Visual Sociology

SOCI 3341

Dr. Morales

Course Description

Visual sociology involves the use of photographs, film, and video to study society, as well as the study of the visual artifacts of a society. This course will focus on photo-based strategies for sociological research, including field research. The camera is parallel to a tape recorder. Photography is a data gathering technology used for ethnography, participant observations, oral history, and the use of urban space. In particular we will examine the uses of video-photographic technologies in sociology to capture the images and apply critical analyses to study social structures and social relations along the US-Mexico border. Additionally, we will explore the sociological dimensions of visual expression on society. Note, that this is a sociology/qualitative research course and it will not emphasize the technical/lab training in photography.

Objectives

- Gain an introduction to visual sociology.
- To use visual technologies to learn about the social world.
- Practice your observational skills, with or without a camera, and thus become knowledgeable observers of society.
- Develop a visual literacy to understand the sociological importance of depictions of different groups of people and their social environments.
- Enhance your sociological imaginations to critically analyze images orally and in writing.
- To consider the significance of media in interpreting and socially constructing culture focusing on photographs, films, artwork, and TV shows.
- Finish a course project based on going out "into the field" of El Paso/Juarez to employ visual and ethnographic methods (e.g., photography and observation).

Required Text and Tools

Harper, Douglas. 2012. Visual Sociology. New York: Routledge.

Access to a camera. Note any camera, including those in cellular phones and lab tops, will work. You can also rent a camera from the library for free.

Course Expectations

- I expect students to offer an evaluation of the course readings through a sociological framework.
- This is an interactive class in which students are expected to come prepared to discuss the days reading and offer an evaluation of that argument through a sociological perspective.
- Every class period students will be required to read the day's material beforehand.
- Students are required to bring reading materials and camera to class.

- Students are required to access Blackboard. This will provide an "integrated e-learning environment" for communication purposes (mail and discussion) and course content (syllabus, readings, etc…). Students are responsible for keeping up-to-date with any- changes or additional information. Information on these matters will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard.
- Attendance will not be taken but absences will obviously affect your participation grade. There will be several in-class assignments that can only be made-up with an excuse absence.
- Students will not be evaluated on their photography skills, instead the focus is on how to apply a sociological analysis to images and how to "write" with images.
- I will deduct 10 points a day for late homework assignments, unless you have a university excused absence (signed doctor's note, documentation of a family emergency, or you are involved in a university sponsored extra-curricular activity that prevents participation) or just have an emergency. Please notify Dr. Morales if you are unable to attend class as soon as possible.
- Please put your cell phones on vibrate or silence.
- I will give pop reading quizzes if discussions indicate that some students are not coming to class adequately prepared.
- Students are required to have a facebook account and be a member of the group created for this course. We will use this space to share our work— photographs and analysis—
  with the class. This group will be closed to the public.
- To be flexible and creative as we (including your instructor) go through the process of discovering visual technologies for sociological discovery.
- I, and the TA, are available for consultation on your progress in the class. Do not wait until the end of the semester.

Respect

Controversial topics will be discussed in this course. Discussion with the instructor and your classmates is a crucial factor necessary to enhance the learning experiences but please assure that your comments and actions are respectful. This will help us to create a comfortable learning environment for you and your classmates.

Communication Policy

- Email Dr. Morales through the blackboard email for our course. I have close to 150 students and get about 100 emails a day at the UTEP email. Additionally, the UTEP email nests the conversations and therefore it is very easy to miss an email.

- Calling via phone is not a reliable way to communicate.

- You should allow 48 hours for response to an e-mail Monday through Friday.

	Percentage of Final Course Grade
Self-portrait	10
Ethnography of UTEP	10
Micro-aggressions	5
Comparative Visual Sociology	15
Micro-blogging (4 @ 5 each)	20
Course project: Photo-voice	35

Final letter grades system:

	Percent
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	< 60

Other Important Information

Please be aware that the Disabled Student Services (Union East, room 106, Tel. 747-5148) provides a program of support and advocacy services to students with disabilities. Come and talk with the instructor if you need additional support because of a disability.

Any form of cheating is academic misconduct. Attribute the source of actual words and the information used in your writing. Fabrication of material and copying/plagiarism is prohibited, including the use of unattributed excerpts from articles, news releases, reports, handouts, journal articles, other student work, web sites, encyclopedias, etc. Penalties for plagiarism are severe, even for unintentional failure to cite sources. If you have questions about proper attribution, please consult me before turning in an assignment in question. Students should review UTEP sites on plagiarism (www.academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=23785).

As a general rule, a student missing a class because of observance of a religious holiday shall have the opportunity to make up missed work. Students must notify me of anticipated absences by the last day of late registration to be assured of this opportunity.

Students who represent UTEP at any official extracurricular activity shall have the opportunity to make up assignments, but the student must provide official written notification no less than one week prior to missing the class(es).

Course Schedule

Note: This is a tentative schedule and is subject to change.

DATE	SUBJECT MATTER	READING	ASSIGNMENT DUE
Week 1			
	Introduction to course and review syllabus.	Introduction pp. 1-7	Self-portrait (pp. 246-247) due Sept. 30th
Week 2			
	Class introductions, ethics, and learning to read photos.	Ch.1 Visual Ethnography & pp. 220-225	
Week 3			
	Practicing Visual Sociology	Ch. 4 The visual sociology of space from above, inside, and around	Ethnography of UTEP (group project)
Week 4			
	Micro-level aggressions	Daily Forms of Micro-aggressions (Sue) (electronic on Blackboard)	In-class project on daily forms of micro-aggressions
Week 5			
	Field Trip: Segundo Barrio Murals	Ch. 5 Comparing Societies	Comparative visual ethnography
Week 6			
	Field Trip: Lincoln Park		Comparative visual ethnography due Sept. 29th
Week 7			
	The role of the researcher	Ch. 3 Reflexivity	
Week 8			

	Photovoice	Ch.8 Photovoice	
Week 9			
	Photovoice (continued)	Sample photovoice projects (Electronic uploaded on Blackboard)	
Week 10			
	Photovoice (continued)		Updates from the field
Week 11			
	Media and popular culture: Normalization of violence	Sociology of the Walking Dead	Micro-blogging
Week 12			
	Media and popular culture: Marx and Capitalism	Sociology of the Walking Dead	Micro-blogging
Week 13			
	Media and popular culture: Race, Class, and Gender	Sociology of the Walking Dead	Micro-blogging
Week 14			
	Media and popular culture: Social norms and Social Construction	Sociology of the Walking Dead	Micro-blogging
	Thanksgiving Holiday		
Week 15			
	Course project presentations		Course project Due Nov. 29th
Thurs.	Last Day of Class		
Week 16			
	Course project presentations (continued)		