

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Department of Sociology
Sociology 445
Visual Sociology
Fall 2015

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 1:00-3:00 pm and by appointment

Course Overview and Objectives:

We produce our social world in part through the visual appearances of the things we create and do (objects, buildings, clothing, gestures). We know – and navigate – our world in part through socially organized ways of looking and making sense. A significant set of visual practices involves the creation and activation of visual *representations* (e.g., drawings, photographs, films). A key feature of late modernity has been the exponential proliferation of images in more and more domains of social life. In the last decades we have experienced the even wider and faster circulation of digital images and their increased use in personal life, mass communication, commerce, security, regimes of governance – and research. For while visual practices are a relevant topic for sociological investigation, sociology itself involves visual practices (e.g., observation, visual displays of data), and some researchers use photographs and films to generate data for sociological analysis or to explore sociological topics.

In this course, our focus will be on social practices that involve making, circulating and viewing/using photographic (analogue and digital) images. In the first half of the course we will read some theoretical works on photographic representation and consider the role that photographic practices have played in the development of modern society. A particular focus will be on the exploration of contemporary photographic practices in various domains of present-day life (from selfies to surveillance). This will necessarily involve us to some extent in the creation of knowledge: the published research hasn't kept up with the pace of change in the use digital image technology, so we will be pooling our own knowledge – as people who live these changes, and make or view these images – in order to develop our own sociological understanding. In the second half of the course, we will turn our attention to the domain of research and the use of images in sociological investigation. Here the objective is not just to study how social researchers use visual methods, but to try out some of these methods: you will have a chance to carry out small-scale projects of empirical research involving photographs.

This course emphasizes hands-on practice and critical reflection, with small exercises, writing assignments and projects throughout the semester. Class participants will need access to a digital camera of some kind: cell phone, point-and-shoot, DSLR. Ordinary life experience of taking and posting digital images is all that is required.

Required Readings

A collection of journal articles and chapters, which is available through D2L (either as a permanent link or a PDF). The reading list and the schedule of readings by date will be posted in D2L. It is highly recommended that you print the readings so you can make notes on them and bring them to class.

Assignments, Activities, and Assessment

Participation	5 %
Reading response	15 %
Research activities/papers	60 %
Midterm test	15 %
Final test	5 %

Participation

This is a seminar-style course. There will be some lectures, but much of the time we will be working and learning together through discussion of assigned readings and collaborative analysis. Your participation grade will reflect your recorded attendance as well as your contributions to class discussions.

Reading response writing

It is expected that you will come to class having read and thought about the assigned reading for that day. In addition to that default preparation, for 10 of the readings (up to 8 in the first half of class; up to 5 in the second half) you will write a (maximum) one-page, single space response, following guidelines given in class. To get credit for your response, you must post it to the Drop Box in D2L by 12 pm (noon) on the day that we will be discussing the reading. Each response that is submitted on time is worth 1 point, to a maximum of 10 points. Work that is poorly written or that does not display evidence of a careful engagement with the reading will be given half credit or no credit. At the midpoint and at the end of the semester you will turn in a hard-copy set of your responses, and I will award up to a possible total of 5 additional points for consistently thoughtful and well-written responses.

You will be expected to share ideas from your responses during class discussions. You will find it easiest to do this if you bring a copy of your response with you to class.

Activities

The emphasis in this course is on learning through doing. There will be three graded practice/research activities over the semester. Detailed instructions will be given in class and posted in D2L. Some activities require you to post photographs in the SOCI 445 Online Gallery (instructions and passwords for which will be given in class).

Activity #1:	Auto-ethnography of photographic practice (Oct. 1)	10 %
Activity #2:	Exploring experiences of University spaces (Nov. 10)	20 %
Activity #3:	Photo elicitation research project (Dec. 15)	30 %

Midterm test

There will be an in-class test on October 20. This test will involve a combination of short and longer essay questions and will cover assigned readings and class material from the first half of the course.

Final test

There will be a final in-class test on December 3. This test will involve a combination of short and longer essay questions and will address practices and issues in visual research.

Grading

Your final letter grade will be determined according to the following schedule:

95-100	A+	67-69	C+
90-94	A	63-66	C
85-89	A-	60-62	C-
80-84	B+	55-59	D+
75-79	B	50-54	D
70-74	B-	49 or less	F

Instructor's Policies

Classroom atmosphere: Stimulating discussion thrives in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Let's work together to create an environment in which everyone feels inspired and safe to participate in discussions.

Courtesy: Please make this class and the other people in it your priority during the time the class is in session. That means not reading or sending text messages, checking Facebook or engaging in other forms of electronic distraction.

Late assignments: A late penalty (maximum 5% per day late) will be deducted from the grade on any assignments handed in after the due date (except for reading responses, which will not be accepted for credit after the deadline). Extensions will be granted for illness or family affliction; these must be requested ***in advance*** of the due date.

Electronic submission: Your activity papers must be submitted in hard copy. Electronic submission will be accepted in cases where religious observance, illness, family affliction or documented sports-team travel prevent your attendance in class; you must contact me ahead of time for permission to submit electronically.

Plagiarism: In accordance with University policy, I report all cases of plagiarism, including the unintentional kind. Make sure you know what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Grade reappraisal: See me within two weeks of the return of an assignment if you wish to challenge the grade you received and request reappraisal of your work.

Official Information (I don't write this part):

Handing in Papers, Assignments

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. **Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

Ethics in Research

Students are advised that any research with human subjects – including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Academic Misconduct

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Deferrals

When possible, please provide advance notice if you are unable to write an exam or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements, misreading the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a “make up” test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a “make up” test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology.

Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:

http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Sp_Su_DFE_App.pdf

Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

Student Representation

The 2015-16 Students' Union VP Academic is Stephan Guscott: email: suvpaca@ucalgary.ca. The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: arts1@ucalgary.ca, arts2@ucalgary.ca, arts3@ucalgary.ca, and arts4@ucalgary.ca. You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>

Emergency Evacuations

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at the Food Court in the Professional Faculties Building. Please check these assembly point locations for all of your classes at:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

Safewalk

The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodation is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.