Middle East Technical University
Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

ADM 5111 - VISUAL POLITICS

Spring Semester 2024

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Course Description: Visual politics encompasses, on the one hand, the role of visual elements in the development of political narratives and, on the other hand, the analysis of the political potential of visual phenomena themselves. Today, the fact that political practices are obliged to use mass media in order to reach their interlocutors effectively carries the danger of reducing the relationship of politics with visuality to mere representation. However, beyond this approach, visual politics opens up a series of issues such as how the political sphere is limited by biased perceptions of the elites, who are displayed and who are overlooked according to the political power matrix of a given time and space, how advanced surveillance techniques reshape the political-legal sphere, and how these visual techniques can be used in a counter manner. Following these and more questions, this graduate course aims to critically discuss the effects of "the visual age" (Bleiker 2018), that have appeared in conjunction with developing technologies and globalisation, at the political level. At the end of the semester, it is aimed that students will have knowledge about cutting-edge theories and their applications in the fields of visual politics, visual anthropology, cultural studies, visual communication and political aesthetics.

Course Requirements: The students are expected to **make a presentation** on a topic chosen together with the instructor in Week 1, **be the discussant of other presenters' topics**, and **a final article** (6000-8000 words).

The students must complete the weekly reading assignments which are decided in Week 1.

Grading: The grades will be based on the following:

Presentation: 30 %
Discussion and participation: 20 %
Final Paper: 50 %

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 – Introduction

Week 2, 3 & 4 - Mapping the Visual Politics

Definitions and Methodology of Visual Politics * Modernity and Visuality * Visual Political Communication * The Visual Turn * Global Visual Politics

Arnheim, Rudolf. *Visual Thinking*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1969, Ch.6.

Grabe, Maria Elizabeth and Erik Page Bucy. *Image Bite Politics: News and the Visual Framing of Elections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 3-51.

Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer*. On Visions and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, Ch. 1.

Bleiker, Roland. "Mapping Visual Global Politics." In *Visual Global Politics*, edited by Roland Bleiker, 1 - 29. London and New York: Routledge, 2018.

Azoulay, Ariella. "Getting Rid of the Distinction between the Aesthetic and the Political." *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 7-8 (2010): 239-262.

Bottici, Chiara. *Imaginal Politics: Images Beyond Imagination and the Imaginary*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. Ch. 5 & 6.

Mitchell, W.J.T. "The Pictorial Turn." *Artforum* 30, no.7 (1992): 89-94.

Visual Materials:

Juliano Ribeiro Salgado and Wim Wenders (Dir.) *Sebastião Salgado: The Salt of the Earth* (2014). Colour and sound, 110 min. https://archive.org/details/saltGado

John Berger, Ways of Seeing. BBC, B&W and sound, 117 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utEoRdSL1jo&t=159s

Hito Steyerl, How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File, (2013). Color and sound, 15:51'. https://www.artforum.com/video/hito-steyerl-how-not-to-be-seen-a-fucking-didactic-educational-mov-file-2013-51651

Week 5 & 6 – Decolonizing the Western Gaze

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *White Sight*: *Visual Politics and Practices of Whiteness*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2023, 66-100.

Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992. Ch 5 & 15.

Mignolo, Walter, and Rolando Vazquez. "Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds / Decolonial Healings." *Social Text*, July 15, 2013.

Nashef, Hania A. M. "Barbaric Space: Portrayal of Arab Lands in Hollywood Films." In *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Walid El Hamamsy and Mounira Soliman, 197-210. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Tichindeleanu, Ovidiu. "Decolonizing Eastern Europe: Beyond Internal Critique." In *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Ana Janevski, Roxana Marcoci and Ksenia Nouril, 193-99. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2018.

Visual Materials:

Revealing/Imagining Slavery through Museum Collections. Lecture by Fred Wilson at Harvard Radcliffe Institute. 58 minutes. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FJRt9Ls11s&ab_channel=HarvardRadcliffeInstitute

Selected Videos from the Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire. http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/home

Week 7 & 8 - Elections, Populism and the Visual Political Campaigns

Sartori, Giovanni. *Görmenin İktidarı: Homo Videns – Gören İnsan*. İstanbul: Karakutu Yayınları, 2006.

Baker, Ulus. "Medyaya Nasıl Direnilir?" *Dolaylı Ekran* içinde, 217 – 25. İstanbul, Birikim Yayınları, 2014.

Khatib, Lina. *Image Politics in the Middle East: The Role of the Visual in Political Struggle*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013, Ch. 2.

Juárez-Gámiz, Julio and Cosette Celecia Pérez. "The Visual Construction of Andrés Manuel López Obrador's Populist Communication on Facebook." In *Visual Politics in the Global South,* edited by Anastasia Veneti and Maria Rovisco, 93 – 120. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

Khan, Farhat Basir. *The Game of Votes: Visual Media Politics and Elections in the Digital Era*. New Delhi: Sage, 2019, 144-179.

Messham-Muir, Kit and Uroš Cvoro. *The Trump Effect in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture. Populism, Politics, and Paranoia*. London: Bloomsbury, 2023, 119-139.

Visual Material:

The U.S. Presidential Campaign Commercials – 2008: Obama vs. McCain. http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/2008

Week 9 - Visual Politics in Search of Truth in the Post-Truth Era

Visual Politics of War * Fake Images and Politics * Investigative Aesthetics

Weizman, Eyal. *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. New York: Zone Books, 2017, 13-47.

Weizman, Eyal and Ines Weizman. *Before and After: Documenting the Architecture of Disaster*. Moscow: Stelka Press, 2017.

Giotta, Gina. "Ways of Seeing… What You Want: Flexible Visuality and Image Politics in the Post-truth Era." In *Fake News: Understanding Media and Misinformation in the Digital Age*, edited by Melissa Zimdars, Kembrew Mcleod, 31-44. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2020.

Visual Materials:

Forensic Architecture. The Killing of Tahir Elçi. Color video, sound, 26:18 minutes. https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-killing-of-tahir-elci

Harun Farocki. Nicht löschbares Feuer (The Inextinguishable Fire). 1969. Black and White video, sound. 21 minutes. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnpLS4ct2mM&ab_channel=%E3%82%A2%E3%83%AB%E3%82%B9

Week 10 & 11 – Images of Migration and Migratory Aesthetics

Doer, Nicole. "How Right-wing versus Cosmopolitan Political Actors Mobilize and Translate Images of Immigrants in Transnational Contexts." *Visual Communication* 16, no. 3 (2017): 315–336.

Köhn, Steffen. *Mediating Mobility: Visual Anthropology in the Age of Migration*. London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2016. Intro, Ch. 1 & 2.

Ibrahim, Yasmin. “The Unsacred and the Spectacularized: Alan Kurdi and the Migrant Body.” *Social Media + Society 4*(4) (2018): 1-9.

Lee, Tessa C. “From Alien Nation to Alienation: Tracing the Figure of the Guest Worker in Fatih Akın’s *Gegen die Wand*.” In *Aesthetic Practices and Politics in Media, Music, and Art: Performing Migration*, edited by Rocio G. Davies, Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Johanna C. Kardux, 66-80. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Bal, Mieke. “Migratory Aesthetics: Double Movement.” *Exit* 32 (2008): 150 – 161.

Canclini, Néstor García. “Migrants: Workers of Metaphors.” In *Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture Conflict, Resistance, and Agency*, edited by Mieke Bal and Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro, 23 – 35. Amsterdam: Ropodi, 2011.

Bennett, Jill. “Migratory Aesthetics: Art and Politics beyond Identity.” In *Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture Conflict, Resistance, and Agency*, edited by Mieke Bal and Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro, 109 – 126. Amsterdam: Ropodi, 2011.

Visual Materials:

Mona Hatoum, Measures of Distance (1988). Color video, sound, 15 minutes. A Western Front Video Production, Vancouver. **https://www.ubu.com/film/hatoum_measures.html**

Rineke Dijkstra’s Almerisa series. 11 Photographies.

Week 12 & 13 - Visualizing Invisible Labour at the Age of Precarity

Kirsten, Guido. "Studying the Cinema of Precarity: An Introduction". In *Precarity in European Film: Depictions and Discourses*, edited by Elisa Cuter, Guido Kirsten and Hanna Prenzel, pp. 1-30. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022.

Mazierska, Ewa. “Work, Struggle, and Cinema.” In *Work in Cinema*: *Labor and the Human Condition*, edited by Ewa Mazierska, *1 – 25*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. (Excerpts).

Virno, Paolo. *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. New York: Semiotext(e), 2004. Ch. 4.

Standing, Guy. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury, 2011. (Excerpts).

Visual Materials:

Lila Aviles (Dir.) *La Camarista* (The Chambermaid). 2018. 102 minutes.

Ümit Kıvanç (Dir.), 16 Ton. Colour and sound video. 84:46'.
https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1uriuy

Ahu Öztürk (Dir.) *Toz Bezi*. 2015. 99 minutes.

Week 14 – Concluding Remarks

Assignment Topics:

A sampling of topics appropriate for the final (visual) essay includes but is not limited to:

Abu Ghraib
9/11
Black Lives Matter
Pride (Local / Global)
Vietnam War
Fall of the Berlin Wall
Syrian Civil War
Kahramanmaraş and Hatay Earthquakes
Climate movements (Local / Global)
Colonialism / Postcolonialism / Decolonialism (Local / Global)
Migration (Local / Global)
Gender Inequality (Local / Global)
Conditions of Work / Workers (Local / Global)
Russia-Ukraine War
Genocides (Local / Global)
Military Interventions (Local / Global)