

Making Meaning

The Art of Visual Semiotics

Dr. Colin Beineke (Dr. B)

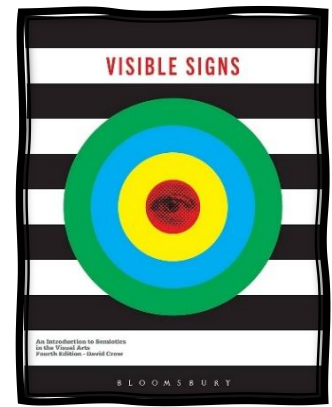
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Office: Elliot Basement

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 10:00-2:00, Burris 115

M/W/F, 9:30-10:30, Elliot Office



Course Description

This course introduces you to the critical and creative field of visual semiotics—the study of how art and design express and communicate meaning through the use of signs—drawing on theories and practices from art history, communication, aesthetics, linguistics, and studio art.

Taking on the identity of both critic and creator, you will develop skills in the semiotic interpretation of visual art and communication, articulate how semiotic theories inform creative practices, and produce a portfolio of your own visual art and design.

Learning Outcomes

1. Internalize and articulate foundational concepts and theories of visual semiotics
2. Interpret visual art and design by applying concepts and theories of visual semiotics.
3. Create original visual art and design informed by concepts and theories of visual semiotics.

Office Hours

My office is a student-centered space where you can ask questions, work through challenges, take intellectual risks, and simply be heard. You are **always** welcome to stop by: you never need a “good” reason to come in. I genuinely care about your growth, your well-being, and your experience in this course and at the Academy. The door is open because **I want you to feel supported**—not just as a student, but as a person navigating a challenging academic environment.

Open Studio Time

Our classroom will be available every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for open studio time to work on class tasks.

Grading

Please see the Tasks Booklet for detailed information regarding the grading framework for this course, including task instructions, evaluation criteria, and extensions and resubmissions.

AI Use

Use of generative AI for any part of task completion will result in a failing grade in the course.

Attendance

Five unexcused absences and/or tardies in excess of five minutes will result in a failing grade in the course.

Class Schedule

Week One (8/10-8/14)

Monday

During Class

- ❖ What Does Meaning Mean? Activity

Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ Task Booklet (Available on Canvas)

During Class

- ❖ Task Booklet Review and Grade Selection

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Introduction (pp. 6-9)

During Class

- ❖ Activity: Exploring Collage and Mixed Media Art

Week Two (8/17-8/21)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter One: What is Theory? / Saussure and Peirce / Linguistic Signs (pp. 12-17)

During Class

- ❖ Context Activity

Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter One: Agreement / Linguistic Community / Grammatology and Deconstruction (pp. 18-23)

During Class

- ❖ Duality Activity

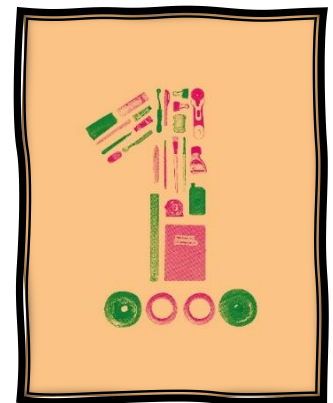
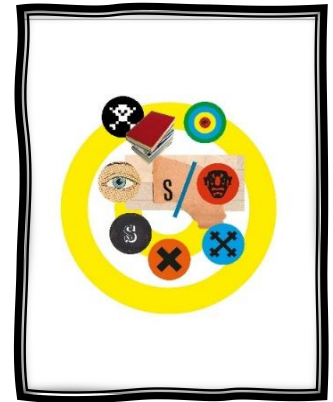
Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter One: Portfolio (pp. 24-28)

During Class

- ❖ **Chapter One Quiz**
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #1**



Week Three (8/24-8/28)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Two: Categories of Signs / Icon/Index/Symbol (pp. 32-35)

During Class

- ❖ Icon/Index/Symbol Activity

Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Two: Semiosis / Unlimited Semiosis (pp. 36-37)

During Class

- ❖ Unlimited Semiosis Activity

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Two: Value / Syntagm / Paradigm / Codes (pp. 38-43)

During Class

- ❖ Value Activity
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #2**

Week Four (8/31-9/4)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Two: Metaphor and Metonym (pp. 44)
- ❖ **Class Activity Reflection #1**

During Class

- ❖ Metaphor Activity

Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Two: Portfolio (pp. 45-49)

During Class

- ❖ Relationships and Meaning Activity

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Two: Portfolio (pp. 50-54)

During Class

- ❖ **Chapter Two Quiz**
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #3**



Week Five (9/7-9/11)

Monday

- ❖ **No Class**

Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Three: The Reader / Barthes / Denotation and Connotation (pp. 58-61)

During Class

- ❖ Denotation and Connotation Activity

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Three: Convention and Motivation / Language and Speech / Myth (pp. 62-64)

During Class

- ❖ Language and Speech Activity
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #4**

Week Six (9/14-9/18)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Three: Portfolio (pp. 65-74)

During Class

- ❖ **Chapter Three Quiz**

Wednesday

During Class

- ❖ Studio Time

Friday

During Class

- ❖ Studio Time
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #5**

Week Seven (9/21-9/25)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Four: Digital and Analogue Codes (pp. 78-79)
- ❖ **Portfolio Projects (Chapters One to Three)**

During Class

- ❖ Digital and Analogue Codes Activity



Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Four: Advertising Writing / The Three Messages / Anchorage and Relay (pp. 80-83)

During Class

- ❖ Anchorage and Relay Activity

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Four: Portfolio (84-90)

During Class

- ❖ **Chapter Four Quiz**
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #6**

Week Eight (9/28-10/2)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ **Class Activity Reflection #2**

During Class

- ❖ Studio Time

Wednesday

During Class

- ❖ Studio Time

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ **Semiotic Analysis**

During Class

- ❖ Semiotic Analysis Showcase
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #7**

Week Nine (10/5-10/9)

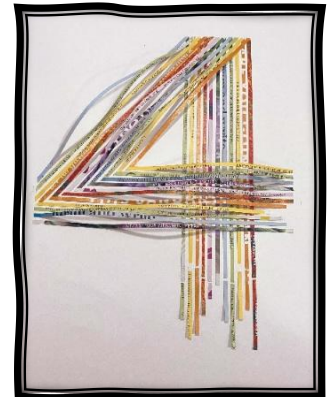
Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Five: Habitus / The Production of Legitimate Language (pp. 94-99)

During Class

- ❖ Legitimate Language Activity



Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Five: Capital / Rules (pp. 100-101)

During Class

- ❖ Capital and Rules Activity

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Five: The Competition for Cultural Legitimacy / Major and Minor Language / Authorized Language (pp. 102-103)

During Class

- ❖ Authorized Language Activity
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #8**

Week Ten (10/19-10/23)

Monday

During Class

- ❖ Studio Time

Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Five: Unofficial Language / Unofficial Codes / Visual Dialect (pp. 104-110)

During Class

- ❖ Visual Dialect Activity

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Five: Portfolio (pp. 107-116)

During Class

- ❖ **Chapter Five Quiz**
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #9**

Week Eleven (10/26-10/30)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Six: Hyperinstitutionalization (pp. 120-123)

During Class

- ❖ Hyperinstitutionalisation Activity



Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Six: Play and Identity (pp. 124-125)

During Class

- ❖ Play and Identity Activity

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Six: Portfolio (pp. 126-132)

During Class

- ❖ **Chapter Six Quiz**
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #10**

Week Twelve (11/2-11/6)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Seven: The Semiotics of Modernism (pp. 136-137)
- ❖ **Class Activity Reflection #3**

During Class

- ❖ Modernism Activity

Wednesday

During Class

- ❖ Studio Time

Friday

During Class

- ❖ Studio Time
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #11**

Week Thirteen (11/9-11/13)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Seven: The Politics of Pictograms / Emoticons and Cultural Context / The Politics of the Alphabet / Colonial Logotypes / Stereotype Faces (pp. 138-141)
- ❖ **Portfolio Projects (Chapters Four to Six)**

During Class

- ❖ Pictogram Activity



Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Seven: Portfolio (pp. 142-144)

During Class

- ❖ **Chapter Seven Quiz**

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Eight: Dirt and Taboo / Rubbish Theory / Semiotic Categories of Objects / Rubbish as Resource (pp. 148-159)

During Class

- ❖ Rubbish Activity
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #12**

Week Fourteen (11/16-11/20)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Eight: Portfolio (pp. 160-164)

During Class

- ❖ **Chapter Eight Quiz**

Wednesday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Nine: What is Open Work? / Information and Meaning (pp. 168-171)

During Class

- ❖ Open Work Activity

Friday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Nine: Openness and the Visual Arts / Openness and Information / Form and Openness (pp. 172-179)

During Class

- ❖ Interpretation Activity
- ❖ **Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #13**

Week Fifteen (11/23-11/27)

Monday

Before Class

- ❖ *Visible Signs*, Chapter Nine: Portfolio (pp. 180-186)
- ❖ **Class Activity Reflection #4**

During Class

- ❖ **Chapter Nine Quiz**



Wednesday

❖ No Class

Friday

❖ No Class

Week Sixteen (11/30-12/4)

Monday

During Class

❖ Studio Time

Wednesday

During Class

❖ Studio Time

Friday

Before Class

❖ Portfolio Projects (Chapters Seven to Nine)

During Class

❖ Studio Time

❖ Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #14

Week Seventeen (12/7-12/11)

Monday

During Class

❖ Studio Time

Wednesday

During Class

❖ Studio Time

Friday

Before Class

❖ Critical Collage

During Class

❖ Academic Engagement Self-Evaluation #15

❖ Critical Collage Showcase

