



MDST 1030 WDE Introduction to Visual Media Winter 2023 January 9 - April 11

Instructor: TBD

E-mail: TBA

Class Hours: MW 8:30AM - 10:00AM through Zoom

Office Hours: TBA

Calendar Course Description

An introduction to the critical analysis of visual media. Topics include: ideologies and issues of power in visual representation with an emphasis on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, disability and age, from a social justice perspective. Students will analyze new media, photography, advertising, film, video and TV news, as well as intermedia, multi-media and re-mediated visual texts, to investigate visual media in relation to society, culture and the arts.

Detailed Course Description

Many of us think of visual media as the images we see on our phones, tablets, computers, and televisions. We may even consider aesthetic design elements and fashion trends as we view them. But visual media involve much more than images, elements, and trends; they interact with us as forms of social communication. Photographs, document designs, packaging, space designs, film clips, and data presentations -- all these visual materials convey social and cultural messages as “semiotic” materials which can be used intentionally to communicate meaning. This course analyzes various semiotic materials and considers the opportunities and challenges that visual media afford us. What are the messages we are giving and receiving and how are we responding? What kind of values and power relations are implicit in these messages? How can we research these materials to determine the way they work with respect to race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and age? And how can we imagine the revisioning of visual media in pursuit of social justice?

Learning Outcomes1

By the end of this course, you will have demonstrated that you understand and know how to critically analyze different forms of visual communication as follows:

- 1) define key elements of visual communication
- 2) identify and use different approaches to visual communication
- 3) analyze photographs using the language of photography
- 4) analyze and explain differences among three key types of photographs
- 5) compare and analyze documents including offline and digital documents
- 6) use the language of document design including fonts, layout, use of images, etc.
- 7) describe and analyze packaging including semiotic materials of packaging, and packaging as a signifier of norms with respect to race, class, gender, and sexuality

- 8) describe and analyze indoor spaces, including classrooms, offices, kitchens, and outdoor spaces such as urban landscape design and graffiti artist interventions
- 9) describe and analyze film, TV, advertising, and PSA plots and clips including the language of film angles, lighting, and sound break a film or TV plot down into scenes using a plot segmentation method
- 10) articulate and analyze the way data is presented in infographics, charts, graphs, etc.
- 11) make an infographic using a platform or software app (such as easelly)

Course Resources

Required Course Text:

Ledin, P. & Machin, D. (2018). *Doing visual analysis: From theory to practice*. London: Sage.

Course Website:

mycourselink.lakehead.ca² is where you will find this course outline, assignment details, and powerpoints. Here you will submit all assignments and tests and receive feedback and grades.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, & Assignments

| Week | Topics & Readings | Assignments & Notes |
|----------|--|---------------------|
| M Week 1 | Introduction | Zoom |
| W Week 1 | Chapter 1. What is Visual Communication? | Zoom |
| M Week 2 | [continued] | Zoom |
| W Week 2 | Chapter 2. Approaches to Visual Communication | Zoom |
| M Week 3 | [continued]. Bring Laptop to class if in person. | Zoom |
| W Week 3 | Chapter 3. The Photograph | |
| M Week 4 | [continued] | |
| W Week 4 | Midterm | Midterm (20%) |
| M Week 5 | Research workshop | |
| W Week 5 | Chapter 4. Document Design | |
| M Week 6 | [continued] | |
| W Week 6 | Chapter 5. Packaging | Project 1 due (20%) |
| Week 7 | <i>Study Break (no classes)</i> | |

| | | |
|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| M Week 8 | Chapter 5. Packaging [continued] | |
| W Week 8 | Packaging analysis workshop | |
| M Week 9 | Chapter 6. Space Design | |
| W Week 9 | [continued]. | Last day to drop: Mar 10 |
| M Week 10 | Graffiti & Urban Space analysis | |
| W Week 10 | Chapter 7. Film Clips | |
| M Week 11 | [continued] | |
| W Week 11 | Film Plot Segmentation workshop | Final Project due (30%) |
| M Week 12 | [continued] | |
| W Week 12 | Chapter 8. Data Presentation | |
| M Week 13 | [continued] | |
| W Week 13 | Wrap-up & Exam Review | |

Assignments and Evaluation

| Assignment | Description | Value | Due Date |
|------------------------------|---|-------|--------------|
| Midterm Test | Covers Chapters 1, 2, & 3 | 20% | TBA |
| Project 1 | Analysis of a document or photograph | 20% | TBA |
| Final Project | Analysis of a package or space with infographic | 30% | TBA |
| Final Exam | Covers Chapters 1-8 | 20% | TBA |
| Participation and group work | In-class workshops and engagement | 10% | all the time |

Assignment Policies

- ✧ All assignments (except in-class group work) are individual assignments and cannot be completed collaboratively.
- ✧ Assignments are due via the Assignments tab of mycourselink, by midnight on the dates indicated.
- ✧ If you require an extension, you must ask for one BEFORE the due date. Be willing to talk with your instructor if you are struggling. The last day to withdraw without academic record or penalty is March 10.

1 Many thanks to Sandra Jeppesen, who has allowed me to use and adapt her teaching materials for this course.

2 <https://idp.lakeheadu.ca/idp/profile/SAML2/Redirect/SSO?execution=e1s1>

3 https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_style_introduction.html

4 https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html

- ✧ Unless you ask for (and receive) an extension, late essays will be penalized by 2% per day (to a maximum of 20%).
- ✧ All essay assignments must be in MLA or APA format, double spaced, with 1" margins, and in 12 point font. Please see the [OWL Purdue Website](#) for helpful [MLA](#)³ and [APA guidance](#).⁴
- ✧ Make sure that you *give credit to ALL sources* you use for an assignment (including presentations), even if you paraphrase them. All *direct* material quoted from a text, even a single sentence or phrase, **MUST** be placed in quotation marks, followed by the source reference (author and page for MLA, author and date for APA) in parentheses. Paraphrases should be followed with parenthetical references.
- ✧ Failure to properly document sources constitutes plagiarism and will be penalized as per University policies below.
- ✧ The final exam must be written on the date scheduled by the Registrar's office, so do not make any commitments (i.e., vacation, job related, or other travel plans) until the exam is scheduled.
- ✧ Exceptions to these policies are allowed only with a doctor's note or other appropriate documentation.

Details of Assignments

Midterm Test:

Worth 20%, to be written on TBD (between 12:01 a.m. and 11:59 p.m.) via the Quizzes section of mycourselink. The 50 minute test will be based on textbook chapters 1-3 as well as lecture notes up to TBD January 31. It will involve 30-40 multiple-choice and short-answer questions and will be marked for accuracy and specificity.

Project 1: Analysis Essay:

Worth 20%, to be submitted via the Assignments section of mycourselink. The essay will analyze either a photograph (Option 1A) or a document (Option 1B), following the instructions below. Length: 5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Arial font. Due TBD at midnight. Early submissions are welcome. Marks will be divided as follows: thesis and argument (40 points), systematic analysis focused on required elements (40 points), use of secondary scholarly research source (10 points), and mechanics, including accurate citation of sources, grammar, and spelling, etc. (10 points).

OPTION 1A. Analysis of a Photograph:

Choose **ONE** photograph to analyze that can be characterized as (a) photojournalism or (b) an artistic photograph (from an established photographer or source of photography). You should include this photograph in an appendix of your essay and be sure to list it in your References or Works Cited. Write an essay, with a thesis regarding connotation and meaning-making in photographs, which is supported by an argument and specifically references detailed elements of the photograph. Your essay should be structured as follows:

1) Introduction

- a. introduce the photograph – explain when, where, context, and by whom it was taken
- b. denotation – describe all elements of the photograph in detail
- c. state your thesis and subtopics – the thesis should consider underlying social meanings, ideologies, values, attitudes & beliefs; underline the thesis

2) Body of essay

- a. use the four carriers of connotation (objects, setting, colour, and people including camera angles) to explain the connotative meanings or signification of the photograph and how they are used to convey ideological values; use this explanation to develop an analysis that supports your thesis
- b. use concepts and key terms of visual representation from the chapter on photographs, and also from the first two book chapters; these should be explained and cited
- c. use at least one concept from a secondary scholarly source in your argument

3) Conclusion

- a. explain or restate your thesis, this time using the concepts you have introduced
- b. draw some conclusions regarding the relevance of your argument e.g. importance of understanding photographic images, or importance of photographs in society today, etc.

OPTION 1B. Analysis of a Document:

Choose **ONE** document to analyze (a movie poster, screen interface, or magazine page). You should include an image of this document in an appendix of your essay, and be sure to list it in your References or Works Cited. Write an essay, with a thesis regarding document design and social practices, which is supported by an argument and specifically references detailed elements of the document. Your essay should be structured as follows:

1) Introduction

- a. introduce the document – explain when, where, context, and by whom it was created
- b. semiotic materials – describe all of the elements of the document (photos, words, font, etc.) in detail
- c. state thesis and subtopics – the thesis should consider underlying social meanings, ideologies, values, attitudes & beliefs; underline the thesis

2) Body of essay

- a. use the four elements of document design (typography, spacing, colour, and borders) to explain the social meanings embedded in the document and how they are conveyed; use this explanation to develop an analysis that supports your thesis
- b. use concepts and key terms of visual representation from the chapter on document design, and also from the first two chapters; these should be explained and cited
- c. use at least one concept from a secondary scholarly source in your argument

3) Conclusion

- a. explain or restate your thesis, this time using the concepts you have introduced
- b. draw some conclusions regarding the relevance of your argument e.g., importance of understanding document design, or the importance of visual digital or print communication in society today, etc.

Project 2: Analysis Report:

Worth 30%, to be submitted via the Assignments section of mycourselink. The report will analyse either the packaging of a product (Option 2A) or the design of a space

(Option 2B), following the instructions below. Length: 4 written pages, double-spaced, 12-point Arial font, plus 10 curated photos plus 1 infographic. Due TBA. Early submissions are welcome. Marks will be divided as follows: selection and curation of photographs (30 points), critical analysis and discussion using textbook and lecture concepts (40 points), and visually appealing and informative infographic (30 points).

OPTION 2A. Analysis of Packaging: Choose **ONE** product to analyse. It could be a food item, personal care product, toy, computer accessory, etc.

1. Document its placement in store(s) by taking photographs, and in marketing, advertising & promo materials online. Curate the photos and online images with brief explanatory captions.
2. Critically analyze the 2D and 3D semiotic elements of the packaging and its placement in supermarket(s) displays & advertising or promo materials. Then add
 - a. a brief description of the consumer, as constructed by the packaging and its placement in the store and/or in the advertising materials, and
 - b. a brief explanation as to how the images construct, reinforce and/or challenge particular social meanings (gender norms, social stereotypes, etc.) or ideological meanings (e.g., capitalism, freedom, democracy, multiculturalism, equality, etc.).
3. Make an infographic to convey your findings.

OPTION 2B. Analysis of Space Design: Choose **ONE** space to analyse. It could be an office, gym, bank, hotel, alley, movie theatre, bar, cafe, stadium, shopping street, etc.

1. Document the space with a series of photos of the different sections within it. Curate the photos and online images with brief explanatory captions.
2. Critically analyze the semiotic visual elements of the space. Then add
 - a. a brief description of the kinds of interactional affordances that each section of the space facilitates or restrains (You can ask people who work in and/or who are using the space, but remember to cite them), and
 - b. a brief explanation as to how these affordances create or limit specific social meanings & relationships.
3. Make an infographic to convey your findings.

Final Exam:

Worth 20%, to be written via the Quizzes section of mycourselink, as scheduled by the Registrar's office. The three-hour exam will be based on textbook chapters 1-8 as well as lecture notes throughout the course. It will involve a variety of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, as well as a longer essay question (3 pages). More details will be discussed in March and posted to mycourselink.

Answers will be marked for accuracy and specificity.

Participation and Group Work:

Worth 10%. Whether online or in-person, your full involvement is requested, including active listening, questioning, and engaged discussion. Naturally, simply talking or writing a lot or dominating the discussion does not necessarily constitute quality participation. Discussion needs to be on topic, thoughtful, and responsive to others in the class. Moreover, stimulating questions can be as valuable as knowledgeable answers.

For each class, participation marks will be awarded as follows:

Absence = 0/5

Being Present and joining in polls, chats, and group work = 3.5/5

Being Present, joining in polls and chats, and speaking = 4/5

Being Present, joining in polls and chats, and speaking particularly well = 5/5

After the lowest 2 marks are dropped, marks for each class will be averaged to yield a mark out of 5. If you miss one or more classes due to an issue out of your own control, please send the instructor an email as soon as possible to find out about alternative ways to earn discussion marks. Participation marks will be posted after reading week and after the end of the course.

Group work will be marked for accuracy, specificity, relevance, and insight. Absence = 0. Each member of the group will receive the same mark, as follows:

Okay = 3/5

Very good – 4-4.5/5

Good = 3.5/5

Excellent = 5/5

The average of your group work marks will be posted after reading week and after the end of the course. I will drop your lowest group mark before and after reading week.

Marking Standards

| | | |
|----|---------|--|
| A+ | 90-100% | Outstanding understanding of course concepts including integration of materials & ideas, excellent application of knowledge, critical thinking |
| A | 80-89% | |
| B | 70-79% | Above average to excellent knowledge, very good application of knowledge, critical thinking |
| C | 60-69% | Satisfactory knowledge, good ability to recognize and apply major course concepts, adequate to progress to next level of courses, some skill missing |
| D | 50-59% | Basic grasp of course concepts; likely to encounter difficulty in next level ⁵ |
| E | 40-49% | Failed to meet minimum requirements of course |
| F | 1-39% | Failure |
| F | 0 | Failure resulting from academic dishonesty |

University Policies

Land Acknowledgment:

Lakehead University respectfully acknowledges its campuses are located on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples.

Lakehead Thunder Bay is located on the traditional lands of the Fort William First Nation, Signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. Lakehead Orillia is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg. The Anishinaabeg include the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatomi nations, collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy. Lakehead University acknowledges the history that many nations hold in the areas around our campuses, and is committed to a relationship with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples based on the principles of mutual trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaboration in the spirit of reconciliation.

Accommodations:

Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#). This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the course. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#)⁶ and register as early as possible.

Academic Integrity:

Students in this course are expected to conform to the [Student Code of Conduct - Academic Integrity](#).⁷ A breach of Academic Integrity is a serious offence. The principle of Academic Integrity, particularly of doing one's own work, documenting properly (including use of quotation marks, appropriate paraphrasing and referencing/citation), collaborating appropriately, and avoiding misrepresentation, is a core principle in university study. Students are strongly advised to familiarize themselves with the Student Code of Conduct - Academic Integrity ("[The Code](#)") - and, in particular, [sections 26 and 83 through 85](#). Non-compliance with the Code will NOT be tolerated in this course and the Code will be adhered to in terms of disciplinary action. The Code provides a full description of academic offences, procedures when Academic Integrity breaches are suspected and sanctions for breaches of Academic Integrity.

Academic Integrity Guidelines⁸

Below are definitions and tips for avoiding three common violations of academic integrity and honesty:

1. Plagiarism occurs when you do not give credit (in-text referencing, footnoting, endnoting, quotations or indentations) to the ideas, phrases, tables or illustrations of another person. **If you did not come up with the concept or idea or image yourself, it must be referenced.**

Quick tips to avoid plagiarism:

- ✧ Keep track of references throughout your work from the beginning. Don't wait until your assignment is near completion to go through and add in-text citations or foot or

endnotes.

- ✧ Talk to a librarian about quick and easy ways to track references such as Zotero or Refworks.

2. Inappropriate collaboration occurs when you **work with classmates on an assignment, test or exam** that you were told is to be completed alone.

Quick tips to avoid inappropriate collaboration:

- ✧ If you aren't sure whether collaboration is allowed, ask the professor.
- ✧ Never share answers or essay material with classmates because allowing your material to be copied is also a violation.
- ✧ Complete Lake University's [Academic Integrity Module](#) for more tips.⁹

3. Cheating means accessing information for or during an examination or test that you were not allowed to access. For example, accessing test or exam banks directed for instructors only and/or purchasing or selling tests or exams from/to other students. Other cheating examples include writing answers on an object or your person to bring into a closed-book exam or test, accessing papers or electronic information during an exam or test, copying answers from another student's exam or test, and more.

Quick tips to avoid cheating:

- ✧ Confirm with the instructor what materials or information are allowed at the exam/test.
- ✧ Contact the [Student Success Center](#)¹⁰ about tutoring and Peer Assisted Learning to ensure you will be able achieve to the best of your own expectations on tests and exams.
- ✧ Contact the [Wellness Centre](#)¹¹ if you are feeling overwhelmed, for strategies on focusing and maintaining wellness during stressful times, such as due dates, midterms, and exams.

This course outline is available online through the mycourselink@lakeheadu.ca site for the course.

⁵ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>

⁶ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-services/accessibility>

⁷ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-conduct/academic-integrity/node/51239>

⁸ Adapted from <https://teachingcommons.lakeheadu.ca/academic-integrity-first-resources>

⁹ <https://mycourselink.lakeheadu.ca/d21/lms/legacy/selfregistration.d21?ou=6606>

¹⁰ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/academic-success/student-success-centre>

¹¹ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/wellness-recreation/student-health-and-wellness>