Visual Evidence in Modern China (ANS 385, 31230)

Fall 2009, TH 3:30-6:30 PM (PAR 214)
Instructor: Chien-hsin Tsai, (WCH 5.105),
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Office Hours: TBA

Description:
How do we see? Why do we see? Are visions always reliable? How does our visual experience add to, or on the contrary, challenge our perception of the world? These are only but a few questions that puzzle writers and thinkers since Plato: for Plato vision is illusion whereas for a Chinese writer like Lu Xun, vision has the power of turning a spectator into spectacle.

Through a broad reading of literary texts and critical writings on photography, pictorial press, advertisement, cinema, and fashion, this course explores the interactions of social context, technology, and culture in modern China. Students will be guided to think more extensively and contextually about the role material media plays in changing epistemological formations, and in defining the “modern” in Chinese literary and cultural fields. The class uses mainly fiction for the literary texts. In many cases, literary text itself becomes a pictograph with careful design and printing, a manifestation of modern, or modernist, sensibility. For critical writings, students will read and discuss theoretical and methodological treatises of ranging from photography to museum exhibitions.

Expectations and Requirements:
Students are required to attend all the seminars, complete the assigned reading, and present a short introduction to one or more of the readings in class, facilitating discussion by directing our attention to a particular segment of the reading for that day by raising a specific issue, question, or link to other texts. A fairly detailed prospectus (5 pages) or draft with preliminary bibliography will be due in class, week 15.

Since Visual Evidence is an interdisciplinary research seminar, students are encouraged to set to work as soon as possible on their individual projects, that first, will be presented for group discussion, and subsequently, will be elaborated into a full-length research paper (20-25 pages). Projects may be individual or collaborative—and, if the latter option is chosen, the length of the seminar paper or scope of the project (such as a website) should reflect the number of students working collaboratively.

We will be presenting our ideas to each other in workshop format at our final session, so students are expected to have preliminary materials on their projects ready for circulation to the other members of the class, either in the form of a prospectus or a preliminary draft of their paper.
Grading:
Weekly Reading Responses 15%—Due every Wednesday at 5 PM.
Class participation and oral report 20%
Final Presentation 20%
Prospectus 10%
Final Project 35%—Due December 15 at 5 PM

Week One: Introduction—August 27

The logistics

Week Two: What is Visual Culture?—September 3

Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Introduction: What is Visual Culture?”
W.J.T. Mitchell, “What is an Image?”
Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
Guan Zengjian, “Zhongguo gudai shijue lilun tansuo” (An exploration of visual theory in ancient China)

Week Three: Photography—September 10

Lu Xun. “Preface” in Call to Arms.
Eileen Chang. “Contrasts” 對照記.

Select Essays from Classic Essays on Photography.
Roland Barthes. Camera Lucida.

Week Four: Pictorials and the Mass—September 17

Wu Youru huabao 吳友如畫寶 NC 990.6 W8 A4 1983 On reserve at the Fine Art Library

Harold Kahn, “Drawing Conclusions: Illustration and the Pre-history of Mass Culture.”
Li Hsiao-t’i. Chapter 2 and 4 in Shanghai jindai chengshiwenhua de chuantong yu xiandai 1880-1930 上海近代城市文化的傳統與現代.
Leo Lee and Andrew Nathan. “The Beginnings of Mass Culture: Journalism and Fiction in the Late Ch’ing and Beyond.”
Richard Terdiman, “Newspaper Culture: Institutions of Discourse; Discourse of Institutions” from Discourse/Counter-Discourse.
Week Five: Women, Magazines, and Advertisements—September 24

Linglong 玲瓏 (http://www.columbia.edu/dlc/linglung)


Week Six: Cities—October 1

Dong, Qizhang 董啓章. Atlas 地圖集 selections.

Chen, Danyan 陳丹燕. Shanghai de fenghua xueyue 上海的風花雪夜 selections.

Walter Benjamin. “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century” from the Arcades Project.

Michel De Certeau. “Walking in the City” from The Practice of Everyday Life.


Week Seven: Exhibiting Cultures—October 8

Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex”


Week Eight: Fashion, Vision, and Everyday Life—October 15


Chu T’ien-wen. Fin-de-siecle Splendors 世紀末的華麗.


**Week Nine: Face—October 22**


Reality TV. *The Extreme Makeovers*.


Chapter 3.


**Week Ten: Revolutionary Aesthetics—October 29**

Mao Zedong, “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” excerpts.


Verity Wilson, “Dress and the Cultural Revolution” in Valerie Steele, ed., *China Chic*.

**Week Eleven: Trauma, Photojournalism, Ethics—November 5**


Week Twelve: Fiction Break/Workshop with the Writers—November 9


Liu, Ke-hsiang 劉克襄. Selected writings.

Week Thirteen: Prospectus Writing and Preparation for Final Presentation—November 16

No class meeting. Instead, we will have a slightly longer seminar in our last meeting.

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving Holidays—No Class

Week Fifteen: Final Presentation—December 3

Prospectus Due in the beginning of the class.

Our final session will be in the form of a mini-conference/workshop which. Students will give brief presentations (no to exceed 20 minutes; 15 minutes ideal) of their final projects, followed by discussion from others. As the time approaches, we can decide as a group whether the workshop should be publicized and/or open to an outside audience.

**Final Paper Due—5 PM, December 15**

**Official Policies**
• Academic integrity: You are expected to adhere to university requirements on academic honesty and integrity. Behaviors, such as plagiarism, copying of another student’s work, are serious offenses that will result in the grade of an “F” for the course and will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Services, where further disciplinary action may be taken. Please refer to the following website for information on how to avoid plagiarism in your work and/or discuss this with the instructor:
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

• University Electronic Notification Mail Policy: In this course, e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class announcements and assignments. As per the University Electronic Notification Policy (please see http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html), it is your responsibility to update your email address and to check your e-mail regularly.

• Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities: Students who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6529 voice or 471-4641 TTY). This letter should be presented to the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made at that time. For more information, please see: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/

• Use of Blackboard in Class: Most of our readings are available on blackboard. You should print out and bring your readings to class. Please allow yourself enough time before an assignment is due. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Blackboard is available at http://courses.utexas.edu. Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 during business hours on weekdays.

• Religious Holidays: If you will need to miss class, tests, or other assignments due to the observance of a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the work you have missed provided you notify me at least one week prior to the absence.