

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
GREENLEE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION
JIMC 521—Theories of Visual Communication**

Fall Term 2009
MW – 006 Hamilton Hall
Meeting Time: 10:00 am – 11:15 am

Instructor: Dr. Jacob Groshek
Office: 116 Hamilton Hall
Office Hours: 12:00 – 2:00 pm MW
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Texts:

This class is a graduate level seminar so it is relatively heavy on reading. This is to say that you will be expected to read for every class and then be prepared to discuss those readings in class. Since this a theory course, the principle basis of your grade will be evidence that you understand how humans process visuals and what effects those visuals can have.

There are two required textbooks that I suggest you purchase for this course.

Grabe, M. E. and Bucy, E. P. (2009). *Image Bite Politics: News and Visual Framing of Elections*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hoffman, D. D. (1998). *Visual Intelligence: How We Create What We See*. New York, NY: Norton Publishers.

Course focus and design:

This course is a graduate level seminar so you are expected to develop your research acumen—namely in understanding how we know what we know. Here, 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 into your research.

Structured around a rather small discussion session that meets MW throughout the semester, this course will provide opportunities to explore existing research and develop your own. Students are expected to attend and participate in class discussions.

Course Objectives:

1. Understand how humans process visuals.
2. Identify the effects visuals can have on humans.
3. Construct testable research questions from relevant literature.
4. Speak confidently about all of the above.

Attendance and participation:

Attendance will be taken (at least initially), but primarily as a tool to help put faces to names. The more you speak up and participate in class, the better the class will be and the better your grade will be. Attendance is essential to your success in this course partly because participation constitutes approximately 13 percent of your final grade.

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 (or texting) on cell phones, browsing the web or writing emails, personal conversations during lectures, reading the newspaper during class or any other disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. I view coming late or leaving class early as disruptive behavior. 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.

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>	
Final research project	100	(33% of final grade)
Project presentation	40	(13% of final grade)
Discussion leader	60	(20% of final grade)
Peer review	60	(20% of final grade)
Participation	40	(13% 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-

Any grade less than a C- is considered not satisfactory.

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

We will formally meet the first 8 weeks of the semester (through October 14). Students will then have the next 6 weeks to develop final research projects. Starting November 30, students will present their final research project results to the class. Completed final research projects will be due on December 18.

Research project:

This project will represent the largest part of your grade and can take almost any research form you wish. We will discuss specifics and options throughout the semester, but the simplest final research project would be to write a literature review with research questions/hypotheses for a study to be carried out at a later date. Details and guidelines will be further established as we move forward as a class.

Project presentation:

During the last 3 weeks of class, each student will have 10-15 minutes to present their research project to the class.

Discussion leader:

During the first eight weeks of class, each student will choose a relevant reading (journal article or book chapter) and lead a discussion on it. Presentation of these readings should be approximately 10 to 15 minutes and will begin with two presentations on September 7. Signups will take place on August 26 and you are expected to circulate your reading to the instructor at least one week in advance (I will take care of copying and redistribution to the class). The goal here is to present important information and to bring additional perspectives to the class.

Peer review:

Each student will provide a professional, thoughtful critique of another student's research project after it is presented. I will provide guidelines for these reviews as the semester progresses. These reviews should form the basis for revisions and improvements to final projects.

Participation:

Participation is not the same as attendance, but the two are obviously related. 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. As a graduate level research class, all students are expected to come to class prepared by having done assigned readings and being prepared to offer opinions and analyses of those readings.

Conclusion:

The goal of this class is to engage you with communication theory and research. It is not to specifically build a professional portfolio—you won't leave here with clips or brochures or sample stories. However, the concepts in this class should permeate your understanding of human vision and thus nearly every aspect of your professional media messages (and they *all* are visual in some way, as we will see). Indeed, the goal is to expand what you know about how humans process visuals to build your professional or academic portfolio indirectly but everyday.