

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 503.9: Advanced Special Topics in Communication and Media Studies
Spectacle and Media Culture

FALL 2022: September 6 to December 7 (excluding Nov. 6-12)

Lecture: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 14:00-15:15

Location: TI STUDIOC

This is an in-person course.

Instructor:	Julia Chan
Office:	SS 306
Email:	julia.chan@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 15:30-17:30 or by appointment

Course Description

Advanced study of contemporary topics or issues related to communications media, technology, culture or discourse. What does it mean to constantly encounter images that are shocking, disturbing, or compelling in our contemporary mediascape? This class will investigate the “spectacle”—a key concept in visual culture—and its intersection with (photographic, cinematic, media) images in our highly mediated culture. “Spectacle” is a word with many meanings, but it is often used to describe the ways in which the use of images can produce shock, outrage, desire, wonderment, and surprise, with important social, cultural, economic, and political implications. At the same time, we will investigate the significance of images and visual culture more broadly in Western culture, particularly in terms of intense or disturbing images.

This class will explore the spectacle’s place in a globalized, digitally networked visual culture—a culture that is (re)produced and informed by the complex interplay between Western imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, and consumerism. We will examine images and imaging technologies from many different vantage points, and we will pay close attention to the ways in which race, gender, sexuality, and other forms of difference subtend the ways in which images are made, received, and deployed in the context of the spectacle in media culture. In this class, emphasis will be placed on not only critiquing media in terms of spectacle, but also critically making media.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics can be found at the end of this outline. Full schedule of readings and assignment information will be available on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Your learning is my priority. To that end, the course schedule may be modified as necessary.

Objectives of the Course

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Explain what spectacle is and why it is significant in terms of media culture and literacy

- Identify and critique the important roles that difference (such as race, gender, ability, sexuality, and class) plays in the confluence of spectacle, images, and media
- Apply ethical concepts and theories of spectacle to case studies and “real world” examples
- Create media that critically engages with questions of spectacle, media activism, and image ethics

Textbooks and Readings

All texts for this course will be available via the course D2L page.

Learning Technologies and Requirements

In order to complete courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for online synchronous courses only).

If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

Please leave your phone and/or any other electronic devices on silent during class. Out of respect for everyone else in the room, please refrain from texting or engaging in any other activities on your devices that could be distracting.

Please familiarize yourself with the University’s policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
2%	Syllabus Quiz This online and open book multiple-choice quiz will be made available in D2L on Sept 6 at 12:01 a.m. and must be completed by Sept 9 by 11:59 p.m. Its purpose is to ensure that you have read and understood the syllabus.	Sept 9
10%	Reading Summary Assignments 750-1000 words. Each student will complete 1 reading summary assignment. Full assignment details and assignment schedule are available in D2L. (The Late Bank does not apply to this assignment. See Policy for Late Assignments, below.)	Varies; check schedule in D2L

15%	Personal Reflection: Image Ethics 750-1000 words. In this reflection assignment, you will draw upon concepts raised in Week 2 and apply them to a specific situation to help you develop your own position on what it means to engage with images and visual media ethically—whether in this class, over the course of your career, or in your personal life.	Sept 28
8%	Participation Your engagement with the course will be assessed on (a) preparedness for class (such as completing the readings); (b) meaningful contributions to in-class activities and discussions; and (c) demonstrating thoughtful analysis and synthesis of class material throughout the course. You will also complete a self-assessment that will be taken into account.	N/A; self-assessment will be completed in class Dec 1
30%	Multimedia Presentation (Group Assignment) In this group assignment, you will make a short multimedia presentation that critiques a media spectacle of your choosing. Creativity and experimentation in structure and format are encouraged. Full assignment details will be available in D2L. (The Late Bank does not apply to this assignment. See Policy for Late Assignments, below.)	Varies; will occur over weeks 5-10. Check schedule in D2L
35%	Final Media Project In this project, you will make a media project that creatively subverts strategies of spectacle through the form, structure, and/or content you choose to work with. You will make EITHER a creative/artistic project OR a documentary/academic project along with a written (750-1000 words) or oral (5-10 minutes, recorded) rationale to accompany the work. Creativity and experimentation in structure and format are encouraged. Full assignment details will be available in D2L.	Dec 6

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: You do not have to complete all the assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments in class or by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox. Include your name and ID number on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

****Late Bank:** Each student will have 2 opportunities to hand in a submission late (that is, 2 days past the original deadline) without penalty over the course of the term. For example, if the assignment is due Monday at 11:59 p.m., you may hand it in by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. without penalty. After that time, the late penalties above apply. You may only use your Late Bank twice over the course of the term. **NOTE:** The late bank does NOT apply to the Multimedia Assignment OR the Reading Summaries, as other students in the class are relying on you to complete them on time.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades will be used for all assignments.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%

2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material->

[protected-copyright-policy](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html) and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copy-right in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule

WEEK	TOPIC	REMINDERS AND DUE DATES
Week 1: Sept 6 & 8	What are images? What is spectacle?	<u>Syllabus Quiz</u> , due Sept 9 by 11:59 p.m. in D2L. Check D2L for all readings and assignments details.
Week 2: Sept 13 & 15	The ethics of images and looking	
Week 3: Sept 20 & 22	Visuality	

Week 4: Sept 27 & 29	Media spectacle, images, and the body politic	<u>Personal Reflection: Image Ethics</u> by Wednesday, Sept 28 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 5: Oct 4 & 6	Race and spectacle	<u>Multimedia Presentations</u> in Thursday's class. See presentation schedule in D2L.
Week 6: Oct 11 & 13	Gazes and agency	<u>Multimedia Presentations</u> in Thursday's class.
Week 7: Oct 18 & 20	Economies of the eye: “paying” attention	<u>Multimedia Presentations</u> in Thursday's class. See schedule in D2L.
Week 8: Oct 25 & 27	Sexuality and spectacle	<u>Multimedia Presentations</u> in Thursday's class. Guest lecturer: Dr. Dan Vena (Queen's University)
Week 9: Nov 1 & 3	Images of war, violence, and pain	<u>Multimedia Presentations</u> in Thursday's class. See schedule in D2L.
Fall break		No classes this week
Week 10: Nov 15 & 17	Resisting, subverting, re- visioning	<u>Multimedia Presentations</u> in Thursday's class. See schedule in D2L.
Week 11: Nov 22 & 24	Images <i>as</i> violence	
Week 12: Nov 29 & Dec 1	Images, evidence, and “truth”	Participation self-assessment, completed in class Dec 1.
Week 13: Dec 6		No formal class this week <u>Final Media Project</u> , due Dec 6 by 11:59 p.m.