

Academy of Visual Arts
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Visual Arts Programme

VART3337 The Anthropology of Art

No. of units: 3

Pre-requisite: VART 2305 Art in the 20th Century I

Cluster: Visual & Material Culture (2012 & 2013 Intakes) / Graphic Arts (2014 Intake and onwards)

I.1. Course Rationale & Description:

This course introduces the study of visual anthropology, examining the visual documentation of humanity and its cultures. Exploring a variety of media objects and events, this course critically engages students into debates and issues related to photography, advertising, global mass media, material culture and the impact of new technologies.

The visual interpretation offers significant insight into our understanding of the human development in terms of our own identities, and within the wider global and historical contexts. Fragile, and often temporarily specific, the analyses of visual elements offer an intellectual platform for contextualization and decontextualization.

Exploring concepts and methods as research tools for anthropological inquiry that consider the inter-connection of reality, social perspectives, and the resulting visuality, which can help to inform and influence our ways of understanding and assimilating our lives and societies.

Through the discussions of what images mean to us, and their effects, the course will further poses crucial questions surrounding our understanding within the historical, cultural and social, value and power of vision, image and artefact. Emphasizing and contextualizing the relations between people and the visual as objects, studied both within and external to, environmental and cultural context, this course will guide students to integrate various points of view and develop their own critical judgment of the Visual Arts.

I.2. Course Content:

| No. | | Hours | % |
|-----|---|-------|------|
| 1. | Introduction: Definitions and Historical Survey | 3 | 7.6 |
| 2. | Ways and Forms of Visualising Anthropology | 9 | 23 |
| 3. | Object, Image and Visual Comment | 9 | 23 |
| 4. | Visual Anthropology in Institutional Contexts: - Categorisation and cataloguing; - Visual interpretation methodologies; - Interpretation histories; - Re-contextualisations of artefacts. | 18 | 46.2 |
| | | 39 | 100 |

I.3. Intended Course Learning Outcomes (CILOs):

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

| No. | Intended Course Learning Outcomes (CILOs) |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Critically reflect about the scope of visual anthropology as a principle and discipline; |
| 2. | Apply knowledge and understanding of theories and methods of visual anthropology in the interpretation and evaluation of works of art; |
| 3. | Interpret the cultural significance art and art works through visual anthropology; |
| 4. | Assess the mechanism of cultural production that shapes multi-layered meanings and values; and |
| 5. | Adhere to standards of professional practice and ethos. |

I.4. Alignment of CILOs with PILOs:

| Learning Outcomes | <i>Please indicate alignment by checking '✓' the appropriate box</i> | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | CILO1 | CILO2 | CILO3 | CILO4 | CILO5 | CILO6 |
| PILO1.1 | ✓ | | | | | |
| PILO1.2 | | | | | | |
| PILO2.1 | | ✓ | | | | |
| PILO2.2 | | | | | | |
| PILO2.3 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| PILO3.1 | | | | | ✓ | |
| PILO3.2 | | | | | ✓ | |

I.5. Alignment of Teaching and Learning Activities with CILOs:

| No. | Teaching and Learning Activities | CILOs | Hours |
|-----|---|------------|-------|
| 1. | Lectures and presentations with aid of audio-visual media will introduce the history, theories and key issues in the visual arts. Images, objects, videos and reading materials will be used in class. Students will be encouraged to interact actively with the instructor and their peers through Q&A sessions and group discussions. | 3, 4, 5 | 21 |
| 2. | Tutorials and group discussions on special topics, research practice and methodologies will provide students with training in research skills. Students are encouraged to evaluate various issues covered in the module and express their opinions on peers' presentations that will increase the quality of research outcomes. | 1, 4, 5 | 12 |
| 3. | Field trips to museums, art galleries and cultural heritage sites will be arranged to enable students to experience the physicality and materiality of relevant artefacts, artworks and building sites. | 1, 2, 5 | 6 |
| 4. | Practical archival project work will provide students with the opportunity to practice methodologies of visual anthropology on real artefacts from local museums/collections. Additional archival work will need to be conducted outside of class hours in timeslots to be individually arranged. | 2, 3, 4, 5 | 18 |

I.6. Assessment:

| No. | Assessment Methods/Activities | Weighting | Alignment with CILOs |
|-----|--|-----------|----------------------|
| 1. | Research Project: Each student is required to assess and present his/her research findings on a specific topic falling within the scope of this module. Essays should include strong arguments, a clear structure, illustrations, footnotes and a bibliography. | 50% | 1, 2, 3 |
| 2. | Student Presentations: Students are required to give audio-visual presentations based on their essay topics. The following group discussions allow presenters to receive feedback from their instructor and peers. | 20% | 3, 4 |
| 3. | Professional Attitude: Professional Attitude does not necessarily define its own learning outcomes, but takes a look at 'how' the other, | 30% | 5 |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | <p>non-attitudinal outcomes are achieved. Assessment will always be based on direct personal contact with the student. Assessment methods include personal conversations – formal and informal –, class observation, individual and group-tutorials or critiques, and such like. Assessment evidence is continuously produced through attendance and participation class-records, presentations, peer-reviews, evaluation of sketchbooks or visual diaries, personal notes of students and teachers, etc. For more information, please refer to the BA (Hons) in Visual Arts' Programme Document.</p> | | |
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I.7. References:

Barker, Emma. *Contemporary Cultures of Display*. New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 1999.

Bryant, Antony and Pollock, Griselda (eds). *Digital and Other Virtualities: Renegotiating the Image*. London : I. B. Tauris, 2010.

Collier, John Jr. and Collier, Malcolm. *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986.

Dicks, Bella. *Culture on Display: The Production of Contemporary Visitability*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2004.

El Guindi, Fadwa. *Visual Anthropology: Essential Method and Theory*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004.

Hall, Stuart (ed). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publications in association with the Open University, 1997.

Hockings, Paul (ed). *Principles of Visual Anthropology*. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1998.

Levinson, David and Ember, Melvin (eds). *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1996.

Morse, Margaret. *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

I.8. Academic Integrity:

Students will endeavour to only claim work that they have actually produced themselves. Claiming the work of others is considered plagiarism, and will be dealt with under the academic policies of the university.

I.9. Health and Safety:

Every effort will be made to comply with the intent of Hong Kong's law or acts and the University's policies to maintain a safe and healthy working environment.

I.10. Final Note:

The instructor reserves the right to modify the class and the syllabus or the schedule to adjust to the dynamics of the particular group or to take advantage of opportunities that may arise.