History and Forms of Visual Communication

Prof. Domenico Quaranta

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The main aim of the course is to introduce Master’s students studying “Management of digital content for cultural media, enterprises and heritage” to the concept of "visual culture" and to the languages, forms and communication strategies experimented with in the visual arts and communication field from the late twentieth century to today. In particular, it aims to explore the key historical and theoretical concepts of visual communication, the relationship between visual arts and advertising, and the recent developments in the field of visual culture, especially in terms of new communication platforms (e.g. social media, synthetic images, Artificial Intelligence).

At the end of the course, students will be able to navigate the basic notions of the subject and use them as an approach to their experience of contemporary visual culture, as well as the historical and theoretical foundations of their work within a visual communication environment, thus developing independent judgement and acquiring a theoretical basis for personal improvement and education, carry out a critical analysis of the stylistic and aesthetic options available in order to make informed and effective decisions, and actively participate in group work.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course develops as an introduction to visual culture, and then as a historical-critical path through the history of visual communication, with particular attention to the history of contemporary art. In view of the vastness of the topic, the course will focus on a number of specific case studies, highlighting particularly the most recent developments.

Specifically, starting from the theoretical premises proposed by John Berger in his introduction to "seeing" and by Nicholas Mirzoeff in his investigation of "visual culture", the course will focus on the current ways of creating and circulating images, combining a reflection on the widespread and generalised use of visual codes with an exploration of the ways in which these same codes are used, explored and challenged in the visual arts. At the same time, the course will seek to trace the historical roots of the Neo-Avantgarde practices of the Sixties, the Situationist *détournement*, the subvertising and culture jamming practices of underground communication of the Eighties and Nineties, critical Postmodernism, and the theories of Nicolas Bourriaud on postproduction.

***READING LIST***

John Berger, *Questione di sguardi,* Il Saggiatore, Milano 2009 [Buy from V&P](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/john-berger/questione-di-sguardi-sette-inviti-al-vedere-fra-storia-dellarte-e-quotidianita-9788842831006-704700.html)

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Come vedere il mondo,* Johan & Levi, Milano 2017 [Buy from V&P](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/nicholas-mirzoeff/come-vedere-il-mondo-unintroduzione-alle-immagini-dallautoritratto-al-selfie-dalle-mappe-ai-film-e-altro-ancora-9788860101839-252913.html)

Michele Cometa, Cultura visuale, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2020

Further information on the reading list, articles or extracts will be made available to students during the course.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The examination is in two distinct parts: a written paper and an oral discussion.

At the end of the course students will be required to submit a brief written paper (6000 – 8,000 characters) on a topic arranged with the lecturer. The paper, which must be submitted 15 days before the examination date, will be assessed on accuracy of content, form and how far it satisfies the intended aims.

The oral test consists of a discussion on reading list and course topics.

The two parts will be assessed separately. There will be single final mark, 40% for the written test and 60% for the oral.

In order to prepare for the final exam, non-attending students will have to follow the instructions mentioned above (see the ‘Reading list’ section). This means that they will also have to write an assignment (based on a topic that must be previously approved by the lecturer) and read one of the following textbooks:

-Domenico Quaranta; *Surfing con Satoshi, Arte, blockchain e NFT*, Postmedia Books, Milano 2021.

-David Joselit, *Dopo l’arte*, Postmedia Books, Milano 2015

- Joan Fontcuberta, *La furia delle immagini. Note sulla postfotografia*, Einaudi, Turin 2018 [Buy from V&P](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/joan-fontcuberta/la-furia-delle-immagini-note-sulla-postfotografia-9788806237004-529932.html)

- Lorenzo Giusti, Nicola Ricciardi (edited by), *Museums at the Post-Digital Turn*, Mousse Publishing, Milan 2019

- Simone Arcagni, *L’occhio della macchina*, Einaudi, Turin 2018 [Buy from V&P](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/simone-arcagni/locchio-della-macchina-9788806235031-552308.html?search_string=L’occhio%20della%20macchina%20arcvagni&search_results=1)

- Andrea Pinotti, Antonio Somaini (edited by), *Teorie dell’immagine. Il dibattito contemporaneo*, Raffaello Cortina Editore, Milan 2009 [Buy from V&P](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/teorie-dellimmagine-9788860302144-175436.html)

- Barbara Grespi, Luca Malavasi, *Dalla parte delle immagini. Temi di cultura visuale*, MacGraw Hill 2022

- W.J.T. Mitchell, *Scienza delle immagini. Iconologia,* *cultura visuale ed estetica dei media*, Johan & Levi, Milano 2018.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no prerequisites for attending the course. However, students should have a good knowledge of contemporary art. In case of need, they are invited to consult a textbook on this subject (from the avant-garde movements to the 21st century).

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.