

ANTH 398 E – Visual Anthropology

Course Director:

Dr. Maximilian C. Forte

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Concordia University

Office: H-1125-11

Office Hours: Thursdays, 9:30am–12:30pm

Office Telephone: 514 848-2424 ext. 5567

E-mail: mforte@alcor.concordia.ca

Winter Semester, 2007

03 credits

03 January – 04 April, 2007

Meeting days and times:

Wednesdays: 10:15am–1:00pm

Campus: **SGW, Room H-433**

Course Website:

<http://www.centrelink.org/ANTH398/>

Introduction

Visual anthropology, one of the fastest growing subfields of anthropology, is becoming an almost indispensable tool for anyone considering ethnographic research, media analysis, studies of material culture, or critical engagements with the arts and other forms of cultural display (such as museums). Since the subfield is a broad one, and could cover any manner of visual expression, this course is only an introduction that focuses on photography and film, the two leading concerns of visual anthropologists to date.

Visual anthropologists are interested in the cultural meanings of visual expressions, *and* visually recording cultural practices within an ethnographic context. In other words, there are two sides to visual anthropology: *reception* (the study of images produced by anthropologists and others) and *production* (the creation of image records by anthropologists themselves).

In looking at the history of ethnographers' visual documentation of non-Western peoples as well as indigenous self-representations, this course primarily concerns itself with power and the development of professional anthropology, focusing on photography and film. This course explores paradigms and case studies in the history visual anthropology by highlighting the stylistic, social scientific, commercial and political agendas that influence the production of visual documents. Starting with colonial exhibitions of "exotic natives," the course progresses through photography to classic and contemporary ethnographic film with a focus on Curtis, Flaherty, Mead, Gardner, Rouch and MacDougall. This course will not offer any practical training in photography or videography. This course is anthropology-specific, meaning that you will not be provided with a history of photography or cinema as such. In addition, this course does not attempt a complete and comprehensive history of all trends in either ethnographic photography or ethnographic film (although we will see 12 films in 13 weeks), which would easily exceed the bounds of this course. Instead, the focus is on the landmark creations that should hopefully guide and invite students to explore more work on their own.

Finally, as with any course, there is only so much that the instructor can do during lecture time. In our case, classroom interaction is further limited by the need to feature several films. To help you get the most out of this course, it might be useful to think of this course as running along three separate tracks, i.e.: (1) lectures and class discussions, (2) readings (assigned and independent), and, (3) film case studies in class. It is up to you to combine as much as possible from each of these tracks.

Overview—Course Questions

This course explores several related topics surrounding the use of still photography and film: (a) what photographs and film show (and do not show); and, (b) how Western culture uses images of non-Western peoples, and debates about how non-Western peoples use images of themselves.

Some of the specific questions we will explore include:

1. What is the status of the visual in contemporary Western society and in the social sciences?
2. How have photographs and films of non-Western peoples been used in anthropology?
3. What kinds of bias and stereotypes, stylistic conventions, scientific, commercial and political agendas influence the choice of recorded images?
4. In which ways do images taken by indigenous image-makers differ from those taken by “outsiders”?
5. How can a visual component be a valuable part of most ethnographic field projects?
6. What makes a photograph or a film *ethnographic*?

By the end of this course you should be able to come away with a critical understanding of the following:

- (a) That which images do and do not “show”
- (b) The many potential messages embedded in any one image
- (c) The history of visual documentation of non-Western peoples by anthropologists and others
- (d) The implications of visual recording, especially of non-Western peoples
- (e) The limitations and the benefits of using photography and film in anthropological research
- (f) The expectations to be faced when launching a photographic/filmic project or product as an ethnographic one.

Assignments, Grade Structure, Policies

As the due date for each assignment draws near, I will circulate detailed assignment sheets in class (and on the course website), outlining the nature of the assignment, sources, methods, goals, etc.

The list of assignments, and their respective proportion of the overall grade, are as follows:

ASSIGNMENTS	GRADE
1. Class Participation: evaluation of your <i>presence</i> and <i>input</i> in class discussions.	15%
2. Mid-term Exam (take home) <i>Question(s) assigned in class, Weds., 31 January</i> <i>Due Weds., 07 February, in class, at the start of class. No exams will be accepted once the class is in progress.</i>	15%
3. Producer Biography <i>Assignment details provided on the course website.</i> <i>Due Weds., 28 February, in class, at the start of class.</i>	25%
4. Concept Essay <i>Instructions and options provided on the course website.</i> <i>Due Weds., 14 March, in class, at the start of class.</i>	15%
5. Final Exam (take home essay questions) <i>Questions distributed in class on Weds., 04 April</i> <i>Due Fri., 13 April, by e-mail to mforte@alcor.concordia.ca by 5:00pm (only Word, TXT, and PDF accepted)</i>	30%
Total	100%

Extensions, Lateness and Penalties:

- **No exams will be accepted late**, without medical documentation that clearly indicates that the period covered by the exam was the period in which the student was seriously ill. In the case of a death in one's immediate family, an obituary or similar notice must be submitted. In these two cases, the appropriate extension will be negotiated. In all other cases, a late exam is automatically assigned a grade of zero. A late take-home exam is treated the same as a student not showing up to sit an exam.
- When submitting your final exam by email, it is of critical importance that you receive an *acknowledgement*, by e-mail, from the instructor. The lack of such acknowledgement means your exam was not received. Please do not submit a final exam by email in any format other than those specified.
- Extensions for work other than exams may be negotiated, given very compelling reasons, only in **advance** of the due date for an assignment. After the due date has passed, no extensions are possible. Where extensions for assignments are **not** negotiated *in advance* (“my hard drive was wiped clean,” “my computer is in for repairs,” “I had problems printing,” “my boyfriend/girlfriend left me,” are examples of unacceptable reasons), *only* medical certification will be accepted as a valid reason for delayed submission of assignments. In the case of late work, a penalty of 5% of the points for that assignment is levied for every 24 hour period following the due date and time, including weekends and holidays. After 10 days have elapsed, the late assignment will be assigned a grade of zero and will no longer be accepted. These policies are strictly enforced with regard to *all* students in the course, please do not expect any personal exemption.
- Arrangements for Late Completion should be negotiated and arranged with the instructor *before* final grades are due. Only the most compelling reasons, with convincing documentation, can be considered. *Please keep in mind that the instructor will most likely not accept requests for late completion.*
- There will be *no* supplemental work.
- Please do *not* call the main office for course-related inquiries.

Grading

For all work done in this course you will receive a numerical grade which will be converted to a letter grade when final grades are processed. To translate numbers into letter grades, please consult the following chart, which is copied from a faculty handbook in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology. *It is vital that you understand that the characterizations below (i.e., “excellent”) are central in guiding the instructor’s evaluation of the quality of a paper.* In other words, students who feel they deserve an “A” are burdened with explaining why they think their work is “excellent.”

A paper that covers all of the basics, in a reasonably competent fashion, without major flaws, is deemed “satisfactory.” One that has few flaws, and shows an advanced understanding, writing and analytical ability is deemed “very good.” A paper that leaves virtually no room for improvement, demonstrating that the student has taken considerable initiative, showing sophisticated understanding and ability, is deemed “excellent.”

A+	90-100	} EXCELLENT	C+	67- 69	} SATISFACTORY	D+	57- 59	} POOR
A	85- 89		C	63- 66		D	53- 56	
A-	80- 84		C-	60- 62		D-	50- 52	
B+	77- 79	} VERY GOOD				} VERY POOR { F or FNS 40 (30-49) R 20 (0-29)		
B	73- 76							
B-	70- 72							

In general, student work is assessed in the following manner. Student assignments are evaluated in comparison with each other, normally done by the instructor assembling a random sample and highlighting the best elements of each paper, which then forms the template by which papers are judged. The paper(s) that come(s) closest to achieving the highest standards for student work will receive the highest grades. Students are evaluated on the extent and depth to which they have utilized assigned readings (when applicable). Students are also evaluated on their ability to successfully apply key course concepts to their own writing. Analytical and conceptual clarity (the argument does not contradict itself repeatedly, the writer stays focused, any concepts used are defined, concepts are related to one another when applicable, pros and cons are considered, assertions are supported with evidence or logic), are vital elements of a paper deemed to be “very good” or better. Structure, logical organization, and effective writing are of substantial importance. In the case of research papers, students that demonstrate having taken initiative by covering a reasonably wide and diverse range of sources will be appropriately rewarded.

Academic Regulations

Section 16 (Academic Information: Definitions and Regulations) of the Undergraduate Calendar will be strictly administered – particularly on deadlines, Failing Grades, Administrative Notations, Late Completions=‘INCompletes’ (Grade/INC), ‘Failed No Supplementals’ (FNS), ‘Did Not Writes’ (Grade/DNW). Make sure you get a copy of the undergraduate calendar, also available online at <http://registrar.concordia.ca/calendar/calendar.html>, and read that material.

PLEASE NOTE THAT PLAGIARISM is an offence that will not be tolerated. In instances where plagiarism is detected, the instructor is *obligated* by Concordia’s Academic Code to report this to the Dean’s office. You *must* visit the course website for precise details on what constitutes plagiarism and the penalties this can incur. Alternatively, you may type in the following URLs into the address bar of your Internet browser:

<http://secretariat.concordia.ca/policies/academic/en/Code%20of%20Conduct-Academic.pdf> = Concordia Code of Academic Conduct in PDF format

<http://cdev.concordia.ca/CnD/studentlearn/Help/handouts/WritingHO/AvoidingPlagiarism.html> = Concordia University Library document to help you Avoid Plagiarism

Announcements, E-mail Use:

In the event of an unscheduled cancellation of a class, the appropriate notice is posted by the University on its website. See the “Class Cancellations” link on www.concordia.ca. In addition, digital billboards on campus will announce the cancellation. There will be no additional notices posted in any other form, therefore please consult these sources before you attend class.

In other cases, news for the class will be posted on the course website.

The course director cannot guarantee that email will be answered during this semester. Should you have any questions, please see the course director during office hours.

SCHEDULE of CLASSES and READINGS

PART ONE: PHOTOGRAPHY

1. Introducing Visual Anthropology & Colonialism and Exhibited Others: Difference as Spectacle and Science

Weds., 03 January

Overview of course, requirements, introductory notes

- Ruby, Jay. 1996. "Visual Anthropology." In *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, David Levinson and Melvin Ember, editors. New York: Henry Holt and Company, vol. 4: 1345-1351.



2. Colonialism and Exhibited Others, cont'd: Difference as Spectacle and Science

Weds., 10 January

- Ch. 2, "Science and Spectacle: Visualizing the Other at the World's Fair," pp. 46-85 [From: Griffiths, Alison. 2002. *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, and Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture*. New York : Columbia University Press.]
- Corbey, Raymond. 1993. "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930." *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 8, No. 3: 338-369.

Film: *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus (53 mins.)*—Yola Masenko, 1998: the story of a Khoi Khoi woman who was taken from South Africa, at the age of 20 in 1810, then exhibited across Britain as a freak. She was taken to France in 1814, where she became the object of scientific and medical research that formed the basis for European ideas about black female sexuality. The documentary film uses historical drawings, cartoons, legal documents and interviews with cultural historians and anthropologists to tell the story.



3. Early Ethnographic Photography: Contexts and Trends

Weds., 17 January

- Brian Street, "British Popular Anthropology: Exhibiting and Photographing the Other", 122-131 [From: Edwards, Elizabeth, ed. 1992. *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920*. New Haven: Yale University Press.]
- Williams, Carol. 1999. "Photographic Portraiture of Aboriginal Women on Canada's Northwest Coast Circa 1862-1880." <http://cc.joensuu.fi/sights/carol.htm>

Film: *In the Land of the War Canoes: Kwakiutl Indian Life on the Northwest Coast (47 mins.)*—Edward S. Curtis 1914 (1972): Made in 1914. Restored by Bill Holm, George Quimby and David Gerth in 1972. Originally entitled: *In the land of the headhunters*. A dramatic presentation of Kwakiutl Indian life on the northwest coast of America, shot in 1914 on Vancouver Island.

DNE Deadline for withdrawal with tuition refund from Winter courses



4. Ethnographic Photography: Conventions and Methodologies

Weds., 24 January

- Im Thurn, E. F. 1893. "Anthropological Uses of the Camera." *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 22: 184-203.
- Damon, Frederick H. 2000. "'To Restore the Events?': On the Ethnography of Malinowski's Photography." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Mar., Vol. 16, No. 1: 71-77.
- Lakoff, Andrew. 1996. "Freezing Time: Margaret Meads's Diagnostic Photography." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Mar., Vol. 12, No. 1: 1-18.



5. Paradigms and Debates: Photography in Ethnography

Weds., 31 January

- Margaret Mead, "Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words," pp. 3-10 [From: Hockings, Paul, ed. 1995. *Principles of Visual Anthropology*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.]
- Mead, Margaret, and Gregory Bateson. 1977. "On the Use of the Camera in Anthropology." *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, Dec., Vol. 4, No. 2: 78-80.
- Ch. 1, "Reading Pictures," pp. 1-12 [From: Banks, Marcus. 2001. *Visual Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage.]



6. Indigenous Uses of Photography

Weds., 07 February

- Prins, Harald E.L., and Bishop, John. 2001-2002. "Edmund Carpenter: Explorations in Media and Anthropology." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Vol. 17., No. 2: 110-140.
- MacDougall, David. 1992. "'Photo wallahs': An Encounter with Photography." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Sep., Vol. 8, No. 2: 96-100.
- Sprague, Stephen. 1978. "How I See the Yoruba See Themselves." *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, Sep., Vol. 5, No. 1: 9-29.
- Buckley, Liam. 2000. "Self and Accessory in Gambian Studio Photography." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Sep., Vol. 16, No. 2: 71-91.
- [WEB] Buckley, Liam. 2000. "Gambian Studio Photography." from VAR 16.2, pp 71-91: <http://etext.virginia.edu/VAR/gambia/photo.html>

Film: *Photo Wallahs (60 mins.)*—David & Judith MacDougall, 1991: The film focuses on the photographers of Mussoorie, a hill station in the Himalayan foothills of northern India whose fame has attracted tourists since the 19th century. Through a rich mixture of scenes that includes the photographers at work, their clients, and both old and new photographs, this film examines photography as art and as social artifact.

Film: *Oh! What a Blow that Phantom Gave Me (52 mins.)*—John Bishop and Harald Prins, 2003: This film takes its title from a book written by filmmaker Edmund Carpenter in 1972 about his engagement with media in Papua, New Guinea. In the film, several filmmakers discuss the introduction of media, and film in particular, to native cultures. Media has the ability to help native peoples document their own cultures, but it also has the power to encroach upon those cultures and irreversibly alter them. This film relates the ways in which native peoples engage with media, from the Biami who proudly developed the "Big Wink" to learn how to properly focus a camera, to the Kandagan people who changed the rules of a thousand year old male initiation ceremony to allow a woman camera operator to document the ceremony. At issue is the way in which media "swallows cultures" and the benefits and dangers of introducing preliterate societies to Western modes of communication and expression.



PART TWO: FILM

7. History of Ethnographic Film

Weds., 14 February

- Griffiths, Alison. 1996. "Knowledge and Visuality in Turn-of-the-century Anthropology: The Early Ethnographic Cinema of Alfred Cort Haddon and Walter Baldwin Spencer." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Sep., Vol. 12, No. 2: 18-43

Film: *The Hunters (72 mins.)*—John Marshall, 1957: an early classic in anthropological film follows the hunt of a giraffe by four men over a five-day period. The film was shot in 1952-53 on the third joint Smithsonian-Harvard Peabody sponsored Marshall family expedition to Africa to study Ju/'hoansi, one of the few surviving groups that lived by hunting - gathering. John Marshall was a young man when he made this, his first feature length film

Optional Film: *Dead Birds (84 mins.)*—Robert Gardner, 1964: A cinematographic interpretation of the life of a group of Grand Valley Dani, who are mountain Papuans in West New Guinea (Irian Barat, Indonesia), studied by the Harvard-Peabody Expedition (1961-1963). This film was made by Gardner in 1961, before the area was pacified by the Dutch government. The film focuses on Weyak, the farmer and warrior, and on Pua, the young swineherd, following them through the events of Dani life: sweet potato horticulture, pig keeping, salt winning, battles, raids, and ceremonies.



No class on Weds., 21 February (Winter break)



8. What is Ethnographic Film?

Weds., 28 February

- Ch. 7, Marcus Banks, "Which films are the ethnographic films?" pp. 116-130 [From: Crawford, Peter Ian, and Turton, David, eds. 1992. *Film as Ethnography*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.]
- Ruby, Jay. 1975. "Is an Ethnographic Film a Filmic Ethnography?" *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, Sep., Vol. 2, No. 2: 104-111.
- David MacDougall, "Beyond Observational Cinema," pp. 115-132 [From: Hockings, Paul, ed. 1995. *Principles of Visual Anthropology*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.]
- Ch. 1, "Innovation in Ethnographic Film, 1955-85," pp. 5-15 [From: Loizos, Peter. 1993. *Innovation in Ethnographic film: From Innocence to Self-Consciousness, 1955-85*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.]



9. Case Studies in Ethnographic Film: Robert J. Flaherty and *Nanook of the North*

Weds., 07 March

- Flaherty, Robert J. 1922. "How I Filmed 'Nanook of the North'." *World's Work*, October: 632-640.
- Ch. 3, "The Innocent Eye: Flaherty, Malinowski and the Romantic Quest," pp. 45-56 [From: Grimshaw, Anna. 2001. *The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Anthropology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.]
- Hockings, Paul. 2001-2002. "Asen Balicki Films *Nanook*." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2: 71-80.

Film: *Nanook of the North (69 mins.)*—Robert J. Flaherty, 1922: Presents a documentary of the saga of an Eskimo family pitting their strength against a vast and inhospitable Arctic. Juxtaposes their struggle for survival against the elements with the warmth of the little family as they go about their daily affairs.

Optional Film: *Nanook Revisited (55 mins.)*—Claude Massot, 2004: The filmmakers revisit Inukjuak, the Inuit village where Flaherty filmed *Nanook of the North*. Examines the realities behind the ground-breaking documentary and the changes since it was made almost 70 years ago. Shows the reactions of the Inuit living in the village, to the film, and also looks at the inaccuracies and staged scenes in the original.



10. Case Studies in Ethnographic Film: Jean Rouch, Part I

Weds., 14 March

- Edgar Morin, "Chronicle of a Film," pp. 229-265 [From: Feld, Steven, ed. 2003. *Ciné-ethnography*; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.]

Note: as you can see from the duration of the films indicated below, class time for this session will be devoted to watching the films, with most of the review and discussion left for the following session.

Film: *Les Maîtres Fous (The Mad Masters) (29 mins.)*—Jean Rouch, 1954: This film documents the annual ceremony of the Hauku cult, a religious movement which was widespread in Niger and Ghana from the 1920's to the 1950's.

Film: *Chronique d'un été (Chronicle of a Summer) (85 mins.)*—Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, 1961: In the summer of 1960 a documentary film crew asks the people on the streets of Paris if they are happy.

Last day for academic withdrawal from two-term and winter-term courses



11. Case Studies in Ethnographic Film: Jean Rouch, Part II

Weds., 21 March

- Jean Rouch, "The Camera and Man," pp. 29-46 [From: Rouch, Jean. 2003. *Ciné-ethnography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.]
- Taylor, Lucien. 1991. "A Conversation with Jean Rouch." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Mar., Vol. 7, No. 1: 92-102.



12. Case Studies in Ethnographic Film: Robert Gardner, *Forest of Bliss*, and One Big Ugly Debate

Weds., 28 March

- Moore, Alexander. 1988. "The Limitations of Imagist Documentary: A Review of Robert Gardner's 'Forest of Bliss'." *Society for Visual Anthropology Newsletter*, Sep., Vol. 4, No. 2: 1-3.
- Chopra, Radhika. 1989. "Robert Gardner's Forest of Bliss: A Review." *Society for Visual Anthropology Newsletter*, Mar., Vol. 5, No. 1: 2-3.
- Kirkpatrick, Joanna. 1989. Review of "Forest of Bliss." *American Anthropologist*, Mar., Vol. 91, No. 1: 273-274.
- Ostor, Akos. 1989. "Is That What Forest of Bliss is All About?: A Response." *Society for Visual Anthropology Newsletter*, Mar., Vol. 5, No. 1: 4-8.
- MacDougall, David. 2001. "Review Article: Gifts of Circumstance." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1: 68-85.
- Chiozzi, Paolo. 1990. "What is Ethnographic Film? Remarks About a Debate." *Society for Visual Anthropology Review*, Mar., Vol. 6, No. 1: 26-28.

Film: *Forest of Bliss (90 mins.)*—Robert Gardner, Ákos Östör, 1978: A documentary on the Holy City of Benares, India, its daily customs and religious rituals.



13. CONCLUSION: *New trends in ethnographic film*

Weds., 04 April

Film: *Incidents of Travel in Chichén Itzá (90 mins.)*—Jeffrey Himpele, Quetzil Castañeda, 1997: This ethnographic video depicts how New Agers, the Mexican state, tourists, and 1920s archaeologists all contend to "clear" the site of the antique Maya city of Chichén Itzá in order to produce their own idealized and unobstructed visions of "Maya" while the local Maya themselves struggle to occupy the site as vendors and artisans. The setting is the spring Equinox when a shadow said to represent the Maya serpent-god Kukulcan appears on one temple pyramid. As more than 40,000 New Age spiritualists and secular tourists from the United States and Mexico converge to witness this solar phenomenon, the video depicts the surrounding social event as a complicated entanglement of expected dualisms concerning tourism. Going beyond previous films that reduce tourism to neo-colonial and exoticizing social relations, this video portrays a Maya cultural site where US New Agers -- rather than local Mayas -- appear as exotic ritualists who are on display for other secular tourists and for local Mayas. While the video does examine representations of Mayas by visiting New Agers as part of globalizing discourses on the exotic and evolution, it also shows how during the ongoing economic crisis resident Mayas struggle against the Mexican state -- rather than against tourists -- that regularly "sweeps" them from the tourist zone in order to anchor the nation in an image of pure antiquity. This video also asks what kind of fieldwork is possible at such a spectacle and it questions the status of ethnographic authority as people from the various groups converging on the event, including the anthropologist-videomakers, ironically trade positions as well as compete to speak about the Maya.

The End