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I was born in 1989 in Southern California during the advent of the digital revolution (also known as the information age). To say the least, my curiosity to learn was bleak, and died right along with Mario trying to save the princess. Upon much reflection, my experience on learning can be summarized into two main points.

I. Not understanding all the material—resulting in feeling unmotivated and detached.
II. Not understanding the relevancy of the material—resulting in becoming disinterested.

Based on my upbringing and studying conceptual photography in the arts for both graduate and undergraduate, I have realized that because the world is utterly complex and full of subtleties, learning how to unravel the universal language of photography is an excellent place to start. In fact, I believe media literacy is a fundamental human right that should be introduced early in life. The following is a list of five core guiding principles on what I find most important on what I teach and ways to cultivate a fertile ground for lifelong learning. They are:

1. Learning how and why to pause (to help generate clearer thoughts)
2. Using real-world examples (to facilitate direct applied thinking)
3. Questioning what we think we understand and how beliefs are formed (to empower one’s self on becoming more of a reflexive critical thinker)
4. Analyzing media (to have more agency over one’s own mind)
5. Considering the animal (to think beyond the human perspective)

Methods of learning

Trust-building strategies such as breathing and listening exercises, daily-check ins, 1:1 interactions, and circle discussions, will be used in the classroom and are considered vital components to foster communication and community among peers and others alike. Students will be introduced to different modes of activities to help develop a more thorough and meaningful understanding of a particular current topic, idea, term, and/or observation. Students will mainly work with material found in their everyday life such as advertisements, Youtube videos, social media images, magazines, music videos, video games, toys, popular songs, and the archive, as a way to examine repeated encounters. In addition, lectures will usually include film documentaries, discussing assigned readings, inviting guest speakers and visiting artists, in-class software demonstrations such as Photoshop and Premiere Pro, presentations, photography critiques, as well as library and museum field trips. Accessibility, readability and legibility to all presented material is an essential part to my practice as a teacher. Ultimately, I aim for students to walk away as strong independent thinkers who are now better equipped at making more better/informed ethical decisions as creators and consumers of both media and goods.
KINDNESS AND EMPATHY. Two seemingly obvious and universal traits to carry in and outside the classroom setting. One might even consider them as being such basic human fundamental traits that are naturally built into our being and therefore require zero inspection & zero maintenance. Although I think we all are fundamentally OK individuals, it can sometimes be difficult to share or listen to opinions of others that are seen as unconventional or contradictory to our own. This is where my teaching philosophy and inclusivity statement interlock to highlight the absolute importance of having a shared acknowledgement of our humanity. To me this means making it explicit that although we are all different and entering with different cultures, backgrounds, ethnicities, beliefs, experiences, sexualities, gender identities, abilities, levels of knowledge, so on and so forth, in the end, what binds us all together is the fact that we are all human. My goal in the classroom is to get students comfortable with the unknown and comfortable with asking questions. To be open to new possibilities and new understandings, rather than remaining closed and judgmental—as hard as it may be, it is possible! In order to facilitate diverse and inclusive learning, students will be exposed to a wide variety of scholarly research and material done by people of color and other marginalized groups such as: Gabriel Orozco, Cao Fei, Adrián Villar Rojas, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Wafaa Bilal, and Hiroshi Sugimoto. Students will also learn to formulate their own opinion about a particular topic and then be asked to think of the opposite and try to understand why someone else would think in this way. In addition, students will also be invited to think more globally in terms of social justice and the climate crisis as it effects everyone, both human and non-human. As an educator, I strive to emulate the same care and deep respect to all students and represent all freedoms of expression as equally and as responsibly.
“I’m very concerned that our society is much more interested in information than wonder—in noise, rather than silence.”

—Fred Rogers (1994)
Are We Making Images? Or Are Images Making Us?

Photographer Martin Parr once said "After 30-40 years of viewing [images], I have come to the conclusion that we too are fairly predictable in what we photograph." When we talk about living in an image based world, what kind of images are we referring to exactly? Why do certain types of images seem to appear and (re)appear and be photographed in a similar way? How do we decide what is photographable, uploadable, or shareable, and what gets thrown in the trash bin? And how are all these images that are being poured into our heads changing the way we see ourselves and the world? In this course, we will aim to answer these rhetorical open-ended questions by using a philosophical and sociological approach to explore what photography is now in the 21st century and considering its mental health implications. To further explore this idea of the image world, we will be referring to book chapters written by Jerry Mander: How We Turn Into Images and The Replacement of Human Images By Television (1978). The course will be divided into two parts—part one: the power of image, and part two: how to collapse its perceived power. Main thematic images (both still and moving) will include but are not limited to: portraiture, food styling, product, wedding, family, stock, and wildlife—all ranging from the “master” professional level to the amateur hobbyist. Through a combination of assignments, in-class exercises, and debates, students will be asked to re-think, re-define, and re-imagine the language of photography by means of interrogation and investigation. Students will deconstruct images on a technical level (lighting, camera, post-production) as well as learn its theoretical merits (non-verbs such as facial expression, body language, color as emotion, wardrobe, site location). Towards the end of the course, students will take a field trip to a local shopping mall and have an in-class photography critique on all the advertisements encountered to connect concepts discussed over the course of twelve weeks.

(3 credits) 15 student capacity

Open to all majors, graduate and undergraduate elective.
Meditating on Mediations: Recalibrating by Slow Looking

If the mind is an analog to a computer hard drive and images are bytes of information, what might our memory disk look like if we continue to accelerate full speed into the digital era? Recent terms such as doom scrolling and digital detox have been invented, and are concepts used to describe how one might feel when using technology and wanting to disconnect entirely, even for just momentarily. This course aims to introduce mindful techniques on how to carefully absorb information and to consider how images impact the way we think, feel, and behave. At the start of each class, students will participate in a five-minute breathing and writing exercise to help ease into discussions with clearer thoughts. Each week students will print an image found on their social media account such as Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Tumblr, Youtube, Reddit, or other frequently used site, and be asked to carefully analyze what they see, how it makes them feel, and why they think it is an image others imitate/emulate. Homework will be assigned weekly containing both reading and listening material from contemporary media theorists such as James Bridle, Neil Postman, Hito Stereyl, Douglas Rushkoff, Leonard Mlodinow, Rosa Menkman, John Berger, and others. Mid-term will be a choice between (a.) 25 minute presentation or (b) reflection paper (5-7 pages). The final project will be to turn in a 100-page field note journal detailing as many images as possible that were encountered throughout the entirety of the course with reflective responses to how students felt before and after learning about the psychology of images.

Instructors: Steffanie A. Padilla + co-teacher TBA (cognitive scientist)

(3 credits) 12 student capacity
estimated cost of materials $150

Open to all majors, graduate and undergraduate elective.
Knowing Animals
*Representations in Media

“We come to life surrounded by animals. They're among the first things we reach for as they hover over our cots in the shape of colourful toys; as stuffed teddies they spend the night with us, making us feel safe and warm; thereafter, as we grow older, they are ever-present through illustrated books, photographs, wildlife documentaries, films, as pets and pest, at the zoo, in the city, in the countryside, as entertainers or sports partners. Partly, it may be because animals are such an integral part of our daily lives, from the very beginning, that we somehow end up taking them for granted, and that we come to see them as accessories to the human condition.”

— Giovanni Aloi, 2012
lecturer, history of art and visual cultures

So what about animals? Why is learning about animals important? In what ways have we come to understand animals through the lens of popular culture? Why is it that we see more representations of animals than we do of real animals? and in what ways have simulations of animals skewed our way of thinking about reality itself? These questions, among others, will be explored and discussed in the course as it relates to animal imagery and how we have come to know animals. Students will be asked to examine popular modes of media where animals are the main focus such as: films, cartoons, photographs (i.e., National Geographic), advertisements, and consumer products. Weekly readings will be assigned from books chapters such as: Representing Animals by Nigel Rothfels, Developing Animals by Matthew Brower, Every Twelve Seconds by Timothy Pachirat, and Animal by Erica Fudge. Short writing prompts will be given at the start of each class to reflect intently what was discovered through our readings findings. Mid-term project will consist of a short presentation with the final project being a 10-page research paper on what was learned in class and how to apply these new understandings into the real world. Assessments are influenced by attendance, quality of work, and meeting all project deadlines.

(3 credits) 15 student capacity
estimated cost of materials $50
Pre-requisite Meditating on Mediations Required
Open to all majors, graduate and undergraduate elective.
The brain is a three-pound mass you can hold in your hand that can conceive of a universe a hundred billion light years across. “A hundred billion light years a universe a universe that can hold mass you can hold.”

—Marian Diamond (scientist & educator)
Course Description

If the mind is an analog to a computer hard drive and images are bytes of information, what might our memory disk look like if we continue to accelerate full speed into the digital era? Recent terms such as doom scrolling and digital detox have been invented, and are concepts used to describe how one might feel when using technology and wanting to disconnect entirely, even for just momentarily. This course aims to introduce mindful techniques on how to carefully absorb information and to consider how images impact the way we think, feel, and behave. At the start of each class, students will participate in a five-minute breathing and writing exercise to help ease into discussions with clearer thoughts. Each week students will print an image found on their social media account such as Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Tumblr, Youtube, Reddit, or other frequently used site, and be asked to carefully analyze what they are see, how it makes them feel, and why they think it is an image others imitate/emulate. Homework will be assigned weekly containing both reading and listening material from contemporary media theorists such as James Bridle, Neil Postman, Hito Stereyl, Douglas Rushkoff, Leonard Mlodinow, Rosa Menkman, John Berger, and others. Mid-term will be a choice between (a.) 25 minute presentation or (b) reflection paper (5-7 pages). The final project will be to turn in a 100-page field note journal detailing as many images as possible that were encountered throughout the entirety of the course with reflective responses to how students felt before and after learning about the psychology of images. (3 credits) 12 student capacity. Open to all majors, graduate and undergraduate.

• Coarse Goals
  To gain a deeper understanding of the power of images on a more subconscious level
  To learn how to be comfortable with silence and quieting the mind
  To grasp a more nuanced understanding of images
  To integrate a wider scope of ethical uses of images
  To illustrate the power of media in our everyday lives
  To develop habits of inquiry and skills of expression needed to be a critical thinker
  To promote self-esteem in one’s own thoughts and way of thinking
  To learn that it is OK to change one’s opinions based on new information

• Course Learning Outcomes
  A deeper understanding of how images influence viewers
  A basic ability to distinguish between what is real and what is constructed
  A conceptual growth to understanding how all images carry meaning
  A completed field journal with valuable thoughts on how one perceives the world

Required Materials
8.5x11 computer paper
4x6 index cards
100 page minimum journal
Printer (at home or school)
All reading material will emailed via pdf
All viewing videos can be accessed via online
Plan

**Week 1** emerging ideas/techniques (week 1-4)
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * What do you think media literacy is?
Introductions
Go over syllabus

Homework:
*Read*—“The Internet Wants to Keep you ‘doom-scrolling.’ Here’s How To Break Free.”

Next week:
***Print one internet image on 8.5x11 computer paper in b&w to analyze in class next week
***Bring a 4x6 note with one question
***Bring journal to next class

**Week 2**
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * What kind of images do you like and dislike? and why?
Discuss internet images
Discuss reading
Discuss 4x6 note questions

Homework:
*Read*—Chapter “Concurrency” from New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future By James Bridle (pages 215-239)
*Watch*—“What is Real?” by James Bridle on The Conference, 2018 (29:41)

Next week:
***Print one internet image on 8.5x11 computer paper in b&w to analyze in class next week
***Bring a 4x6 note with one question
***Bring journal to next class

**Week 3**
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * How do you define what is real and not real?
Discuss internet images
Discuss reading
Discuss 4x6 note questions

Homework:
Read—Chapter “The Medium is the Metaphor” from Amusing Ourselves to Death by Neil Postman (page 3-15)
Watch—How a handful of tech companies control billions of mind everyday by Tristan Harris TedTalk 2017 (17:00)

Next week:
***Print one internet image on 8.5x11 computer paper in b&w to analyze in class next week
***Bring a 4x6 note with one question
***Bring journal to next class

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**Week 4** developing ideas/techniques (week 4-9)
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * How can what you have learned so far be applied to your life?
Discuss internet images
Discuss reading
Discuss 4x6 note questions

Homework:
Read—“In Defense of the Poor Image” by Hito Steyerl (pages 1-9)
Watch—What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains by Nicholas Carr, Ideacity (18:04)

Next week:
***Print one internet image on 8.5x11 computer paper in b&w to analyze in class next week
***Bring 4x6 note with one question
***Bring journal to next class

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**Week 5**
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * Do you think it is important to take photos? Why or why not?
Discuss internet images
Discuss reading
Discuss 4x6 note questions
Go over any questions for mid-term

Homework: Prepare for midterm

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**Week 6** Midterm
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
Complete midterm feedback form
Give a powerpoint presentation (25 minutes) OR submit reflection paper (5-7 pages)

Homework: None
Week 7
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * What have you found most exciting to learn in class so far?
Discuss internet images
Discuss reading
Discuss 4x6 note questions

Homework:
Read—Introduction: They Say by Douglas Rushkoff (pages 1-23)
Watch—What Being ‘Team Human’ Means with Douglas Rushkoff by RSA (06:55)

Next week:
***Print one internet image on 8.5x11 computer paper in b&w to analyze in class next week
***Bring 4x6 note with one question
***Bring journal to next class

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Week 8
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * If you could ask Mark Zuckerberg anything what would it be?
Discuss internet images
Discuss reading
Discuss 4x6 note questions

Homework:
Read—Chapter “Glitch Studies Manifesto” by The Glitch Moment(um): Rosa Menkman

Next week:
***Print one internet image on 8.5x11 computer paper in b&w to analyze in class next week
***Bring 4x6 note with one question
***Bring journal to next class

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Week 9 advanced ideas/techniques (week 9-12)
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * What is your favorite type of media? please elaborate on why.
Discuss internet images
Discuss reading
Discuss 4x6 note questions

Homework:
Read—Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is the Message
Watch—John Berger Ways of Seeing, Episode 1 (30:04)

Next week:
***Print one internet image on 8.5x11 computer paper in b&w to analyze in class next week
***Bring 4x6 note with one question
***Bring journal to next class
Week 10
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * What are you finding most challenging to understand in class?
Discuss internet images
Discuss reading
Discuss 4x6 note questions

Homework:
Read—Chapter 1,2,3 of Team Human by Douglas Rushkoff

Next week:
***Print one internet image on 8.5x11 computer paper in b&w to analyze in class next week
***Bring 4x6 note with one question
***Bring journal to next class

Week 11
In-class:
5 minute breathing exercise **
5 minute writing prompt * Which do you like more, digital life or real life? Why?
Discuss internet images
Discuss reading
Discuss 4x6 note questions

Class ends early for: Individual meetings (bring journal)

Next week:
Finalize and prepare for final

Week 12 Final
5 minute breathing exercise **
Drop off 100+ page field note journal

Participation

Students are required to participate in all class activities including circle discussions. Students should engage the class with relevant questions, comments, or additional relevant information.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is an important and mandatory aspect of this class. Should you need to miss class, please inform the instructor in advance. Any unexcused absences will affect your grade. Each unexcused absence will drop your grade by one letter grade and two or more unexcused absences are grounds for removal from this course by the registrar.
Accommodations For Students With Disabilities

Any student who feels they may require accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately at the beginning of the semester to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Office of Student Development and Counseling Services directly to coordinate necessary accommodations.

Mental-Health Recommendations

Drink plenty of water
Get adequate amount of sleep
Spend time outdoors in nature
Limit exposure to screen blue light
Have face to face interactions with people
Look at the sky
If you are able, go for a run every now and then to clear your head
Take a technology free walk for a least 20 minutes each day
Make lists to declutter
One only gets to the centre of the problem by taking a detour. “

_The Inventions of History_,

—Stephen Ban,
Internet Analysis—Questioning What We See

Here are ten questions used to provide a shortcut to applying information process skills in a practical, replicable, consistent, and attainable way. (source: Center of Media Literacy, 2003)

Begin by answering these five W’s:
1. Who made this?
2. What is the story?
3. Where was this made?
4. When was this made?
5. Why was this made?

Next answer these five key questions:
1. Who created this message?
2. Why is this message being sent?
3. What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in—or omitted from—the message?
4. How might different people understand this message differently from me?
5. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Goals:
1. To become more self-directed and assume greater control over one’s learning
2. To raise media competencies through levels of understanding
3. To actively decode and deconstruct messages

Learning Outcomes:
1. A better understanding on how to question images
2. More confidence in trusting one’s own thoughts
3. A better ability to share newfound awareness and insight with peers

Grading Assessment

• Basic Competency:
  An ability to answer most questions
  Demonstrates some knowledge of media characteristics and components

• Advanced Competency:
  An ability to answer all questions and pose their own
  Demonstrates a high degree of knowledge of media characteristics and components
  Understands and applies media techniques and related process to other types of media
• Reiteration of Coarse Goals
  To gain a deeper understanding of the power of images on a more subconscious level
  To learn how to be comfortable with silence and quieting the mind
  To grasp a more nuanced understanding of images
  To integrate a wider scope of ethical uses of images
  To illustrate the power of media in our everyday lives
  To develop habits of inquiry and skills of expression needed to be a critical thinker
  To promote self-esteem in one’s own thoughts and way of thinking
  To learn that it is OK to change one’s opinions based on new information

Name:

Please provide feedback on the course and the instructor in general.

1. What have you found most helpful in learning in this course?

2. In which ways has this course been valuable to you?

3. What could the instructor do to improve the class?

4. Please comment on the course readings and other assigned materials. Were the selections valuable? And what other readings would you suggest?

5. Any other comments/suggestions?
Thoughts on . . .

readings

discussions

instructor
“When going back makes sense, you are going ahead.”

—Wendell Berry (poet, writer, activist, academic)
This journal is meant to help you understand how you think about the current world by taking daily close looking observational notes. The more time you spend with your journal, the better the assessment will be.

Main goal is to have a minimum of 100 pages filled by the end of class. How you fill each page is entirely up to you. However, the pages must consist of:
1. Notes of everyday encounters with images
2. Reflection on said image encounters
3. Weekly in-class writing prompts
4. Found internet images printed in b&w (cut and paste)

Other ideas on what to fill pages with may include:
1. Drawings relevant to your reflections/research
2. Attach clippings or pictures (a visual scrap book of your own interests and ideas)
3. Notes taken during class.
4. A place to vent (using appropriate language and keeping in mind and that I will review the journal)
5. Advertisements you have created
6. Write quotations or poems that interest you

Please do not lose your journal! Remember, your journal is considered 30% of your overall class assessment. Minimum effort with little or no evidence of original thought will result in an unsatisfactory grade.
Grading Rubric

Course Learning Outcomes
A deeper understanding of how images influence viewers
A basic ability to distinguish between what is real and what is constructed
A conceptual growth to understanding how all images carry meaning
A completed field journal with valuable thoughts on how one perceives the world

Grading Assessment
Final Project (Journal) 30%
Mid-Term 20%
Homework: 20%
In-Class Assignments 10%
Participation 10%
Individual Meeting 10%

*excelling* 90%+
exceeds work expectations and pushes oneself to make exemplary work. completes all assignments thoroughly and on time. actively participates during classroom discussions multiple times each class session. displays significant growth throughout the

*B

*meeting* 80%+
completed most assignments thoroughly and on time. student exceeds work expectations numerous time throughout the semester. participates in classroom discussions consistently. displays growth throughout the course of the semester. final project is well constructed, but lacks some finesse and cohesion.

*C

*emerging* 70%+
meets work expectation at a minimum. completes some assignments on time. occasionally participates during classroom discussions. displays some growth throughout the course of the semester. final project has some cohesion, but does not exceed student's known potential.

*D

*struggling* 60%+
does not exceed work expectations. does not come to class prepared. hardly ever participates in class discussions. does not display significant growth throughout the semester. final project has insufficient amount of pages filled and lack of cohesion.

*unacceptable* 50% or lower
met no expectations. missed more than three class sessions. displayed little to no participation.

F

Steffanie Padilla

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