

VISUAL SOCIOLOGY

Fall 2010

Rik Scarce, Instructor

Office: Tisch Learning Center 218

Office Phone: 580-5416

E-mail: rscarce@skidmore.edu

Web page: www.skidmore.edu/~rscarce

Office Hours: Wednesdays and Fridays 10-11, and by appointment

Readings

Sarah Pink, Laszlo Kurti, and Ana Afonso, editors, *Working Images*

Numerous other readings are available through the course website, above.

Seeing the World around Us

One premise of the sub-discipline of visual sociology is that we live in an intensely visual society. *The visual matters*. Of course, things that can be apprehended visually have been important to every human culture. But sociology is a modern endeavor, and its emphases point to what matters here and now. Those observations lead us to the conclusion that the visual has never mattered more. In no society have there been more diverse visual phenomena than this one: hundreds of television channels, thousands of magazines, countless billboards, fashion, books, architecture, works of art, automobiles and other industrially designed artifacts, sporting events, films, and on and on—and then there is nature, whether terrestrial, airborne, or marine...and planets and satellites stretching beyond our solar system.

In each and all of these human-created (and not) images, visual sociologists can identify meaningful phenomena: things that tell us about us, about society.

Course Goals

Through this course, you will improve your sociological and visual literacy.

Sociologically, you will gain the tools to both interpret images from a sociological perspective and to produce sociologically-informed images. More broadly, you will come to ask more critical questions of the visual world around you.

Course Requirements

You will have two distinct assignments in this course. The first will be an essay covering the initial background material on visual sociology. The second will be a sociological documentary. That's the plan, anyway. Depending on how we feel about some possible alternatives, these plans may change; if they do, they'll change only with your consent and all details will be spelled out in writing.

Class Participation and Attendance

Class participation is vital to this course and will count for 25 percent of your final grade. Your class participation grade will be based on three factors: (1) your attendance, (2)

your involvement in class discussions and small group analyses and assignments, and, most important, (3) the quality of what you have to say and of your interactions with your peers in class and in small groups. Full credit for class participation will go to those who enliven class discussion by grounding their comments in the class material but who, by the same token, allow others to speak and who respect others' views.

Class Decorum

As a courtesy to me and to your fellow students, please arrive to class on time; if you are chronically late, I will deduct points from your class participation score. Do not begin preparing to leave until the class is concluded. I expect you to respect the views of others in the class, which means that you are free to disagree with them, but abusive language or actions will not be tolerated and may be reported to the Dean of Academic Student Affairs.

Plagiarism

Skidmore's Honor Code is quite clear regarding the severe consequences that result from any act of cheating. In this course I will encourage you to cooperate with other students on many things, but unless I tell you otherwise, you may not work with others on your papers. The form of cheating most likely to emerge in our class is plagiarism. Should I find evidence that you have plagiarized, you will fail the course. To help you avoid plagiarism, review the "Writing Tips" web page (available through the course website noted above) and follow the guidelines there and those discussed in class.

Summary of Course Requirements

Written Assignment	25 percent of your final grade
Final Video	50 percent of your final grade
Class Participation	25 percent of your final grade

COURSE READINGS AND SCHEDULE

Introduction and Sociology Basics

Wednesday, September 8.....	Course Introduction
Wednesday, September 15.....	Berger, Mills, Marx, Goffman (photocopies)
Wednesday, September 22	Grady (.doc), Harper (PDF)

Fundamentals of Visual Sociology

Wednesday, September 29	Becker (.doc), Becker—VS Workshop (PDF)
Wednesday, October 6	Grady (PDF). Banks (PDF); view Cipriani in class
Wednesday, October 13	Wagner (2 PDFs)
Wednesday, October 20	Bohnsack (PDF), Davidov (PDF)

Visual Sociology and Documentary

Wednesday, October 27	Pink, Chapters 1 and 2
Wednesday, November 3	Suchar (PDF)
Wednesday, November 10.....	Kissel (PDF), Pink (PDF)

Wednesday, November 17 Pink, Chapters 7 and 8
Wednesday, November 24 *No Classes--Thanksgiving*
Wednesday, December 1 Pink, Chapter 13
Wednesday, December 8 Rough Cut Presentations