Ways of Seeing: Modern Perception in Literature and Architecture  
FOL 5934-HUM 5258  
Department of Modern Languages/ School of Architecture  
Florida International University

Spring Semester 2014

Professors: Renée Silverman, Department of Modern Languages  
Gray Read, School of Architecture

Course Meeting: Fridays 2:00 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.  
Location: College of Business Complex 254  
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Office Hours for Dr. Silverman: 3:00-4:30 Mondays and Wednesdays and by appointment  
Office Hours for Dr. Read: 12:30-2:00 Fridays and by appointment  
Credits: 3

Prerequisites: Graduate student status. At least two courses in literature and/or history of architecture; background in Art/Architectural History or Cinema Studies is helpful.

In conjunction with, Modern Beauty? The Aesthetics of Perceptual Simultaneity, the Wolfsonian exhibition at Frost Museum Teaching Gallery

Ia. Course Description:

This graduate interdisciplinary course investigates how an international discussion among poets, artists, and architects defined modernity by redefining perception. We look at the impact of technology on everyday experience, focusing on how modernists in the first half of the twentieth century represented perception, first by rejecting accepted artistic techniques such as perspective drawing, linear narrative and axial design, then by inventing new strategies. We examine specific innovations such as cubist collage and cinematic montage to show how they impacted diverse forms of art, including film, literature, and architecture. The examination of modern “ways of seeing” in this course encompasses some of the major currents in twentieth-century thought: Modernism, Cubism, Surrealism, and Postmodernism. The course includes films by Fritz Lang, Sergei Eisenstein, Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí, and Pedro Almodóvar; and visual art by Dalí, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Robert Delaunay and Sonia Delaunay-Terk. We will also look at a range of poetry and prose, including texts by Blaise Cendrars, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Roman Jakobson, Federico García Lorca, Walter Benjamin, Henri Bergson, Georges Bataille, and Vicente Huidobro. We look at built work by Antonio Gaudí, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Gerrit Rietveld, Erich Mendelsohn, and Eileen Gray as well as recent work by Bernard Tschumi, Herzog & Demeuron, and Diller & Scofidio.

Ib. Learning Outcomes and Additional Graduate Coursework (Requirements)
Students will advance their critical thinking and writing on the graduate level with a focus on research skills. Graduate students will be expected to master manuscript and bibliographic format (according to their field of study); architecture students will be expected to produce professional-level analytical drawings as part of their research. Analysis of literary texts, film and architecture, will center on issues and problems of disciplinary crossing. In addition to the listed assignments, graduate students will present selected readings and architecture during the semester and lead class discussions.

**Ia. Course Description:**

This undergraduate interdisciplinary course investigates how an international discussion among poets, artists, and architects defined modernity by redefining perception. We look at the impact of technology on everyday experience, focusing on how modernists in the first half of the twentieth century represented perception, first by rejecting accepted artistic techniques such as perspective drawing, linear narrative and axial design, then by inventing new strategies. We examine specific innovations such as cubist collage and cinematic montage to show how they impacted diverse forms of art, including film, literature, and architecture. The examination of modern “ways of seeing” in this course encompasses some of the major currents in twentieth-century thought: Modernism, Cubism, Surrealism, and Postmodernism. The course includes films by Fritz Lang, Sergei Eisenstein, Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí, and Pedro Almodóvar; and visual art by Dalí, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Robert Delaunay and Sonia Delaunay-Terk. We will also look at a range of poetry and prose, including texts by Blaise Cendrars, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Roman Jakobson, Federico García Lorca, Walter Benjamin, Henri Bergson, Georges Bataille, and Vicente Huidobro. We look at built work by Antonio Gaudí, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Gerrit Rietveld, Erich Mendelsohn, and Eileen Gray as well as recent work by Bernard Tschumi, Herzog & Demeuron, and Diller & Scofidio.

**Ib. Learning Outcomes**

Students will improve skills of critical thinking, and writing. The course focuses on analysis of texts, film and architecture, crossing boundaries between language and visual literacy. We will introduce students in literature to techniques of visual analysis, and students of architecture to textual criticism. Students will write papers and make an oral presentation of research and analysis.

**Ic. Major Topics**

Early 20th century European literature and architecture.

**IIa. Assignments, Course Policies, Grading:**
**Coursework:** In-class discussion questions and answers to be handed in. One research paper (10-12 pages [note: analytical drawings count as pages]). Students will also create a 5-7-minute oral presentation with written, visual, or aural materials. Graduate students will present selected readings and objects to the class and lead class discussions.

**Web-based Assignments and Informational Postings:** “Ways of Seeing” has a course website (Blackboard). A copy of the syllabus will be posted there.

**Policies surrounding Assignments and Grading:** 1.) Students will be required to participate regularly, actively, and effectively in class discussions in order to achieve the highest participation grade. 2.) More than two non-excused absences will reduce the final participation grade by one-half letter grade, e.g., from A to A-, B+ to B. 3.) Late papers and assignments will not be accepted. Exceptions may be made for illness, personal emergency, religious holidays, or serious scheduling conflict. Permission should be sought as much in advance as possible. 4.) Florida International University Academic Honesty rules will be strictly enforced. 5.) Students with disabilities will be given appropriate accommodations. 6.) Religious holidays: Florida International University policies on religious holy days as stated in the University Catalog and Student Handbook will be followed in this course. Students may request to be excused from class for religious observance.

**Grading Guidelines:**
*Papers will be evaluated for originality and conceptual quality, smoothness and clarity of expression, structure of composition, stylistics and grammar. Participation and all oral assignments will likewise be graded on originality and clarity of thought, as well on thoroughness of preparation outside of class.*

Class Participation and Discussion: 15%
Discussion Questions and Answers: 30%
Oral Presentation in class: 20%
Research paper: 35%

**IIb. Communicating and Meeting with your Professor:**
Faculty are available during office hours and email correspondence is welcome. All emails will be answered promptly, Monday through Friday. Course information will be sent to student’s FIU email addresses so students must arrange to receive messages promptly. Separate appointments can be made on weekdays if you cannot attend regular office hours.

**IIc. Classroom Discussions:**
You are invited to enjoy a friendly atmosphere that is conducive to intellectual engagement. Therefore, students are asked to please turn off cell phones and beepers, and put away all foods, with the exception of liquids such as water and coffee.

**IIIa. Writing Assignments:**
Students will write one research paper (6-8 pages) that answers questions posed by the professors. Alternate topics must be approved by professors. Papers will be accepted in English and Spanish; Dr. Silverman will read Spanish-language papers.

IIIb. Oral Presentation: (approx. 5-7 minute presentation): Each student will give a short oral presentation to the class focused on one object in the Modern Beauty exhibition. At some point during the first few class sessions, you will have the opportunity to sign up for dates. The work and ideas that you present should help your fellow students understand the object. It is acceptable to use outside sources and examples, but remember that your time is extremely limited. It is recommended that you discuss your presentations with your professor. Students must accompany their presentation with a short rationale/statement of purpose or ideas (1 page typed on the date of the oral remarks) which includes: a discussion of your intentions, as well as the limitations and problems encountered while working on the text/materials. Handouts and other materials supporting your presentation are encouraged.

IIIc. Class Participation and Discussion: Participation in class discussions will be a crucial part of your success in this course. To reflect the weight placed on discussion, your effective participation will make up 10% of your final grade.

IV. Required Texts and Materials:  

Electronic Reserve (administered through the Green Library):  
Please note that some texts/materials marked will be placed on the University (Green) Library electronic reserves system and on the course web site.

Reading Texts in the Original Language: “Ways of Seeing” will be taught in English; therefore, all texts will be assigned in that language (in translation where necessary). Students may also choose to read any and all texts in Spanish. Those students with the appropriate language skills are encouraged to read relevant texts in the original French, Russian, or Spanish. Please consult Dr. Silverman regarding obtaining and analyzing texts in languages other than English.
**SCHEDULE**

Discussion of Berger, *Ways of Seeing.*
Looking at objects/texts: Breuer Chair

**Jan. 17:** Ways of Seeing. Theoretical and Philosophical Approaches.
Reading: John Berger, *Ways of Seeing.*
Guillaume Apollinaire, selected poetry from *Calligrammes.*
Prepare discussion question on one of the readings. Hand in question and answer at the end of the class

**Jan. 24:** Meet at Frost Museum: Simultaneity
Reading: Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay-Terk
*The of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and of the Little Jean of France. Letter from Blaise Cendrars.* (La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jeanne de France. Lettre de Blaise Cendrars)
Perloff, Marjorie, “Profond Aujourd’hui” in *The Futurist Moment* (Chicago, 1986)
Prepare discussion question on reading

**Jan. 31:** Perceptual Simultaneity
Reading: Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay-Terk
*The of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and of the Little Jean of France. Letter from Blaise Cendrars.* (La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jeanne de France. Lettre de Blaise Cendrars)
Perloff, Marjorie, “Profond Aujourd’hui” in *The Futurist Moment* (Chicago, 1986)
Architecture: Gerrit Rietveld, Schroeder House
Due: Statement on choice of object for study from exhibition. Discussion question and answer

**Feb. 7:** The Difference between Sensation and Perception
Reading: Vicente Huidobro, *Altazor or, A Voyage in Parachute*
Architecture: Abstraction of space Le Corbusier’s villas. promenade architecturale.
Prepare discussion question on reading or architecture

**Feb. 14:** Altazor Continued
Reading: Vicente Huidobro, *Altazor or, A Voyage in Parachute;*
Architecture: Abstraction of space Le Corbusier’s villas. promenade architecturale.
Hand in discussion question and answer at the end of the class

**Feb. 21:** Baudelaire and the City
Reading: Charles Baudelaire, *Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil) selected poems
Architecture: Parisian Arcades vs. Department Stores and the origins of the shopping mall
Prepare discussion question on reading or architecture

Feb. 28: Baudelaire and the City  
Reading: Benjamin, Paris, Capital of the 19th Century  
Richard Sennett, ‘Exposure’  
Architecture: Parisian Arcades vs. Department Stores and the origins of the shopping mall  
Due: Outline with references.  
Hand in question and answer at the end of the class

March 7: Cubism and Futurism  
Reading: Vladimir Mayakovsky, The Bedbug and Selected Poetry.  
Marinetti, Futurist Manifesto.  
Architecture: Antonio Sant’Elia drawings, El Lissitzky drawings (Prouns) and buildings  
Prepare discussion question on reading or architecture

March 14: Spring Break.

March 21: Meet in Frost Gallery: Student Presentations

March 28: Continue Student Presentations  
Film: Fritz Lang, Metropolis.

April 4: Industry and motion  

Architecture: Friederich Kiesler, Endless House, Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona Pavilion and Skyscraper drawings

April 11: Surrealism and Variations on Surrealism.  
Reading: Federico García Lorca, selected poems from Poet in New York (Poeta en Nueva York); Louis Aragon, excerpt from Paris Peasant (1926).  
Architecture: Salvador Dalí’s Funhouse, Le Corbusier’s Roof Garden for Beistegui, Antoni Gaudí  
Due: Final Draft of Research and analysis paper on object

April 18: Surrealism Part 2: Louis Aragon’s literary construction of surrealist space.  
Reading: Lorca, Poet in New York  
Review.