

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Department of Sociology
Sociology 445
Visual Sociology
Winter 2012

Instructor: Dr. Liza McCoy

Office: SS 934

Telephone: 403-220-6856

Email: mccoym@ucalgary.ca

Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:00-3:00 pm; Thursdays, 11:00 am-12:00 pm; and by appointment

Course Description

There are two main trends within the field of **visual sociology**. The first studies visual aspects of human society, with an emphasis on social forms and practices of visual representation (e.g., photographs, film, drawings, advertising, maps, video surveillance, etc.). The second uses visual methods (mainly film and photography) to conduct sociological research on a broad range of topics.

In this course we will learn about – and practice – both types of visual sociology. Our focus will be on still photographs and practices of photographic representation, both as objects of sociological analysis and as data within sociological research. In the first half of the course we will explore social practices involved in taking and circulating family, vacation and “everyday” personal photographs, as well as the use of photographs in public discourse, such as news, documentary and advertising. In the second half of the course we will consider how taking and/or talking about photographs can enhance sociological inquiry and understanding as part of qualitative research. Research methods explored will include participant-generated photography and photo elicitation interviewing.

This course emphasizes hands-on practice, with small exercises and writing assignments 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, storing and transferring digital images is all that is required.

Required Readings

Gillian Rose, *Doing Family Photography: The Domestic, the Public, and the Politics of Sentiment* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate e-book). Available online through the University of Calgary library (link in Blackboard “External Links” section).

A collection of journal articles, available online through the University of Calgary library (links in Blackboard). See list of articles posted in Blackboard.

Assignments, Activities, and Assessment

Reading notes	10 %
Article discussion	10 %
Activities	50 %
Midterm test	20 %
Final test	10 %

Reading notes 10 %

For up to ten of the assigned readings, you may write one single-spaced, typed page of notes, following guidelines posted in Blackboard. Post these to the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard by 9 am on the day of the class when we will discuss the reading. Each set of notes is worth 1 point, to a maximum total of 10 points. Your notes will not be graded, but incomplete or weak notes may be given half credit or no credit. Notes for the article on which you will serve as discussant *cannot* be submitted for reading note credit, as you will be turning those notes in for your discussant grade (see below).

Article discussion 10 %

Each student will take the lead role in discussing one of the assigned readings. Guidelines for preparation are posted in Blackboard. You will turn in a copy of your speaking notes after the discussion.

Activities 50 %

Instead of one big project or paper, in this course you will carry out four short exercises/activities throughout the semester. Instructions will be given in class. See schedule for due dates.

Travel/vacation pictures (Activity #1)	5 %
Advertising images (#2)	10 %
University spaces (#3)	15 %
Photo elicitation (#4)	20 %

Midterm test 20 %

There will be an in-class midterm on February 28. This test will involve a combination of short and longer essay questions.

Final test 10%

A final test will be held in class on April 12. This test will also involve a combination of short and longer essay questions.

Grading

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

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

Instructor's Policies

Classroom atmosphere: Stimulating discussion thrives in an atmosphere of mutual respect. My goal is an environment in which everyone feels inspired and safe to participate in discussions. Every person in the class has a role to play in creating and maintaining that environment.

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 and email, surfing the Internet, checking Facebook or engaging in other forms of electronic distraction. People who continuously show disrespect in this way will be asked to leave.

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/time.

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. Consult the Effective Writing Centre (<http://www.efwr.ucalgary.ca/writingcentre>) and the resource material posted in Blackboard.

Rounding: If your percentage grade falls on the cusp between two letter grades, I will look at your grades and your participation in class discussions over the semester in order to decide whether to round your final grade up to the higher letter grade.

Official University & Departmental Policies

Exam Policies: You must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam. All requests for deferral of an examination 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 physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferred exams may be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. If you have missed an exam for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a “make up” exam as close to the original exam as possible. The date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferred exam. Deferred exams will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

Ethics 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 Departmental 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: Cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor’s office or the Department main office. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor’s office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

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 with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student’s responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

Handing in Papers Outside of Class, Return of Final Papers, and Release of Final Grades

When students are unable to submit papers at class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant rather than at the Sociology Department main office.

Final papers will not be returned through the Sociology Department main office. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, (i.e., outside an instructor's office, the department office, etc.). Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will only be available for pick-up during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or the beginning of the next term.

Final grades are not posted by the Sociology department. They are only available online.