



VISUAL RHETORIC

COM 270

DR. BRIAN CARROLL

Spring 2025
MWF
10-102:50 am
LAU 113

"It is a paradox of the twentieth century that while visual images have increasingly come to dominate our culture, our colleges and universities traditionally have devoted relatively little attention to visual media."

-- Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*

Course Objectives

I. Introduction

Catalog Course Description

Study of visual theory, visual literacy and how visual images are used to persuade. Students study and interpret audience-specific visual culture and communication, and the rhetoric of visual materials.



Learning Outcomes

By successful completion of this course, students will:

- Better understand how images and their viewers make and communicate meaning.
- Understand how to "read" and deconstruct images by applying methods of interpretation.
- Appreciate different modes of visibility, or the practices of seeing or looking or reading images.
- Understand the different roles images play in culture and how those roles change as the images are communicated, circulated and appropriated.
- Understand how cultural influences determine visual messages and how they are interpreted.
- Learn a grammar and ethics of and for seeing and producing visual messages.

Purpose

The course uses images to ask questions about vision and seeing, power, spectatorship, reality, and other aesthetic concerns, organized around a few central questions: What are images? What do they do? How do they work? How are they structured, and how in turn do they structure or frame or influence our perceptions of reality? What do they mean? How do they create meaning? How do we negotiate those meanings?

II. Stuff you need to know:

Instructor: Dr. Brian Carroll
Office location: Laughlin 100
Office phone: 706.368.6944 (anytime)
Email: bc@berry.edu

Home page: <http://cubanxgiants.berry.edu>

Blog: <http://wanderingrocks.wordpress.com>

Office hours: MW 11am-2pm, T/TH 10am-noon, by appt., or just drop by

Schedule of class sessions available: <http://cubanxgiants.berry.edu/270>. Any changes to our schedule, including deadlines, will be indicated on this webpage, so frequently and regularly refer to it. Deadlines and changes to deadlines will be mirrored on Canvas.

III. What you will need (required)

- Course Primer, available via Canvas
- Safari Guide, available via Canvas

IV. What you may want (recommended, not required)

- *The Age of the Image*, Stephen Apkon
- *Seeing is Believing*, Arthur Asa Berger
- *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger
- *The Image*, Dan Boorstin
- *pure design: 79 simple solutions for magazines, books, newspapers and web sites*, Mario Garcia
- *Ourspace*, Christine Harold
- *Graphic Design Across Cultures*, Ronnie Lipton
- *Meggs's History of Graphic Design*, Philip B. Meggs and Alston W. Purvis
- *Visual Methodologies*, Gillian Rose
- *Graphic Communications Today*, Ryan and Conover
- *On Photography*, Susan Sontag
- *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright

V. Class format

The professor has planned a combination of dynamic out-of-class enterprises (safaris), a range of media to examine in the classroom, and a bounty of discussion themes and lines of inquiry. Class time, then, will be spent learning ways of seeing, then applying these methods as we examine artifacts from our various media or visual culture safaris, with plenty of discussion throughout. The professor believes in discussive and collaborative learning experiences, realizing that we all bring something unique and valuable to pursuit and discovery. For each credit hour of registered coursework, Berry expects students to commit two hours of outside engaged learning (readings, safaris, projects, etc.). Because this is a three-credit hour course, successful students should expect to spend three hours per week in-class and an additional six hours of outside learning activities.

VI. Policies

Attendance: Be on time, just as you would for a job, surgery, or even a haircut. Everyone gets one unexcused absence or late arrival, maybe two, with no questions asked. Stuff happens. After that, unexcused and/or unexplained absences and/or lateness will result in point deductions from the "professionalism and participation" portion of your grade -- **one point for each unexcused absence and/or late arrival.** And late is late – one minute or ten minutes. It's binary. What is excused is at the

instructor's discretion, so you are best served discussing situations and extraordinary circumstances prior to class whenever possible. Medical attention typically is excused. Weddings, family reunions, vacations, job interviews, grad school visits, Winshape retreats, your roommate's birthday? These are NOT typically excused. Save your free passes for these non-academic excursions.

Late submissions (deadlines): Submit assigned work on time, printed out for grading, and submit this work in person. Do not email the professor your work; your professor does not offer a printing service. Similarly, posting your assignment somewhere in Canvas will not "count" as making deadline. Late work, including any work submitted any other way than that which is authorized, will be penalized one letter grade per class session. Work submitted a week or more after deadline will not be eligible for points. In-class quizzes cannot be made up, regardless of the reason it was missed. The instructor is very reasonable when consulted PRIOR TO deadlines. Finally, please appreciate that deadlines are also for instructors, so that we can move on, as well. In short, deadlines are real, they are our friends, and they will be enforced.

Email etiquette: Related to the above, when emailing your instructor, please keep in mind that he is a person, not a vending machine for information, grades, etc. Begin each and every email with an address and a greeting, something like, "Dear Dr. Carroll. I hope this finds you well." It's courteous, and it doesn't take much time to write. It's also polite to thank someone for whatever was provided in response to your request. Speaking of email, it is the authorized communication channel for faculty and students at Berry, so you are responsible for checking your email and promptly responding to your instructors as needed.

Distractions: The instructor needs your attention and your respect, as do your peers seated near or around you. Your instructor is easily distracted, so he needs your help. Practically, this means:

- ZERO unauthorized device use of any kind, including laptops, iPads, smartphones, and Apple watches. Put your devices away and make sure they are either off or on 'silent.' Use a device, even an Apple watch to check a text, and you will be marked as having been "absent" for that class session.
- Doing homework for other classes somewhere else.
- Avoiding the zipping up of backpacks and clearing off of desks prior to being dismissed.
- Avoiding repetitive noisemaking, such as clicking pens, crinkling food wrappers, and clanging water bottles.

Decorum: Related to the distractions described above, please remember that the classroom is the professor's workspace and our shared learning space. It's not your living room or den, in other words. You cannot, therefore, disappear with your phone into the restroom for 20 minutes whenever you might like. Getting up, leaving, using the door, returning, occasionally tripping over someone's backpack and/or spilling their beverage - all of this distracts and interrupts. So, go the bathroom BEFORE you come to class. If nature calls - and I mean SCREAMS - ask for permission to (briefly) exit the classroom. Leave your phone behind. Students are permitted one or two "emergencies" during the semester, but deductions will be made from your

professionalism and participation grade for chronic bathroom escapes or their equivalents.

Academic integrity: Because academic integrity is the foundation of college life at Berry, academic dishonesty will have consequences. You are invited to consult the College Catalog for an articulation of the College’s policies with respect to academic integrity. Specific to this course, academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: unauthorized collaboration, fabrication, submitting the same work in multiple courses, hiring a ghostwriter, asking an AI generator to write something for you that you later submit, failing to cite sources for your research (and, therefore, submitting others’ work as your own), consulting non-authorized sources or texts during an exam period, and aiding and abetting academic dishonesty by another student. Violations will be reported. Students who are sanctioned for violating the academic integrity policy forfeit the right to withdraw from the class with a grade of “W.” Attached to this syllabus is the pledge of academic integrity you will be asked to sign for most major assignments.

Class recording (Zoom): Per Berry policy, students are required to attend class in-person. Classes will not be available for remote learning, at least not regularly or without advance warning and authorization. Any recordings will only be available to students registered for this class and cannot be re-transmitted, distributed, or otherwise shared without the expressed, written consent of the instructor, who owns the copyright to the intellectual property contained in or by the recording.

VII. How your course grade will be computed (assessment measures):

Daily projects, safaris & blog post comments, etc.	15%
Exam/Project I (semiotic analysis)	25%
Exam/Project II (ad campaign)	25%
Exam/Project III (capstone analysis)	25%
Professionalism, participation, attendance	10%
	<hr/>
	100%

To compute your final grade, add up your point totals, apply the appropriate percentages, then refer to the Berry College Communication Department suggested grading system, summarized here:

A = 93-100	A-= 90-92	B+=88-89	B=83-87
B- = 80-82	C+= 78-79	C=73-77	C-=70-72
D= 60-69	F=59 and below		

Definitions of the grades can be found in the Berry College Catalog. “A” students will demonstrate an outstanding mastery of course material and will perform **far above** that required for credit in the course and **far above** that usually seen in the course. The “A” grade should be awarded sparingly and should identify student performance that is relatively unusual in the course and that **demonstrates mastery**.

VIII. Assignments

- A. Daily projects and safaris, for which there will be great variety. Generally, they ask you to observe, then to analyze what you have observed.

- B. Larger projects are to test your recall of key terms and concepts, our semiotic tools, some history, and your ability to apply visual rhetorical theory to examples and artifacts.
- C. Blog post comments extend and expand our discussions. The professor will occasionally write to Wandering Rocks (wanderingrocks.wordpress.com) and invite students to comment to his post. Evaluated here are a student's creativity, thoughtfulness, and follow-up questions.
- D. Note that professionalism is a significant portion of your grade. On-time attendance, active participation, discernible preparation, quality submissions turned in by deadline, and overall professionalism are aspects of this 10 percent.

IX. Accommodation Statement

The Academic Success Center provides accessibility resources, including academic accommodations, to students with diagnosed differences and/or disabilities. If you need accommodations for this or other classes, please visit berry.edu/asc for information and resources. You may also reach out at 706-233-40480. Please note, faculty are not required, as part of any temporary or long-term accommodation, to distribute recordings of class sessions.

X. Academic Resources

Consultants at the Berry College Writing Center are available to assist students with all stages of the writing process. To schedule an appointment, visit berry.mywconline.com

The Academic Success Center provides free peer tutoring and individual academic consultations to all Berry College students. The ASC Session schedule is available on ASC Website: berry.edu/ASC. The goal of these meetings is to help students study smarter, not harder.

Finally, I believe we are here for a good time, not a long time, so let's have some fun.



"Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing!" --Judy the elf in "The Santa Clause"



"Every appearance is also a disappearance." - Dr. Carroll

"We view things not only from different sides, but with different eyes; we have no wish to find them alike." --Blaise Pascal, Pensee no. 124

"Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak." - John Berger, Ways of Seeing

"The more you see the more you know. The more you know, the more you see." -- Aldous Huxley



Pledge of Academic Integrity

As a member of the Berry College academic community, I recognize the importance of honesty, integrity, and respect for knowledge in all academic endeavors. I hereby pledge to uphold the following principles of academic integrity:

1. Honesty: I will be truthful in all my academic pursuits, including coursework, exams, research, and any other academic activities.
2. Originality: I will submit only my original work, ideas, and creations, acknowledging and appropriately citing the contributions of others.
3. Attribution: I will give proper credit to all sources used in my academic work, whether they are written, visual, oral, or electronic.
4. Independence: I will complete all assignments and exams on my own, unless expressly permitted to collaborate with others by the instructor.
5. Respect: I will respect the intellectual property rights of others, including copyright and fair use principles, in all academic materials.
6. Ethical Use of Technology: I will not use AI or software that employ it (ChatGPT and Grammarly, for ex.) without BEFORE obtaining specific authorization from my instructor. Furthermore, I will not use any software or technology to engage in academic dishonesty, including but not limited to:
 - o Unauthorized assistance in completing assignments.
 - o Plagiarism or other forms of intellectual dishonesty.
 - o Altering or falsifying academic records or credentials.
7. Accountability: I understand that academic integrity is my personal responsibility, and I will accept the consequences of any violations of this pledge. These consequences likely mean earning a zero ('0') for any assignment or activity for which I violated this pledge. Depending on the degree of the infraction, I understand I could earn a failing grade for the course or even expulsion from the College. Lastly, I understand that ignorance is no defense against charges of academic dishonesty.

By affixing my signature below, I commit to upholding the principles of academic integrity and maintaining the highest standards of honesty and ethical conduct in all my academic endeavors.

Name

Date

