

**Visual Anthropology**

ANT 3390 Sect. 8131

Fall 2006

Tuesdays 4:05 PM – 4:55 PM Room 2353 Turlington Hall

Thursdays 4:05 PM – 6 PM Room G514(L) Building: NRNA

**Instructor:** marilyn m. thomas-houston, Ph.D.**Office:** 372B Turlington Hall**Email:** [marilynm@ufl.edu](mailto:marilynm@ufl.edu) **Phone:** 352-392-2253 x 241**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 1 PM to 2:30 PM

Fridays 12:30 PM to 1:30 PM &amp; by appointment

**Introduction:**

Visual anthropologists are interested in the cultural meanings of visual expressions, *and* visually recording cultural practices within an ethnographic context. Visual anthropology, one of the fastest growing subfields of anthropology, is becoming an almost indispensable tool for anyone considering ethnographic research, media analysis, studies of material culture, or critical engagements with the arts and other forms of cultural display (such as museums). It is the field that is concerned with the documentation of culture, social institutions, and everyday human behavior through film. Since the subfield is a broad one, and could cover any manner of visual expression, this course is only an introduction that focuses on photography, video, and the World Wide Web. While students will become familiar with ethnographic and other documentary approaches in multi-media, and will carry out their own projects with digital media, the course will not offer in-depth training in the mechanics of photography or videography.

This is a course that looks at the field of anthropology as it presents itself through film and gives a basic introduction to the history of ethnographic film as a means of bringing out some of the changes in ethnographic film over the years. It raises questions about anthropological knowledge and ethics by looking at how anthropologists and documentary filmmakers have depicted other cultures in film. The course will show how the images presented are part of a broader society-wide set of ideas about other cultures and what they represent. To illustrate this, we will explore Western conceptions of other societies and see some films and documentaries.

Finally, as with any course, there is only so much that the instructor can do during lecture time. In our case, classroom interaction is further limited by the need to feature several films. To help you get the most out of this course, it might be useful to think of this course as running along four separate tracks, i.e.: (1) lectures and class discussions, (2) readings (assigned and independent), (3) film case studies in class, and, (4) projects. It is up to you to combine as much as possible from each of these tracks. The final exercise is designed to combine elements of each.

**Course Aims and Objectives:**

This course in visual anthropology explores several related topics surrounding the use of visual images. During the semester we will develop critical tools--questions, concepts, techniques--for creating, describing, interpreting, and analyzing images. Some of the specific questions we will explore include: What kinds of bias and stereotypes, stylistic conventions, commercial and political agendas shape what the camera records? Who controlled and created the historical images of people in other cultures that we see today? What are some of the problems involved in using photographs to reconstruct the histories of other peoples? To what degree do images taken by indigenous or "native" photographers differ from those taken by outsiders? What are some of the ethical implications of picture taking? What do photographs mean to us, including those we snap as tourists?

**Specific Learning Objectives:**

The main goal of this course is to give students a general idea of what it takes to research, plan,

shoot, edit, and present a short documentary, slide show with digital stills, photographic essay, or web site using digital illustrations. Additionally, while producing a short documentary as a group member, students will become familiar with SOME of the hardware and software used by today's film industry. Students will understand the role, purposes, and challenges associated with visual anthropology. They will become familiar with the basic history of the discipline and features of its technological development. While the class does contain weekly readings, the central component of the class will be the eleven visual projects. Rather than approaching visual anthropology with its usual divide between 'anthropological content' and 'aesthetic composition' this class will attempt to foster both, pushing an artistic eye toward newly unfolding anthropological concerns. Experimentation and creativity will be highly valued within this setting.

By the end of this course, students will: 1) use visual forms to communicate understandings about human behavior, 2) incorporate anthropological concerns into the visual forms of representation, 3) explain a variety of theoretical approaches to the use of visuals, 4) analyze and interpret the subtle, and not so subtle, messages embedded in images, and 5) the limitations and the benefits of using photography in anthropological research.

### **Format and Procedures:**

This will be a challenging and time consuming seminar class. Make sure you consider this when making your final class decisions for the semester. Be prepared to devote the time necessary to both projects and to class reading each week. With some of the assignments you will need to plan ahead in order to get the project adequately completed on time. To do well in the course you will need to have some background in photography and/or art, however you do not need to have a background in video production. We will work in teams, so you must be willing to develop team skills to do well.

Because this is a hands-on and discussion-oriented class, attendance is critical. The format of the class outlined above necessitates that everyone not only come to class, but also come having read the material and done the assignment for the day. Credit for participation cannot be made up. If you cannot attend class you must talk to me before the class begins. Because we only meet once a week, more than one absence without a written excuse will affect your grade.

All assignments are known well in advance; therefore, opportunities for make-up work or permission to hand in an assignment late are only granted for exceptional circumstances. If you feel that your situation is such, contact me before your assignment is due and provide me with a written medical excuse.

It is best if you have a good 35mm or a digital still camera and a video camcorder for this course. However, disposable digital still cameras may also be used. The department has several digital still and video camcorders for use during the semester, but demand for them will be high. The cameras and camcorders can only be checked out for one day or over the weekend. You must leave your "gator ID" card with personnel in the main anthropology office to check out the cameras or camcorders. The University does not carry insurance on any equipment, so if you do check out the equipment you will be responsible for any loss or damage. Your classroom and smaller labs in Norman Hall are available for use by members of the class. You are responsible for scheduling time for the production of your projects. You must have a current "Gator ID" card to use these facilities.

### **Course Requirements:**

**Participation (200 points):** One half of the grade for participation (100 points of your total 1,000 points for the class) will be based on your leading a particular class discussion. The other half (100 points) will reflect your participation in classes where you are not the leader. If you do not attend class, then you cannot participate. Therefore, attendance is required. Further, there is no way to make an A in the class if you do not participate in class each week.

*Leading class discussion:* Each week students will be assigned to lead class discussion. When it is your turn, you will be required to lead class discussion for about forty minutes that week. During this discussion, you should note your thoughts on the articles, articulate a reading of the assignment, and you

should craft a list of discussion questions. Make a copy of these discussion questions for each student in the seminar and the instructor.

On your assigned day of class, you will start by asking a series of probing and provocative questions about the assigned readings. You may set up these questions by making a few brief comments on your interpretation of the text or by citing particular passages of the text that were interesting to you. Then, you will begin to lead the class in a discussion of the answers to these questions. As we all work through your questions as well as others that come up in the context of the discussion, we will articulate our own reading(s) of the materials. Assignments are to be made by the end of week two.

**Projects (800 points):** Each assignment will be graded based on both its creativity and its content.

**Style (25 points):** Go to the art/architecture library or look online and find a photographer whose style is interesting to you. Pay special attention to how they frame their shots and what sort of equipment they use. Bring in 5 of their images that illustrate this style and present the photographer to the class. – DUE WEEK 2 (8/31).

**Autobiography (50 points):** Study your personal space and document the ways in which that physical environment visually symbolizes who you are. Photograph that environment and construct a photo essay exhibit or web page (with no more than 12 images) that represents that understanding. Pay special attention to how the images are sequenced to tell a story. – DUE WEEK 3 (9/7)

**Final project idea (25 points):** Research and type up one well thought-out idea for the final project. Highlight why the topic is important and why a visual medium would be useful. You will present your ideas in class and take notes of the other presentations. Email me within the week and list your top three choices for projects to work on this semester. If you do not complete this final step you will not get credit for completing the assignment. – DUE WEEK 4 (9/14)

**Representing “The Other” (50 points):** Find an individual whose social or cultural practices are different than your own. With permission capture a day-in-the-life of that person. The visuals should reveal activities as well as say something about the social/cultural life of the individual as well as capture personality. This project may be presented in either photos or video with no more than 10 images or 2 minutes video (if you have prior video editing experience). Be prepared to discuss the problems you ran into and future solutions in class. Framing is important to this exercise. Incorporate a variety of shots to add depth and understanding to your visuals. – DUE WEEK 5 (9/21)

**Anthropology in Cyberspace (50 points):** Critique an existing website designed to develop social or cultural consciousness. Include in your critique suggestions for improvement. You should be able to link to the site in class and then combine your critique with the links. Visual creativity is expected in your 8-10 minute presentation. – DUE WEEK 6 (9/28)

### **THE REST OF THE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE DONE IN GROUPS**

**Consent Form and Draft of IRB (50 points):** Construct a consent form suitable for use with your group project. Visit the following web site, view several IRB formats, and construct first draft of IRB form, which will be submitted to the research committee for approval. Follow the link <http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/index.html> to find links for copies of the UFIRB forms and sample Informed Consent documents. This assignment will also serve as your final project proposal. – DUE WEEK 7 (10/5)

**Interaction (50 points):** Anthropologists focus on social and cultural behavior. As part of your final project find an interaction that reveals cultural worldviews or ideologies within the area you are

investigating for your final project and capture an exchange that reflects these interactions. The project should be no longer than three minutes or fifteen images. – DUE WEEK 8 (10/12)

**Autobiographical/Indigenous Ethnography (50 points):** Ask one of the informants of your final project to take photographs that reveal something about your project's central issue or problem. Analyze the pictures and share the group's understanding and up to 15 of the photographs with the class. Also be prepared to share what you have learned from the exercise. – DUE WEEK 9 (10/19)

**Interviews (50 point):** Using the techniques discussed in class conduct three interviews that will be used in your final project, either as background research or as footage. Be ready to show clips of the video and discuss what worked and did not work with the interviews in class. – DUE WEEK 10 (10/26)

**Storyboard (100 points):** Create a series of diagrams to depict the composition of your final video or website project. Each diagram should consist of: a sketch of the video or webpage image; a brief description of the visuals; notes for the camera operator; the details of the desired audio that will accompany the visual; and an estimate of how long the segment will be. The storyboard cards should then be placed in order to provide a foundation for capturing the proper footage/photographs and for making the correct editing/web-design decisions.– DUE WEEK 11 (11/2)

**Final Project: How Facts Travel in the World (300 points):** The final project can be a video, or web based presentation. Choose a social issue about which visuals will be able to advance anthropological theory and/or critique a social phenomenon. Video projects should be designed to be 12-15 minutes long. If the final project is a web project, it should have between 10-20 interactive pages. Each project will also include an essay of 3-5 pages from each group member, which describes the anthropological concept, or issue that is the focus of the project, the working conditions of your group, the research methods incorporated, and a guide for viewing the project. These projects will be presented at the end of the semester, first to the class and then to an open audience. Groups will have a total of 20 minutes to set up and present their project. This time limit includes a 5-minute Q & A section. – DUE WEEK 15 & 16 (11/30 & 12/6)

### **Course Schedule, Screenings, and Reading List:**

*Screenings* are a mandatory part of the seminar. They are designed to benefit student projects by the discussions that follow. Therefore it is important that students do not miss the presentations as there is no way to provide for additional venues for screenings. *Readings* are rarely over 30 pages, but will often be challenging. You should plan to read each week's reading at least twice: once before you complete that week's assignment and once right before class. Your grade will suffer if you do not incorporate these materials into your projects (where appropriate) or if you cannot discuss this material articulately in class each week.

### **ALL DATES ARE TENTATIVE**

#### **Week 1 - Introduction to Course**

Thurs 8/24 - Pass out syllabus and introduce course. Introductions of students. View *Ethnic Notions* and discuss.

#### **Weeks 2 - Style**

Tues 8/29 - Assign discussion weeks.

**Readings for class:** Wright, Chris 1998 The Third Subject: Perspectives on Visual Anthropology. Anthropology Today 14(4): 16-22.

Thurs 8/31 –View *Trance and Dance in Bali* and discuss.

**Due: Style****Weeks 3 - Speaking Alongside**

Tues 9/5 - Present assignment. Discuss readings.

**Readings for class:** Ruby, Jay 1991 Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside- An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma. Visual Anthropology Review 7(2):50-67.

Thurs 9/7 - Discuss final projects possibilities.

**Due:** Autobiography

**Weeks 4 - Scientific Images**

Tues 9/12 - Present assignment. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:** Handout on Video Technique

Dumit, Joseph 1997 A Digital Image of the Category of the Person: PET scanning and Objective Self-Fashioning. In Cyborg and Citadels: Anthropological Interventions in Emerging Sciences and Technologies. Gary Lee Downey and Joseph Dumit, eds. Pp. 83-102. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press.

Thurs 9/14 - Introduction to video equipment and technique.

**Due:** Final project idea

**Weeks 5 - Display**

Tues 9/19 - Present assignment. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:** Hinsley, Curtis M 1991 The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893. In Exhibiting Cultures. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Thurs 9/21 - View *In and Out of Africa* and discuss.

**Due:** Email project ranking by Monday, Representing "The Other"

**Week 6 - Hypermedia**

Tues 9/26 - Present assignment. Discuss reading. View warlpiri.com.au and discuss. Talk about informed consent.

**Readings for class:** Pink, Sarah 2003 Representing the sensory home: ethnographic experience and anthropological hypermedia. Social analysis – Adelaide 47(3): 46-63.

Thurs 9/28 - Give group assignments, meet in groups to start brainstorming.

**Due:** Anthropology in Cyberspace

**Weeks 7 - Photography**

Tues 10/3 - Present assignment. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:** Handout on editing

Edwards, Elizabeth 1997 Beyond the Boundary: a consideration of the expressive in photography and anthropology. In Rethinking Visual Anthropology. M. Banks and H. Morphy, eds. London: Routledge. Pp. 53-80.

Thurs 10/5 - Introduction to editing equipment.

**Due:** Consent Form and Draft of IRB

**Week 8 - The Interview**

Tues 10/10 - Present assignment. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:** Handouts on Interviews

Barbash, Ilisa and Lucien Taylor 1997 Interviews. In Cross-Cultural Filmmaking. Berkeley: University of California Press Pp: 341-357.

Thurs 10/12 - View *Imaging in Authenticity* and discuss. Interview strategy.

**Due:** Interaction

### **Week 9 - Indigenous Media /Autobiography**

Tues 10/17 - Present assignment. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:** Michaels, Eric 1991 Aboriginal Content: Who's Got It—Who Needs It? Visual Anthropology 4:277-300.

**Thurs 10/19 - View *Chiapas Media Project* film and *How, We Are Present* and discuss. Group work to form interview questions.**

**Due:** Autobiographical/Indigenous Ethnography

### **Weeks 10 - Transnational Cinema**

Tues 10/24 - Present assignment. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:** Naficy, Hamid 1999 excerpt from *Home, Exile, and Homeland: Film, Media and the Politics of Place.*

Thurs 10/26 - View videos and discuss.

**Due:** Interviews

### **Week 11 - Storyboard Techniques**

Tues 10/31 - Discuss reading. Storyboard technique.

**Readings for class:** Burrows, Inga 2005 The Experience and the Object: Making a Documentary Video Installation. In Visualizing Anthropology.

Thurs 11/2 - View/map out *Night Cries* and discuss. Group work on storyboard.

**Due:** Story Board

For groups doing a video: Video Storyboarding

For groups doing a website: Web Storyboarding

### **Week 12 - Editing I**

Tues 11/7 - Present assignment. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:** Minh-ha, Trinh T. 1992 *Framer Framed* (excerpts). New York: Routledge.  
Gracki, Katherine. 2001 True Lies. Pacific Coast Philology 36:48-63

**Thurs 11/9 - View *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* and discuss.**

### **Week 13 - Editing II**

Tues 11/14 - Present progress on final project. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:** Dornfeld, Berry 1989 *Chronicle of a Summer and the editing of cinéma-vérité.* Visual Anthropology 2(3-4): 317-331.

**Thurs 11/16 View *Chronicle of a Summer* and discuss.**

### **Week 14 - Concluding Thoughts**

Tues 11/21 - Present clips. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:** MacDougall, David 1998 Whose Story Is It? In Transcultural Cinema Pp:150-164.

Thurs 11/23 – HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

**Weeks 15 – Concluding Thoughts Continued**

Tues 11/28 – Discussion

Thurs 11/30 - **Final Presentations.**

**Due:** Final Project

**Week 16 - Final Presentations**

Tues 12/5

**Due:** Final Project Presentations Continued. Turn in personal essay.

**Public Screening – *Date and Location to be set.***

**Grading:**

900 – 1000 = A    700 - 749 = C  
 850 – 899 = B+    650 - 699 = D+  
 800 – 849 = B    600 - 649 = D  
 750 – 799 = C+

**Academic Integrity**

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Florida's Student Honor Code and Code of Conduct. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students.

However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an email, an email attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities**

In compliance with the University of Florida's policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

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Please use this space for notes regarding the information stated below, any changes in the syllabus, and any additional information needed to assist you in meeting deadlines or doing your best in class.

GROUP # \_\_\_\_\_

PRESENTATION DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GROUP MEMBERS      CONTACT NUMBER      EMAIL ADDRESS