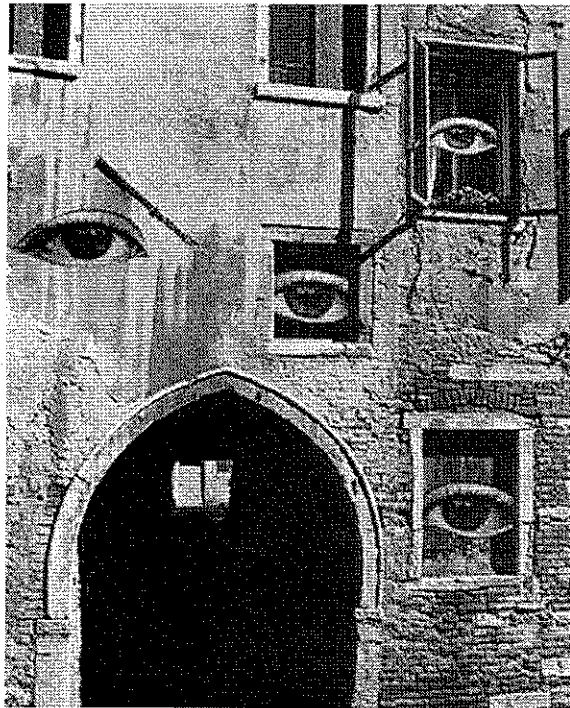


AHIS 469: Critical Approaches to Photography Theories of Photography, Vision, and Identity

Fall 2010
Mondays, 2:00-4:50 pm
VKC 260
4 units

Dr. Catherine E. Anderson
Office Hours: Tues. 11:30-1:30
and by appointment
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Patricia Townsend, *Critical Observations*, 1988

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to critical writings on photography, from early articles that explored and theorized photography as a new medium in the nineteenth century, to some of the most recent essays on the state of this art form in our current digital age. We'll be reading and analyzing texts from a range of critical perspectives, including works by the major theoreticians of photography such as Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, and Rosalind Krauss. Through this process, we'll consider the ways in which photography was used as a tool to establish national, racial, and cultural identities in the context of imperialism, as well as postcolonial responses to these images; how theories of vision helped form new meanings for photography at its inception, and how science continues to inform postmodern practice; and how photographers have variously defined, questioned, or challenged gender identities in their work, among other issues. Finally, students will be honing their own analytic and interpretive skills by studying photographic images in person and writing critical responses informed by the readings.

Required textbooks, all available at the USC bookstore:

Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1990)

John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota Press, 1988)

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, transl. Richard Howard (1980; New York: Hill and Wang, 1981)

Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1973)

Terry Barrett, *Criticizing Photographs: An Introduction to Understanding Images*, 4th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006)

Additionally, you will need to purchase the **course reader**, available at University Graphics, 3309 S. Hoover St.

Recommended background reading:

Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002)

-----, *Photography and Its Critics: A Cultural History, 1839-1900* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1997)

Requirements and grading (all requirements must be completed to pass the course):

Weekly write-ups on required readings:	30%
Weekly discussion participation:	25%
Review essay (4-5 pages, due October 11):	15%
Research presentation:	10%
Research paper (8-10 pages, due Wednesday, December 8 by 5 pm):	20%

Since this course is a reading- and discussion-based seminar, your regular attendance and active, engaged participation are crucial to your success. Please come to class having completed the assigned readings for that day and be prepared to ask and answer questions.

To facilitate discussion and analysis of the readings in class, you must complete a brief write-up of the assigned texts each week: this is basically an abstract, or summary, of each reading in your own words, along with comments, critiques, and questions. While the types of books and essays we'll be reading are quite varied, from artists' statements to recent criticism, one thing to consider in your write-ups is what constitutes the author's main argument, and how s/he develops and sustains this argument. As you're reading, think about what kinds of evidence are presented in the text, and what the author's conclusions are. Becoming a more analytical reader will help you in your own writing, and so we will often discuss the structure of an author's work and the development of his or her argument. Your write-ups should be 1-2 double-spaced, typed pages for each reading, except as noted below.

You have two paper assignments in this class: a review essay, due October 11, and a research paper, due December 8. The review essay will consist of an analysis of a photograph that you study in person, from a local gallery or museum. You should plan to take detailed notes on the image (and even begin your paper if possible) while viewing it firsthand. Terry Barrett's book *Criticizing Photographs* will be useful in helping you look critically at photographs and in writing your essay.

Towards the end of the semester, you will be presenting a 10-minute overview of your research topic and your work-in-progress on your final paper to the class. During the last class meeting, we will "workshop" paper drafts in class. Your final paper should demonstrate thoughtful analysis of your topic; evidence of revision and re-writing; and attention to detail, both in terms of writing and scholarly research. Suggested broad paper topics will be distributed, but keep in mind that you will need to develop a narrow, focused topic in consultation with me.

Late write-ups and papers will not be accepted except in the case of a legitimate, documented emergency.

Schedule of topics and readings:

All articles may be found in the course reader.

*Please note that assigned readings and write-ups must be completed *before* each class where they are listed.*

Week 1 (August 23): Course introduction

Video: *Edward Burtynsky: Manufactured Landscapes* (2006)

Week 2 (August 30): Prehistories of photography and theories of vision in the nineteenth century

Read: Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*

Write-up on Crary due at the start of class

Week 3 (September 6): NO CLASSES

Week 4 (September 13): Social histories of photography

Read: John Tagg, *Burdens of Representation* pp. 1-183

Write-up on Tagg due at the start of class

Week 5 (September 20): Changing views of photography in the early period

Read: Charles Baudelaire, "The Salon of 1859" (excerpt)

Nadar, "My Life as a Photographer" (excerpt)

Max Kozloff, "Nadar and the Republic of Mind"

Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography"

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (excerpt)

Write-up on Kozloff and both Benjamin essays due at the start of class

Terry Barrett, *Criticizing Photographs* 1-59 ("About Art Criticism," "Describing Photographs," "Interpreting Photographs") – no write-up, but be prepared to discuss images in class based on Barrett's text

Week 6 (September 27): Barthes on Photography

Read: Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" and *Camera Lucida*

*Please do two *separate* write-ups for Barthes*

Barrett, *Criticizing Photographs* 127-52 ("Judging Photographs")

Week 7 (October 4): Postcolonial perspectives on photography, race, and identity

Read: James R. Ryan, "Introduction" and "'Photographing the Natives'" from *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*

Shawn Michelle Smith, "'Baby's Picture is Always Treasured': Eugenics and the Reproduction of Whiteness in the Family Photograph Album"

Richard Dyer, "The Light of the World" from *White*

*Please do one write-up on *either* Ryan *or* Smith and Dyer*

Barrett, *Criticizing Photographs* 209-31 and 239-42 ("Writing and Talking about Photographs" and "Processes of Writing")

Week 8 (October 11): Gendered images

Review essays due

Read: Carol Mavor, "Dream-Rushes: Lewis Carroll's Photographs of Little Girls," from *Pleasures Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs*

Carol Armstrong, "Cupid's Pencil of Light: Julia Margaret Cameron and the Maternalization of Photography"

Write-up on Mavor and Armstrong due at the start of class

Week 9 (October 18): Photography, art, and art photography

video: René Clair, *Entr'acte* (1924)

Read: Douglas Crimp, "The Museum's Old/The Library's New Subject"

Richard Bolton, "In the American East: Richard Avedon Incorporated"

Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces"

*Please choose *two* of the above essays for your write-up this week*

Week 10 (October 25): The essays of Susan Sontag

Read: Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, pp. 1-180

Write-up on Sontag due at the start of class

Week 11 (November 1): Photography and postmodernism

Read: Andy Grundberg, "The Crisis of the Real: Photography and Postmodernism"

Martha Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)"

Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Photography after Art Photography"

*Please choose *two* of the above essays for your write-up this week*

Week 12 (November 8): Research presentations

Week 13 (November 15): Research presentations

Week 14 (November 22): Research presentations

Week 15 (November 29): In-class writing workshop

Please bring a completed draft of your research paper (as a hard copy) to class.

Study Days: December 4-7

Paper due: Wednesday, December 8

Please note: this schedule is subject to change in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.