Jan Marontate & Dave Murphy   Fall 2009
School of Communication   Simon Fraser University (Burnaby)

CMS 325-4: Visualization and Visual Culture in Communication

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| **Handout 1: Course Administration & Overview** |
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An electronic version of this handout can be downloaded from the Resources section of the course site:
https://webdav.sfu.ca/web/cmns/courses/2009/325

Overview:
One of the striking features of contemporary society is the proliferation of visual images in everyday life. Quick and accessible technologies for creating, recording and disseminating images have made it much easier to communicate using visual images and combine them with text and sound. This course will provide students with an opportunity to consider theoretical foundations of the many ways that visual culture shapes and is shaped by communication and to develop applied skills in visualization. Visualization is not merely a set of techniques for organizing and presenting information. The term also refers to processes for gaining insights into phenomena that we cannot necessarily 'see' or communicate about using other means. Visual culture and visualization processes thus conceived are powerful ways of knowing. Visualization is sometimes presented as a strategy for synthesizing complex ideas and containing the flow of massive amounts of information but visual representations are not neutral presentations of 'facts.' The ability to critically analyze and design effective visual communication is of fundamental importance for understanding and participating in contemporary society.

This course investigates both theories and techniques of visualization design. Themes covered in the course include: theories of visualization in relation to communication studies; methodologies for studying the interplay of technology, culture and media in visual studies and visual communication design; analysis of imaging conventions and innovations in the context of contemporary global communication; and visual communication in diverse cultural contexts.

This laboratory-based course requires the completion of practical assignments that apply the ideas presented in seminars, workshops and readings. Assignments will include student presentations of visualization design and short applied theory essays.

Students should plan to attend ALL of the scheduled hours for this course. Additional lab work outside of class hours will be needed in order to complete assignments. All students are expected to present their work to the class and to participate actively in critiques and discussions.

Required and Recommended Readings:
Required Textbooks (available in the Burnaby campus bookstore):
     Manghani, Sunil, Arthur Piper and Jon Simons (eds.). *Images: A Reader.* London: Sage, 2006.
     Ware, Colin. *Visual Thinking for Design*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2008.
Other readings (and viewing assignments) will be assigned throughout the term. Additional readings will be made available on-line or through the library reserves. Some viewing assignments will involve fieldwork (actually going places to visually examine them).

Grading Scheme:

Visualization Designs (Aesthetic/Conceptual)	15%	Final Applied Design Project	35%
Information Visualization Design (Quantitative/Data)	15%	Lab Assignments	35%

Note: Attendance of **all** scheduled classes and labs is mandatory. Marks will be deducted for absences except in the case of valid documented absences (e.g. absences for health reasons with a note from a physician).

The School expects that the grades awarded in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distribution of grades. In addition, the School will follow Policy T10.02 with respect to "Intellectual Honesty" and "Academic Discipline" (see the current Calendar, General Regulations section).

Handout #2 presents a tentative outline of the reading schedule and class activities.
Changes will be announced in class. More readings will be assigned.