ANTH 377 – Visual Anthropology

Course Director:
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Class Information:
Fall 2017
September 8 – December 1
Meeting days and times:
Fridays, 10:15am—1:00pm
Campus: SGW, Room H–561

“The science of anthropology owes not a little to the art of photography”.
~ Edward B. Tylor (1876)

Overview (from the Undergraduate Calendar)
In looking at the history of ethnographers’ visual documentation of non-Western peoples as well as indigenous self-representations, this course primarily concerns itself with power and the development of professional anthropology, focusing on photography and film. It explores paradigms and case studies in the history of visual anthropology by highlighting the stylistic, social scientific, commercial, and political agendas that influence the production of visual documents. Starting with colonial exhibitions of “exotic natives,” the course progresses to classic and contemporary ethnographic film with a focus on Curtis, Flaherty, Mead, Gardner, Rouch, and MacDougall.

INTRODUCTION
“Visual anthropology” offers important tools for those who wish to undertake ethnographic research, engage in media analysis, for those interested in material culture, or it can be relevant to those with an interest in the arts and other forms of cultural display (such as museums). Since the subfield is a broad one, and could cover any manner of visual expression, this course is only an introduction that focuses on photography and film, the two leading media of visual anthropologists to date. In focusing on photography and film, we consider broad themes dealing with the relationships between “scientism” and “humanism”. The dominant centres in the production of visual ethnography have been Britain, the United States, and Australia, producing a subfield that was once one of the fastest growing areas of interest in Anglo-American anthropology.

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Starting with colonial exhibitions of “exotic natives,” the course progresses through photography to classic and contemporary ethnographic film with a focus on Curtis, Flaherty, Mead, Gardner, Rouch and MacDougall. This course does not offer any practical training in photography or videography. However, it is inevitable that many points about methods and
techniques will be raised throughout the course, even if methods are not the central concern. This course is specific to anthropology, which means that we do not cover the history of photography and film in a general sense. In addition, this course does not attempt a complete and comprehensive history of all trends in either ethnographic photography or ethnographic film, which would easily exceed the bounds of this course (although we will still see 9 films in 13 weeks). This course focuses on the landmark creations, those that serve as core points of reference among most visual anthropologists, that should hopefully guide and invite students to explore more work on their own. More contemporary and experimental films, post-1990, are left out of this course, but are largely accessible to you online (see more on that below).

Finally, as with any course, there is only so much that the instructor can do during lecture time. In our case, classroom interaction is further limited by the need to feature several films. To help you get the most out of this course, it might be useful to think of this course as running along three separate tracks, i.e.: (1) lectures and class discussions, (2) readings (assigned and independent), and, (3) film case studies in class. It is up to you to combine as much as possible from each of these tracks.

**OVERVIEW—COURSE QUESTIONS**

This course explores several related topics surrounding the use of still photography and film: (a) what photographs and film show (and do not show); and, (b) how Western culture uses images of non-Western peoples, and debates about how non-Western peoples use images of themselves.

Some of the specific questions we will explore include:

1. What is the status of “the visual” in contemporary Western society and in the social sciences?
2. How have photographs and films of non-Western peoples been used in anthropology?
3. What kinds of bias and stereotypes, stylistic conventions, scientific, commercial and political agendas influence the choice of recorded images?
4. In which ways do images taken by indigenous image-makers differ from those taken by “outsiders”?
5. How can a visual component be a valuable part of ethnographic field projects?
6. What makes a photograph or a film *ethnographic*?

By the end of this course you should be able to come away with a critical understanding of the following:

(a) That which images do and do not “show”;
(b) The many potential messages embedded in any one image;
(c) The history of visual documentation of non-Western peoples by anthropologists and others;
(d) The implications of visual recording;
(e) The limitations and the benefits of using photography and film in anthropological research; and,
(f) The expectations to be faced when constructing a photographic/filmic project or product as an ethnographic one.
Please make sure to **download the reading guide**, which consists of review questions for each reading in the course. That guide is designed to help you focus on key points in a reading, and should assist you for the purposes of review.

In addition, please **download the list of concepts** that are mentioned in this course. By the end of the course, you should be familiar with most if not all of the concepts listed.

### WEEKLY COURSE WORK

Each week, please come to class having done the assigned readings for that week. In addition, please remember to follow the **reading guide**, and keep an eye on our **list of concepts**—both items can be downloaded from the course website.

**Films** shown in class, are booked for those dates and times. You should view them, in class, so as to make best use of any discussion that follows, or to ask questions. You are always free to review the films in the library on another occasion, if desired.

You can also view a wider selection of ethnographic films, beyond those shown in class, by a variety of means:

The library provides access to a large database of ethnographic films, which you can view online. In particular, have a look at **Ethnographic Video Online** at, [http://0-search.alexanderstreet.com.mercury.concordia.ca/anth](http://0-search.alexanderstreet.com.mercury.concordia.ca/anth)

More films, apart from those listed in the library catalogue, are also available on campus from the **Moving Image Resource Centre**, housed in H-341. See the office’s website at, [https://www.concordia.ca/finearts/facilities/moving-image-resource-centre.html](https://www.concordia.ca/finearts/facilities/moving-image-resource-centre.html)

Also, see their list of films categorized under “Anthropology” in their catalogue (simply choose “anthropology” as the subject in the online catalogue, and input no other search entry, and click submit).
ASSIGNMENTS, GRADE STRUCTURE, POLICIES

As the due date for each assignment draws near, I will circulate detailed assignment sheets in class (and on the course website), outlining the nature of the assignment, sources, methods, goals, etc.

The list of assignments, and their respective proportion of the overall grade, are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. First Essay Exam (take home)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Second Essay Exam (take home)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Short Essay (take home)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: On the course website—on the Assignments page—each of the items above will become an active hyperlink to an assignment sheet, when each is ready to be assigned. Notification of the assignment, plus a link to the PDF for the assignment sheet, will also be circulated by email.

Schedule of Due Dates

1. The first essay exam will be assigned on or before Friday, October 13, and it will be due on Saturday, October 21 at 9:00am (09h00).
2. The second essay exam will be assigned on or before Friday, November 17, and it will be due on Saturday, November 25 at 9:00am (09h00).
3. The final paper, a short essay, will be assigned on or before Friday, December 1, and it will be due on Friday, December 8 at 9:00am (09h00).

Guidelines

For each essay, you will receive an assignment sheet no less than one week before the essay is due. You will be asked to address a single question. The aim is to make sure you have covered and understood the course materials, and are able to apply what you learned by addressing a key “problem”. Formatting and other guidelines will be listed on each assignment sheet. As for how to submit your papers by email, see the rules below.

Rules concerning exam submissions and course work in general:

→ No papers will be accepted late, without medical documentation that clearly indicates that most of the period since the exam question was assigned was the period in which the student was seriously ill. In the case of a death in one’s immediate family (which excludes relatives, friends, etc.), an obituary or similar notice must be submitted. In these two cases, the appropriate extension will be negotiated. In all other cases, a late exam is automatically assigned a grade of zero. A late take-home exam is treated the same as a student not showing up to sit an exam, or not handing in the exam once the exam session has ended.
Extensions are not taken by students, under any circumstances. An extension can only be granted by the course coordinator, in advance of the due date for an assignment, and only under extreme circumstances. No technical reasons are acceptable for late work, therefore identify alternatives that might be needed to complete and submit an assignment.

When submitting your exam by email, make sure that you receive an acknowledgement, by email, from the instructor, after the deadline has passed. Acknowledgments are emailed individually to each student, within three hours of the passing of the deadline. No acknowledgments are sent out early, for papers submitted before the deadline. The lack of an acknowledgement after the deadline has passed means your exam was not received.

Send your exam papers by email to maximilian.forte@concordia.ca. Please attach your paper to your email message, in one of the following file formats: .odt, .doc, .rtf, or .txt, but no PDFs or any other file format. Do not send a link to retrieve your paper from Google or any other online drive. To be safe, you can also opt to simply copy and paste your essay into the body of your email message. Please double-check that you have attached your paper before sending your email.

Papers should be submitted in English; if submitted in French, the instructor's reading ability is limited, and this could affect the quality of the feedback received by the student.

Incomplete grades (INC) are not granted in this course, under any circumstances.

This course does not allow for Late Completion.

There will be no supplemental work.

Please do not call the main office for course-related inquiries.

**Attendance**
Every semester there is a minority of students who believe that a course can be taken as if it were a correspondence course, or an online course. Instead, regular attendance at lectures is critical to passing this course, and to avoid unnecessary failures the following policy will be strictly enforced:

In cases where a student is absent for most or all of the classes, the student will receive a failing grade for the course.

**How (Not)to Succeed in this Course**

- Students will receive a failing grade for this course if they choose to treat it as a “distance education” or “correspondence course,” in other words, by missing most or all classes.

- All assigned readings are mandatory, and represent a minimum amount of reading needed to succeed in this course. In each of your written assignments, you are required to apply what is learned in class from lectures and assigned readings, and to show evidence of having covered these materials by using one’s judgment in selectively applying them where they are most appropriate.

- As with any course, the rule of thumb is that at a minimum one should be doing three hours of work for each hour spent in class, each week. One should thus budget for between seven and nine hours of study for this course, each week, beyond class time.

- It is usually not advisable to avoid taking notes, assuming you will remember everything, or that all that is needed is what is on the lecture slides (which are not lecture notes). You should also be asking questions in class any time that material presented or assigned as reading is not clear to you.
• Leaving questions about your performance on the assignments until the final days of the course, or worse yet, waiting until the final class has passed, will usually bear unsatisfying results.

Office Hours
Please see the course director during office hours. If you cannot be available during the scheduled times, then please use email. These are the only two options available. The course director is not available for special appointments on days and times other than those allotted for office hours. Also, please do not attempt to use the minutes after class ends for a rushed meeting.

Citing Sources
To refer to any ideas, information or quotes that you acquired from the assigned readings, simply end the sentence in which the material appears with a reference in brackets, as follows: (Smith, 92)—where Smith is the surname of the author, and 92 is the page number on which the material appears. Do not formally cite lecture notes. No bibliography is needed, unless you use sources in addition to those assigned—in that case a bibliography should appear at the end of your essay. Do not use footnotes or endnotes.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism
First, students are required to read and follow Concordia University’s policies on Academic Integrity. See:
https://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity.html
On plagiarism, you must read:
http://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity/plagiarism.html

Grading
For all work done in this course you will receive a numerical grade which will be converted to a letter grade when final grades are processed. To translate numbers into letter grades, please consult the following chart, which is copied from the faculty handbook in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology. It is vital that you understand that the characterizations below (i.e., “excellent”) are central in guiding the instructor’s evaluation of the quality of a paper.

\[
\begin{align*}
A+ & : 90-100 \quad \text{EXCELLENT} \\
A  & : 85-89 \\
A- & : 80-84 \\
B+ & : 77-79 \quad \text{VERY GOOD} \\
B  & : 73-76 \\
B- & : 70-72 \\
C+ & : 67-69 \quad \text{SATISFACTORY} \\
C  & : 63-66 \\
C- & : 60-62 \\
D+ & : 57-59 \quad \text{POOR} \\
D  & : 53-56 \\
D- & : 50-52 \\
F & : 40 \quad \text{VERY POOR} \\
\text{FNS} & : 30-49 \\
R & : 20 \quad (0-29)
\end{align*}
\]

In general, student work is assessed in the following manner. Student assignments are evaluated in comparison with each other, normally done by the instructor assembling a random sample and highlighting the best elements of each paper, which then forms the template by which papers are judged. The paper(s) that sets the highest standards for student work will receive the highest grades. Students are evaluated on the extent and depth to which they have utilized assigned readings, lectures, films, and class discussions when applicable. Students are also evaluated on their ability to successfully apply key course concepts to their own writing. Analytical and conceptual clarity (the argument does not contradict itself repeatedly, the writer stays focused, any concepts
used are defined, concepts are related to one another when applicable, pros and cons are considered, assertions are supported with evidence or logic), are vital elements of a paper deemed to be “very good” or better. Structure, logical organization, and effective writing are of substantial importance.

No points are ever lost an assignment—they can only be gained. Full points are not awarded for simply doing the minimum required, as determined by the overall level of the papers read by the instructor. Students will tend to judge their paper in isolation, which is understandable; however, the instructor’s evaluation is always a comparative one.

When writing your paper, these are some important areas to consider in strengthening your work:

**Writing, Structure and Organization**
- an effective introduction that shows an understanding of the problem at hand, without modifying the original question to such an extent that the student is effectively addressing a problem that was not assigned;
- a conclusion that does not just repeat or summarize, but that draws together the main themes and ideas of the paper;
- significant ideas forming the first sentence of each new paragraph;
- ideas and paragraphs that flow from one to the other, so that there is no abrupt break; and,
- logical presentation: statements that logically follow from one another.

**Analysis, Conceptualization**
- an effective paper is not one that contradicts its own main premises and statements, especially not without a discussion of the reasons for any apparent contradiction;
- better papers tend to have a clear picture of the problem as a whole and its constituent parts;
- a demonstrated understanding of the key ideas, concepts, or theories is required—being able to apply and scrutinize those ideas, concepts, or theories makes for a better paper.

**Supporting Materials**
- a well reasoned, logical, and analytical paper is further strengthened by being able to refer to supporting ideas or details from the assigned readings and other course materials; and,
- it is expected that students will try to cover, as much as is reasonable and applicable given the specific question, the assigned readings, films and lectures, without any unjustifiable exclusions.

**COURSE POLICIES**
In the event of a major public health crisis, or events beyond the University’s control, alternative course requirements and grading policies will be developed and used.

**Announcements, E-Mail Use**
In the event of an unscheduled cancellation of a class, the appropriate notice is posted by the University on its website. See the “Class Cancellations” link on www.concordia.ca. In addition, digital billboards on campus will announce the cancellation. You will also be notified by email.
Please check your email as late as two hours before the start of class to ensure that the class has not been cancelled for that day.

Otherwise, for the duration of this course please check your email at least once each week, and look for any messages that begin with the course number.

Having said that, please ensure that you have the right email address entered in your MyConcordia student profile. That is the same email address to which course messages are sent.

_Disclaimer_
In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

_Improving Students’ Academic Experience_
The University offers many services that can help students. To improve students’ ability to succeed in their courses, get the most out of the university experience, and ensure their success in completing their degree, it is strongly recommended that you make a note of the following list of services:

- Concordia Counseling and Development offers career services, psychological services, student learning services, etc. [http://cdev.concordia.ca/](http://cdev.concordia.ca/)
- Student Transition Centre: [http://www.concordia.ca/extended-learning/stc/](http://www.concordia.ca/extended-learning/stc/)
- New Student Program: [http://cdev.concordia.ca/our-services/services-for-newstudents/](http://cdev.concordia.ca/our-services/services-for-newstudents/)
- The Academic Integrity Website: [http://www.concordia.ca/programs-andcourses/academic-integrity/](http://www.concordia.ca/programs-andcourses/academic-integrity/)
- Health Services: [http://www-health.concordia.ca/](http://www-health.concordia.ca/)
PART ONE: PHOTOGRAPHY

1. Introducing Visual Anthropology + Colonialism and Exhibited Others: Difference as Spectacle and Science  
   Friday, September 8
   • Overview of course, requirements, introductory notes; start of first lecture
   Recommended Reading:

2. Colonialism and Exhibited Others, cont’d: Difference as Spectacle and Science  
   Friday, September 15
   Film: The Life and Times of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus (53 mins.)—Yola Masenko, 1998: the story of a Khoi Khoi woman who was taken from South Africa, at the age of 20 in 1810, then exhibited across Britain as a freak. She was taken to France in 1814, where she became the object of scientific and medical research that formed the basis for European ideas about black female sexuality. The documentary film uses historical drawings, cartoons, legal documents and interviews with cultural historians and anthropologists to tell the story.

3. Early Ethnographic Photography: Contexts and Trends  
   Friday, September 22
   • Williams, Carol. (1999). “Photographic Portraiture of Aboriginal Women on Canada's Northwest Coast Circa 1862-1880”.
4. Ethnographic Photography: Conventions and Methodologies  
   **Friday, September 29**

5. Paradigms and Debates: Photography in Ethnography  
   **Friday, October 6**

   **Recommended:**

6. Indigenous Uses of Photography  
   **Friday, October 13**

   **Film:** *Photo Wallahs (60 mins.)*—David & Judith MacDougall, 1991: The film focuses on the photographers of Mussoorie, a hill station in the Himalayan foothills of northern India whose fame has attracted tourists since the 19th century. Through a rich mixture of scenes that includes the photographers at work, their clients, and both old and new photographs, this film examines photography as art and as social artifact. [VHS]
PART TWO: FILM

7. History of Ethnographic Film

Friday, October 20


**Film:** *The Hunters* (72 mins.)—John Marshall, 1957: an early classic in anthropological film follows the hunt of a giraffe by four men over a five-day period. The film was shot in 1952-53 on the third joint Smithsonian-Harvard Peabody sponsored Marshall family expedition to Africa to study Ju/'hoansi, one of the few surviving groups that lived by hunting - gathering. John Marshall was a young man when he made this, his first feature length film (Also online at: http://0-search.alexanderstreet.com.mercury.concordia.ca/view/work/763912)

**Optional Film:** *Dead Birds* (84–146 mins.)—Robert Gardner, 1964: A cinematographic interpretation of the life of a group of Grand Valley Dani, who are mountain Papuans in West New Guinea (Irian Barat, Indonesia), studied by the Harvard-Peabody Expedition (1961-1963). This film was made by Gardner in 1961, before the area was pacified by the Dutch government. The film focuses on Weyak, the farmer and warrior, and on Pua, the young swineherd, following them through the events of Dani life: sweet potato horticulture, pig keeping, salt winning, battles, raids, and ceremonies. (Also online at: http://0-search.alexanderstreet.com.mercury.concordia.ca/view/work/764168)

8. What is Ethnographic Film?

Friday, October 27


9. Case Studies in Ethnographic Film: Robert J. Flaherty and *Nanook of the North*

Friday, November 3

• Ch. 3, “The Innocent Eye: Flaherty, Malinowski and the Romantic Quest,” pp. 45-56

Film: Nanook of the North (69 mins.)—Robert J. Flaherty, 1922: Presents a documentary of the saga of an Eskimo family pitting their strength against a vast and inhospitable Arctic. Juxtaposes their struggle for survival against the elements with the warmth of the little family as they go about their daily affairs.
(Also online at: https://youtu.be/m4kOlzMqso0)

Optional Film: Nanook Revisited (55 mins.)—Claude Massot, 2004: The filmmakers revisit Inukjuak, the Inuit village where Flaherty filmed Nanook of the North. Examines the realities behind the ground-breaking documentary and the changes since it was made almost 70 years ago. Shows the reactions of the Inuit living in the village, to the film, and also looks at the inaccuracies and staged scenes in the original.

Monday, November 6, 2017
• Last day for academic withdrawal from fall-term courses.

10. Case Studies in Ethnographic Film: Jean Rouch, Part I
Friday, November 10

Note: as you can see from the duration of the films indicated below, class time for this session will be devoted to watching the films, with most of the review and discussion left for the following session.

Film: Les Maîtres Fous (The Mad Masters)(29 mins.)—Jean Rouch, 1954: This film documents the annual ceremony of the Hauku cult, a religious movement which was widespread in Niger and Ghana from the 1920’s to the 1950’s.
(Also online at https://youtu.be/podpwdMDGW0)

Film: Chronique d’un été (Chronicle of a Summer) (85 mins.)—Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, 1961: In the summer of 1960 a documentary film crew asks the people on the streets of Paris if they are happy.

11. Case Studies in Ethnographic Film: Jean Rouch, Part II
Friday, November 17
12. Case Studies in Ethnographic Film: The Controversy around Robert Gardner’s *Forest of Bliss*

*Friday, November 24*


*Film: Forest of Bliss (90 mins.)—Robert Gardner, Ákos Östör, 1978: A documentary on the Holy City of Benares, India, its daily customs and religious rituals. [VHS] (Also online at http://0-search.alexanderstreet.com.mercury.concordia.ca/view/work/764692)*

13. CONCLUSION: *What have we learned about visual ethnography?*

*Friday, December 1*

Monday, December 4, 2017

- Last day of classes — Fall term.