

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Visual literacy explores multiple aspects of visual messages. How we interpret the visual messages we see and how visual messages are created are major components of the course. Educators need to understand visual literacy since much of the learning process involves the use of visuals. How people perceive and understand visuals is dependent on many aspects including their prior experience, their education, their culture, their race, their age, and their gender. This course will also examine the historical development of visual literacy and its impact on teaching and learning.

II. RATIONALE

Visual literacy is a major component of the broad field of study called instructional technology. Visual literacy encompasses the interpretation of visual messages and the creation of visual messages. In today's society, we are bombarded with visual messages from the newspapers, books, and magazines we read, the television programs we watch, the Internet images we see, and the artistic interpretations we experience through dance, drama, and other artistic works. As educators, it is important to understand visual literacy to increase the ways we can help learners in the learning process since visual images often facilitate understanding.

By combining a basic understanding of design principles and concepts with research findings on the use of visuals in the learning process, students will better understand how to create and use visuals effectively with students. Students will create, critique, and use visual messages.

III. COURSE GOALS/OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, the student will be able to

- define in writing the term visual literacy
- identify major milestones in the history of visual literacy
- discuss and describe interpretation of visual images
- effectively use basic design principles and concepts to create effective visual messages
- critically analyze the effect of visual messages in society
- critique and evaluate visual messages
- design and develop a visual solution to a problem situation

- develop and deliver instructional materials that effectively use visual components.

Standards from INTASC pertinent to this course are detailed in the matrix below. Course components relevant to the INTASC standard are included in the column corresponding to each standard.

INTASC Standard	Course components that address the standard
Principle #1, Performances: The teacher effectively uses multiple representations and explanations of disciplinary concepts that capture key ideas and link them to students' prior understandings	Students explore perceptions and interpretations of visual messages and create visual messages in multiple ways through course assignments and course activities. Assignments 5, 6, and 7 specifically deal with multiple representations.
Principle #3, Knowledge: The teacher understands and can identify differences in approaches to learning and performance, including different learning styles, multiple intelligences, and performance modes, and can design instruction that helps use students' strengths as the basis for growth.	Students participate in a learning styles inventory at the beginning of the course. Results are discussed and are used to shape the focus of activities in the course. Since many learners identify visual learning as a preference, examples of ways to visual tools to help the learning process are used in the course. These tools include graphic organizers, photographs, graphic images, lettering, grids, and videos.
Principle #3, Knowledge: The teacher knows about areas of exceptionality in learning—including learning disabilities, visual and perceptual difficulties, and special physical or mental challenges.	Exceptionalities are included in discussions about visual literacy, especially visual impairments. Adaptive technologies are discussed as they relate to audio descriptions of visual images in computer-based media.
Principle #3, Knowledge: The teacher understands how students' learning is influenced by individual experiences, talents, and prior learning, as well as language, culture, family, and community values.	Students explore perceptions and interpretations of visual messages, especially the impact of language, culture, family, and community values.
Principle #4: Knowledge: The teacher knows how to enhance learning through the use of a wide variety of materials as well as human and technological resources (e.g., computers, audio-visual technologies, videotapes and discs, local experts, primary documents and artifacts, texts, reference books, literature, and other print resources).	Students are exposed to and use a wide variety of materials related to the topic of visual literacy including Internet sites, videotapes, texts, and reference books. Through the use of these resources, students identify how and why the resources are helpful for a particular activity and see the benefits of finding or creating instructional materials.
Principle #6: Knowledge: The teacher understands how cultural and gender differences can affect communication in the classroom.	Students explore perceptions and interpretations of visual messages and the impact of culture and gender on these perceptions and interpretations.
Principle #6: Knowledge: The teacher recognizes the importance of nonverbal as well as verbal communication.	As students work in cooperative groups and present information to their peers in more formal settings, they exhibit knowledge of appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors.

<p>Principle #6: Knowledge: The teacher knows about and can use effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques.</p>	<p>Students use verbal, nonverbal, and media communication throughout the course. Verbal and nonverbal components are evident in each class session through class discussion, group work, and individual work. Students also communicate with each other and the instructor through threaded discussions about various topics in visual literacy.</p>
<p>Principle #6: Performances: The teacher models effective communication strategies in conveying ideas and information and in asking questions (e.g., monitoring the effects of messages, restating ideas and drawing connections, using visual, aural, and kinesthetic cues, being sensitive to nonverbal cues given and received).</p>	<p>In one assignment, students create a visual message using only two colors. This assignment helps students to understand the impact of shape and color in conveying information.</p> <p>In another assignment, students attempt to convey the meaning solely through typographical images.</p> <p>Students can also choose to create visual instructional materials to supplement their curriculum.</p>
<p>Principle #6: Performances: The teacher supports and expands learner expression in speaking, writing, and other media.</p>	<p>Students in the visual literacy course often use the strategies and activities that are modeled in class with their own students to expand student awareness of visual messages and visual communication. Specifically, students have used the two-color assignment, and the assignment of creating a visual solution to a community problem with their students.</p>
<p>Principle #6: Performances: The teacher knows how to use a variety of media communication tools, including audio-visual aids and computers, to enrich learning opportunities.</p>	<p>Students use computers throughout the course, from accessing Internet sites to using the computer for PowerPoint presentations and Adobe Photoshop, to using email and threaded discussions for communication. Students also access course information using the course management system, WebCT. Students are thus exposed to a variety of media communication tools for their own learning.</p>
<p>Principle #9: Knowledge: The teacher is aware of major areas of research on teaching and of resources available for professional learning (e.g., professional literature, colleagues, professional associations, professional development activities).</p>	<p>Students become aware of professional literature and organizations related to visual literacy including the Journal of Visual Literacy, multiple texts related to visual literacy topics, the Center for Media Literacy, and the International Visual Literacy Association.</p>

IV. COURSE OUTLINE

Week	Date	Course topic/activity	Assignment Due
1		Introduction to the course, group activity to define the term “visual literacy,” pretest, learning styles inventory	
2		Results from pretest, analysis and implications of learning styles inventory results, history of visual literacy	
3		Gestalt psychology, perception, two-color assignment	
4		Interpretation of images, classification of visuals, critique of images	Two-color assignment
5		Graphic design basics	
6		Typography, critique of images, typography assignment	
7		Graphic organizers, critique of images	Typography assignment
8		Representing information visually, critique of images	
9		Visual instructional materials, visual representation of quantity, verb, or noun assignment	
10		Color, optical illusions	Visual representation of quantity, verb, or noun
11		Manipulating graphics with Adobe Photoshop	
12		Adobe Photoshop	
13		Optical illusions, visuals and society	Collage created with Photoshop
14		Media and advertising, critique of images	
15		Peer sharing and critique of projects	
16		Peer sharing and critique of projects, review for final examination	Although the two larger projects can be submitted anytime throughout the semester, this is the final date they will be accepted

V. REQUIRED/OPTIONAL TEXTS

- Moore, D. M., & Dwyer, F. M. (Eds.). (1994). Visual literacy: A spectrum of visual learning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.
- Weaver, M. (1999). Visual literacy: How to read and use information in graphic form. New York: Learning Express.
- Wileman, R. E. (1993). Visual communicating. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.
- Selected articles from online journals and paper based journals.
- Kovalik, C. L. (1997). Visual literacy. [Online]. Available: <http://www.educ.kent.edu/vlo> [2000, September 14].

VI. INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES/TECHNOLOGY

Class time will consist of hands-on activities, demonstrations, discussion, and lecture. Students will be actively involved in content delivery. Students will be involved in peer evaluation of assignments.

Technology used in this course includes:

- Microcomputers
- Data projector
- Laptop computers
- Software applications (word processor)
- Overhead projector
- Use of the Internet
- Video tapes and VCR-TV

VIII. EVALUATION/STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Assignments

Students complete two of the following four assignments:

1. Research one aspect of the broad topic of visual literacy and present findings to the class through a presentation or demonstration. 50 points
2. Investigate/examine one type of visual communication medium in relation to its use in educational settings. Students may select from media including (but not limited to) maps, photographs, advertisements, video productions, book illustrations, textbook illustrations, posters/bulletin boards. Students will present a visual interpretation of their findings. 50 points
3. Create visual materials to supplement an instructional unit. 50 points
4. Create and assemble a visual solution to a problem in their community. 50 points

Students complete all of the following assignments:

5. Create a visual message using only typography. 25 points

6. Create a visual message using only two colors. 25 points
7. Create visual messages to represent quantity (pictures of numbers), nouns, or verbs. 25 points
8. Create a collage of modified images related to one theme using Adobe Photoshop. 25 points

IX. STUDENT ETHICS AND OTHER POLICY INFORMATION

For further information about The University of Akron's policies regarding student ethics and conduct, please consult the following sources:

<http://www3.uakron.edu/gradsch/gradbull.html>, then select "General Information" (academic honesty); or www.uakron.edu/studdev/conduct.html (Student Code of Conduct). Any student who feels she/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability please consult www.uakron.edu/access and the Office of Accessibility at (330) 972-7928.

X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Additional resources related to this course include:

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Considine, D. (1987). Visual literacy and the curriculum: More to it than meets the eye. Language Arts, 64, 634-640.

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- Fransecky, R. B., & Debes, J. L. (1972). Visual literacy: A way to learning, a way to teach. Washington, DC: Association for Educational Communications and Technology.
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Technology Publications.

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