course aims to introduce students to Visual Culture with a main focus on photography, film, multimedia, and other forms of visual communication. Students will become familiar with international photography, both historical and contemporary and how imagery is used to communicate with an audience. The course places special emphasis on how visual images are constructed and how to identify and understand the visual functions of each element and their effect and impact on the viewer.

We will focus on formal analyses, discuss the huge impact of technology on our Visual Culture nowadays - in comparison to the past - and place emphasis on putting visuals into their social, cultural and historical context to understand them better. Students will also analyze, explore, question and discuss the relationship between the photographer/artist, viewer, subject, and the various functions of photography and Visual Culture in society.

Those who complete the course will have significantly improved their understanding of photography as a main part of Visual Culture and visual communication.

### 2. Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will gain a wide understanding of what Visual Culture represents.
- Students will be introduced to the basic vocabulary of visual communication and the way images are constructed.
- Students will gain a historical perspective on the development of visual communication.
- Students will explore the connection between still and moving images.

- Students will have a good understanding of the relationship between the image-maker, the subject and the audience.
- Students will develop an understanding of the ways in which images and other media can be analyzed in relation to their cultural, social and historical context

### **3. Reading Material**

Throughout the semester, excerpts from selected books, topical articles, links to videos and other materials will be posted on the course web site. Below a list of books related to the course structure:

"After Photography" / Fred Ritchin  
 "Ways of Seeing" / John Berger  
 "Believing Is Seeing" / Errol Morris  
 "Visual Culture" / Howells, Negreiros  
 "Understanding a Photograph" / John Berger  
 "Looking at Photographs" / John Szarkowski

#### **Videos:**

Much of this course involves "visual" learning experience. Several videos of related topics will be either posted on the web site (links) or on reserve at Library. When noted as such, these videos are considered **required** "watching" for the course.

Of particular interest is the BBC series, "Ways of seeing 1-4" by John Berger which will give students a clear and concise overview of the history of Visual Culture.

Link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pDE4VX\\_9Kk&list=PLn6KyJ4PmZsPhigNqPIWGEoCgBHJbhib3](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pDE4VX_9Kk&list=PLn6KyJ4PmZsPhigNqPIWGEoCgBHJbhib3)

#### **Gallery Visit:**

Throughout the semester we will be visiting one current exhibition in Prague. Students will write a critique of the exhibit.

#### **Required Course materials for Students:**

Access to and use of a computer and internet outside of class  
 Journal for ideas, thoughts, gallery notes etc.

### **4. Teaching methodology**

The course is conducted in lecture/discussion format with periodic seminar work and specific class presentations. Lectures are usually accompanied by slide and/or video presentations related to material presented.

Interactive aspects are adapted from communicative methodology and are particularly applied in the presentation of new vocabulary/terminology and in oral analysis of both still photographic and video/film work.

Students are required to give two presentations (one individual, one group presentation) during the semester and will have regularly written assignments related to content discussed in class.

Some material will only be available in class so it will be difficult to make up the material you miss when absent. Additional support is offered to students through prearranged meetings with the instructor. More than 2 absences during the course will negatively influence your final grade. Late assignments are **NOT** accepted and will be just graded with a reasonable explanation such as illness or anything similar. Each student is expected to attend all class sessions and participate in discussions and any group activities.

## 5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Class 1, Monday, February 5th	<p><b>Topic:</b> Introduction lecture</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Introduction of my own visual work, a journey into my photography. What to expect? What is the goal of the course? What is Visual Culture and how does it differ from other cultural studies? Discussion of resources needed for this course.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (Due 12/02):</b> For next class: Please bring one example which is working for you as a strong visual, it can be from all different kind of media related to Visual Culture - such as painting, video, photography etc. and please explain us why you chose that particular image, what influenced your choice and why does it represent Visual Culture for you.</p>
Class 2, Monday, February 12th	<p><b>Topic:</b> Theory 1: How do we read an image?</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Introduction to the general vocabulary, elements and principles used for visual analysis and the construction of images. // Students presenting their Visual Culture examples.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (Due 19/02):</b> Watch John Berger's "Ways of Seeing, Episode 1/2", Opinion paper about "Ways of Seeing" by John Berger and the transformation into the digital age.</p>
Class 3, Monday, February 19th	<p><b>Topic:</b> Theory 2: How do we read an image?</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Guidelines for reading visual text and understanding certain principles in Visual Arts analysis. Film projection about the art world - "My kid could paint that".</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines: (Due 26/02)</b> Please analyse the documentary "My kid could pain that" in an opinion paper.</p>

<p>Class 4, Monday, February 26th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> The “selfie” syndrome</p> <p><b>Description:</b> How the “digital revolution” in imagery changed our Visual Culture in the last years ? “I was there”: The influence of mobile cameras and social media platforms as Facebook and Instagram on our visual perception.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines: (Due 04/03)</b> Watch John Berger’s “Ways of Seeing, Episode 3/4, <b>Reading:</b> “<i>The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction</i>” by Walter Benjamin. Opinion paper about Walter Benjamin’s “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”</p>
<p>Class 5, Monday, March 4th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Visual journalism and storytelling</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Examples of in-depth visual journalism and storytelling</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> No assignment.</p>
<p>Class 6, Monday, March 11th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Commercial, advertising and fashion imagery</p> <p><b>Description:</b> What the industry is doing to sell their products with focus on the Benetton campaign from the 1990s and art director Oliviero Toscani</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines: (Due 18/03)</b> Essay about the controversial advertisement work by Oliviero Toscani and his Benetton campaigns during the 90’s.</p>
<p>Class 7, Monday, March 18th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Field trip</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Gallery visit to a current exhibition in Prague.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (Due 08/04):</b> Write an exhibition critique/review</p>
<p>March 25th</p>	<p><b>NO CLASS // Mid-term break</b></p>
<p>April 1st</p>	<p><b>NO CLASS // State holiday</b></p>

<p>Class 8, Monday, April 8th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Images and Ideology   Photographs are not neutral; they are susceptible to the abuse of power</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Politics, propaganda, power and manipulation. What does an image mean ? How images are used and misused for communicating a certain message to an audience.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines: (Due 15/04)</b> Looking for images which are "fakes" under the topic "What does an image mean ?" Short opinion paper what the image represents or does not represent.</p>
<p>Class 9, Monday, April 15th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Blind photographers</p> <p><b>Description:</b> How a visually challenged person can express his imagination with photography and transfer his inside world into images ? Where is the sense if the photographer will never be able to see his own images ? Different examples about visual impaired people working with images.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> The article "The Mind's Eye" ?</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines: (Due 22/04)</b> Essay about visual impaired photographers.</p>
<p>Class 10, Monday, April 22nd</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Guest lecture</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Presentation and Q&amp;A with a working Visual Culture expert giving us an inside look at his/her profession and daily work.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines: (Due 29/04)</b> Opinion paper related to the guest lecture</p>
<p>Class 11, Monday, April 29th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Wilhelm Brasse - the photographer of Auschwitz</p> <p><b>Description:</b> "Auschwitz" - with focus on the portraiture work of photographer Willhelm Brasse who was forced by the Nazis's to take portraits of thousands of incoming prisoners. Film projection "The Portraitist" about Wilhelm Brasse.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Think. Prepare for the group presentations</p>

Class 12, Monday, May 6th	<p><b>Topic:</b> The „Che“ image by Alberto Korda</p> <p><b>Description:</b> The most reproduced photograph in the world „Che“ by Alberto Korda and the story behind it. How the image was created and why it became an icon of photography and an used and misused symbol for revolution and freedom.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines: (Due 13/05)</b> Written assignment related to the film, Prepare for the last group presentations</p>
Class 13, Monday, May 13th	<p><b>Topic:</b> Performance and conceptual visual art</p> <p><b>Description:</b> A journey into performance and conceptual art with Joseph Beuys, Sophie Calle, Duane Michals, Marina Abramovic and more.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare for the last group presentations</p>
Class 14, Monday, May 20th	<p><b>Topic:</b> Home final exam</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Testing the knowledge gained during the semester</p>

## 6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42	20%	Daily contribution to class and preparation based on reading assignments, videos, websites, etc., Ability to explain the studied topic to peers and identify key issues.	1/2/3
Presentations	45	30 %	Students presentation in class (One presentation of each student and one group presentation)	1/2
Writings	45	30 %	Essays, Analysis, Critique, Concepts etc. Constructive feedback on your peers' work.	1/2/3

Final Exam	18	20 %	Testing all knowledge attained throughout the semester.	1/3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

## 7. Detailed description of the assignments

### **Attendance and class participation:**

Assessed area	Percentage
Attending class each week	60%
Contributing your own ideas, thoughts and questions and discussing with classmates during class	40%

Assessed area	Percentage
Assignment Nr. 1 - Prepare a short presentation about your chosen Visual Culture example and explain us your choice. Why, where, who, what and when ? <b>(Due 12/02)</b>	15 %
Assignment Nr. 2 - Opinion paper about "Ways of Seeing" by John Berger and the transformation into the digital age. <b>(Due 19/02)</b>	3,33 %
Assignment Nr. 3 - Opinion paper about the film "My kid could paint that" <b>(Due 26/02)</b>	3,33 %
Assignment Nr. 4 - Opinion paper about Walter Benjamin's "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" <b>(Due 04/03)</b>	3,33 %
Assignment Nr. 5 - Essay about the controversial advertisement work by Oliviero Toscani and his Benetton campaigns during the 90's. <b>(Due 18/03)</b>	3,33 %
Assignment Nr. 6 - Exhibition critique. <b>(Due 08/04)</b>	3,33 %
Assignment Nr. 7 - Look for images which are "fakes" under the topic "What does an image mean ?". Short opinion paper what the image represents or does not represent. <b>(Due 15/04)</b>	3,33 %
Assignment Nr. 8 - Essay about visual impaired photographers. <b>(Due 22/04)</b>	3,33 %

Assignment Nr. 9 - Opinion paper about the guest lecture and the work introduced <b>(Due 29/04)</b>	3,33 %
Assignment Nr. 10 - Opinion paper about the „Che“ image by Alberto Korda. Why the image became one of the most published photographs ever ? <b>(Due 13/05)</b>	3,33 %
Assignment Nr. 11 - Please work in groups of max. 3 students and prepare a presentation about a “Visual Culture” topic, that can be the introduction of a movement, an artist or an unusual point of view to “Visual Culture” in general. <b>(Due 06/05)</b>	15 %

## 8. General Requirements and School Policies

### ***General requirements***

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

### ***Electronic communication and submission***

The university and instructors shall only use students’ university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams. Students sending e-mails to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, “COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question”. All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

### ***Attendance***

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, at AAU courses is default mandatory; however, it is not graded as such. (Grades may be impacted by missed assignments or lack of participation.) Still, students must attend at least two thirds of classes to complete the course. If they do not meet this condition and most of their absences are excused, they will be administratively withdrawn from the course. If they do not meet this condition and most of their absences are not excused, they will receive a grade of “FW” (Failure to Withdraw). Students may also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (for example by arriving late or leaving early).

### ***Absence excuse and make-up options***

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), and the student wishes to request that the absence be excused, the student should submit an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence to the Dean of Students within one week of the absence. Each student may excuse up to two sick days per term without any supporting documentation;



however, an Absence Excuse Request Form must still be submitted for these instances. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

**Late work:** No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

### ***Electronic devices***

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

**Eating** is not allowed during classes.

### ***Cheating and disruptive behavior***

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the student's Dean. Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the student will fail the exam or assignment and be expelled from the exam or class.

### ***Plagiarism***

Plagiarism obscures the authorship of a work or the degree of its originality. Students are expected to create and submit works of which they are the author. Plagiarism can apply to all works of authorship – verbal, audiovisual, visual, computer programs, etc. Examples are:

- **Verbatim plagiarism:** verbatim use of another's work or part of it without proper acknowledgement of the source and designation as a verbatim quotation,
- **Paraphrasing plagiarism:** paraphrasing someone else's work or part of it without proper acknowledgement of the source,
- **Data plagiarism:** use of other people's data without proper acknowledgement of the source,
- **False quotation:** publishing a text that is not a verbatim quotation as a verbatim quotation,
- **Fictitious citation:** quoting, paraphrasing, or referring to an incorrect or a non-existent work,
- **Inaccurate citation:** citing sources in such a way that they cannot be found and verified,

- **Ghostwriting:** commissioning work from others and passing it off as one's own,
- **Patchwriting:** using someone else's work or works (albeit with proper acknowledgement of sources and proper attribution) to such an extent that the output contains almost no original contribution,
- **Self-plagiarism:** unacknowledged reuse of one's own work (or part of it) that has been produced or submitted as part of another course of study or that has been published in the past,
- **Collaborative plagiarism:** delivering the result of collective collaboration as one's own individual output.

At minimum, plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the student's Dean. A mitigating circumstance may be the case of novice students, and the benefit of the doubt may be given if it is reasonable to assume that the small-scale plagiarism was the result of ignorance rather than intent. An aggravating circumstance in plagiarism is an act intended to make the plagiarism more difficult to detect. Such conduct includes, for example, the additional modification of individual words or phrases, the creation of typos, the use of machine translation tools or the creation of synonymous text, etc. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Intentional or repeated plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

### ***Use of Artificial Intelligence and Academic Tutoring Center***

The use of artificial intelligence tools to search sources, to process, analyze and summarize data, and to provide suggestions or feedback in order to improve content, structure, or style, defined here as AI-assisted writing, is not in itself plagiarism. However, it is plagiarism if, as a result, it obscures the authorship of the work produced or the degree of its originality (see the examples above). AAU acknowledges prudent and honest use of AI-assisted writing, that is, the use of AI for orientation, consultation, and practice is allowed. For some courses and assignments, however, the use of AI is counterproductive to learning outcomes; therefore, the course syllabus may prohibit AI assistance. A work (text, image, video, sound, code, etc.) generated by artificial intelligence based on a mass of existing data, defined here as AI-generated work, is not considered a work of authorship. Therefore, if an AI-generated work (e.g. text) is part of the author's work, it must be marked as AI-generated. Otherwise, it obscures the authorship and/or the degree of originality, and thus constitutes plagiarism. Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor, submission of AI-generated work is prohibited. If unsure about technical aspects of writing, and to improve their academic writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

### ***Course accessibility and inclusion***

Students with disabilities should contact the Dean of Students to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive. Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

## 7. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95–100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90–94	
B+	87–89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	
C+	77–79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	
D+	65–69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60–64	
F	0–59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

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\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by: Björn Steinz

Date: 6th of November 2023

Approved by: Karolina Dolanská

Date: November 8, 2023