SYLLABUS

DESCRIPTION
In contemporary culture, visual images are everywhere in all imaginable forms. They serve all kinds of goals. Often they are claimed to have become more important than text, which used to be the unquestionable basis of culture. To cope with this complex visual environment we need "tools" that will help us to make sense of it. We need to be able to read the images and understand how they interrelate with each other, merge, and communicate meanings to different viewers. We need to see beyond their surface, to peek at what lies behind it (if anything). At the same time such "tools" will also help us create our own images by making us more aware of their "nature", their cultural roles and their ways of communicating meanings. By introducing and applying ideas from theories of visual culture, particularly visual semiotics, this course aims at providing a deeper understanding of images in contemporary culture. Many examples, ranging from advertising to film, multimedia and the Web will be discussed. There will be well-known guest speakers talking about their work on the field of visual communication. The main goals are to teach the participants new ways of seeing/reading their visual environment(s), and to encourage them to apply these skills to their own work with images.

ASSIGNMENTS
There is a midterm assignment and a final assignment. The midterm assignment will be in two parts. The first part is a visual/textual analysis of a visual message. It will be an in-class assignment, taking place on April 25. The second part will be a homework the topic of which will be announced later. The final assignment will be a creative visual/textual project to be realized outside of class. The final assignment will be presented to the class during weeks 10 and 11.

GRADING
The grading is based on the midterm assignment (20 + 20 %) and the final assignment (60%). Active participation in the class meetings will be considered an asset. More than two absences (without the teacher's permission) will automatically lower the overall grade by one step. There will be a roll call in the beginning of each meeting. If the student arrives late, s/he should make sure that his/her name is included in the list by the end of the meeting. Names cannot be added to the attendance list after the meeting is over.

TEXT
REQUIRED:
A reader will be available for purchase at the second week's meeting (April 11). Please bring money with you (estimated cost: under 20 dollars). A copy of the reader will be on reserve at The Arts Library.
RECOMMENDED:
The following books are recommended as additional reading. Copies will be on reserve at the Arts Library.

CLASS MEETINGS
Fridays from 9am-12noon at Kinross South, S 133. The room is small, be early to secure a good seat!

TEACHING ASSISTANTS
The TAs are Kim Hager (kmhager@ucla.edu) and Daniel Sauter (dsauter@ucla.edu). Their office hours are Monday, 1-2pm (Kim) and Wednesday 1-2pm (Daniel) at Room 228K, Kinross North. You can also contact them by e-mail.

OFFICE HOURS
My office hours are 12noon-1pm on Fridays. My office is room 214, Kinross North Building (11000 Kinross Avenue), 2nd floor. I can also be reached by e-mail: erhuhta@ucla.edu.

OUTLINE

WEEK ONE (April 4)
- What is Visual Communication?
- Introduction to Visual Semiotics I

WEEK TWO (April 11)
- Introduction to Visual Semiotics II
- The image and the spectator
- Semiotics of Tourism as a case study

WEEK THREE (April 18)
- Visual Communication design
- Coding and decoding advertising messages
- The relationship between image and text

WEEK FOUR (April 25)
- Midterm assignment

WEEK FIVE (May 2)
- The mass-reproduced image
- Images as attraction: The aesthetics of the billboard

WEEK SIX (May 9)
- Visual communication in postmodern culture 1
- Digitalization and visual culture; collage, cut-up, simulation

WEEK SEVEN (May 16)
- Visual communication in postmodern culture 2
- Image, intertextuality, convergence

WEEK EIGHT (May 23)
- Guest presentation 1: Joachim Sauter: media designer and professor (Berlin)

WEEK NINE (May 30)
- Guest presentation 2: Bill Barminski: multimedia designer and visual artist (L.A.)

WEEK TEN (June 6)
Final Presentations I

FINALS WEEK
Final Presentations II