

COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

Academic School / Department:	Communication and the Arts
Programme:	Year 1 Programme
FHEQ Level:	3
Course Title:	Fundamentals of Visual Thinking
Course Code:	ARTS 3101
Total Hours:	160 (Lev 3-5) (4 US Credit)
Timetabled Hours:	45
Guided Learning Hours:	15
Independent Learning Hours:	100
Credit	16 UK CATS credits 8 ECTS credits 4 US credits

Course Description:

This course provides a grounding in the practice and theory of visual thinking. Through theoretical frameworks such as semiotics, the course explores the changing role of images in society from a range of cultures and contexts: the arts, politics, science, sport, design and technology. Students will consider digital forms of observation and image making through visual analysis and will build on this understanding through photographic practice. The course examines questions concerning curating, circulating and making public the images we all produce. It asks: What are the values and truths hidden in images? How can the practice of image production advance our thinking around images? How, in the context of a range of disciplines, can we learn to read and communicate ideas visually?

Prerequisites:

None

Aims and Objectives:

- Develop the ability to observe, interpret and evaluate media and the arts from global contexts and across a range of disciplines.
- Apply practice-centered research in the context of media and the arts.
- Develop the ability to communicate through visual and written media.

Programme Outcomes:

A3I, B3I, C3I, D3I

A detailed list of the programme outcomes are found in the Programme Specification.

This is located at the archive maintained by Registry and found at:

<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, successful students should be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to identify, interpret and evaluate images.
- Demonstrate, at a basic level, practice-centered thinking around images.
- Communicate a basic understanding of the role and contribution of images to society.
- Propose effective ways of sharing visual thought within a professional creative industries environment.

Indicative Content:

- Introduction to visual analysis (e.g. semiotics, context-text)
- Introduction to practice-centered research
- Introduction to exhibitions and display
- Photography: history, theory, practice
- Responding to images: appropriation, montage, sampling, collage
- Reflection on practice: questions, methods, observations, statements
- Ethical dimensions of visual thinking
- Professional practice

Assessment:

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

Teaching Methodology:

This course will be delivered face to face through a combination of lectures and interactive sessions. In addition to classroom activities, there are guided learning elements that are tutor led and arranged through Blackboard. These activities can be asynchronous online sessions, flipped classrooms, set readings with discussion boards or set guest lectures for example. Set activities are monitored by the instructor to ascertain student engagement. Students are encouraged to prepare for class and to play an active part, to raise questions, following-up ideas and interact with a wide range of provided material.

Indicative Text(s):

Bate, D., Wells, L., Cramerotti, A., (2020) *Photography as Critical Practice: Notes on Otherness*. Bristol: Intellect Books.

Behdad, A., (2016) *Camera Orientalis: Reflections on Photography of the Middle East*. Illustrated edition. ed. USA: The University of Chicago Press.

Benjamin, W. (1931) 'A Short History of Photography' in Merwether, C. (2006) *The Archive; Documents of Contemporary Art*. London: Whitechapel Gallery.

Chandler, D. (2022) *Semiotics: The Basics*. 4th edn. London: Routledge.

Crow, D. (2015) *Visible Signs*. 3rd Revised edn. London: Fairchild Books.

Ritchin, F. (2025) *The Synthetic Eye: Photography Transformed in the Age of AI*. New York: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

Sall, A. (2024) *The African Gaze: Photography, Cinema and Power*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

Singh, D. (2023) *International Departures: Art in India After Independence*. London: Reaktion Books.

Sontag, S. (1979) *On Photography*. 1st Penguin Edition. London: Penguin.

Zylinska, J. (2017) *Nonhuman Photography*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

See syllabus for complete reading list.

Change Log for this CSD:

Nature of Change	Date Approved & Approval Body (School or AB)	Change Actioned by Registry Services
First Edition	Nov 2024	
Updated Programme and course title	Feb 2025	