

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
GREENLEE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION
JIMC 342—Visual Principles for Mass Communicators

Spring Term 2010
MWF – 2432 Food Science Hall
Meeting Time: 11:00am – 11:50 am
Website: <http://www.jgroshek.com/342>

Instructor: Dr. Jacob Groshek
Office: 116 Hamilton Hall
Office Hours: 1:30 – 3:30 pm MW
E-mail: jgroshek@gmail.com

Texts:

This class is not very heavy on reading but there will be a number of assigned articles, chapters, and handouts designed to give you a theoretical basis to better evaluate visual messages and guide you in creating your own visual communication products. There is one required textbook that I suggest you purchase for this course.

Lester, P.M. (2006). *Visual Communication: Images with Messages (4th edition)*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

You should also expose yourself to visual communication in all media and genres to become a better, more critical and thoughtful consumer of visual messages. Yes, that's right, I am *encouraging*—**actually requiring**—that you to read the magazines of your choice, watch all kinds of television, go to the movies, and browse the web for good and bad examples of visual communication. These activities will actually form the basis of key parts of your assignments.

Course focus and design:

This course will introduce you to the principles of visual communication. We will adopt verbal literacy as a metaphor for visual literacy: You will learn a language to read other people's visual messages and to incorporate theoretical aspects of the psychology of human vision when creating your own visual stories.

The course is structured around a rather large lecture session that meets MWF throughout the semester. Students are expected to attend and participate in class discussions to deepen their understanding of text materials and learn practical applications.

Course Objectives:

1. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and visual information and thus begin to see more acutely.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the synergy between images and text in the communication of ideas.

3. That you develop visual literacy and critical thinking about the theory, ethics, history, and power of visual communication.
4. That you be stimulated to continue studying and practicing visual communication during your tenure at ISU and throughout your life.

Attendance and participation:

Attendance will be taken (at least initially), but primarily as a tool to help put faces to names. I will do my best to learn everyone's name but please be patient because this is a large class. The more you speak up and participate in class, the better the class will be and the better your grade will be. Previous experience teaching this class suggests that attendance is essential to your success in this course partly because participation constitutes approximately 7 percent of your final grade.

There will be no penalty assessed, per se, for failure to attend class. However, those who are not present are unable to participate in class discussions and demonstrations, and penalty will be assessed accordingly. Please keep in mind that if you do miss class, it is up to you to become familiar with the concepts or practices taught that day.

Furthermore, failure to provide homework assignment(s) on time will result in receiving NO CREDIT for the assignment(s). No exceptions will be made and make-up homework will not be accepted. To repeat—LATE WORK OR MISSED ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

I encourage discussion and interaction in this class during the session. To be clear, though, chatting on cell phones, holding personal conversations during lectures or any other disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. If I find your behavior disruptive to me or to your classmates I will discuss this with you. If this type of disruptive behavior continues I will ask you to leave the classroom.

If you feel you can not pay attention for 50 minutes and must do things like text your friends, update your facebook status, or read the newspaper during class, I kindly ask that you do these activities discreetly and in a way that does not distract me or your classmates from our course material. If you can not, I will ask that you turn off your mobile devices and/or leave the classroom.

History teaching this class has shown chronic texting during class has a detrimental effect on grades, but I have set up a twitter topic for this class if you wish to utilize that [#jlmc342](#).

Course Policies:

Grading: The grading scale is found below. Grades are not curved and are based on a student's performance on the following:

<u>Course requirements</u>	<u>Possible points</u>	
Four exams	160	(53.3% of final grade)
Six assignments	60	(20.0% of final grade)
Four quizzes	60	(20.0% of final grade)
Participation	20	(6.7% of final grade)
<u>Total</u>	<u>300</u>	<u>(100% of final grade)</u>

Grading scale

93-100	A
90-92	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
78-79	C+
73-77	C
70-72	C-
68-69	D+
63-67	D
60-62	D-
00-59	F

Make-Up Exams: The exam must be taken on the scheduled day at the scheduled time unless negotiated with the instructor prior to the day of the exam. Exceptions will be made only in the case of family hardship or verifiable medical problems, and then only at the professor's discretion.

Academic Dishonesty:

In accordance with the high standards of excellence set forth by, and for, all members of the Iowa State University community, the Greenlee School finds it imperative that each student understand that the responsibilities associated with high standards of excellence include ensuring that all class work undertaken in this School is performed in an environment that promotes serious scholarship and moral rectitude.

Therefore, the School herein delineates a zero-tolerance policy for acts of academic dishonesty. All acts of suspected academic dishonesty will be thoroughly investigated in a manner that is fair, timely, and efficient and done so in a manner that protects the rights of both the faculty

member and the student. Any individual that is found to have committed an act of academic dishonesty may receive a penalty, up to and including expulsion from Iowa State University.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Our class is broken down into four major units:

- 1) Visual grammar and the psychology of human vision
- 2) Sensual and perceptual theories of visual communication
- 3) Stereotyping, propaganda, and the ethics of visual messages
- 4) Movements across visual media platforms

Tests:

We will have a test approximately every four-six weeks but because this class is fluid and somewhat different every time, I will not provide specific dates for each reading and each exam on the syllabus. That said, I do try my best to position exams for Fridays or Mondays and I will notify you well in advance of exam dates and reading requirements as they arise. Each test is worth 40 points and has 40 questions of the multiple choice, true/false, or fill in the blank variety.

Quizzes:

There are four quizzes worth 15 points each. These are intentionally UNANNOUNCED to encourage attendance. If you miss a quiz you can not make it up for any reason.

Assignments:

There are six assignments worth 10 points each. These assignments will generally be oriented toward having you experience some aspect of visual communication in a directed, “tuned-in” manner. These will be turned in electronically on WebCT and generally positioned as a Friday activity with submissions required before class on the following Monday.

Conclusion:

The goal of this class is not to specifically build your portfolio—you won’t leave here with clips or brochures or sample stories. However, the concepts in this class should permeate nearly every aspect of your media messages (and they *all* are visual in some way, as we will see). Thus, the goal is to use what you know about visual messages and how humans process visuals to, indeed, build your portfolio indirectly but everyday.

As an aside, I really enjoy teaching this class and I have the impression students generally enjoy it. I look forward to getting to know each of you more over the semester and I encourage you to bring relevant examples to share and discuss.