

ANTH 210

VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Cassandre Campeau-Bouthillier

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Humans, as primates, tend to rely heavily on vision to make sense of the world around them. This course engages with this idea as well as the concept of visual culture in thinking critically about how 'images' are constructed in specific historical and cultural contexts. The course will explore how a combination of all senses is necessary for humans to make sense of their body's positionality in their (social and cultural) environment. The course examines different types of visual media such as art, photography, videos, adverts, scientific imaging, etc. and think critically about how 'images' (because visual is not only 2D) are created in certain contexts but can be taken out and 'repurposed' in different political, cultural, and historical circumstances. In addition to exploring how visual cultures take shape and are contested in different cultural contexts, this course will look at how viewers themselves affect the meanings of visual forms of representation. In parallel to exploring visual practices and representation through major topics such as power, ideology, modernity, science, media and advertisement, this course will delve into how anthropologists have developed their own ways to think about the visual and to produce visual media. Various examples will be provided (i.e. ethnographic films, archival photographs, multi-media projects, etc.) to illustrate how anthropologists understand and investigate visual cultures in their own work.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Students in this course will learn to:

- Describe the main concepts associated with visual anthropology and identify common assumptions and how they shape knowledges about images in cultures;
- Think critically and reflexively about how the production, dissemination, and consumption of images happens in fluctuating, culturally, historically, politically, geographically, and technologically contingent contexts;
- Recognize how anthropologists use visual texts to conduct and disseminate their research;
- Effectively work in groups on a project and presentation by analysing a visual medium and develop an in-depth and multi-level interpretation of its meanings;
- Develop a strong understanding of visual methods of research and how to use them in an anthropological setting.
- Think critically about and evaluate historical and cultural images and their production in context;
- Identify and discuss some of the ethical issues associated with the use of visual methods in anthropological research;