INTRODUCTION TO
VISUAL CULTURE

NYU Abu Dhabi  
ARTH-UH 1110X  
Campus Center C2 051  
Mon/Wed  9.15 AM–10.30 AM  
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Prof. Dale Hudson  
Fall 2015  
A6 121 | t. 02 6284153 | office hours  
Mon/Wed  1.00 PM–2.00 PM and by appointment

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION
What is visual culture and how is it important? This course provides a critical vocabulary for discussing both objects and practices of visual cultures, including painting, sculpture, metalwork, architecture, installations, exhibitions, advertisements, photography, film, performance, fashion, and websites. We will apply this vocabulary to pose questions about how different groups make different meanings from the similar objects and practices toward a better understanding of ways of seeing, visualizing, and interpreting modernities as they have moved across the globe with a particular focus on the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia regions that inflect the Gulf, as well as movements away from human-centered approaches to making and understanding visual culture.

This course satisfies the NYUAD Islamic Studies requirement and counts toward the NYUNY Expressive Culture (Morse Academic Plan).

This course includes an overnight seminar in Carthage and a daytrip to Sharjah.

ORIENTING QUESTIONS
In what ways can we understand the different visual cultures of the MENASA (Middle East, North Africa, South Asia) regions from the architecture and collections of new museums of Islamic and modern Arab art to street art and political graffiti in Tunisia and Indonesia, to the elaborate painting and ornamentation of Pakistani truck decoration? How to technologies of vision, such as one-point perspective or overhead imaging by aerial or orbital machinery produce particular meanings for the world? What were the historical exchanges between an “East” and a “West” that produced visual forms of knowledge? When are images sacred or sacrilegious? When are they gendered? Is it possible to decolonize vision—or architecture? How has visual culture been shaped by a focus on, and perspectives drawn from humans rather than other species such as animals? What kinds of perspectives might be gained from shifting our focus to seeing the world from another point of view?
COURSE OBJECTIVES
This course will facilitate student learning in developing skills in critical analysis, expository writing, visual-arts practices, and public speaking; in considering cross-cultural perspectives as a starting point for critical inquiry; and in probing basic questions about the production of knowledge to forward global understanding. There are no prerequisites.

The course has three primary objectives: (1) to develop a critical vocabulary for the analysis and interpretation of visual images; (2) to recognize cultural and historical contexts of the theories and practices of visual studies, including technical, economic, social, philosophical, and military influences; and (3) to use these analytical skills in written, oral, and visual responses to visual images and cultures.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. understand and apply a critical vocabulary for visual literacy;
2. describe, discuss, and analyze a variety of visual forms and media from different cultural and historical contexts;
3. describe, discuss, and apply selected theoretical approaches to visual cultures;
4. assess and summarize arguments in critical texts, applying an understanding of the social, political, aesthetic, and economic context to interpretation of artistic works;
5. apply analytic thinking, critical vocabulary, and creative observation to projects; and
6. articulate, support, and develop fresh arguments in oral, visual, and written forms.

GRADING
Individual preparation and participation
In-class discussion 5% voluntary and thoughtful every class
On-the-spot examination 5% short-answer questions on readings and films periodically

Individual writing assignments
Critical analysis no. 1 20% 3-page analysis of object/practice in context Thu 01 Oct
Critical analysis no. 2 20% 3-page analysis of object/practice in context Thu 22 Oct
Comparative analysis 30% 7-page comparative analysis two other objects Thu 19 Nov
Creative visual response 20% in-class presentation and 3-page artist’s statement Mon 14 Dec
BOOKS AND OTHER READINGS

Texts are available at the NYUAD Bookstore (t. 02 6590778) and are available on reserve at the NYUAD Library. Readings and online streamings designated with a ![eree] will be accessible via NYU Classes under “Electronic reserves: articles” for pdfs and Electronic reserves: videos” for MP4s.

ASSIGNMENTS
Written assignments should be submitted under “Assignments” on NYU Classes in Word doc or docx file, so that I can make comments in track changes. Late assignments will be reduced by a partial letter grade (+/-) for each class that they are late. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted unless special arrangements have been made in advance.

ABSENCE POLICY
If you will miss class due to religious observance or participation in a sporting event, art performance, or cultural trip, please notify me at least one week in advance. If you miss class for medical reasons, please provide a note from your doctor and notify me of extended absences.

Remember, missing a class does not excuse you from respecting assignment deadlines.

Unexcused absences are unacceptable except in extraordinary circumstances. After one unexcused absence, your grade for the course will be reduced by a partial letter grade (+/-) for each unexcused absence. After three unexcused absences, you will be asked to withdraw from the course. After five unexcused absences, you will receive an F for the course. Arriving more than 10 minutes late for class is considered half an unexcused absence.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM
Please be aware of NYUAD’s policies on academic honesty and plagiarism.
https://nyuad.nyu.edu/students/campus.life/policies/policy.academic.integrity.html

Plagiarism results in an F on the assignment. Repeated plagiarism results in an F for the course.

GENERAL TIPS ON CRITICAL WRITING AND RESEARCH PAPERS
Use the library research tools and databases—and ask a librarian for help; don’t rely on Google searches as primary modes of research.

The individual research projects are short papers, so focus on writing a longer exploratory draft, then revising into a more concise final draft. Short papers demand focused topics, so that you have space for nuance in your analysis and argumentation. Start broadly and narrow your focus. You are encouraged to write a longer exploratory draft (10 pages, for example), place it aside for a few days—then go back and edit it to 5 pages. Long papers do not necessarily have more ideas or better argumentation; they are often poorly structured, padded with meandering and tangential arguments, repetitive in detail, and incomplete in analysis.

You may want to do pre-writing exercises like brainstorming and outlining, or you may want to embrace your creativity by writing a sloppy exploratory draft that you will rework into a shorter final draft. Papers that are written on the computer within 24 hours of when they are due are seldom exceptional. They are typically disorganized. Be sure that your thesis is stated clearly in your first paragraph. As you proofread, ask yourself whether you’ve indicated why the information that you include in each paragraph is important to your main arguments and that you’ve made as much evident to your reader.
You are required to cite arguments, including exact page numbers. Try to cite only words, phrases, or ideas that are (relatively) unique to the book or article. Your citations should indicate that you have understood the thesis and main arguments of the book or article, as well as its scope and methodologies.

With the exception of the annotated bibliography, all written assignments should have double-line spacing on pages with 1-inch margins in standard fonts and point sizes (typically, 12 pt). For an A4 sheet, each page should include approximately 25 lines of text and 315 words. If your paper has substantially more or fewer lines or words, then check your formatting. Your annotated bibliography should have single-line spacing.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
If you have questions about anything related to the course, I am available after class, or you may contact me by email or telephone. Should you be unable to make office hours, schedule an appointment for another time. Please let me know if you have any questions or require special accommodations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

PREPARATION
Your preparation for class includes completing the assigned reading, taking notes, and participating in online discussion before coming to class. It is not important to memorize names and dates. Focus on a strategic reading for theses and main arguments, scope and methodology, and supporting evidence. Strategic reading skills will be useful when doing research. Try to recognize difference in critical, analytical and interpretative methodologies employed in different reading assignments to understand ways that scholars come to different (sometimes contradictory) interpretations.

It is often more effective to take notes in the margins of your reading, rather than simply underline words or sentences—or color the pages of your books and articles with highlighters. You may also want to make a personal index inside the back cover of the book or at the end of an article, so that you can refer quickly back to a particular point or argument. Searching through pages and pages of underlined or highlighted text is not typically the best use of your time.

Take notes as you read; take notes as you screen films, browse the internet, and play videogames; take notes during class.

IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION
Active participation is required. Discussion is an important means to develop analytical, interpretive, and creative skills. Test your insights without the pressures associated with written assignments; learn what your classmates think. There are no authoritative interpretations of any text, so let's exchange ideas and interpretations about them.

Discussion will help us think in terms of framing questions and organizing complexities rather than having answers and resolving contradictions.

ON-THE-SPOT EXAMINATION
From time to time, it may become necessary for a brief in-class writing exercise in the form of short-answer questions on the assigned reading.

WRITING, RESEARCH, AND CREATIVE-RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS
For your critical analysis assignments, you will develop topics in consultation with the Professor. You will need to select an object/practice whose interpretation is enhanced by arguments and concepts from
the assigned readings in class. For these assignments, you will not need to conduct outside research; instead, you will focus on (1) describing the object/practice, (2) analyzing its formal elements within its historical and cultural context, and (3) interpreting its meaning.

Your **comparative analysis** will require **additional research** that makes use of the library's collection of books and e-books, as well as its databases for locating recent scholarship. For this assignment, you will focus on constructing an argument by comparing **two objects/practices**. Rather than an interpretation of a single object/practice, as in the critical analysis assignments, you will make a larger argument about visual culture that requires the description, analysis, and interpretation of two objects/practices.

All written assignments should include a strong **thesis**, which is not be an obvious or trite argument, such as “different cultures produce different ideas about art”; rather, your thesis should be an argument that will require you to defend it in your paper. It should be provocative and evocative. Your thesis will invariably change as you further research your project and begin to articulate your ideas, but it is always a good idea to have a working thesis before you begin to draft your essay.

Your **thesis should be something that might not have been obvious to you before this class**. Make use of class discussions to enhance your analysis, but do not transcribe class discussion. Be sure to give proper bibliographic citations to avoid accidental plagiarism—a dishonest effort to pass the work of someone else as your own which will result in serious consequences.

The **purpose** of these papers is to demonstrate proficiency in critical vocabulary for textual analysis, using specific terms for precision and accuracy of expression, as well as an ability to use secondary materials to support further your thesis. Your goal is subtleties and complexities that emerge through comparative analysis and to persuade your reader of your interpretation.

Your critical analysis will be evaluated according to the following 14-point scale:

1. relevant title (1 pt)
2. description of art object/practice (4 pts)
3. historical-cultural context (1 pt)
4. succinct and useful citations from readings (1 pt)
5. strong thesis with interpretation supported by critical analysis (3 pts)
6. evidence reveals subtleties and complexities emerging from analysis (3 pts)
7. page limit (1 pt)

You encouraged to **schedule an appointment** to discuss your topic. The earlier that you schedule this appointment, the more time you will have to revise your paper. You are also welcome to discuss any other aspect of these research papers with the Global Academic Fellows in the Academic Resource Center (ARC) on the second floor of the Campus Center (C2).

See the sections on “Online Recourses and References” and “General Tips on Critical Writing and Research Papers” for more information.

You will conceive, develop, and execute a **creative visual response** to our regional seminar. Your response can take **any form** that is logistically possible (e.g., drawing, photography, video, mixed-media performance) and **any mode** (homage, satire, historical reinterpretation, critical appropriation, deconstruction, reconstruction, mashup, hack, mod, culture jam) that helps frame a research question through visual arts-practice. The goal is to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts and theories discussed throughout the semester, as they relate to the regional seminar. You may want to create a photomontage of images that reproduce, either intentionally or unintentionally, the visual culture of the city or region; or, you may want to produce a sculpture, painting, graphic novel, or video that reinterprets the visual culture that you’ve researched. Along with an in-class presentation of this project, you will submit a **short artist’s statement** in which you describe your concept in relation to assigned readings or other research. In short, you’ll explain what research question your arts practice frames for us as your audience.

For the **in-class presentation**, you are free to include a **short slide presentation** on your research and the artistic concept that guides your creative response. Practice your presentation aloud, so that you have a sense of timing and time limits. If possible, ask friends or roommates to listen to it, so that you can receive friendly feedback on your performance. In general, anticipate about two minutes per page. Pace your delivery. Pause after main points to allow your audience to understand your ideas. Vary your tone to emphasize key terms or ideas.
COURSE OUTLINE

01—INTRODUCTION
Mon 31 Aug  Introduction and introductions

Wed 02 Sep  Sturken and Cartwright, “Introduction,” / PoL 1–8
in-class screening: Mariano Fortuny y la lámpara maravillosa/Fortuny and the Magic Lantern
(Spain 2010; color; Spanish, Catalan, French, Italian, and English with English subtitles;
59 minutes; dir. Claudio Zulian)

02—IMAGES/OBJECTS AND MEANINGS
Mon 07 Sep  Sturken and Cartwright, “Images, Power, and Politics” / PoL 9–48
Amelia Jones, “The Body and/in Representation” | VCR 363–383

Wed 09 Sep  Sturken and Cartwright, “Viewers Make Meaning” / PoL 49–92
Christine Peltre, “Art History and the East,” in Orientalism, trans. John Tittensor
Jonathan Jones “A Qatari Sheikh, Picasso’s Censored Breasts and the West’s Confusion
over Islam,” The Guardian (25 June 2015): online !
in-class screening: Hollywood Harems
(Egypt 1999; color; 24 minutes; English; dir. Tania Kamal-Eldin)

03—ILLUSIONS OF MODERNITY AND REALISM
Mon 14 Sep  Sturken and Cartwright, “Modernity: Spectatorship, Power, and Knowledge” / PoL 93–140
Gil Z. Hochberg, “‘Nothing to Look At’; or, ‘For Whom Are You Shooting?:
The Imperative to Witness and the Menace of the Global Gaze,” in Visual Occupations:

Irsgard Emmelhainz and the Otolith Group, “A Triilogue on Nervus Rerum,”
October 129 (summer 2009): 129–132 !
online streaming: Nervus Rerum
(UK 2008; color; Arabic with English subtitles; 32 minutes; dir. The Otolith Group)

Wed 16 Sep  Sturken and Cartwright, “Realism and Perspective: From Renaissance Painting
to Digital Media” / PoL 141–182
Deepali Dewan, “The Painted Photograph in India,” in Embellished Reality:
Indian Painted Photographs (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 2012): 14–35 !
Olga Zotova, “Colour as a Form of Photographic Manipulation,” in Embellished Reality:
Indian Painted Photographs (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 2012): 36–43 !

04—EVERYDAY REPRODUCTIONS
Faye Ginsburg, “Rethinking the Digital Age” | VCR 605–618

Wed 23 Sep  No class: Eid al-Adha break
## 05—POPULAR CULTURES

**Mon 28 Sep**  
Sturken and Cartwright, “Media in Everyday Life” / PoL 223–264  
Brian Holmes, “Do It Yourself Geo-politics” | VCR 313–326  

**Wed 30 Sep**  
Leila Abdelrazaq, *Baddawi* (entire book)  
online streaming: *Mugaddimah Li-Nihayat Jidal/ Introduction to the End of an Argument*  
(Canada 1990; color; English; 45 minutes; dirs. Jayce Salloum and Elia Suleiman)

**Thu 01 Oct**  
⚠ Critical analysis no. 1, due by 11.55p

## 06—ENGERDERING IMAGES OF CONSUMERISM

**Mon 05 Oct**  
Sturken and Cartwright, “Advertising, Consumer Cultures, and Desire” / PoL 265–306  

**Wed 07 Oct**  
Sturken and Cartwright, “Postmodernism, Indie Media, and Popular Culture” / PoL 307–346  

## 07—GLOBAL IMAGE FLOWS OF NATURAL AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

**Mon 12 Oct**  
Sturken and Cartwright, “Scientific Looking, Looking at Science” / PoL 347–388  
in-class screening: *Les Amoureuses de la pieuvre/The Love Life of the Octopus*  
(France 1965; color; French; 13 minutes; dir. Jean Painlevé)  
in-class screening: *Null Sets*  
(USA 2012; Amy Szczepanski and Evan Meaney) [http://evanmeaney.com/ns/](http://evanmeaney.com/ns/) [BETA version]

**Wed 14 Oct**  
Andrew Ross, “Creativity and the Problem of Free Labor” | VCR 298–306  
online streaming: *Pirates*  
(France-Tunisia 1986; color; English, French, and Spanish with English subtitles; 112 minutes; dir. Roman Polanski)

## 08—POSTHUMANISM: NONHUMAN ANIMALS

**Mon 19 Oct**  
in-class screening: *Zoo Portraits*  
(Spain c.2013; Yago Patal) [http://www.zooportraits.com/](http://www.zooportraits.com/)  
in-class screening: loops from *Jellies: The Art of Nature*  
(USA 2005; color; 60 minutes; Ambient Visuals)

**Wed 21 Oct**  
Randy Malamud, “Zoo Animals” and “Weird Animals” | IAVC 115–148  
in-class screening: **Aerobia**l and **Utopias Video Guide**

in-class screening: **Farm Animal Drawing Generator**
(Austria 2006; Gebhard Sengmüller)

Thu 22 Oct ◂⌂ Critical analysis no. 2, due by 11.55p

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**09—EMBODYING ORIENTALISMS**


in-class screening: **K3 (Les Femmes)**
(Algeria-France 2003; color; 5 minutes; dir. Frédérique Devaux)


in-class screening: **Dansons/Let’s Dance**
(Algeria-France 2003; color; 5 minutes; dir. Zoulikha Bouabdellah)

in-class screening: **Run Lara Run**
(Palestine 2010; color; no dialogue; 2 minutes; dir. Larissa Sansour)

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**10—POST-9/11 ORIENTALISMS**


Lisa Parks, “Zer0ing In: Overhead Imagery, Infrastructure Ruins, and Datalands in Afghanistan and Iraq” | VCR 198–206


Faisal Devji, “Media and Martyrdom” | VCR 220–232


in-class screening: **Planet of the Arabs**
(USA 2005; color; English; 9 minutes; dir. Jacqueline Salloum)


Eyal Weizman, “Urban Warfare: Walking through Walls” | VCR 570–584


online streaming: **Homage by Assassination**
(Palestine-Tunisia-USA 1992; color; Arabic and English with English subtitles; 27 minutes; dir. Elia Suleiman)

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### 11—“ISLAMIC AESTHETICS" AND “ARAB SPRINGS"

**Mon 09 Nov**


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**Wed 11 Nov**


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### 12—REPRESENTATION AND ICONOCLASM

**Mon 16 Nov**


**recommended:** Laura U. Marks, “Islamic Aesthetics and New Media Art: Points of Contact,” *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art* (Cambridge: MIT, 2010): 37–70

in-class screening: *Arabesque*
(USA 1975; color animation; 7 minutes; John Whitney)

in-class screening: *Allahu Akbar*
(Iraq-USA 2003; black-and-white; 5 minutes; dir. Usama Aishaibi)

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**Wed 18 Nov**
Finbarr Barry Flood, “Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum” | VCR 521–551


Sumathi Ramaswamy, “Maps, Mother/Goddesses, and Martyrdom in Modern India” | VCR 428–454

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**Thu 19 Nov**
*Comparative analysis due by 11.55p*

recommended Essential Cinema screening

*Hasq al-wadi/Un été à La Goulette/A Summer in La Goulette*
(Tunisia-France-Belgium 1996; color; Arabic, French, and Italian with English subtitles; 86 minutes; dir. Férïd Bouhadir)
13—GRAFFITI AND TRUCK DECORATION

Mon 23 Nov  Doreen Lee, “‘Anybody Can Do It’: Aesthetic Empowerment, Urban Citizenship, and Naturalization of Graffiti and Street Art,” *City and Society* 25.3 (2013): 304–327

Imaan Sheikh, “The People of Karachi Are Painting Stunning Works of Art over Hateful Graffiti on Their City’s Walls,” *BuzzFeed* (02 June 2015): online


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**REGIONAL SEMINAR IN CARTHAGE** (tentative dates)

Thu 26 Nov  overnight flight to Carthage

Fri 27 Nov  day in Carthage

Sat 28 Nov  overnight flight to Abu Dhabi

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14—CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: INVENTING (AND BREAKING) TRADITIONS


explore: [DAAR: Decolonizing Architecture](http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/)

Wed 02 Dec  No class—UAE National Day

Mon 07 Dec  Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Museums in Late Democracies” | VCR 455–462


Okwui Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition” | VCR 552–569


explore: Gulf Labor, [Global Guggenheim](http://www.globalguggenheim.org/)

IVC ([2015])—10/12
Sat 12 Dec  ** proposed field trip to Sharjah
Barjeel Art Foundation, *Topographies of the Soul* exhibition (Marwan Kassab Bachi)
Sharjah Art Museum, permanent collection of Orientalist painting
Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, permanent collection

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15—REFLECTIONS AND SPECULATIONS
Mon 14 Dec  In-class presentations

presentation of creative visual responses, due in class