

Lingnan University
Department of Visual Studies

Course Title	: Art and Power: A Historical Survey of the Political Uses of the Visual
Course Code	: VIS4251
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd and 4 th years
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture and tutorial
Class Contact Hours	: 2 hours lecture per week 1 hour tutorial per week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

This course addresses the interrelationship between the visual (architecture, sculpture, painting, film, posters, etc.) and the political realm from a historical perspective. The focus will primarily be on Europe, but there will be a comparative aspect in that China, Cuba, and the United States will also be covered.

Although generally chronological in scope, this course does not intend to be a comprehensive survey of a vast area, but rather will use a number of historical case studies to illuminate the key themes.

Aims

This course intends to give students an understanding of the dynamics between the visual and the political realm, particularly the way in which the visual connects with relations of power, propaganda, and struggle. Students should gain an understanding of the visual as more than an aesthetic medium. They should come to see that throughout history, images have been a vehicle for power as well as a means of contesting it.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to enhance students' knowledge of the ways in which the visual (architecture, sculpture, painting, film, posters, etc.) is related to politics and power relations.

Completion of the course should grant students:

1. Knowledge of key visual products and texts pertinent to the topic of art and power.
2. An understanding of the relationship between visual productions and the specific historical and cultural contexts that give rise to them.
3. A basic understanding of the ways that the visual (architecture, sculpture, painting, film, posters, etc.) may bolster or contest certain values, power relations and regimes.

This knowledge enables students to:

1. Discuss and analyse a range of prominent visual products in terms of the socio-political and historical contexts from which they emerged.
2. Make and assess claims concerning the political impacts of specific visual products.

3. Engage in further, independent reflection on the manner in which visual products express or contest certain values and power relations within specific historical contexts.

Indicative Content

Content may vary from semester to semester, but will be drawn from the following topic areas:

1. The Riddle of the Sphinx: Politics and the Visual in the Mesopotamian Empire and the Age of the Pharaohs
2. Pax Romana: Republican Rome to the late Empire.
3. Challenging the Son of Heaven: Art and political expression in Han China
4. Struggle over the “Soul of Man”: Papal Splendour and Protestant Reformation
5. “Bliss it was in that dawn ...”: Revolutionary art in the French Revolution (1789-1798), the Empire of Napoleon, and the Paris Commune (1871).
6. “Oktober”: Art and revolutionary politics in Russia, 1917-25.
7. Art in a Restless Age: the visual and dissent in Republican Spain and Weimar Germany, 1920-39.
8. The Monolith: Propaganda, art and totalitarianism in Nazi Germany and the Stalinist USSR.
9. The East is Red: The Cult of Mao and the Cultural Revolution.
10. “Over There”: America at War – Focusing on the visual representation of the American experience in the Second World War and Vietnam War.
11. “Revolucion!”: Visual representations of the Cuban Revolution and the “cult of Che”.
12. Power Relations and the Visual Today: Student research presentations on contemporary examples of the political uses of the visual.

Teaching Method

Lectures will provide students with a sound background in both the specific historical conjunctures under study and the thematic issues. Selected readings are discussed in class, and students will be required to undertake group research projects on contemporary manifestations of the visual in the context of power relations. These projects will be presented towards the end of the course.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students’ progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above will be measured by continuous assessment of the students’ successful engagement with the lectures, tutorial discussions, readings, presentations, written assignments, and group projects. In addition, students’ knowledge of the subject will be assessed by a final examination at the end of the term.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment: 60%

Final Examination: 40%

Required Readings

Thomson, Oliver. *Easily Led: A History of Propaganda*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999.

Supplementary Readings

Selections from:

Ban Wang. *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Bersani, Leo and Dutoit, Ulysse. *The Forms of Violence. Narrative in Assyrian Art and Modern*

Culture, New York: Schocken Books, 1985.

Bird, William, et al. *A Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998.

Bonnell, Victoria E. *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters Under Lenin and Stalin*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Chuchiak, John F. *The Reformation and the Propaganda War*, <http://history.smsu.edu/jchuchiak/HST%20101--Lecture%2029---Reformation_and_the_propaganda_war.htm>

Clark, Toby. *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Harry N Abrams, 1997.

Craven, David. *Art and Revolution in Latin America, 1910-1990*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002

Cushing, Lincoln. *Revolucion!: Cuban Poster Art*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003.

Edwards, Mark U. *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995.

Evans, Harriet and Donald Stephanie. *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China*. Lanham: Rowman Littlefield, Publishers Inc 1999.

Evans, Jane DeRose. *The Art of Persuasion : Political Propaganda from Aeneas to Brutus*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

Landsberger, Stefan. *Chinese Propaganda Posters: From Revolution to Modernization*. Amsterdam and Singapore: The Pepin Press, 1995.

Larsen, Mogens Trolle (ed.). *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979.

Lewis, Beth Irwin. *George Grosz: Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Lippard, Lucy R. *A Different War: Vietnam in Art*. Bellingham: Whatcom Museum of History and Art, 1990.

Milner, John. *Art, War and Revolution in France, 1870-1871: Myth, Reportage and Reality*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

O'Brien, David. *After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Painting and Propaganda Under Napoleon Bonaparte*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005.

Philippe, Robert. *Political Graphics: Art As a Weapon*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1980.

Powers, Martin Joseph. *Art and Political Expression in Early China*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

Roeder, George H. *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Vernon, Kathleen M. *The Spanish Civil War and the Visual Arts*. Ithaca, NY: Center for International Studies, Cornell University, 1990.

Wistrich, Robert S. *Weekend in Munich: Art, Propaganda and Terror in the Third Reich*. London: Pavilion, 1995.

Zanker, Paul. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. Trans. Alan Shapiro. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988.

Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3* hours of class contact and 6* hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.

* Numbers of hours are subject to adjustment for individual courses.