

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



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Course Information

Course Description

In this course, students will learn some of the major principles surrounding visual communication: physio-psychological bases of perception, cognition, semiotics, and the history of visual images. Lectures, discussions, and analyses of visual artifacts will include the ethical dimensions of visual image-making, as well as critical analysis of contemporary visual images across all media.

Course Learning Outcomes

The purpose of this course is to:

- **Explore** basic issues and perspectives in the study of visual communication
- **Develop** methodological proficiency through the critical investigation and analysis of images
- **Critically engage** with the visual imagery that defines our contemporary culture

Prerequisites

- You do not need to have completed any other courses prior to taking this course.

Course Format

- This course is an asynchronous, online course. This means that you will be able to complete course lecture and reading content on your own schedule during the week. You will be expected to keep up with the week-to-week flow of the course and meet due dates. We will have no required meetings at specific times.

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General Education Credit

This course does not fulfill any university general education requirements.

This course does qualify as a methods/skills elective credit for Communication major students in Comm Studies, CommSHER, and Strategic Communication emphases or as a general elective in Journalism emphasis. Note that this course incorporates elements of critical culture studies and rhetoric.

Required Course Materials

Other readings will be posted directly into Canvas modules.

You will need to watch several films during the semester. Where possible, I will include embedded links to videos in Canvas. Sometimes you will need to access films through the university library databases. See Canvas for details.

Required Course Materials

The following textbook is required and part of Inclusive Access. You can access this book through the Bookshelf navigation tab on Canvas:

Sturkin, M. & Cartwright, L. (2017). *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture* (3rd edition). Oxford University Press.

Other readings will be linked in Canvas modules. I use the Course Materials navigation tab in Canvas, which directly links to electronic copies available through the university library. Materials not available through Course Materials will be directly posted.

Bichlbaum, A., Bonanno, M., & Engfehr, K. (Directors). (2009). *The yes men fix the world* [Film]. HBO.

Carpenter, J. (Director). (1988). *They live* [Film]. Alive Films.

Curtis, A. (Director). (2002). *The century of the self* [Film]. RDF Television BBC.

Garland, A. (Director). (2015). *Ex machina* [Film]. Film4; DNA Films.

Jonze, S. (Director). (2013). *Her* [Film]. Annapurna Pictures.

Kon, S. (Director). (2006). *Paprika* [Film]. Madhouse.

Neuromarketing: Programming the brain to buy [Film]. (2012). Java Films.

Tarantino, Q. (Director). (1994). *Pulp fiction* [Film]. A Band Apart.

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



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Course Information

Instructor Information

Instructor: Jeremy Freed

Email: jeremy.freed@utah.edu

Office: LNCO 2960

Office Hours: By appointment

(in-person or remote; email to discuss scheduling)

It is a FERPA violation for me to discuss your coursework or grades via outside electronic communication (e.g., Gmail). I will only respond to communication from your Umail or Canvas Inbox.

Please do not call or text my cell phone.

Self-Motivated Learning

The advantage of online coursework is increased autonomy and flexibility. The disadvantage of online coursework is a substantively increased need for self-motivated learning. Online learning requires self-motivation, self-discipline, and the ability to meet certain technical requirements.

You will be able to complete lecture and reading content at your own pace and on your own schedule each week. You are expected to keep up with the week-to-week course flow.

Assignment due dates are in place for two reasons. First, staggered assignment due dates spread the workload across the semester, potentially reducing the stresses of producing substantial amounts of work at one time. Second, staggered assignment due dates allow your instructor adequate time to review and evaluate your work.

You should carefully review the Uonline Online Readiness Assessment and determine whether or not an asynchronous, online course is a good fit with your learning style and life situation.



COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

Expectations

I expect you to...

You should expect me to...

Be self-motivated. You need to budget sufficient time to complete and understand the readings. You will need to budget nine (9) total hours per week for successful completion of this course. This includes ~3-4 hours per week of reading/listening to lectures and watching additional assigned content (i.e., movies), ~2-3 hours per week completing assigned readings, and ~2 hours per week working on assignments. Use your time effectively.

Carefully read. Attention to detail is a highly sought after skill in most fields. Carefully read this syllabus. Fully read assignment descriptions. Read assignment rubrics. Read the assigned readings.

Read assigned readings for understanding. Not every concept will be immediately clear or obvious. Take notes as you read and ask yourself if you can explain the main idea (i.e., the gist). Note areas that remain unclear or confusing.

Be willing to not be an expert. Ask questions. Don't be shy about bringing questions to class. The only dumb questions are questions that are not asked. Let's engage in dialogue.

Understand your rights and responsibilities as a student: [Student Handbook](#) and [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

Curate course content. I curate and create content that is intended to help you understand concepts with the intent of helping you achieve the course learning objectives.

Respond to your emails. I will do my best to respond to electronic communication (email) within 48 hours. **This does not count holidays or weekends.** If you have not received a response after 48 hours, then contact again until I respond.

Promptly evaluate your work. I will do my best to grade all assignments within seven (7) days. If an assignment is ungraded after fourteen (14) days, please contact me and hold me accountable. Foster a classroom experience that respects the dignity of each member.

Push your thinking. We are here to learn and part of learning is pushing past your comfort zone. We will apply theoretical frameworks to guide our analysis of cultural artifacts. Culture is a complex phenomenon so pushing from simplistic to complex thinking is crucial to understanding how cultures function.

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

This course is online and asynchronous. There are no requirements for class attendance. That said, you are expected to budget sufficient time every week to successfully keep up with the flow of the course.

Late work will receive an automatic 15% grade reduction. There are no exceptions to this policy. Work received more than seven (7) days after the assigned due date will receive zero (0) points.

If you are undergoing a serious life event, contact the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling Center, and/or the Office of Disability and Access for assistance.

If you have an accommodation letter from the Office of Disability and Access that specifies additional time for assignments, you will need to discuss your needs with me before the assignment due dates.

Late Work

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
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Course Policies

Content Accommodations

I select course content as a vehicle for learning, to help illustrate core principles, and to promote critical thinking. You may be exposed to ideas or concepts you might find discomforting or offensive, including concepts grounded in critical and cultural studies and rhetoric. I will not make accommodations to course content, requirements, or expectations. I suggest you try and keep an open mind and be willing to face challenging intellectual arguments. I will not suggest that you change deeply held beliefs, but you may be exposed to arguments and viewpoints that differ from those beliefs. **If you believe that exposure to course content will place an undue burden on your sincerely-held core beliefs, drop the class.**

Other Accommodations

Contact me at the beginning of the semester if you need accommodations for:

- Religious Practice
- Active Duty Military
- University-Sanctioned Events
- Disability/Access

Contact me as soon as possible if an extreme personal circumstance (e.g., hospitalization, death of a close loved one, etc.) is interfering with your ability to complete work.

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
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Course Policies

Not a Contract

This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the course schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements.

Generative AI (i.e., ChatGPT, Adobe Express/Firefly, etc.) is a new technology (LLM and machine learning) that has substantial potential for both benefit and harm. Generative AI has notable limitations and there are serious questions about plagiarism and credibility, since generative AI is designed to provide human-like responses and the models have largely been trained in surface-level (e.g., Reddit) sources of communication. Generative AI has also been demonstrated to “hallucinate” (lie/make stuff up) when the answer is not known. While generative AI is a useful tool for certain functions (i.e., quick overviews of popular topics), using generative AI to do work for you is not wise, unethical, and potentially illegal. Use the tools with caution.

Generative AI

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
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Course Policies

Drop
&
Withdrawal

This course may not suit your needs or expectations. You might also find an unexpected life event interfering with your ability to succeed this semester.

If you elect to drop or withdraw from the course, **you are solely responsible** for doing so by the appropriate deadline. The last day to drop the course is May 22nd. The last day to withdraw from the course is June 21st.

[Registrar's Drop Policy](#); [Registrar's Withdraw Policy](#)

You are responsible for submitting assignments with the required naming convention, correct file extension, and using the software type and version required for the assignment. All assignments are due at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) and will be submitted via Canvas.

Do not wait until the last second to submit your assignments.

Assignment
Submission

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
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Evaluating Learning - Learning Objectives

Student Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester you will be able to...

- **Analyze and interpret** texts and case studies by applying the concepts, questions, and theoretical paradigms discussed in lectures and assigned readings.
- **Interpret and compare** various visual communication concepts/theories.
- **Apply** visual communication perspectives and theories to real-world case studies.

Demonstrating Meeting the Objectives

Completing these assignments will demonstrate progress towards meeting the student learning objectives.

Evaluation	Relevant Objective	Value (%)
Reflections	Interpret and compare concepts/theories...	40
Critical Visual Analyses	Analyze and interpret texts and case studies... Apply visual communication perspectives and theories to real-world case studies	60
Total		100

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

Evaluating Learning - Assignment Descriptions

Reflections

Through the semester you will be required to will write seven (7) short reflective analyses where you think through how different visual communication principles, concepts, and theories fit (or do not fit) together, interact, mix, and/or combine. You will use specific textual evidence (precise quotes) that support your analysis. Your reflections will be 500-750 words.

Critical Visual Analyses

Through the semester you will be required to submit a total of four (4) visual examples that directly respond to the critical question that was asked in the assignment. In addition to providing required examples of visual communication, you will also provide an analyses of 750-1250 words where you apply specific visual communication principles/concepts/theories as analytical lenses to “read” a particular “text.” You will show specific evidence (i.e., textual quotes, descriptions, etc.) and explain how that specific evidence supports your understanding of the “text” from the particular analytical lens’ perspective.

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

Evaluating Learning Grading Scale

Minimum Points	Maximum Points	Letter Grade
94.0	100.0	A
90.0	93.9	A-
87.0	89.9	B+
84.0	86.9	B
80.0	83.9	B-
77.0	79.9	C+
74.0	76.9	C
70.0	73.9	C-
67.0	69.9	D+
64.0	66.9	D
60.0	63.9	D-
0	59.9	E

University Achievement & GPA Equivalence

Letter Grade	GPA Equivalence	University Performance & Achievement
A	4.0	Excellent performance, superior achievement
A-	3.7	
B+	3.3	Good performance, substantial achievement
B	3.0	
B-	2.7	
C+	2.3	Standard performance and achievement
C	2.0	
C-	1.7	
D+	1.3	Substandard performance, marginal achievement
D	1.0	
D-	0.7	
E	0.0	Unsatisfactory performance and achievement

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH®

Semester Schedule

May 13-17

Topic	Introduction to Rhetoric
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the course syllabus • Read all assignment instructions and grading rubrics on Canvas • Complete Module 1 on Canvas 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Reflection: Rhetoric</i> before Saturday, May 18 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

May 20-24

Topic	Power
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 1 (pp. 13-50) • Complete Module 2 on Canvas • Watch <i>Paprika</i> (2006) 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Reflection: Power</i> before Saturday, May 25 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH®

Semester Schedule

May 27-31

Topic	Audiences
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 2 (pp. 51-88) • Complete Module 3 on Canvas • Watch <i>They live</i> (1988) 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Critical Visual Analysis: Reading Images</i> before Saturday June 01 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

June 03-07

Topic	Modernity & Spectatorship
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 3 (pp. 89-138) • Complete Module 4 on Canvas 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Reflection: Gazes</i> before Saturday, June 08 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH®

Semester Schedule

June 10-14

Topic	Realism/Perspective
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 4 (pp. 139-178) • Complete Module 5 on Canvas • Watch <i>Her</i> (2013) 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Reflection: Deepfakes</i> before Saturday, June 15 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

June 17-21

Topic	Reproduction
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 5 (pp. 179-218) • Complete Module 6 on Canvas • Watch <i>Ex Machina</i> (2015) 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Critical Visual Analysis: Memes</i> before Saturday, June 22 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH®

Semester Schedule

June 24-28

Topic	Mass Culture
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 6 (pp. 219-256) • Complete Module 7 on Canvas • Watch <i>Century of the Self - Part I: Happiness Machines</i> (2002) 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Reflection: "The" Media</i> before Saturday, June 29 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

July 01-05

Topic	INDEPENDENCE DAY HOLIDAY
Location	N/A
<i>This is a work week. There are no specific readings/lectures/assignments due. Use the time to decompress and/or work ahead.</i>	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH®

Semester Schedule

July 08-12

Topic	Brand Culture
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 7 (pp. 257-300) • Complete Module 8 on Canvas • Watch <i>Neuromarketing: Programming the brain to buy</i> (2012) 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Reflection: Seeing Influence</i> before Saturday, July 09 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

July 15-19

Topic	Postmodernism & Remix
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 8 (pp. 301-336) • Complete Module 9 on Canvas • Watch <i>Pulp fiction</i> (1994) 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Critical Visual Analysis: Remix</i> before Saturday, July 20 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH®

Semester Schedule

July 22-26

Topic	(Visual) Rhetoric of Science
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 9 (pp. 337-378) • Complete Module 10 on Canvas 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Reflection: Science Icon</i> before Saturday, July 27 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

July 29-August 02

Topic	Global Lenses
Location	Online (via Canvas)
Complete the following before beginning assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Sturken & Cartwright, Chapter 10 (pp. 379-420) • Complete Module 11 on Canvas • Watch <i>The yes men fix the world</i> (2009) 	
Graded Assignments Due:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Critical Visual Analysis: Player's Choice</i> before Saturday, August 03 at midnight (11:59pm Mountain Time) 	

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

University Policies

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism means passing off someone else's work as your own or not giving credit to someone when you use their ideas, including generative AI.

Academic misconduct includes submitting graded work for multiple classes, completing work for others, and making false claims.

You do not have any permission to use any graded assignments in this class for any other class (you also cannot use graded work from previous courses for this class).

I receive class rosters with your name as well as "Preferred first name" (if previously entered by you in the Student Profile section of your CIS account, which managed can be managed at any time). While CIS refers to this as merely a preference, I will honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you in class or on assignments. Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes so I can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun are respected. If you need any assistance or support, please reach out to the LGBT Resource Center



Names and Pronouns

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

University Policies

Misconduct
Sexual
Harassment



Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677 (COPS). **As an employee of the University of Utah, I am a mandatory reporter for all cases of sexual violence** (this includes reports of cases that happened out-of-state, occurred many years ago, or have already been prosecuted).

There are several resources on campus that will support you with your language development, including:

- [English Language Institute](#)
- [International Student & Scholar Resources](#)
- [English for Academic Success \(EAS\) Program](#)
- [Writing Center](#)

Please let me know if there is any additional support you would like to discuss for this class.

Languages
&
Resources

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

University Policies

Wellness & Success



Your personal health and wellness are essential to your success as a student. Personal concerns like stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, or cross-cultural differences can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive in this course and at the University of Utah.

The University has many resources available to aid you in achieving success as a student. Resources can be accessed through the university's [Basic Needs Collective](#).

Campus Safety



The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677) or Sandy Police (801-799-3000) if you are at the Sandy Center. You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

University Policies

Americans
with Disabilities
Act



The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives will be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class will be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture.

Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally.



Individual
Perspectives

COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

University Policies

Technical Support



If you have technical issues with the course Canvas site, contact **Digital Learning Technologies**.



For help with other university-related technology (e.g., UConnect, Two-Factor Authentication), you can find help through the **University IT help desk**.

Immigration is a complex phenomenon with broad impact—those who are directly affected by it, as well as those who are indirectly affected by their relationships with family members, friends, and loved ones. If your immigration status presents obstacles to engaging in specific course activities or fulfilling specific course criteria, confidential arrangements may be requested from the Dream Center. Arrangements with the Dream Center will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence. The Dream Center offers a wide range of resources to support undocumented students (with and without DACA) as well as students from mixed status families. To learn more please contact the Dream Center at 801-213-3697.

Undocumented Students



COMM 3550-090

Principles of Visual Communication

Summer 2024

Online

Asynchronous



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH®

University Policies

Veterans



If you are a student veteran, the U of Utah has a Veterans Support Center located in Room 161 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm.

Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events and links to outside resources.

Please also let me know if you need any additional support in this class for any reason.

Grievances

If you have any concerns about the course, please contact me via email or in person to discuss your concerns as soon as possible. If we are not able to resolve your concerns, contact [Travis Ciaramella](#), the Director of Undergraduate Studies