

ANSC 183 **Visualizing the Human**

Professor Steve Parish
Office hours: TBA, before and after class

Welcome! This course is about creating visual accounts of human experience.

It is a process course—you learn by doing and collaborating. Your grade will be based largely on two projects: a group project and an individual project.

There will be required exercises and assignments that advance work on the projects. Attendance and participation will also be integral to your grade.

There is no mandatory section, but you are expected to meet with your project group outside of class. You are also expected to dive into readings—to extract what might advance your projects and help with our collaborations.

Text: Visual Research by Marin and Cr

If class discussion and project development offers sufficient evidence that the readings have been thoughtfully engaged, there will be no midterm and no final exam.

The projects will be the basis of presentations in the last 1-2 weeks of classes.

UCSD Principles of Community <https://ucsd.edu/about/principles.html> and Standards of Academic Integrity apply to this course.

Overview

Humans live visual lives; they live in visual cultures; they create the visual worlds they inhabit; they are consumers and creators of images that saturate their daily lives. Technologies, economics, and social processes shape these visual worlds and capacities. This class will provide an opportunity to develop and sharpening visual skills, and offer you the chance to reflect on the impact of the visual on the human. We will assess the potential of visual arts, techniques, technologies, and cultures for understanding and enhancing human life—and develop our own projects to enhance our own skills and develop our understandings.

Visualization is a very broad term; for the purposes of this course, it encompasses any media or technology that can be used to offer a visual account of human life. A drawing pencil and sheet of paper is a visual technology; so is your cell phone camera. Taking a picture and using it to say something about human life—adding analysis and interpretation to the image—is one example of visualizing. So is making a map, or creating a chart.

So the first question you will face in developing projects is what kind of visualization will serve your purposes. Charts? Diagrams? Illustrations? Photos? Video? Animation? And what resources do you have to do these?

Conceptual discovery precedes and accompanies visualization. What are you trying to do? What do you want to understand? Why is it important?

Are you trying to document human behaviors?

Are you displaying and organizing data?

Are you trying to render invisible processes visible?

Are you primarily trying to communicate a concept?

Are you trying to explain, persuade, or establish a framework for action?

Are you trying to make the strange, familiar, or the familiar, strange?

Do you intend your visualizations to be humanizing?

Horizon expanding? Consciousness-raising?

Editorial?

Or, as is quite likely, more than one of these?

In that case, how do the goals relate to each other?

What story are you trying to tell with visual images?

Why does this story matter?

Your own interests will determine what mode of visualization will be the focus of your individual projects, but the group projects should try to integrate more than one mode:

- Scientific visualization; use of charts, graphs, scientific illustrations, visual or 3 d modeling, explaining or clarifying processes, relations, hypotheses, experimental procedures, used to enhance our understanding of scientific processes.
- Art based: drawing, painting, conceptual art, performance art that is visually recorded or has visual impact, film with its narrative traditions and cinematic techniques, anime, cartoons, used to expand our ability to imagine human possibilities, have an impact on feelings, explore human meanings, and so on
- Documentary or ethnographic focus: use of any visual technique to record everyday life, interviews, human situations, places, architecture, dwellings, interactions, habitations, social and cultural life in its many forms (e.g., making music, family rituals, dance, bench work in a lab, working, leisure practices, and so on)

- Analysis of visual cultures: exploring visual experience in cultural life (or your own personal life) by making use of internet, or archives or other sources to explore visual cultures themselves, the propagation of images, the influence, news value, propaganda value, psychological appeal, cultural meaning, of the flow of images in modern life. Are your cell phone photos a cultural archive that can be used to examine visual culture for what it says about human experience? What about your grandparents' family albums?

In all of this, we will try to connect visual images to “the human.” Images without human context don't count as visualizing the human. We need to connect the images to some aspect of human experience, explore ways they express the human condition or can be made to do so by careful crafting of narrative or development of analysis and interpretation.

How will you put put imagines in their human context and explore their human significance? How do you go from image to human significance?

The schedule of readings and exercises will be developed as we get to know each and discuss our interests.

Readings and exercises Week 1 and 2

Week 1

On Thursday bring in two to four images that “say something.” One should be an abstraction; the other very concrete. You will use them to introduce yourself. What are your interests in general? In the course?

Read: “The ethics of images,” chap. 1 in Visual Research.

Week 2

Read by Tuesday: Visual Research, pp. 13-67

Mini-photo essays

What will be the focus of your individual project? By Tuesday, post a set of exactly five captioned images that say something about the aspect of human life you want to explore. You may focus on a place, a person, or a process. Be prepared to speak briefly about them when we meet. What do they say? How do you see them? You can use your own images—that is likely to be most interesting to the rest of us; but you can also take images from the internet or use social media, or use a combination.

Tuesday: Organizing project groups

Thursday: TBA