

**Course Meeting Time and Place**

Mondays 7:00-9:40  
SH 213

**Contact Information**

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Sheppard  
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**Office Hours**

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00-3:00

**Required Texts**

*The Non-Designer's Design Book: Design and Typographic Principles for the Visual Novice* (3rd ed.)  
Author: Robin Williams  
ISBN: 9780321534040  
Publication Date: 2008  
Publisher: Peachpit Press  
  
*A Graphic Adaptation of the 9/11 Report* (1st edition)  
Authors: Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón  
ISBN:9780809057399   
Publication Date: 2006   
Publisher: Hill and Wang   
  
Course Reading Packet from Montezuma Publishing for RWS 744

Other readings are available as PDFs in our Blackboard course. Please let me know if you have problems accessing the files.

**Course Description**

Sonja Foss argues that, "The study of visual imagery from a rhetorical perspective... has grown with the emerging recognition that visual images provide access to a range of human experience not always available through the study of discourse... Key to a rhetorical perspective on images and what makes the perspective a rhetorical one is its focus on a rhetorical response to an image rather than an aesthetic one." In other words, Foss suggests that visuals provide, beyond their aesthetic value, a means for persuasive communication that is not always possible through other modes.  
  
This course begins with the assumption that visual language is one of many available means of persuasion and that it can neither replace nor work entirely independently from other modes of communication. By studying visual rhetoric in the context of contemporary and historical culture, we will discover how frameworks used to explore the rhetoric of writing and speech provide strong starting points for analysis, but also fail in other ways to account for the rhetorical affordances of the visual.   
  
Our work will focus on examining and utilizing rhetorical practices at work in visuals across a variety of genres and contexts (including photography, advertising, public memorials, visual art, propaganda, and new media). By developing a robust visual and rhetorical vocabulary and learning to think critically about individual elements within visuals (e.g. line, color, typography, arrangement, perspective), as well as how those elements interact with one another and with the contexts in which they are situated, we will develop thoughtful, persuasive strategies for reading and creating visual artifacts.  
  
This course will explore several approaches to defining visual rhetoric in order to get a sense of the field and the many disciplines that have influenced the scholarly conversation. Students in this course will be asked to read, critique, and analyze a number of visual texts during the semester and will have the opportunity to put those theories into practice through creating a visual text of their own. The course does not require any previous experience with visual composing or technologies.

**Course Goals**

By the end of the term, you should be able to:

* + identify key issues and perspectives in visual rhetorics and visual studies
  + understand and apply rhetorical concepts (ethos, pathos, logos, audience, purpose, context, etc.) to a variety of visual and multimodal texts to provide insight about their communicative and persuasive purposes
  + understand and apply visual and design concepts (perspective/angle, contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, etc.) to a variety of images to provide insight about their communicative and persuasive purposes
  + find, analyze, and produce a variety of visual texts that communicate effectively and persuasively to targeted audiences
  + analyze the way visual artifacts are deployed in ideological, political, and social contexts
  + understand the relevance of visual analysis and rhetoric in the teaching and professional work of writing and communication

**Grading**

I will evaluate your performance according to:

* + the quality of your written and visual work (analysis, support/explanation, and overall organization)
  + class presentations (quality of preparation and evidence of comprehension and ability to apply key concepts)
  + participation in class discussions and activities

The following indicates the percent value for course assignments (fuller descriptions below):

* + Short written responses to readings- 25%
  + Annotated Visual Analysis and Presentation- 25%
  + Visual Argument, Essay, and Presentation- 50%

**Participation and Collaboration**

As this is a graduate level course covering a wide disciplinary subject area, it is critical that you are an active and respectful participant in all activities. I expect that you will read all assigned material prior to class and that you will engage in thoughtful, critical dialog with your classmates. In order to explore the breadth of perspectives on visual rhetoric, we will need to rely on the work and resources each of us brings to this experience. Throughout the semester, we will discuss readings, share collected materials and research, and provide feedback on drafts of one another's work. Your sustained engagement in this process will create a rich learning environment for yourself and your classmates and will help to construct a network of intellectual support for your professional development.

**Attendance**

I expect graduate students to attend all class meetings (except in the case of an emergency, illness, or absence related to a conference presentation). If you have more than four absences, your grade will be negatively affected and may result in failure of the course. You are responsible for checking the course website, seeking help from classmates, and/or contacting me during office hours to find out what you missed.

**Accommodations for Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

**Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct**

Plagiarism is using another person's work without acknowledgment, making it appear to be one's own. Intentional and unintentional instances of plagiarism are considered instances of academic misconduct and are subject to disciplinary action such as failure on the assignment, failure of the course or dismissal from the university. With that said, we live in a [culture of remix](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remix_culture" \t "_blank) and the sampling or redesign of others' work for new rhetorical purposes has become commonplace. This is acceptable within our class only with inclusion of clear and appropriate credit to original sources.

**Discrimination and Harassment**

SDSU complies with all federal and state laws regarding discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, medical status, veteran status, and disability. Further, the expectation for our classroom is that it is a safe, collegial space where differences of background and perspective are treated with consideration and respect. Disagreement on some issues is expected as part of the learning process, but should always be expressed within a framework of collegiality.

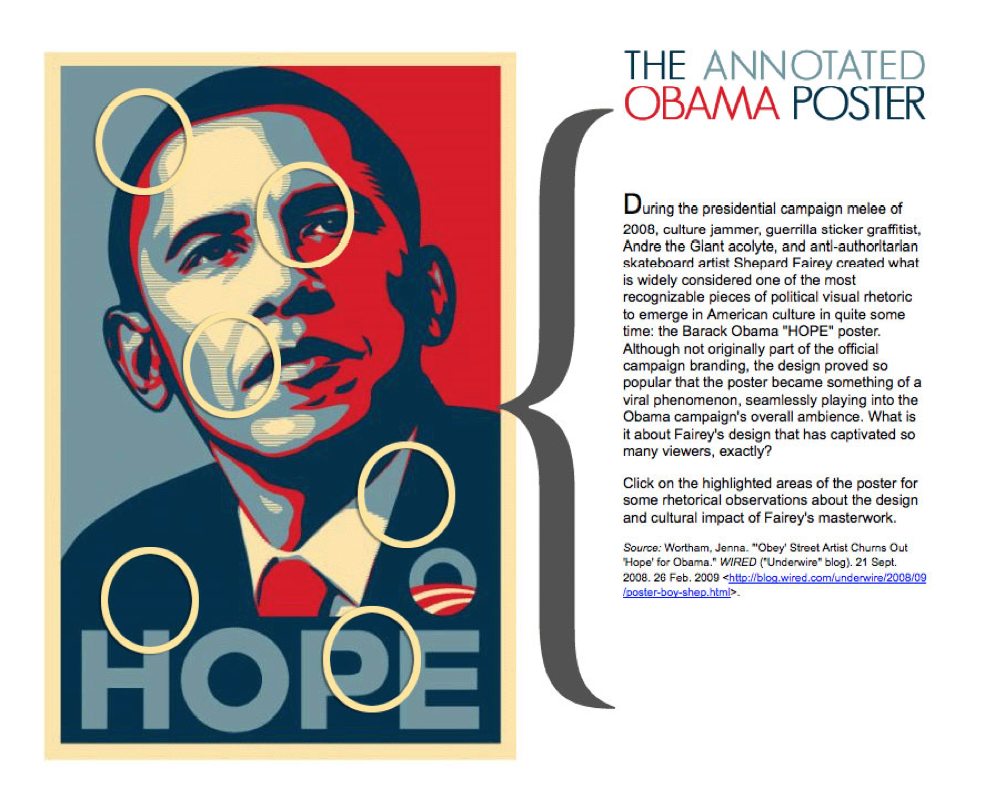
**Course Assignments**  
**Short Written Responses to Readings- 25%**

This course is run as a seminar. Learning in a seminar format depends upon preparation and active engagement by the students as well as the professor. Therefore, it is very important that you not only read the assigned material but that you also that you think critically about the argument, concepts, and potential applications.  
  
Prior to each class, please read all assigned material and respond in 1-2 single-spaced pages using the following format (you can choose to respond to one or all of the day's readings):

1. What is the overall argument and what are the key concepts or terms?
2. How does this material fit in with other materials in the course as well as with relevant outside materials?
3. What does this approach allow you to understand or how can you use it to analyze the rhetoric of visual images and artifacts?
4. What doesn't make sense to you and what questions do you have?

A good response will do at least a few of the following:

* connect the reading to other readings and/or larger conversations in the field
* reference specific passages (with page numbers)
* provide summation when necessary to clarify points
* focus on unpacking the meaning/implication of key ideas
* pose questions to stimulate discussion

**Annotated Visual Analysis and Presentation 25%**  
*Purpose*:  
The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your ability to "read" and make meaning from the rhetorical messages embedded within a visual text. You will select and analyze a contemporary image, creating a minimum of five annotations of what and how various elements or features function in communicating meanings. As Sonja Foss argues,

The study of visual imagery from a rhetorical perspective... has grown with the emerging recognition that visual images provide access to a range of human experience not always available through the study of discourse... Conceptualized as a communicative artifact, **visual rhetoric is the actual image rhetors generate when they use visual symbols for the purpose of communicating**... Key to a rhetorical perspective on images and what makes the perspective a rhetorical one is its focus on a rhetorical response to an image rather than an aesthetic one... In a rhetorical response, meaning is attributed to the image. Colors, lines, textures, and rhythms in an image provide a basis for the viewer to infer the existence of images, emotions, and ideas (from "Theory of Visual Rhetoric")

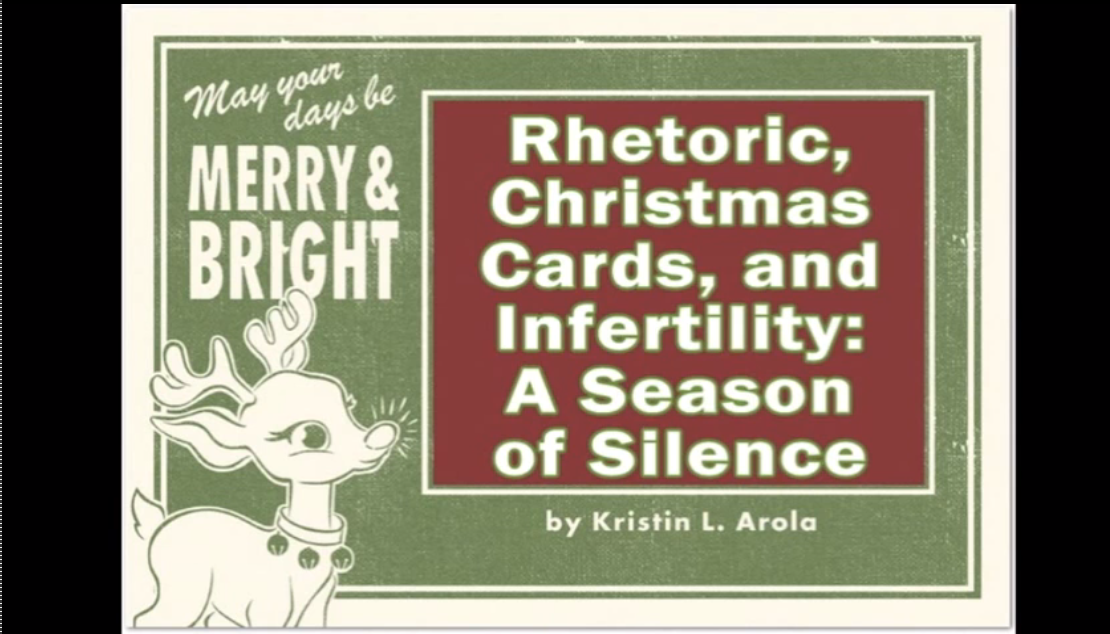
*What to Do:*

1. Select a single still image (photo, illustration, advertisement, poster, etc.) for analysis. It should be relatively contemporary and can be well-known or not, but the original creator and publication venue should be cited.
2. Annotate at least five different aspects of visual rhetoric in the image. These annotations can focus on aspects of the rhetorical situation, persuasive strategies, the social/political/historical/context, the visual arrangement, or other elements within the image.
3. Include a short (1-2 page) introduction with your annotated image that provides some context about the rhetorical situation, particularly the author, site of publication, intended audience, and purpose.
4. Select and use a technological platform that allows for integration of the visual image and annotations (MS Word, PowerPoint/Keynote, Photoshop, WordPress/Dreamweaver, Tumblr, etc[.](https://readtapestry.com/)).
5. Present your image and analysis to the class in a 5-8 minute presentation.

*Grading Criteria:*  
Not all analyses and annotations are equally enlightening or persuasive, so **select your image wisely** and develop your interpretation thoughtfully. Refer back to our course readings on visual rhetoric for concepts, approaches, and elements to analyze. Projects will be graded based on the following criteria:

1. Relevance of information provided in the introduction.
2. Level of analysis in the annotations (***what*** is being communicated). Remember, that *analysis* provides a justified interpretation, while *description* simply states what's there.
3. Appropriate use of design and rhetorical language to convey analysis (***how*** messages are being communicated).
4. Quality of writing: clarity, focus, and concision.
5. Functionality of your technological platform for reading the image and annotations.

*This assignment is adapted with permission from Dr. Michael Neal.*

**Visual Argument, Essay, and Presentation- 50%**   
This assignment has three parts that encourage you to go beyond considering only the words in a text -its linguistic content- and to investigate actively how rhetorical tools and visual elements, such as graphics, typography, color, and placement, contribute to meaning and persuasion. Visual arguments surround us in life and on screen. In our daily lives, we are frequently confronted by visual artifacts with very little linguistic content that are still highly informative and persuasive. The overall goal of this project is to help you to be more conscious of the visual strategies you have at your own disposal in creating persuasive communication.

***Part 1: Visual Argument***  
For this part of the assignment you will create a short visual argument. Your visual argument must:

* be primarily visual rather than linguistic. It can take almost any form: a photo or series of photos, a painting, a drawing, a comic strip, a sculpture, a video, a computer generated image or animation, a collage, a scrapbook, etc. Importantly, you do NOT necessarily have to be the original creator/designer of the images you use as long as you choose purposefully and provide proper attribution.
* appeal or be directed to a specific audience
* clearly identify or state a problem to be addressed
* make a claim to make about the problem
* use one or more rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, or logos) to persuade viewers
* support your claim through evidence and visual choices such as typography, color, placement, graphics, etc.

*Assignment Possibilities*  
Keep in mind the amount of time you have to do complete this part of the assignment when choosing your approach. You will turn in a one paragraph proposal to ensure your project idea is manageable.

* Photographic Essay: Create a series of photos (4-5) in support of or serving as a particular argument.
* Curated Image Collection: Compile a set of images from any source (4-5) in support of or serving as a particular argument.
* Scrapbook: Create a series of images, captions, and design choices in support of or serving as a particular argument.
* Ad Campaign: Develop an ad campaign for a specific event, cause, organization, or product. The series should contain 2-3 ads and work to convince the audience of the value of your subject.
* Editorial Cartoons: Design a series of cartoons and captions (2-3) that make an argument—political, social, economic, religious, etc.
* Professional Presentation: Identify a problem within a specific community and develop a solution to that problem. Your presentation should rely on visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint, posters, etc.) to support your argument.
* Issue-based web site: Develop a web site (max 3 pages) that informs and persuades readers on a specific issue or topic.

*Possible Subject Areas*  
Given our reading and discussion of visual representations of poverty and public memorials, you might consider further investigation into these issues/artifacts in other contexts. San Diego is particularly rich in military-related monuments and memorials and there are several monuments on the SDSU campus itself. Other possible subjects include the following, but the choices are nearly limitless:

* Race/Ethnicity/Cultural Issues
* Gender or Sexuality Orientation/Identification
* Education/College Life Campus-Based Issue
* Advocacy for a specific social or political cause (e.g., environmentalism, expansion of public transportation, etc.)

**Please note: The issue/subject area you choose should be appropriate for academic discussion. It should also be free of any material that can be offensive in terms of race, religion, gender, economic status, sexual orientation, etc. as stated in the course policy statement.**

***Part 2 Project Reflection and Connection Essay***  
The second part of this assignment asks you to compose a written essay (5-8 pages) in which you analyze the process used to compose your visual argument AND connect your work and thinking to relevant readings/ideas from the course. Use an essay format for this assignment and consider the question prompts below to help justify your rhetorical and design decisions.

* **Write about key ideas, concepts or theories that inspired your approach**. Who or what was most influential in shaping the approach of your visual argument project? Why? What did you learn about these ideas from applying them to your own work and in what ways, if any, did it change your understanding? Please be sure to cite at least three sources from course readings. You are welcome to include additional sources you find on your own if relevant, but it is not required.
* **Write about translating linguistic claims into visual claims**. How does your visual support your linguistic claim?
* **Write about the context**. In what ways does your visual argument appeal specifically to the audience you identified? That is, how do your design choices persuade your audience?
* **Write about how you used Williams’ Four Design Principles**. In what ways did you use repetition, contrast, proximity and alignment? Why? Did you violate any of these conventions? If so, why? You may wish to connect your discussion of contrast, repetition, proximity and alignment to your discussion of ethos, logos, and pathos.
* **Write about how you used Ethos, Pathos, Logos, and Kairos**.  How did you use appeals logic, emotion, and credibility in your visual? Which of these appeals is the strongest? Why?
  + **Ethos**: What does your choice of medium say about your ethos? How does your design reflect your character as writer/designer? Do you convey your ethos through typography? Color? Some other way?
  + **Logos**: How does your visual rely on logos? In what ways do you appeal to logic? Through typography? Color? Placement? References? Some other way?
  + **Pathos**: How does your visual appeal to emotion? Do you convey emotion through typography? Color? Some other way?
  + **Kairos**: What elements of timing and cultural setting did you consider in producing this visual text? In what ways did that moment in time impact the composition and meaning of your text
* **Write about the process**. What was the most challenging part of composing your visual argument? Why was it so challenging? Briefly describe and explain one of the significant revisions you made to your visual argument after your initial draft. What is the most effective aspect of your project? Have you deliberately adapted a standard genre convention in an unusual or creative way? If so, why? What would you do differently given more time or experience and why?

***Part III: Project Presentations***  
The final part of this project is a short presentation (5-7 minutes) to your classmates about your visual argument and the work you did in your essay. Your presentation should allow the class to see/experience your visual argument and understand your motivations and context for approaching it as you did. Be sure to cover the specific persuasive strategies you invoked.

*Grading Criteria*  
The three parts of this assignment combined are worth 50% of your final grade. Below are the specific criteria I will use to evaluate each component:

* adherence to assignment’s directions
* the quality of your written and visual work:
  + clear and specific claims
  + clear support/explanation of claims
  + analysis of visual choices and relevant readings
  + overall organization
  + effective incorporation of the Four Design Principles
  + effective incorporation of ethos, pathos, and logos
* class presentations (quality of preparation and evidence of comprehension and ability to apply key concepts)
* thorough, clear, and thoughtful answers to the above questions in the essay

*This assignment is adapted with permission from Dr. Julia Romberger.*