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**Visual History: The Past in Pictures**

**Graduate Seminar; Hebrew University, Spring 2022**

**Vanessa Schwartz, Director, Visual Studies Research Institute USC**

Images make history. They document events, preserve memories, allow us to witness at a distance, and move us to act. Images can serve as both records and sources for the writing of history. This graduate seminar investigates the history of “writing” history in images (what Hayden White termed “historiophoty”) from the rise of European print culture circa 1450 to the global spread of digital media in the present, with an emphasis on the Western tradition and experience, including its imperial contexts. By investigating the many ways in which histories have been told with and in images, we aim to contextualize the current ubiquity of visually mediated evidence, documentation, and narrative. In the age of digital media, the power of images to transmit information in the present and craft accounts about the past appears obvious. That power, however, rests on a series of widely held and sometimes contradictory assumptions, among them: that images can be trusted as evidence if their provenance and accuracy are judged adequate; that images have greater emotional impact than words, but are on their own insufficient to write history and thus serve as illustrations to textual narratives; and that images are more universal and more capable of traversing geographic distances and cultural differences than words, except when impeded by unbreachable culturally-specific interpretive walls. The epistemic work of images, their evidentiary status in relation to words and things, and their perceived value as both historical sources and historical accounts have shifted again and again in the period our seminar examines, as have notions of what “history” itself means. This class will benefit students in history as well as the history of art and all humanities and social science graduate students interested in using images as sources as well as those considering the issues of time and change in their work.

**Requirements**

Students must (1) attend all meetings indicated in the schedule below; (2) read all assigned readings in preparation for each meeting and participate in group discussions (readings are available on the website); (3) post on our website a short response to the readings no later than 10 pm the day before the seminar meets and (4) do one in-class presentation of a “visual history,” which will begin in week two. The final project will consist of creating a visual lesson of the visual history selected. **That project is due May 18.**

Presentations and Visual History: Each student will select a “Visual History” to work on in the class. It is not a mere object that visualizes the past or is a source for understanding the past, but rather a full-blown “visual narrative.” This can be a singular object (like a history painting) or a film, or an illustrated history, a museum exhibition, etc.. Students will initially present a 10-15 minute object history in class and then will eventually produce a “visual lesson” by creating a stand-alone mini-film through powerpoint, prezzi, keynote, imovie.

Grading:

Posts: 20%

Participation: 30%

Class Presentation: 10%

Visual Lesson: 40%

**Week One: What is Visual History?**

**Session One: Sunday, April 24**

**16:00-17:00**: Presentation of the Seminar and Introductions

**17:30-19:15:** Presentation of Selected Clips by Schwartz and

Discussion of films and readings

Read:

* Schwartz and Bleichmar, “Visual History” *Representations, 145* Special Issue Introduction
* Schwartz, “Film and History”
* Hayden White, “​Historiography and Historiophoty​,” ​*The American Historical Review*,93:5 (1988): 1193–99

Screen:

* “Dawson City: Frozen Time” (2018)
* “Summer of Soul” (2021)

Each student must select a two-to-five-minute sequence from one of the films that they would like to discuss and it should be called out in their post on our class blog as part of their comment.

**19:15-20:00:** Presentation: How to Make a Visual Lesson, Rose Bishop, PhD student, Art History, USC, via Zoom

**Session Two: Tuesday, April 26: The Past in Pictures**

**16:00-17:30**

Lecture Schwartz: “Images: Are they dead or alive?”

**Discussion: 18:00-20:00**

* Frances Haskell, ​*History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), ​Introduction, p.1-10
* Ernst H. Gombrich, “​What Art Tells Us​,” in ​*New York Review of Books* (October, 1993)
* Stephen Bann, “​The Road to Roscommon​,” ​*The Oxford Art Journal*, 17:1 (1994): 98–102 (review of Haskell, ​*History and Its Images*)

**Session Three: Thursday April 28: Time**

16:00-17:00: Visit: Dr. Dani Schrire of the David Pearlman Holy Land Postcard Collection

17:00-18:00: Presentation of Mark Twain Images of the Holy Land (Schwartz)

**Discussion: 16:00-18:00**

* Kubler, *The Shape of Time*(<https://yaleunion.org/secret/Kubler-The-Shape-of-Time.pdf>)

**Visit to the Palmach Museum on Monday morning, April 25, 11:30-1:00 in Tel Aviv**

**Week Two: Mediating the Past**

**Session Four: Sunday, May 1: Photography**

**16:00-16:30**

Schwartz on Photography

**16:30-18:00: Discussion:**

* Raphael Samuel, “​The Eye of History,​” in ​*Theaters of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994), 315–36
* Clément Chéroux, “History Through Photography” in *Since 1839*, pp. 201-238
* Catherine Clark, “Photography as History”
* Fox-Amato, *Exposing Slavery*, pp.1-18 and 69-102

**18:30-20:00: Presentations Group 1**

**Session 5: Monday, May 2: Exhibiting the Past**

**16:00-17:30**: Schwartz presentation and discussion: “With Jefferson and Franklin in Paris”

**18:00-19:00: Discussion**

* Rymska-Pawlowska, *History comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s*, 1-11, 39-66
* Ben-Amos, “The Palmach Museum in Tel Aviv”
* Watch: “With Jefferson and Franklin in Paris” (link to follow)

**19:00-20:00: Presentations Group 2**

**Week Three: Changing Pictures: From News to History**

**Sunday, May 8:**

**16:00-17:30** Guest presentation: Steven Samols, PhD Candidate, History and Visual Studies USC: “Ruth Gruber’s Destination Palestine and the Zionist Photobook as a Work of History”

18:00-19:00: Further discussion of readings below.

• Berkowitz, Michael. “Photography’s Jewish Affinities: Unintended Benefits and Squandered Opportunities for Zionism and Israel.” The Journal of Israeli History 37, no. 2 (2019): 249-273.
• Gidal, Tim “Jews and the Camera” Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 32, (1987): 437-453.
• Grossmann, Rebekka. “Image Transfer and Visual Friction: Staging Palestine in the National Socialist Spectacle.” Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 64, (2019): 19-41.
• Kaplan, Amy “Zionism as Anticolonialism: The Case of Exodus” American Literary History 25, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 870-895.
• Samols, Steven. “Capturing Difference: The Wurstelprater Photobook in Turn-of-the-Century Vienna”, Leo Baeck Institute Year Book(Forthcoming).

Optional:
• Sewell, William H. “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille.” Theory and Society 25, no.6 (December 1996): 841-881.
• Shandler, Jeffrey. “The Time of Vishniac: Photographs of Pre-War East European Jewry in Postwar Contexts.” Polin 16, (2003): 313-334.

**19:00-20:00: Presentations Group 3**

**Monday, May 9: From News to History, part two**

**16:00-17:30** Schwartz presentation on Time-Life books.

**Discussion: 18:00-19:00**

**Reading:**

* Hill and Schwartz, *Getting the Picture*, Introduction
* Bair, “The Decisive Network” *History of Photography*
* Selections from Brussard, *Life* catalogue

**19:00-20:00: Presentations Group 4**